

BUSINESS NEWS

United Adds Global Routes

Travel demand from Americans fuels the bets on places like Ljubljana, Marseille

By Alison Sider
And Jacob Passy

United Airlines is readying its biggest international expansion yet, betting that adding nonstop connections to far-flung, social-media-friendly locales will keep passengers booking trips abroad. The Chicago-based carrier on Tuesday announced new destinations ranging from Ljubljana, Slovenia, and Marseille, France, to Ibiza, Spain. “People’s desire to see and explore the world is bigger and brighter than ever,” said Scott Kirby, United’s chief executive, at an event in Newark, N.J.

United is looking to extend its global reach to cement its lead over rivals and overtake Delta Air Lines as the most-profitable U.S. carrier. Kirby has even floated megadeals with Delta and American Airlines as a way to continue expanding around the world and to better take on foreign airlines.

The Chicago-based airline already flies to more international destinations than its top competitors.

United for years has embraced a strategy of adding nonstop flights to off-the-beaten path destinations, beyond the most popular and heavily visited European capitals.

It has added nearly 60 international destinations to its route network in the past decade, and has made its summer route reveal into an annual event, complete with Easter egg hints dropped on its social-media accounts. United is hoping that another slew of exotic locales will help capture travel trends and spark new ones, even as high ticket prices weigh on customers’ pocketbooks.

The Slovenian capital, Lju-



United sees the Slovenian capital, Ljubljana, as a city seasoned travelers want to visit.

bljana, to United is the sort of city seasoned travelers want to see but couldn’t get to directly.

“This is one of the most Instagrammable, beautiful cities out there,” said Patrick Quayle, United’s senior vice president of global network planning and alliances. “It’s an example of United Airlines being creative and putting destinations on the map where I don’t think any other airline would think about it, because you can’t square it off in an Excel spreadsheet.”

Americans have clambered to travel overseas in recent years, and airlines are racing to add service to match their zeal for new experiences.

United’s new routes next

year will include flights from Newark to Terceira, an island in Portugal’s Azores, as well as Sardinia and Sicily. Valencia, Spain, and Okinawa, Japan, will also be added.

Rivals have been bulking up their international destination portfolios as well. Delta

started flying to Sardinia and Malta this summer, and announced plans to fly to the Philippines from Los Angeles next year. American this summer added Budapest and Prague.

U.S. government data shows that international travel has cooled off some this year, but airlines have said European trips remain in demand despite long immigration lines and oppressive heat.

“Demand is incredibly

strong,” Quayle said. And the summer travel season also now extends deeper into fall, with airlines continuing to operate seasonal service to some destinations into October or November, he said.

Other new places on United’s map, like Luxembourg and Toulouse, France—where Airbus is based—are important business corridors. United also announced new flights from Washington, D.C., to Milan; Los Angeles to Osaka, Japan; and Denver to Paris.

United also plans to restart its service from San Francisco to Tel Aviv. Its 10 new international destinations include eight that no other U.S. airline serves nonstop.

Many of the United’s new routes will be served by the Airbus A321XLR, a single-aisle jet designed for long-haul flying that United said will play an important role in its next phase of international growth.

New Products Spur Record Lego Sales

By Dominic Chopping

Lego reported record sales for the first half of the year as it launched hundreds of new products, with homegrown and licensed themes proving popular across all age groups.

The Danish toy-bricks maker said strong global growth was buoyed by its Speed Champions, Botanicals, Technic, Icons and Star Wars-themed toys, while sporting and entertainment partnerships including Formula One, FIFA World Cup 2026 and KPop Demon Hunters also helped build strong engagement.

“Culturally relevant brand experiences continue to drive demand across the globe,” said Lego Chief Executive Niels B. Christiansen.

The company said it significantly outpaced the global toy market and gained market share as it reported a 22% rise in consumer sales in the first six months of the year.

The results come as the global toy industry is experiencing a strong resurgence, according to Circana, a market research firm that tracks consumer goods.

