

Royal Brunei Airlines back on Brisbane route – Australian Aviation

A file image of Royal Brunei Airlines Airbus A320neo V8-RBD, which features a special Visit Brunei livery. (Masakatsu Ukon/Wikimedia Commons)

Royal Brunei Airlines (RBA) has resumed nonstop flights to Brisbane for the first time since 2011 with the arrival of BI9 early on Thursday morning, July 11 2019.

Flight BI9, operated by Airbus A320neo V8-RBD featuring a special Visit Brunei livery, landed at about 0330 local time on Thursday, following its six and a half hour journey from RBA's Bandar Seri Begawan hub.

The aircraft was on the ground at Brisbane Airport for about 13 hours before taking off as the reciprocal BI10 a little after 1600 local time.

RBA chief executive Karam Chand said the airline was delighted to be back in Brisbane after an eight-year absence.

Further, Chand said the new Brisbane service would strategically position the airline as a key player on the Kangaroo route between Australia and the United Kingdom.

"We are delighted to offer our Bruneian, UK and other guests from our expanding route network an additional Australia travel destination where they will find many and attractions and activities of offer in Brisbane city and its surrounds," Chand said in a statement.

In addition to Brisbane, RBA flies nonstop to Melbourne daily

with Boeing 787-8s.

Both its Australian routes were expected to support RBA's nonstop Bandar Seri Begawan-London services.



A file image of a Boeing 787-8 in Royal Brunei Airlines livery. (Wikimedia Commons/Jahurz)

The Brisbane route will will operate as an overnight flight from from Bandar Seri Begawan on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Meanwhile, the return service takes off from Brisbane in the late afternoon on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

The schedule, which is similar to RBA's Melbourne service, has been optimised for convenient connections on the London route.

CAPA – Centre for Aviation chief analyst Brendan Sobie said while the new RBA service represented less than two per cent of total capacity between Brisbane and Asia, it was strategically important as the flights would stimulate demand in the Brisbane-Brunei and Brisbane-Uk markets.

“Brunei is a tiny source market for Queensland and there is also limited outbound demand in the Brisbane-Brunei market.

However, these segments will grow (from a very low base) as nonstop services are resumed,” Sobie said in a research note from February.

“Of more significance is the impact the new Brunei service will have in the Brisbane-UK market. The UK is the fourth largest source market for Queensland and London is also a very popular destination for Brisbane area residents.”

“However, making the Brisbane-Bandar Seri Begawan route work will not be easy because Brisbane-London – which Royal Brunei will need to rely on for a large proportion of its Brisbane passengers – is a very competitive and low yielding market.”

Sobie noted return fares of less than US\$1,000 were available on many carriers for Brisbane-London itineraries, while RBA had some sub-US\$800 fares in the market for travel during the second half of calendar 2019.

“With the offer of such low fares it will be hard for the new Brisbane-Brunei route to deliver sustained profitability – even with incentives from Brisbane Airport and Queensland,” Sobie said.

At the time the Brisbane flight was launched, RBA has targeted a start date of June 11. However, aircraft availability issues due to engine maintenance requirements on its Boeing 787 fleet forced the flight to be pushed back a month.

RBA has seven A320neos powered by CFM LEAP-1A engines. The airline has configured the next-generation narrowbody to carry 150 passengers, with 12 seats in business class and 138 seats in economy.

Airbus lists the A320neo as having a range of 3,400nm in a typical two-class configuration of 165 seats. Bandar Seri Begawan-Melbourne is 2,940nm.

RBA was the first to fly the A320neo to Australia when it used

the aircraft temporarily on the Bandar Seri Begawan-Melbourne route in August 2018 while its Boeing 787-8s were unavailable due to engine inspection requirements.

To celebrate the new route, the airline planned to host an event at the Brisbane City Hall on Thursday evening.

The airline recently began flying nonstop between Bandar Seri Begawan and London Heathrow, having previously served the United Kingdom capital with a one-stop routing via Dubai.

Brisbane may also prove a source market for RBA's new regional services with ATR 72-600s due to kick off in October. The turboprops on lease from Malaysia-based Malindo Air will be used to serve seven destinations on Borneo – six in the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak and one on the Indonesian part of the island.



RBA Airbus A320neo V8-RBA at Melbourne on August 1 2018. (Brian Wilkes)

Flight Number/Routing	Days of operation	Time of departure	Time of arrival
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BI9 Bandar Seri Begawan-Brisbane	Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Sunday	18:50	03:45+1
BI10 Brisbane-Bandar Seri Begawan	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday	16:10	21:30

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