

PRESS RELEASE

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Association of Asia Pacific Airlines
(Reg. No.587)

36th Floor, Menara Maxis
Kuala Lumpur City Centre

50088 Kuala Lumpur
MALAYSIA

Tel: +603 2615 0188

Fax: +603 2615 0088

www.aapairlines.org

Asia Pacific Airlines September 2026 Traffic Results

Passenger numbers marginally higher as cargo growth accelerates

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - Preliminary September 2026 traffic figures released today by the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA) showed that international passenger numbers edged up from a year earlier, following five consecutive months of year-on-year declines. Performance remained uneven across markets, with capacity reductions contributing to lower passenger traffic on some routes, while longer-haul markets continued to grow, supported in part by passengers choosing routings that avoided Middle East hubs.

For the month, Asia Pacific airlines carried a combined total of 30.4 million international passengers, a marginal 0.7% increase compared to a year earlier. Growth in passenger demand, as measured in revenue passenger kilometres (RPK), accelerated to 5.9%, while available seat capacity expanded by 6.8%, resulting in a 0.6 percentage point decline in the average international passenger load factor to 80.2%.

Meanwhile, air cargo markets benefited from stronger global manufacturing activity, increased purchases of raw materials and components, and sustained demand for AI-related goods. International air cargo demand, as measured in freight tonne kilometres (FTK), grew by a firm 6.4% year-on-year, outpacing the 4.9% expansion in offered freight capacity. As a result, the average international freight load factor rose by 0.8 percentage points to 60.3% for the month.

Commenting on the results, Mr. Wong Hong, Director General of AAPA, said, "September saw passenger numbers increase slightly compared to a year earlier, with stronger growth in longer-haul travel, while air cargo demand gained momentum. Overall, during the first nine months of the year, Asia Pacific airlines carried 289.5 million international passengers,

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1.9% more than in the same period last year. International air cargo demand rose by 5.6% over the same period.”

Mr. Wong Hong added, “The latest results highlight the resilience of demand amid a difficult operating environment. Passenger markets continued to adjust to changes in capacity and travel patterns, while stronger manufacturing activity and demand for AI-related goods supported cargo flows. Nevertheless, elevated jet fuel prices, airspace restrictions and weaker Asian currencies continue to put pressure on operating costs and profitability.”

Looking ahead, Mr. Wong Hong said, “Year-end holiday travel should lend support to passenger demand, while continued investment in AI infrastructure and associated trade flows bode well for air cargo markets. However, higher travel and shipping costs could temper growth, while geopolitical tensions and changes in trade policies remain key uncertainties.”

TRAFFIC UPDATE – PRELIMINARY

International Scheduled Services of Asia Pacific Airlines

International	Sep-26	Sep-25	% Change	Jan-Sep 2026	Jan-Sep 2025	% Change
Passengers (Thousand)	30,403	30,196	+ 0.7%	289,483	284,063	+ 1.9%
RPK (Million)	116,532	109,996	+ 5.9%	1,062,309	1,015,885	+ 4.6%
ASK (Million)	145,257	136,060	+ 6.8%	1,274,183	1,237,976	+ 2.9%
Passenger Load Factor	80.2%	80.8%	- 0.6 pp	83.4%	82.1%	+ 1.3 pp
FTK (Million)	6,442	6,057	+ 6.4%	56,835	53,819	+ 5.6%
FATK (Million)	10,682	10,186	+ 4.9%	95,059	90,907	+ 4.6%
Freight Load Factor	60.3%	59.5%	+ 0.8 pp	59.8%	59.2%	+ 0.6 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.

For further information, please contact:
Office of the Director General
Tel: +603 2615 0188
Fax: +603 2615 0088
Email: odg@aapa.org.my
Website: www.aapairlines.org
X: @aapairlines

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