

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Asia Pacific Airlines March 2026 Traffic Results**

*Resilient growth in passenger and cargo traffic amid Middle East disruptions*

**Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia** – Preliminary March 2026 traffic figures released today by the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA) showed robust growth in international passenger traffic, reflecting healthy travel appetite. Asian carriers also benefited from an upsurge in demand on Asia-Europe routes, as travellers shifted to alternative routings following airspace closures and operational disruptions at Middle East hubs.

For the month, a combined total of 33.9 million passengers flew on the region's carriers, representing an 8.5% year-on-year increase. Demand, as measured in revenue passenger kilometres (RPK), rose by a solid 11.3%, reflecting strength on longer-haul routes. This increase in demand significantly outpaced the 1.9% year-on-year expansion in available seat capacity. As a result, the average international passenger load factor rose markedly, by 7.4 percentage points to a record high of 87.6% in March.

Supply chains were also disrupted by the war, resulting in cargo flight cancellations and the subsequent rerouting of Asia - Europe cargo flows away from key Middle East hubs. Against this backdrop, international air cargo demand, as measured in freight tonne kilometres (FTK), rose by 2.5% year-on-year in March, supported by an increased demand for timely shipments. Offered freight capacity rose by 3.8%, resulting in a 0.7 percentage point decline in the average international freight load factor to 62.3%.

Commenting on the results, Mr. Wong Hong, AAPA Director General, said, "The aviation industry faced multiple challenges in March, as military conflict in the Middle East led to flight cancellations and a sharp increase in jet fuel prices. Asia Pacific airlines responded swiftly by making network adjustments, including adding flights on key Asia - Europe routes,

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and trimming unprofitable routes in the face of higher fuel and operating costs. This supported both passenger and cargo demand during the month, bringing first quarter growth to 6.2%, with 102 million international passengers carried, and a 5.7% increase in air cargo demand.”

Mr. Wong Hong added, “However, the impact of the Middle East conflict has begun to weigh on what had been an encouraging start to the year. Already grappling with high operating costs due to persistent supply chain issues, airlines are now facing additional strain, with jet fuel prices up by 80% year-on-year to an average of US\$156 per barrel in March, compared to US\$87 per barrel a year earlier. Fuel remains the single largest cost item for Asia Pacific carriers, accounting for around 30% of total operating expenses.”

Looking ahead, Mr. Wong Hong concluded, “The duration of the Middle East conflict is going to add uncertainty to the global economic outlook and air travel demand. Against this backdrop, Asia Pacific airlines continue to maintain vigilance over cost controls while maintaining international connectivity. The region’s airlines remain committed to the highest safety standards, and to working closely with governments and industry stakeholders to ensuring safe, efficient and sustainable operations.”

**TRAFFIC UPDATE – PRELIMINARY**

*International Scheduled Services of Asia Pacific Airlines*

<b>International</b>	<b>Mar-26</b>	<b>Mar-25</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 2026</b>	<b>Jan-Mar 2025</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Passengers (Thousand)	33,894	31,252	+ 8.5%	102,093	96,104	+ 6.2%
RPK (Million)	125,096	112,379	+ 11.3%	370,372	344,478	+ 7.5%
ASK (Million)	142,758	140,149	+ 1.9%	436,697	418,661	+ 4.3%
Passenger Load Factor	87.6%	80.2%	+ 7.4 pp	84.8%	82.3%	+ 2.5 pp
FTK (Million)	7,076	6,901	+ 2.5%	19,508	18,452	+ 5.7%
FATK (Million)	11,360	10,945	+ 3.8%	32,903	31,314	+ 5.1%
Freight Load Factor	62.3%	63.0%	- 0.7 pp	59.3%	58.9%	+ 0.4 pp

Effective September 2025, the dataset comprises aggregated traffic data from the following 36 Asia Pacific based carriers: 5J, 6E, 7C, 9C, AI, AK, BI, BR, CA, CI, CK, CX, CZ, D7, GA, HO, HU, IX, JL, JQ, KC, KE, KZ, MH, MU, NH, NZ, PG, PR, QF, SG, SQ, TG, TR, VA and VN.

- Previous year data adjusted for comparison purposes
- RPK = revenue passenger kilometres
- ASK = available seat kilometres
- FTK = freight tonne kilometres
- FATK = available freight tonne kilometres
- All figures, including estimates for missing data, are provisional

**Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA)**

The AAPA is the trade association for scheduled international airlines based in the Asia Pacific region. The AAPA permanent secretariat is headquartered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia with international representation in Brussels and Washington, D.C. Collectively, the region's airlines represent over one-third of global passenger and air cargo traffic, and thus play a leading role in the ongoing development of global aviation.

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