Ashwini Phadnis

Air Canada is to launch seasonal flights to Bangkok and Mumbai in winter this year.

The daily flight to Mumbai will operate Toronto-Heathrow-Mumbai and will start from October 29. The start of the seasonal fight to Mumbai will also allow a passenger from Toronto to fly to London and back to London. Similarly, the airline can also pick up passengers from London who are keen to go to Mumbai and passengers from Mumbai who are keen to go only up to London. Sources indicated that the India-Canada Air Services bilateral allows fifth freedom bilateral option which is allowed under the agreement. The flight has to be cleared by the Indian Directorate General of Civil Aviation, the Indian aviation watch dog before it can start.

The non-stop flight to Bangkok which will be the operated four times a week will start on December 1. This will be the only non-stop flight on the North America Thailand route. The flight will operate from Vancouver to Bangkok on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday and from Bangkok on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

“We are also excited to return to Mumbai, India’s largest city and an important financial, commercial, and entertainment hub, complementing our 13 weekly flights from Canada to Delhi. Our Mumbai services are scheduled to operate with a stop in London Heathrow, offering connectivity to more than a dozen Air Canada and Star Alliance partner United Airlines flights between North America and London, as well as additional options for travel between the UK and India. The India market remains very important to Air Canada, and we are committed to resuming our currently paused non-stop services on Toronto-Mumbai and Vancouver-Delhi when circumstances allow,” a statement by Air Canada said.

Both the flights will be operated with a Boeing 787 offering passengers a choice of three cabins including a lie-flat business class, premium economy and economy.

The decision to return to Mumbai comes as the Indian government is looking to welcome more tourists. India has re-started issuing visa-on-arrival for visitors from over 100 countries. The India-Canada market is popularly called the Visiting Friends and Relatives market or the VFR market and is a huge market as many Indians are settled in Canada. The flight was stopped because of the closure of the Russian air space.

In an effort to attract more tourists the government of Thailand is to do away with the Thailand pass and the COVID hospitalisation insurance which are mandatory right now from July 1.

Thailand welcomed 1.4 million tourists during the first five months of 2022, a significant increase on 427,869 arrivals recorded for the whole of last year, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) governor Yuthasak Supasorn was quoted as saying in Bangkok Post a prominent English daily in Thailand.

The launches to Bangkok and Mumbai come as Air Canada is looking to expand its international winter services to the South Pacific region with the return of seasonal services from Vancouver to Auckland, New Zealand, and additional flights to Sydney and Brisbane, Australia. Air Canada is also re-establishing international services to South America with the resumption of routes from Montreal and Toronto to Lima, Peru on a seasonal basis.

***(EOM)***