



AIR NZ EXPANDS INTERNATIONAL NETWORK WITH RETURN TO OSAKA

News / Airports / Routes



Air New Zealand is expanding its presence in Asia with a return to Osaka (Kansai).

The seasonal three times weekly Auckland-Osaka (Kansai) flights are scheduled to begin in November with Boeing 767-300ERs and run until March 2017, Air NZ said on Thursday.

Currently, Air NZ flies 10 times a week between Auckland and Tokyo with Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners.

The Star Alliance member said demand for travel between Japan and New Zealand had grown significantly since it cut flights to Osaka in 2013, allowing for the resumption of nonstop services to Japan's second largest city and the gateway to nearby tourist attractions such as Kyoto, Kobe and Nara.

"Osaka will also increase the options for travellers connecting to other destinations within Japan and exploring more of the country," Air NZ chief strategy, networks and alliances officer Stephen Jones said in a statement.

“With this new seasonal offering, paired with our 10 times weekly service between Auckland and Tokyo on the 787-9 Dreamliner, we’re confident that we can meet the growing demand for travel to and from Japan.”

Jones noted the number of visitors from Japan to NZ had grown 7.6 per cent to 87,328 in the 12 months to December 2015. Meanwhile, 29,400 New Zealanders travelled to Japan over the same period, an increase of 17 per cent.

The three flights a week will run on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, with a morning departure from Auckland and early evening arrival at Osaka (Kansai) about 11 hours later. After a short time on the ground, the Air NZ 767 returns to Auckland as an overnight service.

Osaka is the second new seasonal route Air NZ has announced in recent times, with the airline also offering flights to Ho Chi Minh City, also using the 767-300ER, three times weekly between June and October.

Further, Air NZ’s alliance with Singapore Airlines offers connections beyond Singapore to Asia and Europe.

Air NZ’s 767s feature 24 cradle-style seats in business class in a 2-2-2 configuration and 206 seats in economy in a 2-3-2 layout. There is no premium economy cabin. The five 767s were due to exit the fleet by the end of calendar 2017, the company said in a slide presentation accompanying its 2015/16 first half financial results published on February 25.

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