



American Inter-Island operated by Antilles Air Boats

# AA Travel Agency News

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## **American's Inter-Island Convair 440 Service connecting mainland—St. Croix flights with St. Thomas**

Dear Travel Agent:

Last May American Airlines inaugurated a "new airline" in the U.S. Virgin Islands designed to provide our passengers with the safest, most efficient service to St. Thomas. We feel we have succeeded with our Convair 440 continuation flights between St. Croix and St. Thomas, and if the increase in our June traffic figures is any indication, our passengers agree with our estimate.

The "American Inter-Island" Convair 440 service has — and is continuing to be — broadly and positively covered in the trade press. But if you happened to miss any of the articles, let me provide you with some of the reasoning behind our purchasing a fleet of piston-powered aircraft and some of the basic ways in which you can use this new service to provide your clients with the safest, most efficient air transport to the increasingly popular island of St. Thomas.

As you may know, the Harry S Truman Airport on St. Thomas will soon undergo a major expansion

project designed to add a longer runway and a new terminal building. American Airlines had, up until May 24, flown 727 jets into St. Thomas under restrictive wind and weather conditions that often precluded our landing on a runway that is suited only for ideal weather and wind factors.

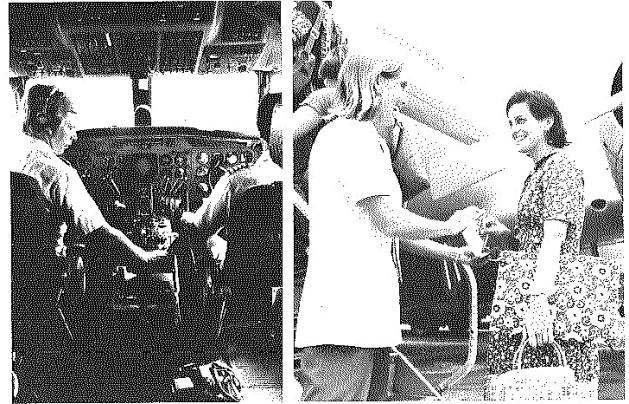
The result was that we often inconvenienced our passengers by having to divert to St. Croix and find whatever means available to transport them to St. Thomas. The prospect of construction around the airport at St. Thomas added just another variable with which our jet pilots would have to contend, and we decided that during the period of construction — and only until the airport expansion project is completed — we would suspend jet service to St. Thomas.

The alternative was to purchase a fleet of four comfortable, 48-passenger Convair 440 airplanes to provide a transfer service to and from St. Thomas for

our passengers arriving at St. Croix on our jets. The aircraft, which are operated for us under contract by qualified and experienced Antilles Air Boats crews, do not carry local traffic. American Inter-Island's sole function is to meet the flights from New York, Washington, Boston, Buffalo, Providence and Rochester in St. Croix and transfer American's passengers either directly to or from St. Thomas. The clean, smooth-riding Convairs are immediately recognizable by their AA colors and logo.



When your clients arrive in St. Croix, they transfer directly from the American Airlines jet to the American Inter-Island Convair 440's waiting on the ramp to carry them to St. Thomas.



Captain Scott Hamilton (left) and Captain Bob Iba prepare your client's Convair 440 for takeoff from St. Croix.

Flight Attendant Jacqueline Landis welcomes passengers aboard an American Inter-Island Convair.

To make the transfer as smooth as possible, we have virtually eliminated any semblance of a connecting operation. Allow me to explain. There are two major ways to book your clients to St. Thomas from the Northeast: direct through St. Croix, taking advantage of the Convair transfer, or by ticketing them through San Juan, so they can make (or maybe not make) a small plane connection at the other end of the terminal at Isla Verde Airport.



Wide, contoured seats let you relax in comfort on your Convair flight.



Here are some interesting comparisons. The transfer southbound through St. Croix is made on the ramp. The baggage is placed in specifically designated containers for quick and accurate transfer to the St. Thomas-bound Convairs. There is no interline transfer of bags across a major airport complex. Northbound, the flight is processed in virtually the same manner as it was when we flew 727's into St. Thomas with a stop in St. Croix on the return leg. In both instances, the same ticket and boarding pass are used on the jet and Convair portions of the trip. The length of time to St. Thomas via St. Croix and San Juan is virtually the same if your clients make their connection in San Juan, but the St. Croix route is a good deal smoother and more comfortable. And the subject of comfort brings me back to the Convair 440.

