

## **Qatar Airways adds more Melbourne airport flights**

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- A Monitor Desk Report

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Qatar Airways is to double the service it provides between Doha and Melbourne from once per day to double-daily in time for the FIFA Soccer World Cup in November.

The expanded presence in Melbourne by the Doha-based carrier has been made possible by a 'strategic agreement' with the Victoria government as part of efforts to boost post-pandemic trade and tourism.

Melbourne was Qatar Airways' first destination in Australia but the, until recently, the airline was severely constrained in how many flights it could operate to and from Australia due to a restrictive air services agreement between Australia and the state of Qatar

Up until the start of the pandemic, Qatar Airways was given a weekly allocation of just 21 flights to Australia. The cap was a major bone of contention for Qatar Airways chief executive Akbar Al Baker who lashed out at the fact that UAE rivals Emirates and Etihad Airways had a bigger allocation.

The apparent disparity led to a dispute between Qatar Airways and Qantas because the Aussie flag carrier refused to support an increase in the number of weekly flights for the Qatari airline despite the fact both airlines were members of the oneworld alliance.

One of the reasons for this was because Qantas had entered into a strategic relationship with Emirates.

During the pandemic, however, Qatar Airways managed to woo the Australian government by continuing to operate flights to the country at a loss, while the likes of Qantas, Emirates and Etihad grounded their jets.

Qatar Airways was allowed to operate flights to Brisbane for the first time and now operates to five other Australian gateways including Adelaide, Canberra, Perth, Melbourne and Sydney.

"Melbourne is the original home for Qatar Airways in Australia, and we are excited to enhance our operations there, as a testament to both strong demand and our deep commitment to Australia," commented Akbar Al Baker on Thursday.

"The launch of the additional daily flight to Melbourne ahead of the FIFA World Cup

Qatar 2022Ω will allow more football fans travel to attend their respective matches,” Al Baker continued.

The timing of the additional flight launching is interesting, though, given the fact that Qatar Airways is being forced to suspend as many as 20 routes in order to free up capacity for its World Cup services.

The additional flight will be operated by a Boeing 777-300 and will operate a triangular route from Doha to Melbourne and onwards to Canberra before returning to Doha with a stop in Melbourne.

When the new flights starts operating from 1st October, Qatar Airways will operate 40 weekly services between Doha and Australia.

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