

AIRLINK

CONTENTS - SEPTEMBER 2022

Airport Talk

Airport MD Speaks	37
Cautious Optimism Prevails for Recovery in Asia Pacific	38

Aviation News

Airport Collaborative Decision-Making to Increase Operational Efficiency	40
SriLankan Airlines Airlifts Malaysian Medical Donations to Sri Lanka	41

Malaysia Airlines Expands Digitalisation of The Traveller Touchpoints	42
SAUDIA Sets Out To Connect Seoul and Saudi Arabia	43
Ethiopian Airlines Orders Africa's First A350-1000	44
Emirates Restarts Route to London Stansted	45
Qatar Airways Unveils Platinum, Gold and Silver Lounges	46

Jetstar Takes Delivery of its First A321neo	47
Etihad Airways Announces Double Daily Flights to Manila	47

Aviation Interview

Aviation Interview with Mohd Daud Mohd Arif Chief Executive Officer of Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council	48
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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 rejoices as KL International Airport (KLIA) and Langkawi International Airport (LIA) stand tall among the world's best airports in the Airports Council International's (ACI) Airport Service Quality (ASQ) survey for the second quarter of 2022 (2Q22). The airport operator also celebrates KLIA as the fourth busiest airport in Asia Pacific as air travel recovery gains traction in tandem with more route resumptions, frequencies and new services by airlines.

Dato' Iskandar Mizal Mahmood
Managing Director
Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad

I am so proud that KLIA and LIA have both achieved perfect scores of 5.00 in ACI's latest survey measuring overall passenger satisfaction for terminal safety, facilities, services and cleanliness. KLIA shares that glory with seven other airports in the over 40 million passengers per annum (mppa) category while LIA is the sole airport scoring full points in the 2-5 mppa category.

KLIA was recognised for the smooth processes at its touchpoints, courteous on-ground assistance and fast check-in at the counters. The achievements by KLIA and LIA reflect not only Malaysia Airports' continuous commitment but also that of the entire airport community in ensuring their services and operations meet the high global standards.

Since the reopening of Malaysia borders on April 1, KLIA has been performing well in terms of passenger traffic, ranking among the top 10 international airports in Asia Pacific. According to data from Singapore's independent consulting firm Sobie Aviation, KLIA was the fourth busiest airport with 2.6 million passenger arrivals for 2Q22,

overtaking Hong Kong International Airport, Asia's busiest airport before the pandemic.

Our latest statistics for July show the Malaysia Airports Group registering a total of 7.8 million passenger movements, of which 4.8 million were from our network of local airports and the rest from Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen International Airport. Out of the 4.8 million passenger traffic, 1.6 million were international passenger traffic into Malaysia.

Having surpassed the one-million mark for the first time in June for international passenger movements since the Covid-19 pandemic, we are optimistic of our aviation industry continuing on its recovery trajectory as more international routes and frequencies are resumed and increased respectively by our airline partners such as Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia, Batik Air and Air Busan recently.

Our national flag carrier Malaysia Airlines has not only recommenced its thrice weekly Kuching-Singapore route using Boeing 737-800 on July 1 but also started its maiden twice-weekly KUL-Tokyo Haneda flight

operated by Airbus A330-300 on 14 August, marking its fourth route to Japan after KUL-Osaka, KUL-Tokyo Narita and Kota Kinabalu (BKI)-Tokyo Narita.

Our Kota Kinabalu International Airport has also seen more flights coming into Sabah with the return of more foreign carriers with the latest twice-weekly route resumption by Air Busan from Busan to BKI on 13 July. Sabah, which has 40 weekly direct international flights coming in, enjoys the highest frequency from South Korea (17) followed by Singapore (14), Brunei (4), Thailand (3) and the Philippines (2). AirAsia also recently resumed its BKI-Bangkok Don Mueang route.

While it has been challenging for us to continuously ensure that our passengers have a pleasant and seamless experience as we welcome more traffic at our airports, we will not waver in our commitment to do so. Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone, Happy Malaysia Day, which falls on a Friday and another long weekend for many to do some short-haul travels.



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Advisor

Dato' Iskandar Mizal Mahmood

Managing Editor

Mohamed Sallauddin Hj. Mat Sah

Editorial & Concept

Octagon Creative
melisa.fly@octagon.com.my

Advertising & Production

Noor Hafiza Ruslan
hafiza@malaysiaairports.com.my

Mohd Faizal Md Haris

faizalmd@malaysiaairports.com.my

Design & Distribution

Mediate Communications Sdn. Bhd.

