

AIRLINK

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MORE THAN AN ISLAND, A GATEWAY TO LIVING HERITAGE.

PENANG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, THE GATEWAY TO GETAWAYS

It all begins at Penang International Airport (PEN). Modern street art interweaving with old world architecture. Cuisines both fancy and rustic, found nowhere else. Home to a heritage of 500 years. Plan your route to a UNESCO World Heritage City.

Airport MD Speaks

Dato' Iskandar Mizal Mahmood returns to Malaysia Airports after almost 20 years with his wealth of experience gleaned from many multinationals and government-linked companies to elevate and transform Malaysia Airports in the fast-changing aviation landscape with new travel norms and innovative technological advances.

This month, he views the continued strong pent-up demand for travel among inbound and domestic tourists to Malaysia with optimism for the aviation industry as low-cost carrier Citilink, a subsidiary of Garuda Indonesia, adds yet another route to Malaysia almost within the space of one month. Additionally, Malaysia Airlines' recent renewal of its five-year partnership with SITA, the air transport industry information technology provider, is expected to strengthen the latter's global operations link to the national carrier's hub at KL International Airport (KLIA) besides ensuring faster, more secured and reliable network connectivity.

Dato' Iskandar Mizal Mahmood
Managing Director
Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad

The gradual and sustained recovery of our aviation industry is written in the skies as can be seen in the return of more airlines to our airports. Shortly after opening its Medan-Penang route on June 10, Citilink has recommenced its daily direct flights from Jakarta to Kuala Lumpur (KL) on July 15 using the Airbus A320 with a seating capacity for 180 passengers.

With Indonesian-based Lion Air Group's recently receiving its first batch of eight leased Boeing 737 MAX to join the rebranded fleet of Batik Air Malaysia, formerly Malindo Air, this will not only improve Batik Air's product offerings and operations but also expand its destination reach with the expected delivery of nine more MAXs by year-end.

Besides launching its services from KL to Phuket on Aug 1, Surabaya on Aug 10 and Ho Chi Minh on September 15,

Batik Air also plans to start flights from Penang and Melaka respectively to Pekan Baru from August 12.

With more air connectivity being added at Penang International Airport, the number of international flights to the island state has increased tremendously by 783% from 12 weekly flights in January to 106 in July, thus making this airport the second highest after KLIA.

We also view Malaysia Airlines' five-year deal, which leverages on SITA Connect, to help airlines lower connectivity costs while improving their quality of service and security, among other things, to benefit the air transport industry as a whole. The airline, which began its KL-Doha flights in May, is doubling them to twice daily from August 1 to October 29, in view of its growing relationship via code-share with its oneworld member, Qatar Airways.

In the light of flights' resurgence and tourist arrivals into Malaysia following the opening of its international borders, the country's international arrival target is likely to be revised upwards in September to exceed 4.5 million arrivals.

We welcome the recent easing of travel procedures for Malaysian inbound travellers where they are no longer required to fill the Traveller's Pass feature in the MySejahtera application effective July 4 in tandem with Malaysia's improved public health situation. According to the Health Ministry, this requirement will be gradually extended to those with social passes, student visas and permanent residence. However, foreigners entering Malaysia must continue to provide their details to the Traveller's Pass in MySejahtera before entering the country.



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Malaysia Rebuilding Its International Traffic

Although Malaysia's hard-hit sectors such as the tourism and aviation industries are not expected to fully regain its strength until 2023, signs of its gradual recovery have been gathering steam since last year and after the reopening of its international borders and other economic sectors in April.

In a bid to reinvigorate the tourism industry and work towards a sustainable recovery, especially in ASEAN, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) recently reconnected with the Thai Travel Agents Association (TTAA) and invited 97 of its members, comprising outbound tour operators and air ticket sales distribution agencies, for a four-day three-night familiarisation (fam) trip organised to Malaysia.

Thailand is one of Malaysia's important short-haul markets where almost 70% of the 1.88 million Thai arrivals in 2019 were repeat travellers. "Their top activities were sightseeing in the cities, shopping and visiting historical sites, including museums. The most visited states were the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur (KL), Selangor, and Pahang," says Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture at TTAA's welcome dinner on July 18.

