ETIHAD A380 HEADED TO MELBOURNE IN JUNE 2016

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Etihad Airways' flagship Airbus **A380** will touch down in **Melbourne in June 2016.**

The Victorian capital will be the airline's second Australian port and fourth destination overall to receive A380 services, after the double decker superjumbo debuted on the Abu Dhabi-Sydney route in June 2015.

The move represented a 26 per cent increase in capacity between Melbourne and Abu Dhabi to about 11,500 seats a week, Etihad said in a statement on Friday.

The A380 will be scheduled on the evening departure from Melbourne, arriving in Abu Dhabi in the early morning the next day. The reciprocal service takes off from Abu Dhabi at night, landing in Melbourne the following evening.

Etihad's second daily service to Melbourne began in August and had already exceeded expectations after just three months in operation, the airline's chief executive James Hogan said.

"Melbourne is an important point on our global network, and our Abu Dhabi to Melbourne services continue to generate very high seat load factors on a year round basis," Hogan said in a statement.

"Deploying the 496-seat A380 to Melbourne will enable us to accelerate our growth in the Victorian market by providing additional capacity, particularly in business class, where demand for seats

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continually outstrips supply.”

Also, Hogan noted the upgauging to the A380 would ensure passengers from Melbourne enjoyed a seamless all-A380 service to London via the airline’s Abu Dhabi hub.

Etihad’s A380 features its three-room The Residence, nine first class seats, 70 business class seats and 417 economy seats. Currently, it deploys the aircraft to London and Sydney, with New York joining the A380 network in late November.

The airline has taken delivery of five A380s out of a firm order of 10 of the type.

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