MALAYSIA AIRPORTS HOLDINGS

BERHAD (487092-W)

Aviation Marketing and Development
Division

Level 3, Arrival Hall (Domestic)

Main Terminal Building

KL International Airport

64000 Sepang

Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

Tel : 603-8776 4949

Fax : 603-8776 4040

Email : marketing@malaysiaairports.
com.my

Cautious Optimism Prevails for Recovery in Asia Pacific

Amidst strong headwinds such as the geopolitical instability in eastern Europe rocking the global macro-economic, high inflation rates, rising energy prices, and disruptions in supply chains, a sense of cautious optimism prevails for the aviation sector in the Asia Pacific and the Middle East.

While the Airports Council International's (ACI) Asia Pacific Director General Stefano Baronci views 2022 as a more positive year for the sector, he anticipates bumps along its road to recovery. In its newly released Asia Pacific Industry Outlook for the second quarter of 2022 (2Q22), ACI attributes the relaxation of travel restrictions and successful vaccination programmes implemented in many parts of these two regions as contributing factors to the sector's recovery, including passenger and aircraft traffic movements.

Apart from Malaysia, 2Q22 also saw countries such as Cambodia, Singapore, India, Thailand, and Australia withdrawing restrictions on international air travel. Statistics from key hubs in these countries show that, in aggregate, passenger traffic has increased substantially between end-February and early July.

ACI says South Asia (encompassing Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Afghanistan) and the Middle East (involving Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Yemen, and Qatar) have recovered to about 85% of 2Q 2019 seat capacity.

As for emerging East Asia, representing China, Mongolia, and South Korea, it is at 15% of 2Q 2019 level as China adopted a zero Covid-19 approach and renewed lockdowns. Most of these East Asian

countries are heavily dependent on Chinese passengers.

ACI, in its Asia Pacific Industry Outlook 2Q22, also observes that many airports are already operating at capacity in peak periods, although the overall footfall is below 2019 levels. The 2Q22 scheduled domestic seat capacity shows recovery of 89% of pre-pandemic levels compared to the same quarter of 2019.

"The international seat capacity, however, is still down 59% as travel restrictions, quarantine and testing requirements still continue to impact, particularly in China and partially in Japan.

"Total domestic seat capacity is expected to exceed 2019 levels by 3Q22, with the overall traffic for 2022 likely to be on par with 2019 levels."

It adds that another factor buoying the recovery of the aviation sector is the continued pent-up demand for air travel, particularly for leisure such as visiting friends and relatives and taking their postponed holidays.

Developed in partnership with Mott MacDonald, ACI's Industry Outlook for 2Q22 also provides a snapshot of airport business performance across the region with a short-term analysis of the key industry trends.

To enhance the airports' role as engines of economic and social growth in a safe and sustainable manner, Stefano says ACI Asia-Pacific has urged the regulators to work closely with the industry to enhance workforce and operations to ensure a smooth traveller experience and harmonise as much as possible health protocols. "We will continue working with our members to help the industry build stronger."



Second roadshow to India

Meanwhile, with China still closed to outbound travel, Tourism Malaysia has organised yet another roadshow to India, its other top source market prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, after the success of its first one to six different cities in April.

This time, the roadshow done in collaboration with the Malaysia Association of Tour and Travel Agents covered four cities, namely Visakhapatnam, Kolkata, Kochi and Thiruchirappalli from August 17 to 24. Led by the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Datuk Seri Dr Santhara, the delegation of the second roadshow comprised a Malaysian-based airline, 18 travel agents, two hoteliers and a state government agency.

Currently, more than 14,000 seats are offered weekly between India and Malaysia via Malaysia Airlines, Batik Air, AirAsia, IndiGo, and Air India Express. Malaysian e-visa applications can be done online by Indian travellers.

Following the reopening of India's borders on March 27, Malaysia Airlines has redeployed several aircraft such as Boeing 737-800 and the widebody Airbus A330 to this important market. The airline has also reinstated its scheduled commercial flights to major cities like New Delhi, Bangalore, Mumbai, Chennai and Hyderabad.

The flag carrier, which hopes to achieve pre-pandemic capacity for its flights to India by year-end, reportedly carried about 171,000 Indian passengers with about 79% load factor for the first two quarters of 2022. India is more than just a point-to-point passenger market for Malaysia Airlines as many of the Indian travellers use KLIA as a transit point to go to Australia and New Zealand.

Meanwhile, Singapore, another key market for Malaysia, saw air checkpoints reporting an average volume of more than 78,000 travellers daily over the August 5-7 weekend ahead of Singapore's National Day holiday on August 9, according to the republic's Immigration and Checkpoints Authority.

