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Thousands flock to Queensland: Virgin Australia opens more lounges as travel demand soars ^[2]



? Virgin Australia flights from Victoria and New South Wales to Queensland near capacity today

? Melbourne and Sydney lounges to open on 15 December, Gold Coast to soon follow

? Virgin Australia expects it will reach 60% of prior year domestic capacity by January 2021

? Thousands of travellers booked to travel to the Sunshine State this week

? Approximately 78,000 additional weekly seats between Victoria and New South Wales and Queensland by January 2021

? Virgin Australia continues to offer COVID-19 booking flexibility until 31 March 2021

Thousands of Virgin Australia guests will make their way north to Queensland today as the Sunshine State throws open its borders to Victoria and all of New South Wales for the first time in months.

With the majority of Virgin Australia's Queensland flights full today and arrival gates set to replicate a scene from the movie *Love Actually*, the airline has marked the occasion by announcing its lounges in Melbourne and Sydney will reopen on 15 December and follow the

Brisbane Lounge which reopened last month. The Gold Coast lounge will also open soon.

Virgin Australia Group CEO and Managing Director, Jayne Hrdlicka said today was a day of celebration for the Queensland-based airline, its people and travellers from the southern states.

“Queensland is our home, so it’s a particularly great day for Virgin Australia as we welcome so many of our loyal guests from Melbourne and Sydney back to the Sunshine State today.

“We’re seeing strong demand throughout December across all of our Queensland services from Victoria and New South Wales, so we know many Australians have been itching to visit Queensland to reunite with their loved-ones or do business. The broader economic contribution that open borders will bring cannot be underestimated in what has been the most difficult year for many businesses, particularly in the tourism and hospitality industries.

“Historically the Golden Triangle* has been one of the busiest flight corridors in the world and with domestic travel volumes significantly increasing for these services, we will reopen our lounges in Melbourne and Sydney on 15 December, which will be welcome news for our loyal frequent flyer members and our Lounge staff.

“With open borders we can bring more of our people back to work to safely connect Australians with their families, which is the best Christmas present an airline CEO could have asked for in 2020.

“We have always advocated for the safe re-opening of borders and we thank the Queensland Government for their actions in helping to reconnect the nation ahead of Christmas,” Ms Hrdlicka said.

To give customers added confidence when booking, Virgin Australia is waiving applicable change fees and allowing unlimited booking changes for reservations with travel between now and 31 January 2021. The airline will further extend booking flexibility until 31 March 2021 should a customer’s travel plans be impacted by COVID-19. More information here.

*The Golden Triangle covers flights between Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

NOTES TO EDITOR

Booking data (as at Monday 30 November):

• Approximately 100,000 seats to Queensland destinations have been booked in the last seven (7) days.

• Almost three quarters of Queensland flights booked in the last seven (7) days were for travel in the lead up to and during Christmas.

• Flight searches for routes between Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland have increased by 103% week-on-week.

• The top five flight routes were (both ways):

o Melbourne-Brisbane

o Sydney-Brisbane

o Melbourne-Gold Coast

o Melbourne-Sydney

o Sydney-Gold Coast

• Traffic to virginaustralia.com is the highest it’s been in eight (8) months.

New health and wellbeing measures for Virgin Australia lounges:

Along with new health and wellbeing measures introduced at airports and on Virgin Australia flights, the airline has introduced similar measures throughout its Lounge network, beginning with Brisbane:

? QR code check-in on entry;

? Capacity restrictions to comply with state-based regulations;

? More frequent cleaning and sanitising stations;

? Hosted pre-made food offerings including sweet and savoury options, sandwiches and fresh fruit; and

? Barista-made coffee, premium tea and soft drinks served from the hosted bar, as well as alcoholic beverages including craft beers and curated wines from 12pm.

More information on the Lounge experience, here.

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