

## **AIR INDIA LAUNCHES 'EASY CONNECT' FLIGHTS – BRINGING THE WORLD CLOSER TO EVERY INDIAN**

- Operationalises Government's Hub-and-Spoke model from Varanasi
- 'Easy Connect' flights to soon begin from 11 additional cities: Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Chennai, Goa, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Kochi, Mumbai, Patna, Vadodara, Visakhapatnam

**VARANASI, 25 June 2026:** Air India today marked a defining milestone in the Indian aviation industry with the inauguration of its first 'Easy Connect' flight under the Government of India's new hub-and-spoke framework, launching the transformative model aimed at linking the length and breadth of India seamlessly with the world, and vice versa.

The inaugural Easy Connect service, flight AI1111, is scheduled to depart from Varanasi at 09:23 AM today, with international passengers on the flight connecting onward from Delhi to 9 destinations outside of India, such as Dubai, Colombo, Jeddah, Riyadh, Kathmandu, Phuket.

**Mr Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, Hon'ble Minister of Civil Aviation, Government of India,** inaugurated the first 'Easy Connect' flight from Varanasi's Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport. At the occasion, he said: "Today we take a major step forward towards realising our vision of making air travel more accessible and building a future-ready, self-reliant Indian aviation industry that is efficient, inclusive, and globally competitive. Our new hub-and-spoke model paves the way for a monumental shift in how our citizens travel - where regardless of the city one lives in India, one can begin their international journey from their home city and travel across the globe with ease and confidence, on India's own wings."

At the launch, the Hon'ble Minister of Civil Aviation, Mr Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, presented the first passenger to check-in for the inaugural Easy Connect flight with a commemorative boarding pass. Also present at the occasion were Mr Samir Kumar Sinha, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation; Mr. Puneet Kansal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation; Mr Vipin Kumar, Chairman, Airports Authority of India; Mr Campbell Wilson, Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director, Air India; Mr P. Balaji, Group Head – Governance, Risk, Compliance & Corporate Affairs, Air India; among other senior officials from government agencies and Air India.

### **Nationwide rollout**

As the first airline to begin the hub-and-spoke services, Air India is leading a phased nationwide rollout that will progressively connect more domestic "spoke" cities in addition to Varanasi to the airline's primary hubs in Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru, unlocking seamless, end-to-end international travel for millions of Indians.

Over the next few months, Air India aims to introduce 'Easy Connect' services from several other Indian cities progressively, including Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Chennai, Goa, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Kochi, Mumbai, Patna, Vadodara, and Visakhapatnam, thus fundamentally changing the way Indian travellers access destinations around the world.

**Campbell Wilson, Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director, Air India,** said: "India is a major force in global aviation, and yet, for decades a meaningful share of Indian travellers flying abroad have routed their journeys through overseas transit points - often at the cost of comfort and convenience. Air India's 'Easy Connect' flights is a response to that reality, and we are grateful to the Government of India for its vision and support in enabling this framework."

Wilson added: "In today's India, a family in Varanasi, Amritsar, or Vishakhapatnam should not have to navigate unfamiliar transit environments to reach the world. They should be able to begin their international journey from their home city, on their own soil, feeling confident, comfortable, and proud as they connect seamlessly to global destinations."

Nearly 25 million passengers travel long-haul to and from India annually, of which close to 20 million are connecting travellers – and around 85% (approximately 17 million) of whom currently transit through overseas hubs rather than Indian airports.

## More about Easy Connect flights

Air India's 'Easy Connect' services are flights from spoke airports to hub airports, earmarked to provide seamless connectivity to international destinations beyond the hub airports. This means travellers from cities that do not have direct flights to many international destinations can now begin their international journey from their home city with unprecedented ease:

- Through check-in to final destination at the origin airport
- Immigration clearance at the point of departure instead of doing so at the hub airport
- Seamless international transit through the hub airport, without having to re-check baggage

This enables travellers to fly via Delhi or Mumbai as international transit passengers, eliminating the need for repeated processes and significantly reducing travel complexity and unfamiliarity usually associated with the transit experience at a foreign hub.

Passengers travelling on Air India's 'Easy Connect' flights are required to complete certain pre-departure and transit processes to ensure a seamless journey, including mandatory DigiYatra enrolment for Indian nationals. Indian passport holders connecting internationally on 'Easy Connect' flights are required to enrol in DigiYatra and ensure their boarding passes are uploaded on the app prior to departure. Web check-in and Customs declaration are not available at spoke airports.

Bookings for Air India's Easy Connect flights under the new hub-and-spoke model are now open across all channels, including Air India's website, mobile app, contact centre, and travel agents.

Flight AI1111 from Varanasi-Delhi offers seamless connections to 17 international destinations within four hours of arrival at Delhi, including London, Rome, Milan, Frankfurt, Zurich, Dubai, Riyadh, Jeddah, among others.

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## About Air India Group

The Air India Group – comprising full-service global airline, Air India, and value carrier, Air India Express – is spearheading a new era of Indian aviation. The Air India story began in 1932 when JRD Tata piloted the airline's inaugural flight and opened the skies for aviation in India. Today, Air India Group employs more than 30,000 people, operates over 300 aircraft and carries travellers to 60 domestic and 51 international destinations across five continents.

Returning to Tata Sons in 2022 following 70 years under Government ownership, Air India Group is in the midst of a five-year transformation programme, Vihaan.AI. As part of the transformation, Air India has placed orders for 600 new aircraft. In addition to taking new aircraft deliveries, Air India is progressively retrofitting all its legacy aircraft.

The Air India Group operates South Asia's largest aviation training academy in Gurugram, India. The construction of a new flying school and a greenfield maintenance base is in progress.

With transformation underway across all facets of the business and India's rich legacy of hospitality, Air India is committed to being a world class global airline with an Indian heart.

For more news on Air India, visit <http://www.airindia.com/newsroom>

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Air India launches 'Easy Connect' flights – bringing the world closer to every Indian