The fam trip aims to raise awareness on the historical state of Melaka, one of the recognised UNESCO World Heritage sites in Malaysia besides introducing other latest attractions such as the newly opened Genting SkyWorlds Theme Park in Pahang and the magnificent Merdeka 118 Tower in KL, now the world's second-tallest building.

With ASEAN member countries being a major contributor to Malaysia's international tourist arrivals, MOTAC's promotion arm Tourism Malaysia has been rebuilding this market by organising fam trips for Singapore

and Indonesia as well as to promote the country as a preferred travel destination in the region.

Reiterating how Malaysia is one of the most hassle-free countries to visit post Covid-19 pandemic, Nancy Shukri highlights that the country has further eased the standard operating procedures for fully-vaccinated travellers since May 1 where they are no longer required to undergo pre-departure and on-arrival Covid-19 tests, including for those aged 17 and below. Travel insurance is also no longer a prerequisite for foreigners entering Malaysia.

Having surpassed Malaysia's initial conservative target of two million international tourist arrivals with RM8.6 billion in tourism receipts, she says, "Hence, we have revised our target of welcoming 4.5 million international tourist arrivals with RM11.1 billion in tourism receipts this year as we are optimistic about achieving higher numbers."

On August 18-19, the minister will be attending the 11th Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation's (APEC) Tourism Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok where the host country Thailand aims to push forward APEC Policy Recommendations on Regenerative Tourism to pave the way for the tourism industry to contribute to all types of well-being locally.

Meanwhile, the 1,400-member strong Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) has announced they will be holding its convention this year, themed Build Back Better, for the first time in Sarawak from September 20-23.

Participated by over 700 of its members, it will be held at the state-of-the-art Borneo Convention Centre in Kuching with three nights of pre- or post-tours organised for the delegates.





The TAFI Convention 2022 is a collaboration between Sarawak's Ministry of Tourism, Creative Industry and Performing Arts, Tourism Malaysia, Sarawak Tourism Board and Business Events Sarawak.

With sustainability being the heart of TAFI Convention, Datuk Sri Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, Minister of Tourism, Creative Industry and Performing Arts says it is much aligned with Sarawak's post Covid-19 Development Strategy 2030 where the state aspires to empower its community and ensure a sustainable environment.

TAFI had previously held its conventions in KL and Kota Kinabalu, Sabah in 1999 and 2007 respectively. Its 2022 convention, the first to be held post-pandemic, is expected to draw more tourists and air passenger movements from India to Sarawak.

TAFI president Ajay Prakash asserts, "The Indian market is growing and constantly looking for newer destinations, products and experiences. Sarawak has the potential to become a popular destination in the Indian market as today's generation is concerned about the planet, conservation and sustainability."

Malaysia's largest F&B trade fair draws in more international exhibitors

In another development, the recent three-day Malaysian International Food and Beverages (MIFB), held at two halls of the KL Convention Centre, attracted more international exhibitors than local exhibitors.

More than 200 exhibitors from over 20 countries participated in this year's trade fair from 6-8 July, which is in its 22nd edition. They include those from Australia, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Palestine, Philippines, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkiye, the United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and the United States.

Chua Wee Phong, chief executive officer of Constellar Exhibitions Malaysia Sdn Bhd, the organiser of the country's largest F&B trade fair, says MIFB, themed the Future of Food Business, also hosted "the largest Korean pavilion in its history," covering over 400 sq m.

Hoping for the economic recovery to continue and return to full strength before the pandemic, Chua adds, "We used to occupy five halls before. South Korea was a last-minute push. Representing 38 exhibitors, the Korean pavilion is very aggressive in promoting their products after the pandemic."

Constellar Exhibitions Malaysia project director Henri Tan quips, "This year we are expecting about US\$250 million worth of trade deals to be discussed and generated as businesses and decision-makers gradually chart their way forward post pandemic."

Supported by the Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB), MIFB is estimated to have an economic impact of RM61 million and RM26 million in terms of visitors' expenditure besides creating job opportunities, its chief operating officer Noor Ahmad Hamid says.

Established by MOTAC as an agency to strengthen the country's business tourism besides assisting meeting and event planners to bid and stage international business events on our home ground, MyCEB has supported over 2,000 business events and brought in around 1.3 million delegates since 2010. This brings its contribution to the local economy totalling almost up to RM17 billion.

Together with the Malaysian Institute of Architects, it helped Malaysia recently to win the bid to host the prestigious Union Internationale des Architectes' (UIA) three-day International Forum in KL in November 2024.

