
Stewart hosts NY Air Show, European flights this weekend

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STEWART AIRPORT – Most airports would be content to host an air show, especially one with the Navy’s Blue Angels, and call it a weekend.

But not Stewart International Airport.

In addition to the third annual New York Air Show on Saturday and Sunday, Stewart will host three more inaugural Norwegian Air flights – to and from Dublin and Shannon, Ireland on Saturday; and Bergen, Norway on Sunday.

“Saturday will be the busiest day in the airport’s history,” said Ed Harrison, Stewart’s general manager.

Harrison, in a Monday morning conference call with Orange County Executive Steve Neuhaus, said the air show’s promoters had just told the men that ticket sales have already topped the 20,000 per day that the Air Force’s Thunderbirds attracted last year.

“The Blue Angels are the biggest draw in the business,” said Neuhaus, whose promotion to lieutenant commander in the U.S. Naval Reserves coincidentally becomes effective Saturday.

“Some of it’s history, but most of it is the aerobatics. The F-18s that they fly are really maneuverable.”

Meanwhile, Norwegian Air, which put Stewart on the international airport map on June 15 with flights to and from Edinburgh, Scotland, is continuing to expand its schedule to 21 flights a week.

The fifth destination, Belfast, Northern Ireland, debuts Monday to complete the rollout.

As soon as the gates close on the air show at 5 p.m., Harrison and other Port Authority staff will scurry to the terminal to welcome the first passengers from Ireland and Norway.

“This is history for the airport, too, and we intend to celebrate every new destination,” Harrison said.

State police Capt. Rich Mazzone, who is in charge of logistics for the air show, said traffic should not be an issue for passengers arriving for Norwegian or other flights over the weekend. Norwegian’s arrivals and departures are at night.

The main parking lot opposite the terminal will be reserved for passengers, as it has been in previous years.

“We expect a larger attendance this year, but we still think we’ll be able to clear air show traffic from the airport within an hour or so (of the show’s closing at 5 p.m.),” Mazzone said.

Passengers, like air show attendees, should use Interstate 84 and Route 747 to reach the airport – but are reminded that a portion of 747 will be closed between 3-4 p.m., when the Blue Angels are performing.

Harrison and Neuhaus said the air show has raised Stewart’s profile and been a boon to the local economy, and predicted Norwegian will now have a similar impact.

“All the hotels are booked,” Neuhaus said. “The closest thing the Blue Angels could get is in Dutchess County.”

Port Authority economists, Harrison added, had estimated the air show’s impact at \$5.5 million – including \$450,000 in taxes.

“We’re not in the air show business, but the show is a great marketing tool for us, to demonstrate to airlines what this airport is capable of,” Harrison said.

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