

## Air India, Virgin Australia codeshare to boost travel

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New Delhi: India's national carrier, Air India, and Virgin Australia have launched a new codeshare partnership, offering passengers access to 16 additional regional destinations across Australia and New Zealand.

Air India announced on Monday (Feb17) that the partnership will enhance travel options for its customers, allowing seamless connections from Delhi to Melbourne or Sydney, with onward travel to 16 destinations across Australia and New Zealand via Virgin Australia flights. Codeshare bookings officially opened on February 11, and the first codeshare flights will commence on February 18, according to Air India.

The 16 cities in Australia and New Zealand include: Adelaide, Ballina/Byron Bay, Brisbane, Cairns, Canberra, Darwin, Gold Coast, Hamilton Island, Hobart, Launceston, Melbourne, Newcastle, Perth, Queenstown (New Zealand)<sup>1</sup>, Sunshine Coast, and Sydney.

Passengers booking a single ticket will also enjoy the convenience of having their baggage checked through to their final destination, Air India said.

“The unilateral codeshare agreement enables Air India to place its ‘AI’ code on flights operated by Virgin Australia,” the airline said in a statement.

“India is a growing tourism market for Australia, and this partnership will encourage travellers arriving on one of Air India’s 14 weekly flights to explore more of our wonderful country thanks to seamless onward connections on the Virgin Australia network,” said Alistair Hartley, Chief Strategy and Transformation Officer, Virgin Australia.

Air India operates 14x weekly flights from India to Australia, flying non-stop daily from Delhi to Melbourne and Delhi to Sydney. The airline utilises its Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft on these routes.

“Australia is one of Air India’s most important international markets, so it is incredibly exciting for us to be partnering with Virgin Australia to expand our presence in the region,” said Nipun Aggarwal, Chief Commercial Officer, Air India.

He added, “While the partnership provides greater ease and access for the large Indian diaspora spread across the continent, it also opens up a whole new range of destinations for holidaymakers wanting to soak up the beaches of Gold Coast, discover Tasmania, or explore the natural wonders of The Great Barrier Reef.”

Last week, Air India announced several additional frequencies on key routes as part of its Northern Summer schedule, effective March 30.

Between the United Kingdom and India, the airline will add three more weekly flights on the Delhi-London Heathrow route, bringing the total to 24 weekly flights, operated by a combination of the flagship A350-900 and upgraded B787-9 aircraft.

Additionally, Air India will increase services on the Amritsar-Birmingham and Amritsar-London Gatwick routes from three to four times a week, while the Ahmedabad-London Gatwick service will rise from three to five weekly flights.

In the rest of Europe, the Delhi-Zurich route will increase from four to

five weekly flights, and the Delhi-Vienna route will rise from three to four. For Far East Asia, Air India will increase its Delhi-Seoul (Incheon) service from four to five times a week and switch the Delhi-Hong Kong route from an A321 to a B787 Dreamliner, operating daily. The Delhi-Nairobi route in Africa will also increase from three to four weekly flights.

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