ASIAN STOPOVERS TO EUROPE REGAINING POPULARITY: FINNAIR

News / Airlines

Finnair's Australian boss Geoff Stone says stopping over in Asia on the way to Europe is coming back into favour amid geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

Although Finnair does not serve this market with its own aircraft, the airline has codeshare arrangements with British Airways, Cathay Pacific and Qantas, as well as interline agreements with Japan Airlines, to take passengers from Australia to Asia, where they transfer onto Finnair's services to Helsinki and beyond.

And Stone says connections through Asian points such as Singapore and Hong Kong have been on the rise in recent times, helping boost Finnair's sales in Australia.

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Finnair country sales manager for Australia, New Zealand and New Caledonia. (Finnair)

“It comes in waves in terms of going via the Middle East or going via Asia. We are finding that with the unrest that goes on in the Middle East that Asia’s coming back into its own in terms of the preferred gateway to Europe,” Stone tells *Australian Aviation* in the June issue of the magazine.

“I have often heard this comment that ‘I’ve been to Dubai many times now and I am a little bit bored by it or the shopping is no cheaper than Australia and I have more options within Asia’.

“We are getting a lot of repeat customers and people have no problem with going to Europe once a year these days.”

While the total market for Australians travelling to Europe was up about four per cent in the first three months of 2016, Finnair reported a 20 per cent increase in bookings from this part of the world, compared with the prior corresponding period.

Further, the airline was the only offline carrier included in the federal government’s air travel services panel, meaning it can capture a slice of the roughly $420 million in travel that politicians and public servants undertake each year.

Finnair has also been named Best Offline International Carrier at the Australian Federation of Travel Agents’ National Travel Industry Awards for the past three years.

“I think Finnair Australia is somewhat bucking the trend in terms of what sort of increases we are experiencing compared to the market as a whole,” Stone says.

“In this market, of recent times we have somewhat taken over the mantle as the largest offline carrier.”

Stone describes the inclusion on the government’s 18-airline list as a “huge vote of confidence” in the airline.

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