

## AI to launch BLR-SFO nonstop flight from this winter

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Bengaluru (BLR) will again be directly connected to San Francisco (SFO) from this winter.

Tata Group's Air India is going to start a twice weekly nonstop flight between the silicon cities of India and the US this winter schedule, that starts from October-end.

United's proposed BLR-SFO flight keeps getting deferred as western airlines are not overflying Russian airspace □ something that India does and makes its highly popular nonstops between India and the west coast viable. For the same reason, American Airlines' proposed BLR-Seattle nonstop has not been launched yet.

"Bengaluru will get a twice weekly (to start with) to SFO sometime later this winter schedule," said people in the know. There has been tremendous demand for a nonstop on this route. In fact some Indian origin American entrepreneurs raised the issue of a lack of direct connectivity on the sector during Union commerce minister Piyush Goyal's visit to the West Coast earlier this month.

Air India is the biggest operator of nonstops between India and the US as it still overflies the Russian airspace. Allowing its flights to take the shortest possible route. AI had recently announced it will take on lease five Boeing 777 long range (LR) aircraft.

These ex-Delta planes will join AI fleet between this December and March 2023 to

be used to deploy more India-US nonstops. Once that happens, Bengaluru will have a thrice weekly to SFO. While the B777s in AI fleet currently have a first, business and economy classes, the five LRs that will be joining shortly will have a premium economy cabin too.

About the five B777 LR, AI had recently said they “will be deployed on routes from Indian metro cities to the US. Mumbai will see the addition of flights to SFO as well as to both of the New York area’s international airports, Newark Liberty and John F Kennedy, while Bangalore will receive a thrice weekly service to San Francisco. These aircraft will result in AI offering premium economy haul flights for the first time.”

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