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Airport soars past its 2012 record number of travelers

2.2 million passengers fly through Des Moines in 2013 - a 5.8% gain

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giant Air started offering a twice-weekly flight from Des Moines to Punta Gorda, Fla., last month. / MARY LIE/REGISTER FILE PHOTO

Written by **Joel Aschbrenner**

While other regional airports are losing passengers, Des Moines set another record in 2013.

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Some 2.2 million travelers passed through the gates of the Des Moines International Airport last year, up 5.8 percent from 2012 when the number of passengers topped 2 million for the first time in the airport's history.

The airport saw 181,052 passengers in December, an 8.5 percent increase year-over-year, according to a ridership report released by the airport Friday.

Airport officials credit the introduction and growth of low-fare, no-frills airlines like Southwest and Allegiant Air with helping drive

ridership. Southwest launched a new daily flight to Las Vegas this year, while Allegiant last month began flying a twice-weekly route to Punta Gorda, Fla. The competition from those airlines has pushed down ticket prices, making a flight from Des Moines more attractive compared with driving to other regional airports, officials say.

In Kansas City, the number of passengers was down 3.2 percent through the first three-quarters of the year, according to the airport's website.

Ridership at Omaha's Eppley Airfield was down nearly 3 percent in 2013 through November.



A Southwest Airlines plane lands in Des Moines on Sept. 25, 2013. Des Moines airport officials credit the introduction of low-fare airlines like Southwest for increasing the number of passengers to a total of 2.2 million in 2013. / CHRISTOPHER GANNON/REGISTER FILE PHOTO

Passengers at the Des Moines International Airport

The number of travelers flying in and out of Des Moines has set a record each of the past two years 2013: 2,201,388

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