

Chengdu Report

By ZHUANTI

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Chengdu in Sichuan province, a mega city in western China, is getting closer to the world, as well as its goal of becoming a national hub city with more international air routes.

The Chengdu city government, together with Sichuan Province Airport Group, signed agreements with six airlines to open nine non-stop air routes departing from Chengdu during the 22nd World Route Development Forum, also known as World Routes.

As one of the biggest annual events for the civil aviation sector, this year's World Routes was held in Chengdu from Sept 24 to 27.

The six airlines are Air China, Hainan Airlines, Beijing Capital Airlines, Tibet Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines and Sichuan Airlines. According to the agreements, they will open the direct routes within one year, strengthening Chengdu's connection to Europe, Oceania, North America, Africa and the Middle East.

Ethiopian Airlines, the largest airline in Africa, will open a direct flight between Chengdu and Addis Ababa in October 2017, running four round trips every week. This will be the second non-stop route between Chengdu and Africa, after the one to Mauritius.

Tewolde GebreMariam, CEO of Ethiopian Airlines, said Chengdu is a perfect destination due to its large population and good geographical location.

"The new route will open a gateway to western China. I hope it will further boost the bilateral development between Asia and Africa in tourism, trade and investment," he said.

Sichuan Airlines will open a non-stop route between Chengdu and Dubai, which will be the third non-stop route linking Chengdu to the Middle East after the Abu Dhabi and Doha routes.

It will also open a direct route to Auckland, New Zealand, and turn the Chengdu-Moscow route from a chartered flight to a regular one.

Tibet Airlines will open the second direct flight between Chengdu and Russia, which will link Chengdu and Sochi.

Beijing Capital Airlines will open a non-stop route between Chengdu and Madrid.

Hainan Airlines will open two direct flights from Chengdu to the United States, linking the city to Los Angeles and New York.

Air China will launch a direct route between Chengdu and Sydney on Nov 11, the second direct flight between Chengdu and Australia after the Chengdu-Melbourne route.

Adrian Newton, an executive at UBM EMEA — organizer of the forum, said it was a wise choice to have Chengdu as the host city.

"The number of delegates this year is the largest in World Routes' history, showing Chengdu's appeal to the world," he said.

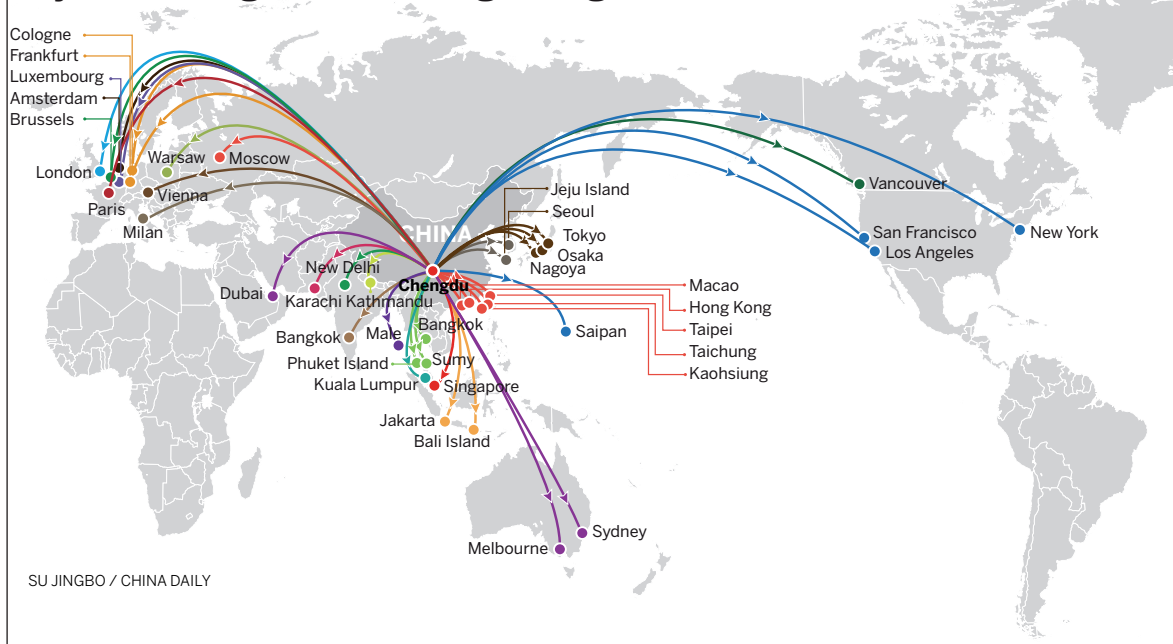
"The opening of the nine new international routes will further improve its status as an international aviation hub," he said.