Representing a collective interest of over one million architects worldwide, the forum, themed Diversity – Humanity and Sustainable Growth, aims to address issues of the tourism industry and enhance the relevance of its activities besides developing a city model for future communities focusing on humanity and sustainable growth.

Malaysia Airlines Reopens Platinum Lounge in KLIA

Malaysia Airlines has announced the reopening of its Platinum Lounge at KL International Airport (KLIA) beginning July 1, 2022, as the airline proactively ramps its international capacity and strategic route expansions to cater to growing travel demands. The reopening of the airline's flagship Platinum Lounge also marks the full restoration of its lounges at KLIA, including its Domestic, Regional and Satellite Golden Lounges, following two years of pandemic-associated restrictions.

Passengers and frequent flyer members travelling via Business Suite, Enrich Platinum, Enrich CIMB World Elite, First Class on codeshare flights (Malaysia Airlines operated flights), oneworld First Class, and oneworld Emerald can enjoy the bespoke end-to-end premium services offered by the airline; from pre-departure via its meet and greet services, dedicated check-in counters located at Level 5, Row D upon arrival at KLIA, and access to its signature Platinum Lounge.

The Platinum Lounge offers guests exclusive fine dining experiences and spacious facilities to refuel before their flight. Tantalise taste buds by indulging in a three-course meal or choose from a variety of food and beverage options through its premium buffet-style offerings at the Platinum Gallery. From local must-tries such as the Malaysian oxtail soup, to international classics like chicken roulade, and crowd-pleasing favourites of Tiramisu and apple crumble to complete the gastronomic journey; there are plenty of mouth-watering options for guests to choose from.

The lounge is also equipped with facilities such as washrooms, private shower suites, nap rooms, and the Platinum Suite where guests can relax and freshen up before boarding their flight. With its spacious and comfortable seating area, guests can unwind, quietly work, or simply take in the picturesque views while enjoying the premium Malaysian Hospitality service at the Platinum Lounge.

“

As a full-service carrier, we want to deliver memorable end-to-end experiences for our guests that prioritises convenience, comfort, safety and wellbeing at every step of their journey. We are thrilled to reopen our Platinum Lounge, especially as we continue to ramp up our international frequency and network to meet the growing demands for travel. We hope guests, far and wide, will continue to enjoy the Malaysian Hospitality service that comes with flying with Malaysia Airlines; from the moment they seamlessly book their flights with us, upon their arrival at the airport, impeccable experiences at our lounges, and a comfortable journey on board.

”

LAU YIN MAY

*Group Chief Marketing and Customer Experience Officer of
Malaysia Airlines*



Turkish Airlines Rewards Its Guests with Touristanbul

Flying to more countries than any other airline, Turkish Airlines, once again provides Touristanbul, one of the privileged services it offers to its guests. Offering the opportunity to discover Istanbul with complimentary city tours to international transit passengers, the flag carrier also aims to promote unique wonders of Istanbul to the world.

With the complimentary city tour Turkish Airlines provides to its guests with a connecting time between 6-24 hours in Istanbul Airport, eligible passengers will have the opportunity to discover Istanbul's historical and cultural wonders such as Sultanahmet Mosque, Ayasofya Mosque, Topkapı Palace between their two flights.

For the programme, passengers are picked up from Istanbul Airport by Touristanbul vehicle, attend the Istanbul tour accompanied by a guide and brought back to the airport for the next leg of their flights. With the programme, the flag carrier aims to increase its share in the transit passenger market and contribute to Turkey's tourism.

On the restart of the project, Turkish Airlines Chief Marketing Officer Ahmet Olmüstür stated, "With the Touristanbul project, we aim to showcase Turkish hospitality and Istanbul's unique wonders to our guests and contribute to tourism of Turkey. Our goal is to increase transfer passenger numbers and our market share with this privileged service. After being suspended due to Covid-19 on 2020, Touristanbul is now restarting. Since 2019, 349,738 guests have had the chance to

discover Istanbul with the service. The satisfaction of our guests opting for the service along with an increase in the number of passengers are providing us with motivation for the future of the programme. We expect approximately 60,000 guests to benefit from Touristanbul privilege until the end of the year."

