

NOKSCOOT CLEARED FOR TAIWAN TAKE-OFF

News / Airlines



Sept. 03--Struggling long-haul start-up NokScoot has secured Taiwanese permission to operate regular flights to Taipei from Bangkok.

The airline, a joint venture between budget carrier Nok Air and Singapore Airlines' no-frills Scoot, plans to launch four flights a week between Don Mueang and Taoyuan airports, starting on Oct 25.

The Taipei route offers a more immediate business opportunity for NokScoot, whose growth plan has been stalled by Thailand's aviation safety fiasco.

NokScoot's original core plan to enter the Japanese and South Korean markets was aborted after the UN's International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) earlier this year red-flagged Thailand's Department of Civil Aviation for "significant safety concerns".

The airline's executives confirmed yesterday permission had been granted by Taiwanese civil aviation authorities after the red flag was brandished.

"Taiwanese officials believe it's OK for NokScoot to operate flights to their country, rather than

putting a blanket flight restriction on all Thai-registered airlines," said an executive who asked not to be named.

The Taipei service will enable NokScoot to utilise the significant capacity of its three Boeing 777-200 wide-body jets, each with 415 seats, which have largely remained idle.

NokScoot's launch of Taipei flights follows the Aug 16 suspension of its regular Bangkok-Singapore flights, initiated in May as a short-term solution to utilise its aircraft.

The move will make Bangkok-Taipei the second route for the airline, whose only other active flight is from Bangkok to Nanjing, launched in June with a frequency of four flights a week, ramping up to six per week on Oct 26.

NokScoot is exploring opportunities to launch a third regular route -- to mainland China -- towards the end of this year.

The name of the Chinese destination has not been disclosed but was described as a second-tier city.

NokScoot has availed its B777-200s for some charter purposes, being used in recent months to ferry Chinese tourists from Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, to the southern resort provinces of Krabi and Phuket.

To stimulate sales on its Taipei service, the airline is offering an all-inclusive round-trip promotion fare starting from 3,222 baht.

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