Thanks to Malaysia's Health Ministry's announcement that all travellers entering Malaysia are no longer required to undergo Covid-19 tests, including pre-departure and on-arrival tests from August 1, this has made the country one of the most hassle-free destinations, particularly in Southeast Asia (SEA). This comes after the relaxation of another ruling that all travellers are no longer required to fill up the traveller's card in the MySejahtera app before entering Malaysia regardless of their vaccination status.

Responding to the long queues of foreigners at the immigration checkpoints at KL International Airport, Malaysia's Immigration

Department director-general Datuk Seri Khairul Dzaimie Daud had announced that from September those holding long-term visit passes can now use the automated entry (autogate) system, which is presently extended only to Malaysian citizens.

They include foreigners working and studying in Malaysia, expatriates, individuals married to locals, and participants in Malaysia My Second Home programme. The use of the autogate system also applies to foreigners holding passports with chips and in compliance with the conditions stipulated by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

With the aviation industry subjected to external factors such as the escalating tension between China and Taiwan; the high cost of living in Europe, which is one of SEA's key long-haul markets; and soaring airlines' operational costs, the journey to recovery remains bumpy despite air travel demand is far outpacing supply. Nevertheless, it is progressing gradually compared to last year and thus gives confidence to the travellers and industry players alike that there is no backtracking as one research and tourism consultant puts it.



Airport Collaborative Decision-Making (A-CDM) to Increase Operational Efficiency

KL International Airport (KLIA) will be implementing the Airport Collaborative Decision-Making (A-CDM) integrated system to increase operational efficiency of its KLIA eco-system. The new initiative will see a collaboration between seven stakeholders at the airport including Civil Authority of Malaysia (CAAM), Malaysia Airlines (MH), AirAsia (AK), Batik Air (OD), Aerodarat, Pos Aviation and Ground Team Red (GTR).

The airport operator together with the government agency, airlines and ground handling companies signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) witnessed by the Secretary General of Ministry of Transport Malaysia, Datuk Isham Ishak on July 29 to commemorate the collaboration. A-CDM system will be able to enhance the airlines' On Time Performance (OTP) and help all parties to strategically use resources and manage flight operations more effectively.

“As the national airport operator, we are continuously working with all stakeholders to enhance the service standards. The MoU that is signed intends to bring the relevant partners at KLIA together and explore the benefits of A-CDM. A-CDM uses real-time data accessible to everyone for smoother process flow management. Embarking on the initiative allows national aviation players to better serve passengers, thus we are very appreciative of the support shown by all stakeholders.”

DATO' ISKANDAR MIZAL MAHMOOD
Managing Director of Malaysia Airports

A-CDM integrates the operations of the airport, air traffic control, regulator, airlines, and ground handlers on a unified platform to achieve collaborative decision-making that will establish common situational awareness and maximise the exchange of information. This will then improve air traffic through enhanced predictability of events and optimised utilisation of resources.

Airline partners will benefit from reduced waiting times on the runway and increase in customer satisfaction and productivity for ground handling activities. Meanwhile, the airport operator will experience improved punctuality, gate planning and overall passenger flow management.

According to the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), 18 airports in Asia Pacific have already implemented A-CDM whereas 23 others are in the midst of embarking on it.



SriLankan Airlines Airlifts Malaysian Medical Donations to Sri Lanka

SriLankan Cares, the corporate social responsibility arm of SriLankan Airlines, takes on the cause of airlifting essential medicines gifted by Malaysian donors to hospitals in Sri Lanka, free of freight charges.

SriLankan Cares has teamed with SriLankan Cargo to implement the long-term humanitarian project which aims to channel medical product donations from Malaysia and other countries to hospitals in Sri Lanka that are struggling to cope with the ongoing drug shortage in the country. The project is also representative of the Sri Lankan national carrier's enduring commitment to espouse national causes in the country's hour of need.

Consequently, SriLankan Cares has already airlifted several consignments of life-saving medicines weighing up to 6,000 kilograms that have been generously donated by Global

Federation of Chinese Business Women; Fo Guang Shan Malaysia; Unimed Sdn Bhd; Rotary Club of Malaysia; Malaysian Sinhalese Association; and Friends@Charity. These medical donations were facilitated by the High Commission of Sri Lanka in Malaysia with the coordination efforts of SriLankan Cargo in Malaysia.