As citizens of 129 countries are discovering Istanbul with Touristanbul privilege, its programme is prepared with the consideration of guests' flight plans. With six different tours organised every day, passengers are able to choose the one that suits their flight times.

For more information, please visit www.turkishairlines.com



Citilink Returns to Kuala Lumpur from Jakarta

Citilink, the low-cost airline subsidiary of the Indonesian flag carrier Garuda Indonesia, has relaunched the Jakarta-Kuala Lumpur route with the inaugural flight that took place on July 15, 2022.

Citilink President Director Dewa Kadek Rai said that this flight will provide easier access for tourists who want to travel to any destinations in Malaysia as the quarantine-free policy for foreign tourists has been implemented.

Dewa explained that Citilink is optimistic that this route will contribute positively to the recovery of the economic and tourism sectors because it connects the capitals of the two countries, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur. This Jakarta-Kuala Lumpur route will add Citilink's international flight service between Indonesia and Malaysia into two routes, after previously opening the Medan-Penang route, which has been in operation since June 10, 2022.

Citilink provides a daily flight for the Jakarta-Kuala Lumpur route by utilising an Airbus A320 aircraft with a capacity of 180 seats.

The airline has consistently implemented strict health protocols throughout its flight operations with reference to the provisions of health protocols established by the government to ensure all flights run optimally while maintaining safety, security and convenience for all customers.

For more information, please visit www.citilink.co.id



Korean Air Ranks First in Global Customer Satisfaction

Korean Air took first place in the air passenger transportation sector of the 2022 Global Customer Satisfaction Index (GCSI) awards on June 23, 2022.

Hosted by the Global Management Association (GMA), the GCSI awards recognise the best Korean corporation in each category by evaluating customer satisfaction levels, global competitiveness and customer loyalty. In recognition of its efforts to enhance customer service, Korean Air has maintained its top rank for 18 consecutive years since 2005.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the airline has been delivering the highest levels of hygiene and safety through various measures such as cabin disinfection, contactless check-in options, social distancing policies, and strengthening hygiene of inflight meals.

Korean Air has not only restored its inflight experience to pre-Covid levels but has also upgraded some services such as providing more options for inflight meals, desserts and beverages. In addition to the airline's signature Korean dish, bibimbap, new seasonal Korean dishes such as bulgogi rice with acorn jelly in cold broth and spicy noodles are being offered.

The airline continuously works to improve customer services through IT investment and innovation. It launched a full-scale digitalisation of travel documents; automated entry at airport lounges; introduced a baggage loading notification service that notifies passengers when their checked baggage has been loaded on their flight; and opened chatbot services where customers can ask questions on their smartphone.

Korean Air is also actively engaging in ESG management. The airline continues to introduce highly efficient and eco-friendly aircraft, and as part of its efforts to reduce carbon emissions, it became the first Korean airline to introduce sustainable aviation fuel, which can reduce a flight's carbon emissions by up to 80%.

The carrier has been recognised by various bodies for its comprehensive efforts to improve customer service. The airline was named 2021 Airline of the Year by Air Transport World (ATW), and it also received the highest rating in Korea's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport's "2021 Air Traffic Service Evaluation" for customer satisfaction, on-time operation, and safety.

For more information, please visit www.koreanair.com



RECARO Aircraft Seating for IndiGo's New Fleet

The RECARO Aircraft Seating (RECARO) BL3710 was selected to outfit IndiGo's brand-new A320neo and A321neo aircraft. The low-cost airline will be the first to feature the bestselling economy class seat in the Indian sub-continent. The BL3710 economy class seat will be installed on 75 Airbus aircraft starting from January 2023.

Dr. Mark Hiller, Chief Executive Officer of RECARO Aircraft Seating said, "Our new partnership with IndiGo demonstrates our commitment to not only building a distinct product with a sustainable life cycle, but also our comprehensive approach to customer service. The BL3710 is an excellent product that will serve both IndiGo and its passengers for many years."

A Red Dot Design Award winner and iF Design Award winner, the BL3710 was specifically created for short and medium-haul flights. The combination of the ergonomic design and weight of less than 10kg per pax has made the economy class seat a bestseller since it first entered the market in 2019.

Sanjay Kumar, Chief Strategy & Revenue Officer of IndiGo said, "As we expand our network, domestically and internationally to cater to the travel demand, the comfortable seats will be key to upgrading the customer experience onboard IndiGo."

