

Your View

Saturday, December 27, 2014

THE KIWI AND THE CONDOR

The majestic Andean condor and the small New Zealand kiwi are an unlikely pairing yet the canny little Kiwi has valiantly wooed the Condor and entered in its jealously-guarded nest.

Air New Zealand has announced it will operate direct Boeing 777-200 transpolar flights to Buenos Aires from Auckland on a code-share basis with Aerolíneas Argentinas as from December, 2015

Aerolíneas pioneered the transpolar route in 1980 and Air New Zealand will follow in their footsteps with three return flights a week all year round.

Air New Zealand's announcement has been the cause of much celebration in South Pacific business, tourism and rugby circles.

Writing from my perspective of over 25 years doing business with Argentina, I can say that New Zealand and Australia's growing trade and tourism with South America suffered a blow in recent years when Aerolíneas stopped flying first to Auckland and later Sydney.

Aerolíneas' withdrawal left LAN Airlines with a South Pacific monopoly.

While LAN cannot be faulted for their high standards of service and technical excellence, the temptation to raise fares was irresistible.

Fares more than doubled to become the most expensive in the world and LAN abolished group discounts, which hit South Pacific export education providers and tour operators hard.

Air New Zealand's code-share with Aerolíneas is a master stroke which dismantles LAN's monopoly and guarantees Air New Zealand a smooth ride all the way to the airbridges of Aerolíneas' Ezeiza terminal.

Going it alone is not a viable option for Air New Zealand as Argentine aviation authorities jealously guard their home turf.

Well-established airlines are tolerated but new entrants find the going especially tough.

Qantas only lasted eight months before bureaucratic obfuscation and exorbitant landing charges showed them the door in 2012.

Air New Zealand provided Aerolíneas' ground-handling at Auckland Airport for over 20 years which was the genesis of the new code-share.

Air New Zealand CEO Christopher Luxon acknowledged Aerolíneas in a statement at the Buenos Aires announcement.

"We are particularly excited that Aerolíneas Argentinas has agreed to support the service with code share, which we expect to help further stimulate tourism to New Zealand from this rugby-loving nation," Luxon said.

"Buenos Aires is the most popular tourist city in South America and is a perfect stepping-stone for those who then want to explore the country, or continent, further."

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“We’ve been very clear about our aspirations for growth in the Pacific Rim. Our flights to Buenos Aires further strengthens our network in the Pacific Rim. Argentina is an exciting new destination for New Zealanders, and with seamless one-stop connectivity through Auckland it will provide a fantastic opportunity for Australians as well.”

“The service will also enable Argentines to travel directly to New Zealand and then on to Australia on Air New Zealand’s extensive trans-Tasman network, or to Singapore and South East Asia,” Luxon said.

The professional relationships and mutual respect forged in the ground-handling business is why Air New Zealand has succeeded in partnering with Aerolíneas when many other aspirants have fallen by the wayside.

From Aerolíneas’ perspective the code-share is a win/win deal which will see the AR code return to the South Pacific market at minimal cost and enables them to capture South Pacific passengers for onward travel from Buenos Aires to Brazil and further north.

Air New Zealand and Aerolíneas Argentinas must be congratulated on their spirit of co-operation.

Both airlines will materially profit from their association and in the process strengthen South Pacific and South American trade and fraternal relations to the benefit of both regions.

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NOTE:

The writer Thomas Manning is a New Zealand businessman active in Argentina for over 25 years, a director of the Latin America New Zealand Business Council (Vice President 2011 – 13 incl.) and a regular Buenos Aires Herald correspondent on South Pacific trade and aviation matters.

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