



AIR CARGO IS BIG BUSINESS BEHIND THE SCENES AT FLORIDA AIRPORTS

With its 20 commercial service airports, ideal climate, and geographic proximity to Latin America, Florida has grown into one of the United States' busiest gateways for air cargo. In 2015 alone, Florida airports handled 2.74 million tons of cargo. More recently, in 2017, Florida ranked second among all states in terms of tonnage imported into the U.S. by air from international markets and fourth in exports. Overall, total trade valued at more than \$51 billion passed through Florida airports. Although perhaps less visible than other sectors of the aviation industry, such as commercial airlines or flight schools, air cargo operations represent an important and lucrative piece of the economic pie for Florida airports.

Miami International Airport - Flower Power

Miami International Airport (MIA) alone handles 80.7 percent of all goods arriving to or leaving from Florida, positioning itself among the most important airports in the country for air cargo. The airport specializes in handling perishable goods like fish, fruits, vegetables, and flowers, which represent almost three quarters of MIA's air cargo imports. In particular, MIA processes more cut flowers than any other airport in the U.S., accounting for about 85 percent of all flowers imported to the country. On any given day, MIA process about 40,000 boxes of imported flowers, most of which come from Latin America. These flower imports have led to the formation of a vibrant cluster of industries and services in the Miami area. Importers, florists, brokers, transportation companies, and other businesses involved in the flower trade employ about 6,100 people in Miami, with about 75 percent of these companies being located near the airport itself.

The best time to witness the flower import industry in action at MIA is just before Valentine's Day. In the week before the holiday, the United States' flower industry ramps up operations to meet the nationwide demand for red roses, the majority of which are imported from Latin America. Air freighters from countries like Columbia arrive at MIA carrying nothing but flowers. After clearing customs, the flowers are trucked to one of the refrigerated warehouses near the airport, where they are cooled to 35°F to keep them from blooming. Workers then assemble the roses into bunches and wrap them. On the next day, the flowers are loaded onto refrigerated trucks and within a matter of hours or a few days, they are delivered to retailers and flower shops across the country. The next time you buy flowers, remember there is a good chance they came through Miami International Airport!

Kennedy Space Center - FedEx Makes Moves

In 2017, Space Florida announced that FedEx's cargo airline would begin using the Kennedy Space Center's shuttle landing facility (SLF). The SLF is one of the longest runways in the world, stretching 2.8 miles. Florida's so-called Space Coast region will benefit from having the logistics and cargo-related services FedEx provides. FedEx first formed a partnership with Space Florida in 2015 when it landed a Boeing 757 on the SLF. The company provides shipping and logistics services through FedEx Space Solutions. FedEx supports biomedical experimentation and other space activities by shipping aircraft supplies and exomedicine materials, which are studied in a zero-gravity environment.





Case Study

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

STATEWIDE AVIATION



Economic Impact Study

Ocala International-Jim Taylor Field - In the Heart of Horse Country

Ocala, Florida is known as the “Horse Capital of the World.” In 2017, 17 of the 20 horses in the Kentucky Derby had trained in Ocala. The horse industry represents a vital part of the economy in Ocala and Marion County, with a 2015 study commissioned by the Ocala/Marion County Chamber & Economic Partnership finding that the industry had an economic impact of \$2.62 billion on the area. In total, more than 100 equestrian related businesses are found in Ocala, ranging from blacksmiths to horse farms. Horse auctions and events in Ocala routinely attract visitors from all around the country and even the world. These visitors often arrive via Ocala International-Jim Taylor Field (OCF). But the airport isn’t just used by people involved in the horse industry, it is also used to transport horses. Several companies provide ad hoc horse air service to and from Ocala, including one company which operates a Boeing 737 specially designed for equine passengers.

Located right across the street from OCF is the Ocala Breeders’ Sales Company, an industry leader which sold 3,100 horses for \$142 million in 2014. Between 2010 and 2019, 61 percent of all horses sold were purchased by non-Floridians. The horse industry continues to grow in Ocala with the construction of the World Equestrian Center (WEC) expected to be completed by the fall of 2019. This 3,000-acre property will include climate-controlled barns, 1,500 horse stalls, 17 outdoor arenas, and an outdoor stadium. WEC will also include a hotel, restaurants, and 18,000 square feet of retail space. OCF officials expect this new world-class facility to attract a significant number of additional visitors to the area, many of whom will use Ocala International-Jim Taylor Field.

BY THE NUMBERS

Ocala International-Jim Taylor Field

- Supports the 100-plus equestrian-related businesses in Marion County
- The horse industry in Marion County is estimated to have \$2.62 billion in economic impact

Kennedy Space Center Shuttle Landing Facility

- 2.8-mile long runway is used by FedEx Express, the largest freight airline in the world

Miami International Airport

- 85 percent of flowers imported to the United States come through MIA
- The flower importing industry employs about 6,100 people in Miami



Overview

The air cargo industry is an important economic driver at airports large and small across Florida. A 2016 study commissioned by the Florida Department of Transportation found there were over 625,000 air freight-related jobs in the state. That same study also found that total sales associated with air cargo-related activity accounted for 6.7 percent of Florida’s entire economic output, proving that Florida airports are a critical link in the supply chain.

Image Sources: Miami Herald, Florida Today, WRUF