AIR NZ AND UNITED DEEPEN PARTNERSHIP

News / Airlines

Air New Zealand and United plan to expand their partnership to include revenue sharing on New Zealand-US routes.

The move to deepen cooperation comes as United counts down to its return to NZ for the first time since 2003, with nonstop San Francisco-Auckland flights with Boeing 787s due to begin in July.

United vice chairman and chief revenue officer Jim Compton said: “This joint venture will allow us to work more closely with Air New Zealand to optimise our trans-Pacific schedules and offer more convenient flight choices to our customers in both the US and New Zealand.”

“We look forward to continuing to work with Air New Zealand, an industry innovator and leader, to further grow our business in ways that will benefit our mutual customers.”

The two Star Alliance members have been partners since 2001, with extensive codesharing on each other’s networks, as well as cooperation on frequent flyer benefits and distribution. In 2015, the pair signed a Statement of Intent to “deepen and further define” their alliance.

Asked whether the revenue sharing arrangement would require any government approvals from either the US or NZ, an Air NZ spokesperson told Australian Aviation: “Air New Zealand and United Airlines have an existing regulatory approval to cooperate on routes between New Zealand and the USA.”

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The revenue sharing agreement is due to kick off when United commences San Francisco-Auckland three times a week from July 1 with 787-8s. United plans to upgauge to the larger 787-9 and move to a daily schedule from November.

The Air NZ spokesperson said United was awaiting its licence from the NZ government to operate between Auckland and San Francisco.

Currently, Air NZ serves five points in North America – Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Vancouver – from its Auckland hub. Meanwhile, United flies from Sydney to Los Angeles and San Francisco, as well as between Melbourne and Los Angeles.

Air NZ chief executive Christopher Luxon said working more closely with United would support NZ tourism.

“The United States is New Zealand’s third largest tourism source market, contributing almost a billion dollars to our economy in the past financial year,” Luxon said in a statement.

“We know this is just the tip of the iceberg though, with around 30 million Americans actively considering New Zealand as a holiday destination.

“To have a strong home market carrier like United Airlines working with us to grow this market through its extensive sales and distribution channels in the US will provide a significant boost to inbound tourism.”

Air NZ has revenue sharing arrangements with Virgin Australia, Cathay Pacific, Singapore Airlines and Air China.

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