

Fly away!

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 12 August 2022 05:36



Mayor, City Council board first Advanced Airline flight out of Gallup

Hot air balloons are no longer Gallup's only form of air travel.

On Aug. 1, Advanced Air became the first passenger carrier in 12 years to offer service to and from Gallup Municipal Airport.

Mayor Louie Bonaguidi and Councilors Linda Garcia, Dist. 1, and Sarah Piano, Dist. 3, were on the first flights to Phoenix, where Rep. Ruben Gallego met their flight.

"The flight was nice. The air service itself is what's exciting. It connects us to the rest of the world, especially the west," Bonaguidi said. "It saves us having to make a trip to Albuquerque and catch another flight, [which means] you have to spend a night there going out and probably when you come back."

Flights in and out of Gallup are on nine-seaters, and Bonaguidi said he hopes the service gets popular enough to get bigger planes. "This is just the beginning. I hope it catches on," he said. "I'd like to see it reach the point where we need a bigger plane."

The new service can cut down on travel expenses for Gallupians, who can connect to most destinations from Phoenix, and for their friends and family who want to visit, Piano said, noting that departing passengers don't have TSA lines in Gallup (although passengers have to go through TSA for connecting flights).

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“It was truly amazing. It was a smooth ride. The customer service was great,” Piano said. “It was really fast and easy. I’m planning to use it quite a bit – I have a sister who lives in Phoenix.”

She also hopes Advanced Airlines gets enough business to expand to other destinations.

“I think it is possible to add additional destinations, but the reality is we need people to use what we have now to show that it works,” she said. “It’s a great opportunity for people.”

Joe Digregorio was the first paying customer for the new route.

“It was a delightful flight, very smooth and comfortable. We didn’t get any turbulence until we landed,” he said. “The other nice thing about it is you fly into [Sky Harbor] Terminal 3. It’s so much easier because you fly right in and your ride service can pick you up right there.”

Digregorio’s wife is getting medical treatment in Phoenix, so he was also the first to buy Advanced’s Bulk Club ticket book, which is available on the carrier’s website and priced at \$826.60 for 10 one-way tickets on the route.

The ticket books could come in handy for traveling families: The tickets are transferable to friends or family members when flights are booked.

“Gallup people are going to really benefit from this because they can get on a plane and go down to Phoenix for specialized medical care or golf,” Degregorio said. “They can travel for a sporting event, they can come out and go back the next day.”

Councilor Michael Schaaf, Dist. 2, wasn’t able to join the flight, but was on hand for the sendoff. “I’m glad Advanced Air is here. It connects us with Phoenix and further, you can go all the way to L.A. on Advanced Air,” he said.

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The city posted a video of the Aug. 1 takeoff on its Facebook page.

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