

New low-cost carriers on horizon

Air Canada expands in South America

AIR CANADA has expanded its services to Latin America with the launch of new services to Bogota in Colombia and Caracas in Venezuela in July. The carrier is the only Canadian airline offering scheduled direct flights to these two countries.

"We are thrilled to now serve Venezuela and Colombia, and soon Peru, with more non-stop air services linking Canada and South America than ever before," said Yves Dufresne at the airline. He added that flights to Chile and Argentina had performed well since their launch in December last year. Non-stop flights to Lima in Peru begin in November. □

A new low-cost carrier to be launched in the USA by the Virgin brand will be based in San Francisco, California, it has been revealed, while its headquarters will be in New York.

The airline will only be partly owned by the Virgin Group – because of strict ownership laws in the USA. It will be primarily US-owned and operated and flights are expected to start in 2005.



Virgin USA hub choice welcomed

Californian governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, was reported to be thrilled with the decision, which will create 1,800 local jobs.

Meanwhile, in South Africa, Civair is expanding its operations to offer low-cost international flights to its customers. Currently offering domestic services only, Civair's international operations will begin with flights between London Stansted and Cape Town in October.

And Japan's All Nippon Airways (ANA) has announced its intentions to break into the low-cost market using new generation Boeing 737s. "We have established a task force to set up the company," said ANA President, Yoji Ohashi. "It's something I think that we have to do." □

Details of planned routes and services were unavailable at the time of going to press. "Whether it will be [ANA] or... set up as a completely different company, we don't know yet," said Ohashi. □

Danish carrier unveils expansion plans

DANISH CARRIER Maersk Air is launching many new routes this autumn. New services from Copenhagen to Bratislava and Rome will take off in September, while further routes to Madeira, Geneva, Istanbul, Manchester, Malta, Tenerife, Warsaw and Zurich are planned to start one month later.

Maersk Air's President, Finn Øelund, said, "We experience a great demand from our customers to these destinations and are pleased to be able to open these routes." The Maersk service to Venice is decreasing in frequency as a result, while the services to Marseille and Bordeaux are being discontinued altogether. "They have not developed satisfactorily," explained Øelund. □

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHANNOLD.COM

Nevada sets up tourism link with China

THE NEVADA Commission on Tourism (NCOT) has become the first US state tourism department to open a tourist office in China, having obtained the required certification from the China National

Tourism Administration. The office opened in Beijing in June.

Bruce Bommarito of NCOT said, "China has at least 100 million and as many as 300 million people who can afford to travel

and it is in Nevada's economic interest to earn their business."

Meanwhile, the USA and China have reached an agreement to expand air services between the two countries. □

Travel Update ● Travel Update ● Travel Update ● Travel Update

● The European coach network **Eurolines** has unveiled a new large-scale coach, Eurolines Plus, on its service from London to Paris. The coaches are claimed to be the largest coaches on British roads with more leg-room per passenger than most airlines. The company has also introduced direct services to Paris from Birmingham and Oxford.

● Peruvian airline **LanPeru** had been grounded at the time of going to press, because of violations of civil aviation rules, according to the judge involved in the legal case against the airline by smaller Peruvian airline, **Aviandina**. However, Chief Executive of LanPeru said his airline was continuing to operate as normal and had done nothing wrong.

● The future of **Alitalia** looks safe for now, as the Italian govern-

ment has agreed to let the carrier obtain a loan worth up to US\$485 million so that it can stay afloat for the immediate future. However, the deal to rescue the beleaguered airline still has to be approved by the European Commission. The Italian airline has also agreed new flexible working conditions with its ground staff that should see a saving of US\$8.5 million this year.

● **Vietnam** is considering plans to build a new airport in the south of the country outside Ho Chi Minh City to cater for the growing number of air passengers travelling into and out of the country, according to the Vietnam News Agency. The proposed airport would cater for up to 100 million passengers a year.

● US carrier, **Continental Airlines**, is considering adding a

number of destinations in Mexico to its route network. Pete Garcia at the airline said that at least two new destinations would be added by the year-end.

● A study undertaken by the **Department of Transport** in the USA has revealed that over 20 of the country's airports need to expand to be able to cope with increased passenger demand within the next 20 years. Modifications needed include new runways, bigger terminals or additional slots. Many of the airports identified were in southern or southwestern states, such as Arizona, New Mexico and Florida.

● **Swiss International Air Lines** will no longer be joining the Oneworld alliance because it no longer has a commercial agreement with British Airways (BA). Oneworld Managing Part-

ner, John McCulloch, said, "This is unfortunate, but we have always been clear that Oneworld will only recruit airlines where they add value both to our customers and to our existing partners."

● **Aeroflot** in Russia has revealed that its profit in 2003 was up by 42 per cent. The airline put its good fortunes down to higher demand from Russians for air travel and cost-cutting schemes within the airline, resulting in a good year despite the difficult operating environment worldwide.

● **Qatar Airways** is becoming one of the rising stars of the Middle Eastern aviation market. It plans to add 20 new destinations to its route network next year, including flights to Osaka in Japan, Johannesburg in South Africa and a number of as-yet-undisclosed destinations in the USA.