

Media | Release

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A new international service for Christchurch Airport

Christchurch Airport is welcoming a new link between the people of Taiwan and the people of the South Island, with today's announcement of a summer service by China Airlines.

Chief Executive Malcolm Johns says the new service will operate three return flights a week for an initial summer season from December 2, 2014 to March 1, 2015.

"The South Island was a very popular destination for the Taiwanese in the 1990s," says Mr Johns. "The new summer service will connect with the valuable Taiwan market, whose travellers are keen to experience the many attractions of the South Island.

"The service will offer an extra 24,000 seats between Christchurch-Sydney-Taipei over December/January/February, which underlines the on-going importance of Sydney as an international airport hub for the South Island."

Mr Johns says a current feature of the aviation industry is the emergence of alliances. China Airlines is a member of the Sky Team Alliance, which does not currently connect with the South Island. Other members of the Sky Team Alliance who currently fly daily to Sydney include Delta Air Lines, Korean Airlines, China Southern Airlines, China Eastern and Garuda Indonesia.

"This will be the first SkyTeam airline to serve Christchurch and the South Island, which we welcome. The 20 SkyTeam member airlines offer more than 16,000 daily flights to more than 1050 destinations in 177 countries, so this service opens up multiple new outbound destinations for the people of the South Island," he says.

"This service also brings another wide body aircraft into Christchurch, so is great news for the air freight industry. Importantly, China Airlines also provides a great network for exporters to get high value air freight into the fast growing Asian markets quickly. A recent report commissioned by CDC and produced by PWC noted that the South Island is missing

out on exporting about 17,000 tonnes of high value air freight exports annually because of the lack of wide body aircraft servicing Christchurch.

CEO of Canterbury Development Corporation, Tom Hooper, welcomes the new service and the additional air freight capacity it will bring to the Canterbury region.

“Getting Christchurch more connected globally is a principal driver of economic growth and this new service is an excellent addition to our international network which will help the overall economy in a number of areas,” he says.

“The service will also offer more freight capacity to Sydney and on to Asia, so another opportunity for fresh and time sensitive goods.”

The new service offers a total time of 14 hour and 15 minutes, including transit time in Sydney, which is up to four hours shorter and one stop less than any other option currently available. It also allows the growing number of Taiwanese visitors to New Zealand to get where they want to go - the South Island - quicker and more directly than any current indirect options.

CEO of Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism, Tim Hunter, says the service is very welcome because it meets a definite need.

“We know there is demand from Taiwan for travellers to visit the South Island. We have seen 8% growth in holiday arrivals from Taiwan to New Zealand in the past year and we are confident this new connection to the South Island will stimulate new holiday demand. The service will also appeal to travellers from other North Asian countries.”

Airport Chief Executive Malcolm Johns says the new summer service comes with a reminder for South Island travellers.

“As with all new services, it comes with a ‘use it or lose it’ caveat, so we encourage the people of the South Island to take advantage of it this summer. These flights will be the last heading to Sydney from Christchurch each evening, so are sure to work well for South Islanders heading overseas.”

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Please note: Images available on request

For further comment, please contact:

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Christchurch Airport – bringing the world South

Christchurch Airport welcomed 5.7 million passengers in the past year, ranking as New Zealand's second largest airport. The airport occupies a unique position economically, as the South Island's busiest and most strategic air connection to the world's trade and tourism markets. 81% of international visitors to the South Island are welcomed and farewelled at Christchurch Airport.

In addition, the airport plays an important role as the South Island's major domestic hub servicing all New Zealanders, enabling passengers to connect to a full spectrum of destinations throughout New Zealand. Christchurch International Airport is a major driver of the regional Canterbury economy, generating airport precinct related jobs for nearly 6000 people.

Government policy currently offers 'Open Skies' over Christchurch until 2017, giving favourable consideration to airlines offering new services to and from the city.

Christchurch Airport is owned and operated by Christchurch International Airport Limited (CIAL). CIAL was established as a limited liability company in 1988, and ownership of CIAL is now shared by Christchurch City Holdings Limited with 75% and the New Zealand Government with 25%. The company's vision is to be recognised as New Zealand's leading tourist gateway.

Visit christchurchairport.co.nz for more information.