Since its founding in 2006, IndiGo has grown into India's largest passenger airline. Today,



the low-cost carrier flies passengers to 74 domestic and 25 international destinations on its fleet of over 280+ aircraft.

AVIAREPS is the General Sales Agent (GSA) for IndiGo in Malaysia.

For more information, please call 03 – 2148 8033

Vistara Ramps Up Flights to Thailand



Vinod Kannan, Chief Executive Officer, Vistara, said, "Thailand remains one of the most preferred tourist destinations for Indians and we are excited to commence flights between Mumbai and Bangkok, in addition to the existing daily connectivity to the city from Delhi. There is huge potential for a full-service carrier like Vistara on this route, and we are confident that travellers will thoroughly appreciate our world-class product and services along with easy and direct access to their favourite destination."

Vistara, India's full-service carrier, announced on July 9, 2022 the addition of a new route to its international network with direct connectivity between Mumbai and Bangkok, starting August 5, 2022 with five weekly flights. The airline will use its Airbus A320neo aircraft with a three-class cabin configuration on the route, bolstering its existing connectivity between India and Thailand. The airline recently increased the frequency between Delhi and Bangkok to daily flights.

Vistara is India's highest-rated airline on Skytrax and TripAdvisor, and it has been the winner of several 'Best Airline' awards, besides being lauded for cabin cleanliness and safety standards. In a short span of seven years since starting operations, Vistara has raised the bar for operations and service standards in the Indian aviation industry to become the country's most loved airline and has crossed the mark of flying 35 million passengers.

For more information, please visit www.airvistara.com



Singapore Airlines Boosts Connectivity to Japan and India

Singapore Airlines (SIA) will increase services to points across Japan and restore its Indian network to pre-pandemic levels in the coming months. The airline will also add more flights to Los Angeles and Paris by December 2022 and continue with its direct services to Vancouver.

This is in response to strong demand for air travel and the airline will offer customers more flexibility and options in the Northern Winter operating season. Together with other adjustments to the SIA and Scoot network, the SIA Group capacity is projected to be at around 81% of pre-pandemic levels by December 2022.

JoAnn Tan, Senior Vice President Marketing Planning of Singapore Airlines said, "Japan is a key market for the SIA Group, and we will work closely with our partners to meet the demand for air travel as entry requirements gradually ease. Robust demand for travel to and from India, to points across the Group network, support an increase in our services in this important market.

From July 24, 2022, SQ634 to Tokyo (Haneda) and SQ638 to Tokyo (Narita) will become daily services. Together with the daily SQ12 service from Singapore to Los Angeles via Tokyo (Narita), SIA will operate three daily services into Japan's capital, up from 14 flights per week. The daily SQ636 service to Tokyo (Haneda) will be reinstated from October 30, 2022, bringing Tokyo up to 28 weekly services.

Flight SQ618 from Singapore to Osaka will be reinstated on October 30, 2022, bringing services between Singapore and Osaka to twice daily. The SQ656 service to Fukuoka will increase to three flights per week. With the thrice-weekly service to Nagoya, SIA will operate 62% of its pre-Covid operating capacity to Japan by October 30, 2022.

The airline will progressively operate 17 weekly services to Chennai, up from the current 10 flights per week. Kochi services will go up to 14 times weekly, up from the current seven flights per week. Bengaluru services will go up to 16 times weekly, up from the current seven flights per week. SIA

will operate almost 100% of its pre-Covid operating capacity to India by October 30, 2022.

From November 30, 2022, SQ36 will operate as a daily non-stop flight to Los Angeles. This is in addition to the current daily SQ38 service. The airline will operate 21 weekly services to Los Angeles, including the daily one-stop service through Tokyo (Narita), up from the current 17 flights per week.

From December 1, 2022, SQ332 will operate five times weekly from Singapore to Paris, up from its current three times weekly service, and complementing the current daily SQ336 service to the city. Paris will be served with 12 weekly flights, up from seven flights per week.

To cater to the growing travel demand, SIA will continue its thrice-weekly SQ48 direct service to Vancouver in the Northern Winter operating season.

For more information, please visit www.singaporeair.com

Mitsui Outlet Park KLIA Celebrates 7th Anniversary



Mitsui Outlet Park KLIA Sepang (MOP KLIA), Japan's branded factory outlet shopping mall, celebrated its 7th Anniversary from June 24 until July 31 with a host of activities and prizes up for grabs.