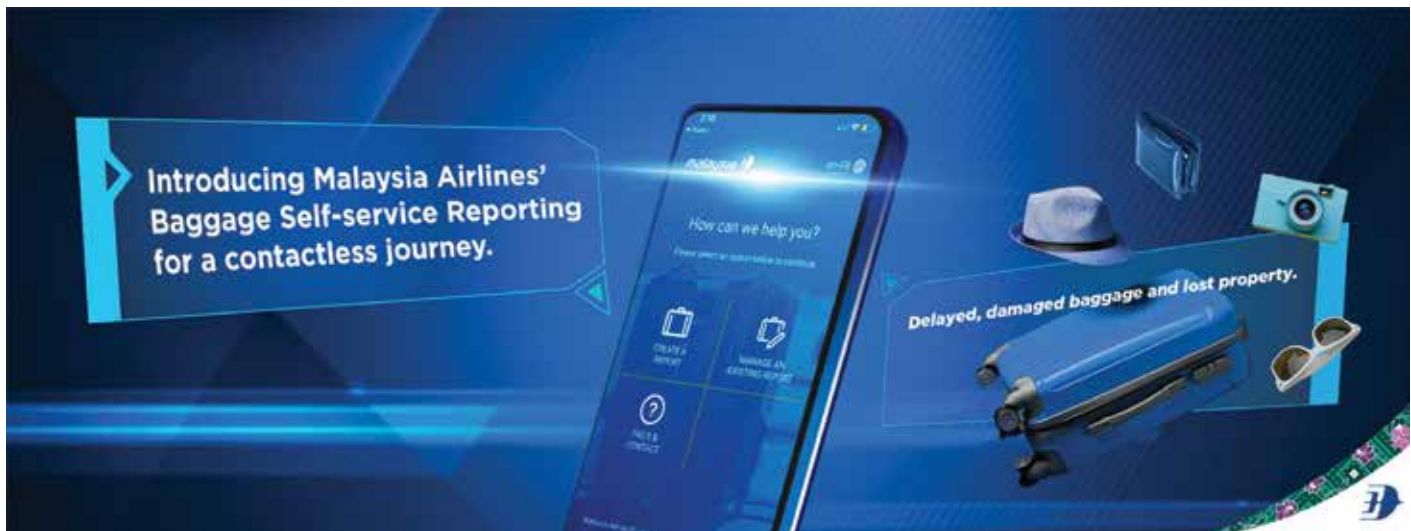
SriLankan Cares organised the logistics of the consignments by obtaining necessary documents, approvals and bookings that helped fast-track the process with the support of SriLankan Cargo. The medical supplies were then flown free of freight charges on SriLankan Airlines and distributed to medical establishments across Sri Lanka. With more donations expected, SriLankan Cares will continue to deliver consignments of donated medicine and medical equipment from Malaysia and the rest of the world in the months ahead.

Time and again, SriLankan Cares has risen to the occasion to aid those in need, especially children. The healthcare sector in Sri Lanka is currently facing its most acute medicine shortage in the history of the country, putting at peril the very lives of those who depend on its services. SriLankan Cares' compassionate move to bring vital medication to the sick and vulnerable is therefore an opportune and life-saving intervention.

For more information, please visit www.srilankan.com or call 03 – 2697 2100



Malaysia Airlines Expands Digitalisation of The Traveller Touchpoints



Malaysia Airlines passengers can now instantly report any delayed or missing baggage at any time of day with the introduction of its Baggage Self-Service Reporting feature. The launch of this new feature is in line with Malaysia Airlines' bold step in digitalising the end-to-end traveller touchpoints and facilitating a seamless travel experience.

This feature allows Malaysia Airlines passengers to easily make a report, track and monitor the recovery process via their personal devices (mobile, table, laptop, etc.) in a safe and contactless environment. Passengers can also seamlessly communicate with airline representatives to get the latest information on their reports. The Baggage Self-service Reporting feature is available for passengers across all Malaysia Airlines' domestic and international networks.

“

As travel demands continue to soar, travellers want simplified processes, and Malaysia Airlines is always ready to lend a helping hand and go the extra mile with our signature Malaysian Hospitality. We want to take the hassle off their travels by digitalising the traveller journey; from biometric facial recognition during check-in, shopping for goodies via Journify and having them delivered to the boarding gate for departing and arriving passengers at KLIA, and now reporting and tracking any baggage issues they face, online. This is also timely as it gives peace of mind and reassurance to our passengers that their needs are taken care of, especially when travelling during this peak period as many airports globally are facing operational challenges in managing the influx of revenue travellers.

