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Media Release

New Auckland-Chicago air service a milestone for New Zealand tourism

The first-ever direct airplane route from Auckland to Chicago announced today by Air New Zealand is a milestone for New Zealand tourism, according to Tourism Industry Aotearoa.

“This new service will bring New Zealand closer to the booming visitor markets of America and Europe than ever before. It’s another important advance for our industry,” says Chris Roberts, Chief Executive of Tourism Industry Aotearoa.

Air New Zealand will fly the route three times a week each way all-year round using their new Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft. The Auckland-Chicago flight will take approximately 15 hours, and the Chicago-Auckland flight will take about 16 hours. Previously it has taken American visitors at least 19-20 hours and a layover to get to New Zealand from Chicago.

“Americans are coming to New Zealand and spending like they never have before. The US visitor market grew nearly 20% in 2017 and it’s now worth \$1.3 billion to New Zealand a year. Much of this growth has been ignited by a massive expansion of our air links to the US in recent years, including the addition of Air New Zealand’s service to Houston, and the entry of United Airlines and American Airlines into the market. This link to Chicago can only set us up for continued success.”

In addition to opening up a gateway in the Chicago metropolitan area, America’s third largest and home to 10 million people, the flight will also bring New Zealand’s network of direct flights within two hours of the major East Coast cities like Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.

“Travellers from these cities will no longer have to fly hours and hours just to get on a flight to New Zealand. We know that anything that makes the journey to New Zealand easier makes us more attractive as a destination.”

Mr Roberts says the Chicago air connection is a great example of the tourism industry’s **Tourism 2025** growth framework in action.

“Tourism 2025 identifies increased sustainable air connectivity as critically important to boosting the industry’s value and performance. When a new sustainable air connection is established, the whole country benefits.”

Flights will commence 30 November 2018.

TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

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KEY FACTS

- Tourism in New Zealand is a \$99 million per day industry. Tourism delivers around \$40 million in foreign exchange to the New Zealand economy each day of the year. Domestic tourism contributes another \$59 million in economic activity every day.
- Tourism is New Zealand's biggest export earner, contributing \$14.5 billion or 20.7% of New Zealand's foreign exchange earnings (year ended March 2017).
- 14.5% of the total number of people employed in New Zealand work directly or indirectly in tourism. That means 399,150 people are working in the visitor economy.
- The [Tourism 2025](#) growth framework has a goal of growing total tourism revenue to \$41 billion a year by 2025.

Visit www.tia.org.nz for more information

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