

# New Intercontinental Routes Expand Asia-Pacific Ties

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Sichuan Airlines, Starlux Airlines and Royal Jordanian are set to launch new intercontinental services that will further connect the Asia-Pacific region with key global destinations. In a significant move that underscores the expanding influence of Asian carriers and the growing demand for seamless international travel, Sichuan Airlines will introduce a nonstop service between Chengdu Tianfu International Airport and Madrid Adolfo Suárez-Barajas Airport. Scheduled to commence on April 27, 2025, this route will operate four times per week using an Airbus A350-900. The new Madrid service marks the only direct connection between Chengdu and the Spanish capital, and it will be the ninth city in Europe accessible nonstop from Chengdu. Currently, the airline serves four European destinations from its hub, including Istanbul, Rome Fiumicino, Moscow Sheremetyevo, and St. Petersburg. The launch of the Madrid route further strengthens China's dominance on China-Europe routes, complementing long-haul services offered by other major Chinese carriers such as Air China and Hainan Airlines. Madrid already maintains strong links with China, as it is connected nonstop to Beijing, Hangzhou, Shanghai Pudong, Wenzhou, Chongqing, and Shenzhen by various airlines. Recent data shows that the Madrid-Chengdu city pair ranked as the tenth-largest in terms of origin and destination traffic, with approximately 5,300 two-way passengers in 2024, while the Chengdu-Madrid pairing was the sixth-largest among Chengdu-Europe routes.

Meanwhile, Starlux Airlines is expanding its Taiwan-United States network by launching a nonstop service between Taipei Taoyuan International Airport and Ontario International Airport. This new route, set to begin on June 2, 2025, will operate four times weekly on a 306-seat Airbus A350-900 configured in four classes. The service will mark Starlux's fourth destination in the United States and its second in the Los Angeles basin, offering an alternative to flights arriving at Los Angeles International Airport. With the addition of this route, Starlux will increase its Taiwan-U.S. network to 28 roundtrip flights per week by July, alongside its established services to Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle. The decision to serve Ontario International Airport is driven by growing demand from the substantial Taiwanese community in Southern California. Data indicates that Southern California is home to a large number of Taiwanese Americans, with the Greater Los Angeles area alone hosting 167,000 residents.

In a further boost to international connectivity, Royal Jordanian is making its long-awaited return to the Indian market with a new nonstop service between Amman and Mumbai. Launching on April 17, 2025, this route will operate four times per week using an Airbus A320neo in a dual-class configuration. This service will mark Royal Jordanian's first scheduled flight to India in more than a decade, with a second route to New Delhi set to begin on September 17. Previously, the airline served Mumbai and New Delhi until 2014 when competitive pressures forced a withdrawal. The current market between Jordan and India, though not fully mature, has

potential to grow as strong economic ties, a rising expatriate community, and increasing tourism drive demand. Despite recent declines in passenger numbers on this route due to external disruptions, Royal Jordanian aims to capture a share of indirect traffic and stimulate growth in the region.

These new routes reflect broader trends in the aviation industry, as carriers seize opportunities amid shifting dynamics and geopolitical challenges. Chinese airlines continue to expand their European footprints while their European counterparts face rising costs and operational constraints. Simultaneously, airlines from other regions are enhancing connectivity to meet the demands of diverse, global travelers eager for more direct and efficient travel options.

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