We are continuously looking for ways to enhance our service offerings, and the Baggage Self-service Reporting feature aligns with our efforts to offer comprehensive and integrated end-to-end solutions for our passengers. The latest addition to our contactless services reinforces our strong commitment to provide safe, hygienic and seamless journeys for customers who travel with Malaysia Airlines.

”

LAU YIN MAY

Group Chief Marketing and Customer Experience Officer of Malaysia Airlines

The launch of the Baggage Self-service Reporting feature also further complements the airline's efforts to ensure efficiency across its operations as global travel demands continue to rise. The airline recently reaffirmed its commitment to continuous improvements in managing customer queries; reducing the average waiting time to below 20 minutes to address the queries received via its contact centre.

For more information, please visit www.malaysiaairlines.com

SAUDIA Sets Out To Connect Seoul and Saudi Arabia



Saudi Arabian Airlines (SAUDIA), the national flag carrier of Saudi Arabia, has officially launched its first direct flight from Seoul to Riyadh on August 19, 2022. The new flight route comes in line with the Saudi Aviation Strategy, which aims to connect the Kingdom to the world with more than 250 destinations.

SAUDIA flight SV899 departed Seoul's Incheon International Airport at 2140hrs on Tuesday, arriving at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh early Wednesday morning. The landmark flight utilised SAUDIA's Boeing 787 Dreamliner, a two-class aircraft with 274 seats in Guest Class and 24 flat beds in Business Class. The establishment of the Seoul-Riyadh route demonstrates the carrier's commitment to offer a wide variety of flight options that boosts the Kingdom's connectivity with the world.

“

As the Wings of Vision 2030, the national carrier has the necessary capacity to continually broaden its route network and welcome a wide range of visitors into Saudi Arabia. To support our strategic objectives, we ensure our airline's 144-aircraft fleet is suited with the latest in-flight innovations and plan to modernize and expand it during the next few years.

With this milestone route, SAUDIA is not only connecting the Kingdom to the world touristically, but also helping to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and services, allowing both countries to enhance their local businesses, logistics framework, and manufacturing infrastructure. The flight schedule between the two countries will be under constant review to ensure that flights and seating capacity will successfully meet operational requirements.

”

ENGR. AHMED ALWASSIAH
Chief Operating Officer of SAUDIA

SAUDIA celebrated the new route between Saudi Arabia and South Korea with a receptive ceremony in Seoul that showcased aspects of both Saudi and Korean cultures. The ceremony was attended by South Korean dignitaries, diplomats, and members of the media, as well as partners from the domestic travel and tourism sectors. The landmark route is part of SAUDIA's strategy to expand its network and improve the carrier's competitive position internationally to further solidify the airline's role in bringing the world to the Kingdom.

For more information, please visit www.saudia.com

Ethiopian Airlines Orders Africa's First A350-1000



Ethiopian Airlines Group, the flag carrier of Ethiopia - Africa's largest airline group has upsized four of its A350-900 in order to the largest variant of the A350 Family, the A350-1000, becoming Africa's first customer for the aircraft.

Ethiopian Airlines has already ordered 22 A350-900s, of which 16 aircraft have been delivered. With the A350-1000 upsizing, Ethiopian Airlines' backlog consists of four A350-1000s and two A350-900s.

“

We are delighted over the upsizing of the A350-900 to the largest variant, A350-1000, that helps us stay ahead of the curve in technology. We are the technology leaders in the continent introducing the latest technology and fuel-efficient fleet into Africa. The A350-1000 is the best fit for our dense routes, and we believe that the upsizing will be instrumental in satisfying the increasing demand of customers in our vast global network across five continents. We will continue on keeping ourselves abreast of aviation technology advancements to enhance our service and fulfill customers' demands.

”

ROBERT ISOM

*Group Chief Executive Officer of
Ethiopian Airlines*

“We are proud of our strong partnership with Ethiopian Airlines - the first airline in Africa to order and operate the A350-900. In another first, Ethiopian Airlines is once again leading the way in Africa's aviation sector by introducing the A350-1000, the largest version of the world's most efficient and technologically advanced passenger aircraft.” said Mikail Houari, President, Airbus Africa and the Middle East. “The A350-900 has delivered extraordinary capability, fuel efficiency, and operational reliability of 99.5 percent together with unbeatable operational flexibility and efficiency, from short to ultra-long-range operations.”

The A350-1000 will increase the East African carrier's capacity and it will be an addition to its modern wide-body fleet. The airline will benefit from a flexible, high-value family leveraging Airbus' unprecedented level of commonality and same-type rating.

