

## Puerto Rico-based Air Flamenco to begin daily service at Kissimmee airport in 2016

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October 26, 2015

Air Flamenco, a mainstay of air travel in the Caribbean, will open a satellite base of operations at Kissimmee Gateway Airport (ISM) early next year.

Rubén Torres, who founded the Puerto Rico-based airline in 1976, now lives in Kissimmee and has a deal to co-locate with Quantem, a fixed-base operator at the municipal airport. The airline will offer a combination of charter service to and from the Caribbean, cargo flights and commuter flights throughout the state.



Puerto Rico-based Air Flamenco will begin offering daily flights out of Kissimmee Gateway Airport in 2016.

"We have a lot of tourists who come here and stay for two weeks or more," Torres said. "They can go to St. Augustine or to Cape Kennedy, and it's a 15-minute flight. Or they can go to St. Pete to go to the beach or Miami. There's a lot of hot-spots in Florida."

Torres told GrowthSpotter that Air Flamenco is already certified by the FAA to fly to any airport in the domestic U.S. He would have launched the Florida service in September, but a shortage of pilots forced him to delay the expansion. He and his sons, who run the company now, are in the process of hiring more pilots now.

He also plans to offer regular flights to the Bahamas and Havana, Cuba. "We've been invited to go to Cuba three times," he said. "We have to go through the State Department to get approval."

Think about all the lobbyists and government people who will now be able to fly to Tallahassee. And can you imagine flying from Kissimmee to Cuba?- Art Otero, Kissimmee City Commissioner

Kissimmee City Commissioner Art Otero said that having commuter service at Kissimmee Gateway will draw more business travelers, as well. "I see a lot of great opportunity," he said. "Think about all the lobbyists and government people who will now be able to fly to Tallahassee. And can you imagine flying from Kissimmee to Cuba? It's going to be a great mechanism for the airport. It's going to open a lot of doors."

The deal is also a coup for Quantem, which took over the Ranger Jet Center in April. "We're the ones who are going to be hosting them, and we're excited to have them here," Quantem general manager Gary Barrett said.

#### Kissimmee Gateway Airport on verge of major expansion

It's also good timing for the airport, which is on the verge of a major expansion. Airport Director Terry Lloyd said the city has applied for to the FAA for a new \$5 million control tower, but it would cost another \$1 million to open a U.S. Customs and Border Control office here.

"Ultimately, we'd like to get a customs office here at Gateway," Barrett said. "It's a lot of money for a small airport, but it would help Kissimmee. We have found from visiting Ft. Lauderdale, which just got a tower and customs office, that their traffic increased by a third."



Kissimmee Gateway Airport on verge of major expansion