

PRESS RELEASE

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NEW DIRECT QINGDAO TO PENANG ROUTE STRENGTHENS MALAYSIA AND CHINA TOURISM CONNECTIVITY

PENANG – Tourism Malaysia welcomes the arrival of the inaugural direct flight connecting Qingdao and Penang, marking another significant step in strengthening Malaysia's international air connectivity and supporting the nation's tourism growth in line with the Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026) campaign.

The inaugural flight, QW923, departed from Qingdao Jiaodong International Airport and arrived at Penang International Airport at 3.15 p.m. Operated by Qingdao Airlines using an Airbus A320N aircraft, the service offers a seat capacity of 179 passengers. The flight will operate three times weekly on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, further enhancing travel convenience between China and Malaysia.

The introduction of this route is expected to contribute positively to Malaysia's tourism sector by facilitating greater travel flows from China, which remains one of Malaysia's most important source markets. This route will support leisure travel, business exchanges, and visits among friends and relatives, while strengthening Malaysia's position as a preferred short-haul destination for Chinese travellers.

The flight was warmly welcomed by YB Wong Hon Wai, Penang State Executive Councillor for Tourism and Creative Economy, together with Mr. Lee Thai Hung, Deputy Director General (Promotion II) of Tourism Malaysia, Mr. Abdul Hadi Che Man, Director of Tourism Malaysia North Region, and representatives from Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad and Qingdao Airlines.

In a statement, Mr. Mohd Amirul Rizal bin Abdul Rahim, Director General of Tourism Malaysia, said, "The launch of the direct air service between Qingdao and Penang marks an exciting milestone in strengthening Malaysia's connectivity with China, a key source market for our tourism. By making travel easier and more convenient, this route will increase visitor arrivals and support the continued success of VM2026. Penang's unique mix of cultural heritage, world-class cuisine, and vibrant urban experiences makes it an irresistible destination, and we are confident that this new connection will further capture the hearts of Chinese travellers."



Penang International Airport has recorded steady growth in China connectivity, with airlines including China Southern Airlines, Xiamen Airlines, Spring Airlines, Juneyao Airlines, and 9 Air operating direct routes to Guangzhou, Shanghai, Xiamen, and Haikou.

For international visitors, Penang remains one of Malaysia's most distinctive tourism destinations, renowned for its UNESCO-listed heritage areas, vibrant multicultural environment, and world-famous culinary offerings. The state continues to attract travellers seeking authentic cultural experiences alongside modern urban attractions and diverse lifestyle offerings.

China continues to play a vital role in Malaysia's tourism landscape. Malaysia recorded 4.7 million visitor arrivals from China between January and December 2025, representing a 25.1 per cent year-on-year increase, which reflects the strong demand for Malaysia as a travel destination. The expansion of direct air services aligns with the broader strategy of Tourism Malaysia to enhance international connectivity, stimulate tourism growth, and position Malaysia as a leading destination in the region.

Tourism Malaysia remains committed to working closely with airline partners and industry stakeholders to expand flight networks and support increased visitor arrivals. The organisation welcomes the launch of this direct service and looks forward to continued collaboration in promoting Malaysia's diverse attractions, rich gastronomy, and renowned hospitality to travellers from China.

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About Tourism Malaysia

Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, also known as Tourism Malaysia, is an agency under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC). It focuses on promoting Malaysia as a preferred tourism destination and has, since its establishment, played a significant role in strengthening the country's presence and competitiveness in the global tourism landscape.

Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026) underscores Malaysia's commitment to sustainable tourism development, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). The campaign aims to showcase the nation's diverse natural attractions, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant tourism offerings, while driving inclusive growth and long-term value for local communities and industry stakeholders.

For more information, visit Tourism Malaysia's website www.tourism.gov.my and social media accounts on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), [YouTube](#), and [TikTok](#).

About Qingdao Airlines

Qingdao Airlines is mainly engaged in domestic and international air passenger and cargo transportation and related businesses. It was approved by the Civil Aviation Administration of China in June 2013 to prepare for establishment and successfully completed its maiden flight on April 26, 2014.

Qingdao Airlines currently has an all-Airbus fleet of 38 aircraft. With Qingdao Jiaodong International Airport as its main base, it operates more than 70 routes to cities such as Chengdu, Lanzhou, Harbin, and Changsha, serving more than 60 cities. It has successfully



launched several international routes, including Qingdao-Seoul, Qingdao-Osaka, and Qingdao-Kuala Lumpur, and has flights to countries such as South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia.

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