The aircraft clean-sheet design features state-of-the-art aerodynamics, a carbon-fibre fuselage, and wings, plus the most fuel-efficient Rolls-Royce Trent XWB engines. Together, these latest technologies translate into unrivalled levels of operational efficiency and sustainability for Ethiopian Airlines, with a 25% reduction in fuel-burn and CO₂ emissions compared to previous generation twin-aisle aircraft.

For more information, please visit www.ethiopianairlines.com

Emirates Restarts Route to London Stansted



Emirates has resumed passenger services to London Stansted (STN), serving its third London gateway with a daily flight since August 1, 2022.

With the return of services to Stansted, Emirates has ramped up its operations to London with nine daily flights, including six daily flights to Heathrow and a double daily flight to Gatwick. The added services will meet market demand and offer customers more travel choices and enhanced connectivity this summer.

London Stansted will be served by Emirates' wide-body Boeing 777-300ER aircraft fitted with its renowned 'Game Changer' First Class product. Emirates flight EK65 will depart Dubai at 08:50hrs and arrive in London Stansted at 13:30hrs local time. The return flight, EK68 will depart London Stansted at 21:10hrs and arrive in Dubai at 07:10hrs local time, the following day.

London Stansted remains a key hub for the airline's passenger and cargo operations. The daily service will offer customers in East and Southeast UK more travel options, flexibility, and convenience when travelling with Emirates to more than 130 destinations, via Dubai.

Emirates currently serves seven gateways in the UK. By October 2022, the airline will be serving the country with 110 weekly flights, including: six times daily to London Heathrow; daily service to London Stansted; double daily A380 service to Gatwick; three times daily to Manchester, including a double daily A380 service (starting October 1, 2022); double daily service to Birmingham; five weekly flights to Newcastle; and a daily service to Glasgow.

The airline is also currently serving London Gatwick with three daily flights until August 3, 2022. The added frequency is to serve customer demand and accommodating passengers affected by capacity adjustments on flights from London Heathrow.

For more information, please visit www.emirates.com

Qatar Airways Unveils Platinum, Gold and Silver Lounges

Qatar Airways unveils Platinum, Gold, and Silver lounges at its award-winning hub, Hamad International Airport (HIA), inviting Privilege Club loyalty members and oneworld alliance cardholders to access the dedicated lounge corresponding to their frequent flyer tier status when transiting through Doha on July 7, 2022.

The state-of-the-art lounge facilities, with stunning tarmac views, will provide a peaceful haven to Qatar Airways Platinum, Gold, and Silver loyalty members, and oneworld Emerald and Sapphire card holders. The brand-new facilities will offer new spaces where passengers can rest, unwind and enjoy some of Qatar Airways' renowned amenity products from Diptyque, and indulge in international cuisine and a wide beverage selection.

“

It is my pleasure to announce the opening of three premium frequent flyer programme lounges at Hamad International Airport, just in time for the peak Eid holiday. Our latest Platinum, Gold and Silver lounges demonstrate the airline's commitment to rewarding Privilege Club and oneworld alliance members with coveted benefits that befit the service quality Qatar Airways is synonymous for. We look forward to welcoming passengers to experience our sophisticated, modern, and spacious lounges when transiting through the World's Best Airport.

”

AKBAR AL BAKER
Group Chief Executive Officer of
Qatar Airways



Qatar Airways Platinum, Gold, and Silver Lounges offer an ideal space for relaxation or socialising with family and friends. Passengers can extend an invite to one guest using their plus-one complimentary access - eligible to Qatar Airways Platinum and Gold Privilege Club members, and oneworld Emerald and Sapphire members.

Located on concourse A of HIA, Qatar Airways Platinum Lounge South will be home to Qatar Airways Platinum loyalty members and oneworld Emerald card holders. The state-of-the-art lounge accommodates up to 140 passengers, and is equipped with a quiet area, a prayer room, a bar, a restaurant, and showers. Passengers are welcome to enjoy à la carte dining or buffet and utilise the complimentary WiFi provided.

Both Qatar Airways Gold Lounge South and Qatar Airways Silver Lounge South will be home to Qatar Airways Gold loyalty members (and oneworld Sapphire card holders) and Qatar Airways Silver loyalty members, located at Concourse A and B respectively.

For more information, please visit www.qatarairways.com

Jetstar Takes Delivery of its First A321neo

Australia's largest low fares airline Jetstar Airways has taken delivery of its first A321neo.

Featuring the airline's refreshed livery, the aircraft is powered by CFM International LEAP-1A engines and configured in a single class layout with 232 seats. The cabin features extra-large Airspace overhead bins offering a 40% increase in volume, USB ports and tablet holders at every seat and the latest lighting system for an overall enhanced passenger experience.