Rewards worth a total of RM100,000 were won through its "Spend, Twist & Win" campaign with prize offerings that included shopping and F&B vouchers as well as other premium gift items, limited to only 200 daily winners with a minimum spend of RM300 in a maximum of two receipts.

“

This year's anniversary celebration caters to families with young children as well as young adults who are fans of Pinkfong and Baby Shark. With every celebration, we aim to create new experiences for visitors and shoppers so that there is always something new to look forward to, to experience or to try new offerings.

”

TJ CHEAH

*Deputy Managing Director of
MFMA Development Sdn Bhd*

Visitors to MOP KLIA saw a transformation

of the mall into a Colourful Paradise that is adorned with Instagram-worthy displays, such as neon light, balloons, sprinkles, photogenic tunnels and more. Shoppers with interest in arts and crafts took part in a DIY Tote Bag activity which entitled them to create a personalised gift for themselves with a minimum spend of RM200 in a maximum of two receipts.

Birthday After Party Late Night Sale from 10pm till 12 midnight were held on three consecutive days from July 8 until July 10 with discounts offered up to 80%, welcome gift giveaways and happy hour instant cashback reward.

With Phase 3 recently just opened, visitors also took the opportunity to visit the five new concept stores, i.e., PUMA, Nike Unite KLIA, adidas, OBJET, and Courts.

MOP KLIA is strategically located just 8 minutes away from KLIA and klia2 and approximately 45 minutes from KL City Centre. The outlet mall is easily accessible



through various highways such as ELITE, LDP, KESAS, MAJU Expressway, North South Expressway Central Link, and NKVE. Getting to MOP KLIA is also convenient as there are ample of public transportation services available.

For more information on upcoming offers, promotions and happenings at MOP KLIA, visit www.mitsuioutletparkklia.com.my or www.facebook.com/MOPKLIA.

American Airlines and Qatar Airways Expand Strategic Alliance

American Airlines and Qatar Airways are expanding their strategic alliance with a new codeshare agreement, enabling American's customers to book travel on Qatar Airways flights via Doha to and from 16 new countries.

Pending any necessary government codeshare approvals, travelers will be able to book travel beyond Qatar to their final destinations in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Maldives, Oman, Pakistan, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This expanded codeshare comes as American launched a new service on June 4 from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) to Doha's Hamad International Airport (DOH), recently voted World's Best Airport. The new service establishes American as the only U.S. carrier to serve the Gulf region, seamlessly connecting through Doha with Qatar Airways.

“Our global partnerships expand upon American's comprehensive network, providing access to numerous destinations for our customers who are ready to travel around the world. We're excited to deepen our strategic alliance with Qatar Airways alongside the launch of our new service between New York and Doha, giving American's customers more choices and convenient access to the Middle East and beyond.”

ROBERT ISOM

Chief Executive Officer of
American Airlines



The strategic alliance includes Qatar Airways, the leading carrier in the Middle East in terms of frequencies and destinations and the six-time Skytrax 'World's Best Airline' award winner, placing its code on thousands of American's domestic flights — strengthening connectivity and creating new travel options for customers. American's network enables connections to over 250 North American cities and Qatar Airways' extensive network of more than 85 relevant destinations allows customers to access the Middle East, East Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia gateways. The airlines, both alliance members, are paving the way for more interconnected travel within the alliance and globally.

“

Qatar Airways is pleased to extend our codeshare partnership with American Airlines, as yet another step in renewing our long-term strategic partnership with the airline. The expansion of our codeshare agreement is a testament to our joint confidence in the future of aviation, and our shared mission of enhancing the customer experience for millions of passengers worldwide. We are thrilled to build on our relationship with our fellow oneworld partner to provide passengers with the reliable, safe and award-winning service that they have come to know and expect from Qatar Airways.

”

AKBAR AL BAKER

Group Chief Executive Officer of
Qatar Airways



AirAsia X Adds Three Key Routes to Australia and New Zealand

AirAsia X (AAX), the medium to long-haul affiliate airline of AirAsia Aviation Group announces its latest services to Melbourne (Tullamarine) and Perth in Australia as well as Auckland in New Zealand which will all take flight from November 1, 2022.