We have selected these airplanes to be the most comfortable planes flying between islands in the Caribbean. The seat pitch is greater than that found on most jets; the ceilings are higher than those of the



**Baggage is checked through from mainland points to St. Thomas and back for quick and easy transfer to and from the Convairs.**

smaller planes flying from San Juan; the ride is smoother, and the stowage space for carry-on baggage is greater, a consideration of particular significance in this duty-free liquor box market. There is overhead baggage space, and there are closets to hang winter coats that will be needed on arrival in New York, Boston, Washington, Buffalo, Providence, Rochester, etc., as the weather gets cooler.

The Convair fleet is also air-conditioned, a feature unique among piston-powered aircraft in this part of the world.



**Diane Doss, American ticket agent, provides single-ticket service in St. Thomas for a passenger's return flight to New York.**

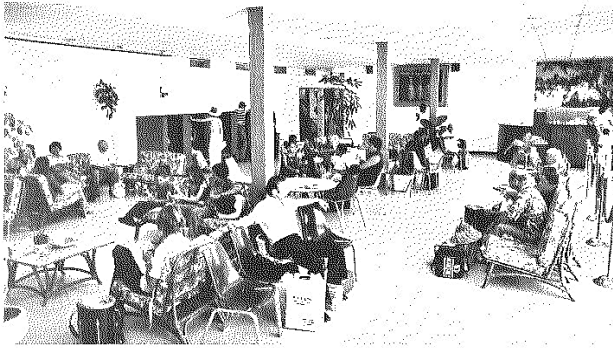


**Security and Customs is a one-stop operation in St. Thomas.**

While we have been restricted in the past to using only 100-seat 727-100 jets to serve St. Thomas, the American Inter-Island service will allow us to fly 150-seat 707's into St. Croix and meet them with three Convairs for the immediate transfer to St. Thomas. With the prospect of a record-breaking tourist season in the U.S. Virgin Islands this winter, it looks like we will be nearly doubling the number of seats to St. Thomas just in time.

How can *you* take advantage of this new American Inter-Island added lift? Here's the procedure.

When you book a client you will fill out a single ticket with the designator code of origin, such as "JFK", and the designator code of destination,



The lounge in St. Croix where, as in the past, returning passengers relax while their American Airlines jet is readied for its flight north.

"STT". You'll then advise your clients of departure time and inform them of the change of aircraft at St. Croix. It's that simple. We'll take care of the rest. And believe me, we have as vested an interest in keeping your clients happy as you do.

We issue a single boarding pass to each traveler on check-in at the originating airport, and we segregate their checked bags in containers with other St. Thomas-bound luggage to assure quick transfer.

On arrival in St. Croix, American's jet taxis to a stop alongside American's Inter-Island Convair 440's. It's a short walk to a red-white-and-blue Convair, where passengers board using the boarding pass issued at point of origin. They are attended to by American Airlines agents, and their baggage is transferred simultaneously.

The 48-seat Convairs depart St. Croix for the 18-minute flight to St. Thomas, arriving approximately one hour later than if the flight had been nonstop from New York.

Upon their return, your clients are issued single boarding passes, and they clear Customs in St. Thomas, avoiding the necessity of having to claim their bags, clear Customs and re-check their bags in San Juan. They board their Convair 440 flight, and as in the past, they enter the sterile lounge in St. Croix upon arrival while the American Airlines jet is prepared for the flight to its mainland destination. The return flight from St. Thomas to the north takes approximately 15 minutes longer than it did in the past.

As I mentioned above, our major concerns in establishing the American Inter-Island operation were safety, dependability and capacity. Once the expansion of Harry S Truman Airport is completed, we intend to inaugurate turnaround service to St. Thomas with both 727 and 707 equipment.

American Airlines has become an integral part of the Virgin Islands community in the six years that we have been serving St. Thomas and St. Croix. We are firmly committed to strengthening our roots on both islands and to providing you, the travel agent, with the finest service possible for many years to come.

C.S. Collins  
Vice President — Caribbean



American's supervisor on St. Croix, Sondra Gyllenband, oversees the boarding of a 727 while St. Thomas-bound passengers fly to their destination on the Convair in the background.