Jetstar's new A321neo is fitted with an additional fuel tank, enabling the aircraft to fly between all destinations on its domestic network, as well as to Southeast Asia, including the popular leisure destination of Bali.

The aircraft is the first of 38 A320neo Family aircraft for Jetstar, comprising 18 A321neo and 20 A321XLR. These are part of a larger backlog of single-aisle aircraft ordered by the Qantas Group, which now stands at 149 aircraft.

As at the end of June 2022, the A320neo Family has received more than 8,000 firm orders from over 130 customers worldwide.

For more information, please visit www.jetstar.com



Etiihad Airways Announces Double Daily Flights to Manila

Etiihad Airways is set to strengthen air connectivity between the UAE and the Philippines this winter with an additional daily service to Manila. A second daily flight will be established on October 30, providing guests with a total 14 flights per week between Abu Dhabi and the Filipino capital.

Both daily frequencies will be operated on a Boeing 787 Dreamliner, one of the most modern and fuel-efficient aircraft in the skies.

"As one of our biggest markets for point-to-point travel, Etihad is proud to offer our guests a greater choice of options and easier access between the UAE and Manila," said Martin Drew, Senior Vice President Global



Sales and Cargo. Our double-daily service will provide the large Filipino population in the UAE with convenient access to visit family and loved ones back home and support the recovery in tourism as more holidaymakers flock to discover the stunning islands of the Philippines."

The combined double-daily flights will see Etihad offer 450,000 seats annually between Abu Dhabi and Manila, representing a year-on-year capacity increase of 75%. The additional frequency will also increase the total annual cargo capacity to almost 30,000 tonnes, opening more business opportunities and supporting the growth of bilateral trade.

In Southeast Asia, Etihad will offer up to 56 weekly flights this winter between Abu Dhabi and Manila (14 weekly flights), Bangkok (14), Phuket (7), Singapore (7), Kuala Lumpur (7) and Jakarta (7).

For more information, please visit www.etihad.com

“ Aviation Interview with Mohd Daud Mohd Arif

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC)

Armed with 20 years in various leadership roles, Mohd Daud brings with him a fresh perspective in upscaling and boosting Malaysia's healthcare travel industry brand presence. Prior to joining MHTC as CEO on April 5, 2021, the 48-year-old Perakian, who hails from Batu Gajah, had served as the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture's (MOTAC) Tourism Policy and International Affairs Division Senior Director and was the Lead Shepherd of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation's Tourism Working Group.

Tell us what are some of your previous job experiences which have helped you handle your present job responsibilities?

During my time with MOTAC, I had the opportunity to work with MHTC as part of the value chain of our country's healthcare travel industry. My portfolio included building our tourism industry through my positions as Director of Tourism Industry Development, Director of Culture and Tourism at the ASEAN-Korea Centre and Chair of several international committees. They include the ASEAN Tourism Professional Committee, Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation and the ASEAN-Korea Tourism Working Group.

As a key economic growth driver, what is Malaysia healthcare travel's estimated contribution to the country's gross domestic product?

Our healthcare travel industry has the potential to contribute up to RM2 billion to the economy by 2025. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the industry raked in RM1.7 billion in hospital receipts in 2019 with spillover effects to other industries and contributed an estimated RM7 billion in economic impact. This includes air travel, accommodation, food and beverage, and leisure activities as for every ringgit spent on healthcare, an estimated three ringgit is spent on such ancillary services.

The industry has successfully provided over 15,000 jobs and attracted RM10 billion in investments since 2012. MHTC is thus optimistic that it is on the right trajectory as we continue reinforcing our value propositions, namely our world-class quality, ease of accessibility and affordability.

What are the factors MHTC is looking at to ensure the industry's resilience and sustainability?

They include establishing trust and confidence in patients to travel internationally for healthcare treatments again besides meeting the demand for safe procedures or protocols. We are also embarking on digitalisation or automation to refine the end-to-end seamless experience for patients as well as addressing new consumer behaviours and demands in critical and elective treatments.

Additionally, adopting a global and regional industry approach is crucial in ensuring the visibility and sustainability of our healthcare travel industry now that things are slowly picking up. We engage with our audiences via on-ground events such as our Malaysia Healthcare Expos in key cities in Indonesia besides participating in international expos and various government-to-government engagements.

With China's borders still closed to outbound travel, what are the alternative markets MHTC is looking at to replace this major market as its revenue contributor?