These three key routes boost the airline's robust growth plans with 13-routes set to be operating this year, including Sydney, New Delhi, Seoul, Tokyo, Sapporo, Osaka and Honolulu as well as London, Dubai and Istanbul.

AAX will recommence its services to Melbourne (Tullamarine), Perth and Auckland (via Sydney) with three weekly flights from November and will gradually increase the frequency to daily flights by the first quarter of 2023 to meet strong pent up demand.

“

We are thrilled to recommence our services to Australia and New Zealand as a core part of our expansion strategy with our famous great value fares for medium to long-haul travel.

We are also pleased to announce our return to Melbourne Airport (Tullamarine) which offers more flexibility and connectivity for our guests travelling to and from the state of Victoria.

”

BENYAMIN ISMAIL
Chief Executive Officer of
AirAsia X

“In 2019, we flew over a million guests to both countries, which shows that Australia and New Zealand are important markets for us and we connected the same number of Australians and New Zealanders to Malaysia and across ASEAN. After a two-year hiatus we are back stronger than ever and proud to renew our commitment to making medium to long-haul air travel affordable once again for everyone in this region as well as across ASEAN.

“As the world reopens and travel restrictions ease, we are confident these new services will prove popular. Our Premium Flatbeds remain the best low-cost seats in the sky, which we know are always in high demand for our Australian and Kiwi guests from down under.

“Importantly with over a dozen routes in our network this year, our valued guests with outstanding credit will be able to use their travel vouchers to book future travel to many exciting destinations with us. We will bring back everyone's favourite destinations and even more in the near future and look forward to welcoming guests back on board with our great value fares and industry-leading hospitality.”

For more information,
please visit www.airasia.com



“ Aviation Interview with Ooi Chok Yan

Chief Executive Officer of Penang Global Tourism (PGT)

Responsible for generating tourism to Penang by working closely with key tourism players since Ooi Chok Yan's current appointment in November 2014, PGT as the state tourism bureau has established under his leadership a number of signature events that not only drew visitors and tourists alike to Penang but also saw the achievement of two Guinness World Records. Innumerable accolades from renowned international media such as CNN, Lonely Planet, Los Angeles Times, Forbes, Yahoo Travel and New York Times have also poured in for Penang and its tourism efforts over the years. Kudos go partly to Ooi's background. Armed with a Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design from Melbourne's RMIT University, the 46-year old Penangite started his career working with top multinational advertising agencies and went on to win several advertising awards in the local and international arena.

How has your advertising career prior to joining PGT help you in your current job responsibilities?

My experience of working with multinational brands has enabled me to plan better strategies promoting Penang's tourism. Besides helping me to understand the target audience much better, I have also been able to apply some of the creative thinking into resolving certain challenges faced during my service with PGT.

Under your tenure, what are some of PGT's memorable highlights and achievements thus far?

Firstly, it would be Penang welcoming its first long-haul flight from Doha by Qatar Airways on February 2018 where the state is the second destination in Malaysia chosen by this Middle-Eastern airline to have weekly direct flights as part of their expansion.

Secondly, the increasing numbers of direct flights to Penang over the years. We received 293 direct flights weekly in 2019 compared to only 202 in 2015, which represented a 45% increase. The growth of passenger traffic at Penang International Airport (PIA) is another achievement worth remembering considering the 38% growth when Penang welcomed about 8.3 million visitors to Penang in 2019 compared to only 6 million visitors in 2014.

Lastly, the vibrant scenarios of the festivals and some very iconic and widely-loved events hosted by the state. They include the Penang Hot Air Balloon Fiesta and Penang International Food Festival (PIFF) which received on average over 500,000 visitors throughout the years these events were held. All these would not have been possible without the support provided by our PGT chairman, board of directors and my dedicated team. Besides our partnership with various associations, we are also grateful to our ever-supportive Penangites.

Firefly made PIA its northern hub with the launch of its first B737-800 on April 11 and opened routes from Penang to Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching. How has the passenger movements been like and have they helped boost connectivity within ASEAN and Asia Pacific?



We have been seeing increasing numbers of domestic traffic coming into Penang since early this year, especially after Firefly's announcement of PIA as its northern hub. Coupled with Malaysia's reopening of its international borders on April 1 and the subsequent increasing number for direct flights from the region into Penang, June 17, for instance, saw us welcoming Lion Air's inaugural daily flight from Medan to Penang.