Rival Mattel reported strong sales growth in its most recent quarter with demand buoyed by sales to retailers and demand for action figures, building sets and games across both its North America and in-

ternational operations. Hasbro, the owner of brands such as Play-Doh and Monopoly, also reported a strong rise in revenue in the second quarter on higher games demand.

Lego’s overall revenue grew 21% to 41.9 billion Danish kroner (\$6.54 billion) in the first half, while expenses rose 21% as it continued to invest in strategic initiatives such as new products, retail channels, manufacturing capacity, offices and sustainability.

Net profit rose 32% to 8.6 billion kroner.

The company launched more than 330 new products in the period and has introduced a new interactive platform known as Lego Smart Play. The new range includes bricks and figures that can react to movement, play sound and light up. It has also strengthened global collaborations with retail partners to expand its reach and introduced interactive in-store demos while opening new Lego branded stores. The company now has a total of 1,106 stores worldwide.

A new global innovation center was recently opened in Denmark and construction continues on a new factory and regional distribution center in Virginia, as it works to expand manufacturing and supply-chain capacity. Both projects remain on track to open in 2027, it said.



A 1:1 scale McLaren sports car built from Lego bricks was displayed at the Munich Trade Fair Center last year.

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Miles Aucoin is distinguished in the industrial sector for his effective leadership principles, commitment to service and innovation, and perseverance amid global industry uncertainties, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic. A cornerstone of his leadership prowess has been his emphasis on employee satisfaction, retention and well-being, building on a career spanning over 20 years in which he has excelled at helming international teams.

Mr. Aucoin serves as the chairman of EPC Project Services, a company he founded in January 2020 that serves over a dozen different industries within the industrial sector and all phases of the project life cycle. Leveraging his extensive vocational background, he dedicated himself to helping others secure career advancement opportunities despite the economic challenges during the onset and height of the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, he recognized that many individuals lacked professional networks beyond their immediate workplaces.

As a result, Mr. Aucoin established talent databases and assembled a team of skilled workers prepared to pursue opportunities around the world, enabling EPC Project Services to swiftly place candidates amid an uncertain job market. This approach, and the company’s subsequent growth, also enabled Mr. Aucoin to rebrand it from EPC Planners to EPC Project Services when adding the capability to provide project management consulting services across the globe.

Today, EPC Project Services boasts additional engineering and artificial intelligence divisions to meet the needs of the ever-evolving market. With its global headquarters in Houston, Texas, and additional offices in Malaysia and India, the company supports projects worldwide, including in Canada, Australia, South America and offshore platforms in the Asia-Pacific region.

EPC Project Services also offers owners a unique, one-stop concierge service in which

EPC works with owners to develop project scope, secure funding, execute Front-End Engineering Design (FEED), and then transition to the Owner’s Engineering and Project Management Office (PMO) to complete the project by awarding detailed engineering and construction to contractors while managing the project for the client. This has been particularly appealing to private equity groups looking to explore and execute industrial projects without having existing engineering, construction, or even industry capabilities or experience.

Mr. Aucoin commenced his career in 2006 as a project control specialist at Fluor Corporation, where he remained for five years. This foundational experience instilled in Mr. Aucoin the importance of quality control and standards, which he has demonstrated through his business acumen throughout his career. Following this appointment, he was a planning, scheduling and project controls professional at CB&I from 2011 to 2012. From there, he joined Jacobs, a premier provider of engineering and construction services, where he rose from a subject-matter expert in planning and scheduling to department manager for planning and scheduling in 2018. Thereafter, from 2019 to 2020, he served as the global director of project controls. In this role, Mr. Aucoin managed teams across the globe and traveled extensively to evaluate offices and their personnel.

Mr. Aucoin holds a bachelor’s degree in business management, with a focus on contract law, from Temple University. He also completed studies at the American School of The Hague in the Netherlands, a formative period that introduced him to global perspectives and diverse cultures. Beyond his primary work, Mr. Aucoin contributes to the EPC Charitable Foundation and supports local schools, patients with cancer and veterans seeking civilian roles following their military service. DL

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