

AirAsia Explores Launching US Flights from Multiple Asian Hubs by 2025

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AirAsia, under the umbrella of Capital A, is exploring a significant expansion by considering the launch of flights to the United States by 2025, with Manila Ninoy Aquino International potentially serving as a key hub. Tony Fernandes, Group CEO of AirAsia, revealed these ambitious plans during a virtual press conference on January 9, outlining a strategy to use multiple Asian cities as springboards for flights to the US.

According to Fernandes, the idea is to leverage the strategic locations of Manila, as well as Kuala Lumpur International in Malaysia and Bangkok Suvarnabhumi in Thailand, as hubs for AirAsia's expansion into US destinations such as Los Angeles International. However, reports regarding Fernandes' statement show some variations in the details. While Malaya Business Insight quoted him suggesting routes from Manila to Malaysia and then to the US, and from Thailand, the Philippine Daily Inquirer's report highlighted Manila's potential as a prime hub for American flights, with the capability to connect with Thailand, Jakarta, and Kuala Lumpur.

AirAsia Group encompasses several carriers, including Malaysia's AirAsia and AirAsia X, Philippines AirAsia, Thai AirAsia, Indonesia AirAsia, and Indonesia AirAsia X. As of this report, AirAsia Group had not issued a formal response to inquiries for comment.

The feasibility of this expansion depends on the fleet capabilities. Philippines AirAsia currently operates twenty-five Airbus A320-200s, which lack the range for direct US flights. Meanwhile, Kuala Lumpur-based AirAsia has a more extensive fleet, including A320-200s, A320-200Ns, and two A321-200NXs, with a significant number of the latter on order. AirAsia X operates eighteen A330-300 widebodies, which are more suitable for long-haul operations.

This planned expansion indicates AirAsia's ambition to transform its operational model from a regional powerhouse to a player on the global aviation stage. The establishment of multiple hubs across Southeast Asia for flights to the United States represents a strategic move to tap into new markets and diversify the airline's route network.

