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July 05, 2011

Finnair To Open Route To China's Largest City, Chongqing

In May 2012 Finnair will introduce a direct route to Chongqing, the largest and fastest-growing city in China. The new route is a logical step in the implementation of Finnair's Asian strategy. The airline's goal is to benefit from the market growth in Asia and open new routes to markets where growth is strongest. Finnair is the first airline to open a direct flight route from Europe to Chongqing.

Situated on the edge of the Tibetan plateau, Greater Chongqing has a population of 32 million. In addition, Chongqing's urban population is expected to double over the next five years.

"China is a key part of our Europe-Asia strategy. Western China is an important growth area, and the new route will strengthen our market share in the growing Asian markets. In addition to Chongqing, Finnair flies to Beijing, Shanghai and to Hong Kong with a total of 26 weekly flights," says Mika Vehviläinen, President and CEO of Finnair.

In addition to Chinese companies many Western companies, especially in the electronics, automotive and chemical industries, are currently expanding their operations in the city, so business travel is booming. Also cargo growth prospects are promising due to industrial growth.

"Our co-operation with the Chongqing authorities and the local airport has been very good when planning this new route, and we are very grateful for the assistance that we have received during our preparations. The smooth co-operation has accelerated the route planning process, which is very important in this rapidly changing business," Vehviläinen adds.

Chongqing Airport's growth potential is huge. The airport has already opened 140 routes to more than 80 cities in China and Asia, and the airport is undergoing expansion. When the expansion is complete in 2015, the airport will be capable of receiving 45 million passengers a year.

Although in the early stages of marketing the focus will be in particular on business travelers, Chongqing also offers much to see for tourists interested in China's history and nature. Visitors can enjoy the historical buildings, temples and natural beauty, as well as the Dazu Rock Carvings, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and hot springs. Chongqing also provides convenient access to river cruises on the Jialing and Yangtze rivers, and the city is well connected to Lhasa, Xian and Kunming.

For passengers traveling from the US, Finnair offers efficient connections in Helsinki, a compact terminal designed especially for transfer traffic. In Helsinki terminal, Finnair operates one of the youngest fleets in Europe and offers several high-class lounges and a unique Finnair Spa. For business class passengers, Finnair's new pre-order meal service has been extended to long-haul flights. Passengers can place a food order from two weeks before traveling up until 24 hours before departure.

Finnair will fly to Chongqing four times a week with Finnair's Airbus A340 aircraft. The new route will be opened in May 2012, and the flight time from Helsinki to Chongqing will be eight and a half hours. In addition to Chongqing, Finnair flies to 10 other Asian destinations.

www.finnair.com

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