

# Queensland luring Japanese

The Queensland government in Australia is trying to attract more Japanese tourists to the state by advertising on television in Japan, attending the World Expo in Nagoya and producing strategic publicity material. "We attracted more than 460,000 Japanese tourists to Queensland in the 12 months to September 2004," said Peter Beattie, Premier and Trade Minister. "They are the world's biggest spenders in Queensland, spending an average of more than AUS\$100 (US\$76) per day."

He added that within Queensland, the most popular destinations for Japanese visitors were tropical north Queensland (Cairns and surrounding area) followed by the Gold Coast. "The television commercials advertise Cairns and the Gold Coast to Nagoya's population of more than two million," said Beattie.

Overall, Australia's biggest tourism spender is currently the UK, although by 2014, China is expected to overtake the UK. Federal Tourism Minister, Fran Bailey added that in terms of visitor volume, "Our largest market will continue to be New Zealand, with arrivals in 2014 forecast to reach 1.3 million. China will be close behind." Other big tourism spenders include the USA and Japan. ●

## More budget airlines for Asia

THERE are four more entrants into the budget airline market in Asia, which is fast becoming as saturated as Europe for low-cost airlines. The founder of Dragonair, Stephen Miller, is setting up Oasis Hong Kong Airlines. The airline will fly primarily to European airports.

Wow plans to launch in October and will become the first low-cost carrier to be based in the former Portuguese colony of Macau. The airline will be led by a former Cathay Pacific executive, Andrew Pyne, and the main routes served will be to China and other destinations in Southeast Asia.

Meanwhile, India now has two more budget airlines. State-owned Air India Express took to the skies for the first time in

April, with an inaugural flight from the southern city of Trivandrum to Abu Dhabi in the UAE. The carrier offers fares that are up to 40 per cent cheaper than competitors and promises more routes to the Gulf, where many Indians work. Initial flights will be available from five Indian cities to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Al'Ayn, Muscat and Salalah.

Kingfisher Airlines, named after the Indian beer, launched in May and is owned by the founder of the Kingfisher empire. Like Air Deccan, it will focus on domestic services and is using models as airline stewards and seat-back entertainment systems to woo passengers. "My vision is to make Kingfisher the largest private sector carrier," said owner, Vijay Mallya. ●

## Middle East market buoyant

THE AIRLINE industry is buoyant in the Middle East. Dubai International Airport has announced that first-quarter passenger traffic increased by almost 13 per cent in 2005, while in the UAE, Abu Dhabi Airport has unveiled expansion plans. A new terminal building and second runway is planned for 2010 and will raise handling capacity to 20 million passengers per year.

Saudi Arabian Airlines has announced its intention to buy 15 new 66-seat aircraft. "Embraer's new jet will provide Saudi Arabian Airlines with the possibility to expand domestic and regional aviation activity," said Khaled Ben-Bakr at the airline. And Dubai-based airline, Emirates, announced a rise in annual net profit of almost 50 per cent for the year ending in March. "Had fuel prices stayed at the levels they were two years ago, we could have made even higher profits," said Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed al-Maktoum at Emirates. ●

## Travel Update

- Some of the air passengers arriving at **London's Heathrow Airport** in the UK are now using iris-scanning technology instead of traditional passport control procedures. Anyone not holding a European Union passport but flying regularly will be invited to use the technology and have the information stored in a database. This will reduce waiting times in the future. By 2010, it is hoped that more than a million passengers will be using the system.

- **Austrian Air** has raised its fuel surcharge for long-haul flights, citing continued high fuel prices as a reason for the move. The extra fee will be €17 (US\$21) to most destinations except Australia, which will be charged at €22 (US\$28) extra. The €7 (US\$9) surcharge for short- and medium-haul journeys remains unchanged.

- **The Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA)** revealed that among its membership, air traffic was up by seven per cent for the first quarter of 2004. "However, concerns persist regarding the ongoing impact of high oil prices on the global economy," said Andrew Herdman at AAPA, which has 17 members.

- Russian carrier **Aeroflot** has signed a code-share deal with **Alitalia** on flights between Moscow and Milan. The deal will eventually see the carriers selling unrestricted tickets on each other's flights. Aeroflot said the deal took it closer to joining the Skyteam alliance, which it hopes to become a member of next year. The Russian airline posted a 60 per cent increase in net profit in 2004, with a modernised fleet and bigger route network attracting more affluent Russians.

- Brazil's low-cost carrier, **Gol!**, is adding flights to its network, with a new route to Santa Cruz de la Sierra in Bolivia and others to Uruguay and Paraguay planned for the future. In April, Gol! was declared the second-most popular domestic carrier in Brazil, overtaking Varig with a 27.8 per cent share of the Brazilian market.

- **Brazil** and **Peru** have agreed to expand the number of flights between the two countries to boost bilateral trade and tourism. Up to 28 flights a week will now operate, up from the previous quota of just eight services. Peru is reported to have signed or amended aviation agreements with other countries in recent months, including Spain, Thailand, UAE and South Africa.

- **Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport** is to benefit from a rail link into the city in 2007, ending the traffic jam problems for many airport commuters. Initial plans, unveiled by Transport Minister, Ivor Levitin, will see a rail link from the airport to Savyolovsky station, with plans to extend the rail link to the central Leningrad station later.

- Canada's **WestJet Airlines** announced a first quarter loss because of competition and high fuel prices. Meanwhile **Air Canada** has ordered new Boeing 777 planes which it hopes will help cut costs as fuel prices soar.