China remains as one of our key markets while we focus on reviving the healthcare travel sector in our other markets such as Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Brunei, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom.

Additionally, we are working closely with member hospitals to determine other areas or markets to focus on which will be key in our public-private partnerships (PPPs) to spur the healthcare travel services growth in the post Covid-19 recovery.

How many members does MHTC have and how are they selected?

MHTC has 79 member hospitals with 22 of them being Elite Members who represent the country's most prestigious private healthcare institutions and are accredited by international healthcare accreditation agencies such as the Joint Commission International (JCI), Malaysian Society for Quality in Health (MSQH), Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS), Accreditations Canada and the CHKS Accreditation Unit of the United Kingdom, Reproductive Technology Accreditation Committee (RTAC) and other agencies under the International Society for Quality in Healthcare (ISQua).

A selection committee comprising representatives from both the private and government sector stringently evaluate and select these medical providers to ensure that standards of service and quality medical care provided within the industry are continuously upheld.

Please share the new course MHTC is charting via the Malaysia Healthcare Travel Industry Blueprint 2021-2025 launched last November for continuous sustainable growth?

To support the blueprint's aspirations, we have identified three strategic pillars, namely the Healthcare Travel Ecosystem, Malaysia Healthcare Brand and Markets for Malaysia Healthcare, anchoring on factors such as high quality, safety, affordability, hospitality, seamless journey and accessibility as part of the experience.

As we move from the recovery phase (2021 to 2022) to the rebuilding phase (2023 to 2025),

the emphasis will shift from the first pillar to the other two pillars. After establishing strategic partnership across various stakeholders to provide better experience to patients in the recovery phase, we will work towards integrating our communication and strategic content dissemination as well as diversifying our products and markets.

They include developing premium wellness packages, enhancing our dental treatment services, upscaling high-value products for cardiology, oncology, fertility besides focusing on niche areas such as orthopaedic and ophthalmology. Our plan is to expand to the two-tier cities in major markets, strengthen the primary markets and seed future new markets.

Going beyond 2025, Malaysia aims to be a leading healthcare travel destination in Asia Pacific. Who are its competitors and how does MHTC hope to reach its goals?

Neighbouring players include Singapore, Thailand, Dubai, and South Korea. Rising healthcare costs in some of our neighbouring countries have helped strengthen Malaysia's position as a healthcare travel destination with world-class quality healthcare services but more affordably priced. Other factors include our strategic positioning as a Muslim-friendly nation, warm hospitality, and well-known tourism attractions.

How has technology helped to enhance the various touchpoints in a patient's journey to seek healthcare treatments in Malaysia?

MHTC has begun forging a new frontier to redefine the patient experience through a unified and collaborative approach to digitalisation that allows our healthcare providers to improve upon service delivery and reinforce our patients' peace of mind, especially in niche areas such as fertility, cardiology and oncology.

We are preparing for a healthy industry rebound through the adoption of telehealth by member hospitals to stay ahead of the curve and ensure continuity of care. This ranges from enhancing hospitals' telemedicine infrastructure, enabling medication delivery services and even beefing up cross-border digital payment gateways.

Which are the preferred states in Malaysia of foreign healthcare travellers and why? To what extent has it to do with air connectivity?

Currently, the top states are Penang, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Johor and Sarawak due to easy connectivity. Indonesian healthcare travellers flock to Penang as direct flights from major cities in Indonesia to Penang International Airport are available daily. Other modes of connectivity such as land and water are also a contributing factor.

Additionally, KL International Airport is merely an hour or less from major hospitals and medical centres in the Klang Valley. While Melaka and Johor boast of ports which attract healthcare travellers from Indonesia, the latter also has a direct bridge linked to Singapore.

How do you see the future for the healthcare travel industry post Covid-19 pandemic?

We need to continue forging industry resilience via stronger PPPs with stakeholders and key industry players to rebuild and recover the industry in a sustainable manner so that we can continue to provide easily accessible healthcare that is affordable and of world-class quality.

Learning from the pandemic, we need to be digital ready to ensure that continuity of patient care is not disrupted, which will in turn provide healthcare travellers greater flexibility in obtaining professional consultations based on their preferred options either virtually or physically. We are constantly refining our robust digital infrastructure that builds on continued trust in patients and ensures their safety while simultaneously delivering high-quality healthcare services.

How do you maintain a work-life balance?

When I was in Japan, I was intrigued by their work ethics where employees embrace a group mentality and big decisions are made collectively with their respective superiors. I proactively bring this mentality both to work and on the home front, and they have shown satisfactory results.



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