

# SilkAir to boost flights

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## Daily services to Singapore begin in June

AN Asian carrier has confirmed it will expand services to and from Cairns this year.

The news comes as relief after Cathay Pacific pulled out the Hong Kong-Cairns flight route after 26 years.

Singapore Airlines public relations manager Karl Schubert said the airline and its offshoot SilkAir would not go the way of the other airline.

"SilkAir remains committed

to operating daily services on the Singapore-Cairns route from June 2019," he said.

"All six of SilkAir's Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft have been grounded at Changi Airport since 12 March 2019 and will not be returned to service until further notice. Our 17 Boeing 737-800NGs are not affected.

"Arrangements have been made to replace flights previously operated by the Boeing

737 MAX 8 with another aircraft type."

Almost a year ago, Cairns Airport marked the third anniversary of SilkAir's service between Singapore and Cairns.

SilkAir currently operates five return services per week but will increase that to daily flights in a month's time.

Singapore Airlines last year announced that SilkAir will be merged into the company after

undergoing a major cabin upgrade, including lie-flat seats in business class and the installation of seat-back in-flight entertainment systems in both business and economy classes.

The upgrades are expected to start in 2020 and the merger will take place once a sufficient number of aircraft have been upgraded.

SilkAir was transitioning to a fleet of only Boeing 737 air-

craft but that has been put on hold until Boeing conducts safety checks and adjustments.

Cairns MP Michael Healy said a meeting had been scheduled with stakeholders yesterday to plan how to entice Cathay Pacific to stay.

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### UP IN THE AIR

China Southern Airlines has suspended services to Cairns for six months after increasing weekly direct flights from Guangzhou to Cairns between mid-December 2018 and February 2019. Last year, Cairns Airport executives were understood to be in talks with Emirates about a direct service to UAE and Qatar after starting negotiations in 2017 with a Middle Eastern airline.