



PAL TOUCHES DOWN IN CAIRNS

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Overcast conditions have greeted the arrival of **Philippines Airlines**'s inaugural flight to **Cairns**.

Flight PR218 from Manila, operated by Airbus A320 RP-C8613, landed a little after 0700 local time on Thursday.

The aircraft was on the ground in Cairns for about two hours before heading across the Tasman to Auckland, which is Philippine Airlines' first destination in New Zealand.

Philippine Airlines' A320s are configured with 150 (12 business and 138 economy) or 156 (12 business and 144 economy) seats.

The new flights Manila-Cairns-Auckland service will operate four times a week and lift Philippine Airlines' international network to 39 destinations, with Cairns joining Brisbane, Darwin, Melbourne and Sydney as its Australian ports.

Philippine Airlines president Jaime Bautista, who is travelling all the way to Auckland on the inaugural flight, said the new service offered a convenient link for expatriate Filipinos to their home country and would promote tourism.

"The route will stimulate passenger traffic along three travel streams – Manila- Cairns, Manila-Auckland as well as Cairns – Auckland," Bautista said in a statement.

“The new service allows Philippine Airlines to cater to the travel needs of business and leisure travelers and showcase its distinct brand of service marked by Filipino warmth, charm and hospitality.

Philippine Airlines has pickup rights between Cairns and Auckland and will be the only airline offering year-round nonstop flights on the route. Air New Zealand serves Cairns on a seasonal basis from its Auckland hub.

It is the second South East Asian carrier to offer service to Cairns, after Silkair commenced flights to the North Queensland city in May 2015.



The A320, registration RP-C8613, heading to the terminal. (Andrew Belczacki)

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