QANTAS TAKES OFF FOR SAN FRANCISCO

News / Airports / Routes



Qantas is on its way back to San Francisco for the first time since 2011 after flight QF 73 took off from Sydney Airport on Friday afternoon.

The Boeing 747-400ER operating the flight, VH-OEG, departed from the NSW capital a little after 1510 local time.

The airline's return to the Bay Area for the first time since 2011 kicks off a new joint-venture partnership between Qantas and American Airlines.

Less than 24 hours later, on Saturday morning, the US flag carrier will touch down in Australia for the first time since the early 1990s when its Boeing 777-300ER, which visited Sydney in November for a promotional visit, arrives in the NSW capital from Los Angeles.

Qantas chief executive Alan Joyce, who held a media conference at Sydney Airport on Friday to celebrate the Flying Kangaroo's return to San Francisco, said the expanded partnership between the two carriers gave travellers more choice.

"This is a new era for both airlines and we're excited to be unlocking new travel options for our customers and helping to build trade, tourism and investment opportunities for the Australian and US economies," Joyce said in a statement.

"These new services are a good news story for Australian tourism, with American Airlines now

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promoting brand Australia across its massive domestic network. When you put that together with Qantas' significant investment in tourism marketing, it's a potent combination."

Following a ramp up phase during December, Qantas's Sydney-San Francisco flights will operate six days a week from January.

Together, Qantas and American will have about 50 flights a week between Australia and the US. The two oneworld alliance members compete against the Delta/Virgin Australia partnership and Star Alliance carrier United on non-stop Australia-US routes.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has given interim approval to the joint-venture, while the New Zealand government has also approved the alliance. However, the US Department of Transportation is still considering the expanded, revenue-sharing joint-venture although aviation watchers expected it would eventually give the tie-up the green light.

American Airlines chief executive Doug Parker said: "With this new Qantas service to San Francisco and American's new daily service to Los Angeles, customers are the clear winners when travelling with our two great airlines."

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