Liu Jichun, an executive at Hainan Airlines, mentioned Chengdu's advantage as it lies at the intersection of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

A hub city, becoming closer to the world

Chengdu is strengthening its global links via a new international airport

Major direct flights connecting Chengdu to the world



New international flights

1. Chengdu-Dubai

It will be launched by Sichuan Airlines on Nov 1, using Airbus 330, three times a week.

2. Chengdu-Moscow

It will be turned into a regular service by Sichuan Airlines on Nov 1, using Airbus 330, three times a week in summer and autumn, and twice a week in winter and spring.

3. Chengdu-Sydney

It will be launched by Air China on Nov 11, using Airbus 330, three times a week.

4. Chengdu-Madrid

It will be launched by Beijing Capital Airlines on Dec 16, using Airbus 330, twice a week.

5. Chengdu-Los Angeles

It will be launched by Hainan Airlines by the end of December, using Boeing 787, three times a week in summer and autumn, and twice a week in winter and spring.

6. Chengdu-New York

It will be launched by Hainan Airlines in the first half of 2017, using Boeing 787, three times a week in summer

and autumn, and twice a week in winter and spring.

7. Chengdu-Sochi

It will be launched by Tibet Airlines on June 1, 2017, using Airbus 330, three times a week.

8. Chengdu-Auckland

It will be launched by Sichuan Airlines on June 16, 2017, three times a week.

9. Chengdu-Addis Ababa

It will be launched by Ethiopian Airlines on Oct 31, 2017, using Boeing 787 or 777, four times a week.

an Airlines, mentioned Chengdu's advantage as it lies at the intersection of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

"The prominent status of Chengdu in China's aviation development has made it a key point for our global development," he said.

Nik Hammond, vice-president of Sydney Airport, said the Chengdu airport is larger than Sydney Airport in terms of passenger volume.

"The geographical advantage of Chengdu will create larger room for growth and more development opportunities for the city," he said.

Pan Gangjun, general manager of Sichuan Province Airport Group, said the company has been pushing forward the upgrading of Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport from a regional aviation hub to a State-level international aviation hub in recent years.

The Shuangliu airport is the fourth-largest aviation hub on the Chinese mainland. It has opened 89 international routes, connecting Chengdu to 74 international cities including London, San Francisco, Paris, Frankfurt, Melbourne and Doha. The airport handled 294,000 flights, 42 million passengers and 557,000 metric tons of cargo in 2015, according to Pan.

Chengdu will have 19 regular intercontinental direct flights after the opening of the nine routes, covering almost all of the hub cities in Asia, North America, Europe, Oceania and Africa.

Chen Zhongwei, director of Chengdu Port and Logistics Office, said Chengdu will open more international flights during the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20), especially strategic intercontinental direct flights. The city is expected to have 100 international routes by 2020.

Chen said the city will also optimize transfer services and ground services at the airport, and improve its capacity for cargo transportation.

"We will try our best to build Chengdu into an international transportation hub, and thus help to build it into a national hub city," he said.

Dong Zhiyi, deputy director of the Civil Aviation Administration of China, said Chengdu is blessed with great advantages and the potential to develop air transportation, as it lies at the intersection of the Belt and Road routes and the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

"CAAC will strongly support Chengdu to build it into an international air hub, making it the third city on the Chinese mainland to have a second civil airport, and a center for civil aviation development in western China," he said.

Chengdu began construction of a new airport, Chengdu Tianfu International Airport, in May. It is China's largest civil airport that began construction during the 13th Five-Year Plan.

With an investment of 71.86 billion yuan (\$10.8 billion), the airport will be completed in 2019 and go into operation in 2020. The long-term target for the airport is to have six runways, with an annual capacity of 90 million passengers and 2 million metric tons of cargo.



BUSINESS REPS talk about cooperation during the 22nd World Route Development Forum. PENG CHAO / CHINA DAILY