With international borders reopening, what are Penang's target markets?

Apart from our top 10 traditional markets, namely Indonesia, Singapore, China, Thailand, Taiwan, Australia, the United Kingdom, Japan, India and the United States, we are also looking at cities that have direct flights to Penang. We will be organising roadshows in some of our top traditional markets to further strengthen Penang's position as a preferred destination of choice.

What are some recent overseas sales missions and trade shows that PGT have participated in to promote Penang as a destination for tourism, medical and education?

We are active participants of the overseas roadshows organised by Tourism Malaysia and the major trade shows. Early January this year saw us exhibiting in the Dubai World EXPO 2022. PGT also recently took part in the Arabian Travel Market in Dubai to showcase Penang's diverse products and services to the Middle East market.

In June, we participated in Tourism Malaysia's Korean Roadshow and were also one of the exhibitors of the Malaysia Healthcare EXPO 2022 in Surabaya to showcase Penang's world-class medical facilities. In July, PGT had its Penang Roadshow in Bangkok featuring Penang's latest attractions.

What are some new attraction offerings in Penang post Covid-19 pandemic?

To diversify our tourism products, we have introduced several hidden gems under "The Other Side of the Island – Balik Pulau and Teluk Bahang" and "The Opposite Side

of the Island – Seberang Perai" to bolster our amazing array of our ecotourism and agrotourism offerings. Visitors can look forward to a scenic bicycle ride through the tranquil rural landscape in Balik Pulau and just a stone's throw away, they can enjoy Penang International Container Art Festival, said to be the first in Asia to showcase urban art on container installations.

Those seeking for adventure within a natural setting will find Teluk Bahang standing out as a home to ecotourism attractions such as Boulder Valley Glamping, Tropical Spice Garden, ESCAPE Theme Park and ENTOTIA by Penang Butterfly Farm.

We also have many nature- and agro-based theme parks on the mainland such as Frog Hill, a former mining site now known as the Jiuzhaigou of Penang while Bukit Mertajam Recreational Forest, a popular hiking spot with its dome-shaped peak at 545 metre-high, is Seberang Perai's version of Penang Hill on the island. Meanwhile, the Butterworth Art Walk at Jalan Bagan Luar features many murals and installations that serve as colourful backdrops for photo opportunities.

As a coordinator of Penang's tourism activities, what are some major events lined up for the rest of 2022 to woo more arrivals?

Come August 20-28, our long-awaited PIFF 2022 will be showcasing the state's diverse food culture and reinstating its fame as Asia's food paradise. The Penang Bridge International Marathon in December will be another major event to look out for.

What is the significance of Penang Hill's Unesco Biosphere Reserve's recent recognition to Penang's prominence as a tourist destination?

This latest recognition received on June 11 makes Penang the first state in Peninsular Malaysia to possess two UNESCO status. Do enjoy a morning hike in Penang Hill's ancient rainforest and spend the rest of the day soaking in the old-world charm of George Town's UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Tell us about Penang's potential as a cruise destination and the facilities in place to support it.

Our Swettenham Pier Cruise Terminal is one of the major city ports in Malaysia. With the completion of its recent expansion, the cruise terminal can now cater to docking two quantum-sized cruise ships at the same time. Cruise passengers off boarding in George Town have ample time to explore the city.

The five-star Amari SPICE Penang with 453 rooms in Bayan Lepas' Central Business District will be opening in September. Will there be more new hotels opening in the state?

We expect The George Penang's soft opening at Jalan Pinang this November and the 200-room Le Meridien Penang Airport hotel, located by the PIA, is scheduled to be opened by end-2026. Both Amari SPICE and The George, with 93 rooms, are part of the international ONYX Hospitality Group.

Does Penang have enough hotel accommodation and the manpower needs to meet the influx of tourists?

Since the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, we have about 20,000 plus rooms in Penang, which are sufficient to cater to the accommodation needs. Manpower remains a challenge nationwide and is not limited only to the tourism industry. For the time being, containment measures such as the digitalisation of hotel services are being carried out to resolve this issue.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind having spent slightly over eight years at PGT?

I wish to leave a strong foundation for PGT backed by the support from the tourism players. My aim is to push Penang to higher grounds in the coming years so that it will remain as one of the world's top chosen destinations noted for its culture and heritage, nature and adventure as well as food and lifestyle.

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