

3 April 2019

Qantas gives global travellers easier access to the lure of Uluru



Caption: Operating twice-weekly from 3 April, Qantas' new 1,419km route between Uluru and Darwin/Adelaide is the only flight from the Qantas Group that offers a full domestic service, including business class. Journey times for Asian and European travellers wishing to visit the iconic 'Red Centre' Australian attraction could fall by up to five hours.

Shaving hours off journey times for inbound Asian and European travellers, Qantas' new twice-weekly 737-800 year-round service between Darwin International Airport and Uluru commenced today, linking the Northern Territory's capital with its, and perhaps Australia's, most iconic attraction for the first time.

Operating on Wednesdays and Saturdays, the new route is the only flight from the Qantas Group that offers a full domestic service, including business class, between Uluru and Darwin/Adelaide. The faster routing for international visitors from Asia and Europe will improve connection options for time-poor travellers, as the distance from Singapore is between 41% and 78% shorter if their entry/exit is via Darwin. For journeys originating in Shenzhen, travel distance saved is equivalent to 68% of the previously-travelled distance. Depending on the flight origin, time savings could be up to five hours.

“The direct flights from Darwin to Uluru will give both locals and international tourists some extra options when planning their visit to the ‘Red Centre’. For many Territorians who have never visited Uluru, this is a great chance for them to tick it off their bucket list,” said Ian Kew, CEO of NT Airports.

“Darwin International Airport is delighted to have partnered with Qantas and Tourism NT to see the capital directly linked with Uluru for the first time. We look forward to continuing to work closely with Qantas to bring new services to Darwin International Airport in the future,” added Kew.

Qantas Domestic CEO Andrew David said: “We’re seeing more demand for travel to Uluru from international and interstate tourists than we have seen in a long time. In the past few years the Qantas Group has added new routes and more flights to Uluru from Brisbane and Sydney, and now from Adelaide and Darwin. The direct flights offer a new convenient option from Adelaide and Darwin, saving travellers up to five hours’ time instead of travelling on flights via other cities. We’re committed to working closely with tourism bodies, hotels, tour operators and airports to get behind these routes, continuing to drive demand, not just to Uluru, but across all parts of the Territory.”

An overwhelming majority (57%) of international travellers visiting Uluru come by air, but only 3% presently arrive via the Northern Territory capital of Darwin. Many visitors access the natural landmark via Sydney (47% arriving; 53% departing), as well as Melbourne (25% arriving; 17% departing). Converting these existing inefficient journeys to connect via Darwin represents the target market for the new service. A recent announcement by Jetstar Asia to increase its five times weekly service from Singapore to Darwin to daily between 16 April and

22 July will help facilitate this switch of travel habits. In fact, a new collaboration of inbound tourism wholesalers, Darwin International Airport, Qantas and Jetstar Asia are already working together to create new itineraries through Darwin and onto Uluru and Alice Springs that are promoted in key Asian markets.

As well as providing enhanced opportunities for leisure travellers wishing to visit Uluru, the new connection is hoped to attract both international and interstate conference and incentive groups, as partner organisation Voyages is very active in promoting in this sector. "The spiritual heart of Australia is now more accessible than ever and these new direct routes to Uluru create opportunities for both the leisure and business events sectors," said Voyages CEO Grant Hunt.

Qantas is Darwin's biggest serving carrier, currently (week commencing 3 April) offering nearly 9,000 seats and 51 direct flights weekly from the city, spread across seven domestic destinations (existing services to Adelaide, Alice Springs, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney) thanks to the new Uluru operation. The Northern Territory capital city airport provides direct services to 18 Australian destinations across 164 weekly flights with five domestic carriers.

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Details on the Qantas' Darwin to Uluru service:

- Year-round service commenced on Wednesday 3 April;
- Service will operate on Wednesdays and Saturdays;
- Departing Darwin at 1220 and arriving Uluru 1435;
- Departing Uluru 0925 and arriving Darwin 1140;
- Service will be operated by 174-seat, 737-800 aircraft, with 12 business class and 162 economy class seating configuration.

Routes and additional services to be launched from NT Airports in 2019:

3 April – Qantas, twice-weekly service from Darwin to Uluru;

3 April – Airnorth, twice-weekly service from Darwin to Gold Coast (via Townsville);

10 April – Virgin Australia Airlines, three times weekly service from Darwin to Denpasar;

16 April – Jetstar Asia increasing services (until 22 July) from Darwin to Singapore from five times weekly to daily;

3 May – Airnorth, twice-weekly service from Darwin to Perth (via Kununurra).