

REPORT: AIRLINES: NORTHEAST ASIA

What you need to know

March 2024

This report presents a roundup of what's been happening to airlines in Northeast Asia over the last month.

Major airlines

Cathay Pacific

Full-year profits surge in 2023

Total annual revenue at Cathay Pacific rose by **85%** to HK\$94.5 billion in 2023. Revenue from passenger services soared by **323%** to HK\$61.4 billion. Operating costs increased by **71%**. The group managed to deliver a near fourfold increase in operating profit to HK\$15 billion (US\$1.9 billion). It also recorded a net profit of HK\$9.79 billion, much-improved on 2022's HK\$6.6 billion loss and its first annual profit since 2019.

Pilot shortage delays capacity return

Cathay Pacific has delayed the full recovery in its passenger capacity by three months to the first quarter of 2025. This is in response to a shortage of pilots. To achieve pre-pandemic capacity, the group needs 3,400 pilots. At the moment, Cathay Pacific and HK Express together have 2,900, a shortfall of 500. As well as training new pilots, the company will try to reduce the attrition rate among existing pilots.

China Southern

New Doha service on the way

China Southern plans to launch a new four times weekly service from Guangzhou to Doha from April 22. The former SkyTeam member will connect with existing codeshare partner and minority shareholders Qatar Airways, offering passengers connections to destinations in Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

Japan Airlines

Fleet renewal disclosed

From 2027, Japan Airlines (JAL) is to start introducing 21 Airbus A350-900s and 10 more Boeing 787-9s to its international fleet and 11 A321neos for domestic operations. The new aircraft will contribute to JAL's plans to grow group international capacity 1.4 times by 2030. They'll support expansion to markets in North America, Asia and India.

Korean Air

Four international routes restarting

During April, Korean Air is to restart services on four international routes. On April 2, it will resume thrice-weekly services from Seoul to Zurich, with flights from Seoul to the Chinese cities of Zhangjiajie and Zhengzhou following on April 23 and 24, respectively. The airline will also restart daily Busan-Bangkok flights on April 25, after a break of nearly four years.

With frequencies also increased on existing services to destinations in Europe, North America and Southeast Asia, Korean Air estimates international capacity will reach 96% of its pre-pandemic level.

[New codeshare with SriLankan Airlines](#)

Korean Air has entered into a new codeshare partnership with SriLankan Airlines boosting connectivity between Colombo and Seoul. It will place its code on SriLankan's flights from Colombo to Seoul, Singapore, Chennai and Male. SriLankan will codeshare on Korean's flights between Singapore and Seoul, connecting Colombo and Seoul via Singapore.

[New Airbus order placed](#)

Once it has acquired Asiana Airlines, Korean Air is planning a major fleet rationalization which will see it focus on operating the most efficient types. To this end, Korean Air is planning to place an order for 33 Airbus A350s, comprising six -900s and 27 -1000s. The airline is also believed to be considering increasing its existing order for 50 Airbus A321neos. Korean Air presently does not operate the A350, but Asiana has 15 examples in-service and another 15 on order.

Other airlines

[China Airlines](#)

[Seattle joining network](#)

Taiwanese carrier China Airlines will launch a five times weekly service from Taipei to Seattle on July 14. It will join EVA Air and Delta Air Lines on the route. Seattle becomes the airline's sixth North American destination, joining Los Angeles, New York, Ontario, San Francisco and Vancouver.

[EVA Air](#)

[New Hong Kong route announced](#)

EVA Air, which already flies from Taipei Taoyuan to Hong Kong will also link Kaohsiung to the Chinese Special Administrative Region (SAR) from April 12. The Taiwanese airline will initially operate daily, but it plans to add a second daily service from May 15.

[Hainan Airlines](#)

[New Chongqing-Europe route launched](#)

Hainan Airlines has launched its fourth European route from Chongqing, inaugurating [twice-weekly](#) flights to Milan.

[Brussels service resuming](#)

From [June 18](#), Hainan Airlines will resume flights to Brussels from Shanghai Pudong International airport. This will be its third route to Brussels, joining existing operations from Beijing and Shenzhen. Hainan Airlines will operate [twice-weekly](#) from Shanghai. It last flew the route in October 2019.

The airline's international plans also include the start of services from Beijing to Dublin and Edinburgh and extra capacity to Berlin and Manchester from the Chinese capital.

[Seattle service resuming](#)

Hainan Airlines will reinstate flights from Beijing Capital airport to Seattle from April 2. The resumption of the [thrice-weekly](#) service has been enabled by U.S. authorities increasing the number of flights allowed by Chinese carriers to 50 per week.

Starlux Airlines

San Francisco service now daily

Amid high demand, Taiwanese carrier Starlux Airlines has increased service on the Taipei-San Francisco route from three-times weekly to **daily**. Flights are operated by Airbus A350s configured with four first-class seats, 26 business-class, 36 premium economy and 240 economy seats.

Phu Quoc joining network

Starlux will add Phu Quoc, Vietnam, to its network on July 1, when the Taiwanese airline starts a **five-times-weekly** service from Taipei Taoyuan. It already serves Da Nang, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

Low-cost carriers

Greater Bay Airlines

IATA membership opens up bilateral opportunities

Hong Kong-based Greater Bay Airlines has joined IATA, the International Air Transport Association. Membership will enable the airline to work bilaterally with other member airlines on interline and codeshare arrangements. Greater Bay's network currently includes Bangkok, Manila, Osaka, Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo. It plans to start Hong Kong-Singapore services on **April 26**.

Jin Air

Profits restored in 2023

Jin Air, a South-Korean low-cost carrier owned by Korean Air, saw its annual sales in 2023 grow **twofold** to W1.28 trillion. It transformed 2022's operating loss of W67.3 billion into a W182 billion operating profit (US\$136 million).

T'way Air

Annual sales more than double and profits return in 2023

South Korea's T'way Air saw annual sales more than **double** in 2023 to W1.35 trillion, as demand for short-haul overseas travel increased. The airline posted an operating profit of W139 billion (US\$104 million), swinging from 2022's W105 billion loss. T'way Air plans to expand its mid- to long-haul routes and launch new routes, starting with Zagreb in May. To support this growth, it will add two more Airbus A330-300s to its fleet.

New interline agreed with Virgin Australia

T'way Air has signed a new interline agreement with Virgin Australia. Passengers flying on T'way's Seoul-Sydney will from **April 1** be able to connect onto Virgin Australia's flights from Sydney to Brisbane, Cairns, Gold Coast, Melbourne and Perth, to Queenstown in New Zealand, and to Fiji.

The information presented in this report represents the latest view as at March 25, 2024. We have carefully researched and checked the information contained. However, we do not guarantee or warrant the correctness, completeness or topicality of this article and do not accept any liability for any damage or loss as a result of the use of the information contained within this article.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this report, please email mike.eggleton@bcdtravel.co.uk to share your thoughts.