

Virgin Atlantic Inaugurates Direct Flights between London Heathrow and Velana International Airport, Malé



Male', Maldives, 23 October 2023 – Today, Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL), the operator of Velana International Airport (VIA), is thrilled to announce the successful inauguration of Virgin Atlantic, connecting London Heathrow to the Maldives.

The inaugural flight touched down at VIA this morning at 07:40 am local time, marking the beginning of a new chapter in air travel between the United Kingdom and the Maldives. The arrival of the Virgin Atlantic aircraft was welcomed by a warm traditional Maldivian Bodeberu along with captivating cultural dance performances.

The new service is operating three times a week, on the airline's Boeing 787 Dreamliner boasting 31 Upper Class, 35 Premium, and 192 Economy Delight, Classic, and Light seats.

For those customers looking to treat themselves, Virgin Atlantic's Upper Class offers fully flat beds and an onboard bar to enjoy dinner and an opportunity to network with travel companions. Premium customers can relax in their luxurious leather armchair with its 38" seat pitch and enjoy priority boarding and welcome drinks. No matter what cabin customers choose to fly, everyone can enjoy complimentary food and beverages, over 300 hours of entertainment, and a warm welcome from Virgin Atlantic's iconic cabin crew.

Mr. Mahjoob Shujau, CEO & Managing Director of MACL, said:

"As the operator of Velana International Airport, we are excited to welcome the prestigious and customer-centric airline, Virgin Atlantic. This inaugural flight marks a significant milestone in the enhancement of air travel connections between the United Kingdom and the Maldives.

"We look forward to a prosperous partnership with Virgin Atlantic as we continue to elevate the travel experience for our passengers."

Juha Jarvinen, Chief Commercial Officer at Virgin Atlantic, commented:

"We couldn't be more thrilled to launch our flights between the United Kingdom and the Maldives with our new thrice-weekly service, as we continue to expand our growing collection of winter sun destinations."

"We are proud to be able to offer more opportunities for our customers to experience the Maldives and are looking forward to welcoming them to this breathtaking and one-of-a-kind destination."

"The collaboration between MACL and Virgin Atlantic reflects the shared commitment to delivering exceptional travel experiences and fostering stronger air connectivity between the United Kingdom and the Maldives."

Caron Rohsler, British High Commissioner to Maldives, added:

"I am delighted that Virgin Atlantic has today started operating direct flights from London Heathrow to Maldives.

"Maldives is a top holiday destination for British tourists. Brits have consistently featured among top 3 nationalities visiting Maldives for many years.

"The UK Government has worked with the Government of Maldives for many years now on airport safety and aviation security. I look forward to continuing our partnerships in Maldives, especially as the airport expansion progresses.

"Tourism is an important pillar of the Maldivian economy and I hope this milestone today will contribute to continued growth in convenient and comfortable travel between our countries.

"Visitors are encouraged to read the FCDO's travel advice and to buy travel insurance to enjoy the best possible holiday experience."

The Virgin Atlantic Inaugural event was attended by the British High Commissioner to the Maldives and senior members of MACL along with senior members of the local agent , Voyages Maldives.

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About Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL):

Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL) is a state-owned company responsible for the management and operation of Velana International Airport (VIA) in the Maldives. MACL's mission is to ensure that VIA serves as the gateway for travelers to the Maldives.

About Virgin Atlantic:

Virgin Atlantic was founded by entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson in 1984, with innovation and amazing customer service at its core. In 2022, Virgin Atlantic was voted Britain's only Global Five Star Airline by APEX for the sixth year running in the Official Airline Ratings. Headquartered in London, it employs more than 7,500 people worldwide, flying customers to 31 destinations across four continents throughout the year. Virgin Atlantic recently continued its expansion in the US, launching new routes to Austin, Texas and Tampa, Florida.

Alongside shareholder and Joint Venture partner Delta Air Lines, Virgin Atlantic operates a leading transatlantic network, with onward connections to over 200 cities around the world. In February 2020, Air France-KLM, Delta Air Lines and Virgin Atlantic launched an expanded Joint Venture, offering a comprehensive route network, convenient flight schedules, competitive fares and reciprocal frequent flyer benefits, including the ability to earn and redeem miles across all carriers. Virgin Atlantic joined SkyTeam in March 2023 as the global airline alliance's first and only UK member airline, enhancing the alliance's transatlantic network and services to and from Heathrow and Manchester Airport.

Virgin Atlantic has been pioneering sustainability leadership for more than 15 years, committing to Net Zero by 2050 and continuous action that reduces environmental impact. The airline operates one of the youngest and most fuel-efficient fleets in the skies and has reduced its absolute carbon emissions by 35% over the last decade. In October 2022, Virgin Atlantic welcomed the first of 16 A330-900neos to the fleet, continuing its transformation towards 100% next generation aircraft by 2027. Later in 2023, Virgin Atlantic is leading an industry consortium to deliver the first 100% SAF flight across the transatlantic. Demonstrating that 100% SAF can be used safely as a drop in fuel in existing infrastructure, engines and airframes. The need to scale production is an industry imperative and Virgin Atlantic is committed to radical collaboration across the energy chain to support commercialisation ahead of 2030. For more information visit www.virginatlantic.com or via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @virginatlantic.

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