PERTH NAMED AS QATAR'S NEXT AUSTRALIAN A350 DESTINATION

News / Airports / Routes



Qatar Airways chief executive Akbar Al Baker says Perth is the likely next Australian destination to receive the Airbus A350-900.

Although Al Baker declined to say when Qatar's Perth-Doha service – currently served with Boeing 777-300ERs – would switch to the A350, he noted late deliveries of the new Airbus widebody had pushed back some route changes in the airline's network.

"We are three A350s short because we are not accepting their quality," Al Baker told reporters in Adelaide on Wednesday.

"We will replace the 777s to Perth when we have enough A350s."

Australia's first A350 commercial service touched down in Adelaide on Tuesday with the arrival of QR914 from Qatar's Doha hub.

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Delays to A350 deliveries would also mean Adelaide would be temporarily cut from daily to six times per week later in 2016. Aircraft would be redeployed on busier routes over a 12-week period before Adelaide returned to a daily service.

Al Baker said demand on the airline's daily services to Melbourne, Perth and Sydney was strong, adding that Sydney was performing "so great" that he confirmed plans to replace its present 335-passenger 777-300ER on the route with the 517-seat Airbus A380s from September.

Meanwhile, he said present promotional fares on the new Adelaide route would be short-lived.

The "honeymoon" fares would end over the next 12 weeks as Qatar sought to improve yields.

"An airline has to sustain itself with yields," he said. On the new Adelaide route, its yields were lower than Qatar's competitors and fares would have to increase as the airline established itself in the South Australian market.

Al Baker would not be drawn on any plans to add Brisbane to the network, which would need an increase in the air services agreement between Australia and Qatar, given the airline has utilised all available capacity to for its flights to Melbourne, Perth and Sydney under the bilateral. Adelaide is not included in the cap.

Apart from attracting passengers, Qatar hoped to gain a share of air exports from Adelaide with its weekly capacity of about 80 tonnes on the A350, which added to about 580 tonnes weekly on the airline's Sydney, Melbourne and Perth routes.

Adelaide Airport managing director Mark Young welcomed the extra cargo capacity, as the airport company sought to boost air exports, particularly of SA seafood and fresh produce.

About two-thirds of present perishable goods were exported through Melbourne and Sydney airports, Young said, and increasing international cargo business was a priority.

Al Baker said Qatar was continuing its expansion plans, with its 185th aircraft, a Boeing 777, being delivered this week. It was receiving a new aircraft every 10 days, on average, and the airline had aircraft orders amounting to US$70 billion.

This would enable it to increase capacity and frequency on existing routes, and open new ones. As announced in March, Qatar planned to add 14 new destinations to its network by the end of 2016, including Marrakech in Morocco, Windhoek in Namibia, Chiang Mai in Thailand, Nice in France and Hensinki in Finland.

It would also enable Qatar to replace older aircraft and maintain an average age of about five years across its fleet.

In other fleet news, Al Baker said he hoped to take delivery of five Airbus 320neo narrowbodies later in 2016, following delays due to engine issues, adding Qatar hoped to start services to the Seychelles by December "if the A320s are available".

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