

Finnair to expand operations to India from June

With flights to India driving its growth, Nordic carrier Finnair is adding one more flight to India in June, even as it awaits permission from the government to add more destinations in addition to [Mumbai](#) and Delhi.

'Currently we have 12 flights a week between India and Helsinki. By June, we will fly daily from [New Delhi](#) and six times a week from Mumbai,' Taina Tornstrom, the director for Indian subcontinent for the airline, told IANS.

'We are eager to add more destinations. But currently the bilateral arrangement between the two countries permits flights only to Delhi and Mumbai,' Tornstrom said, adding that Asian passenger traffic grew over 24 percent last year, thanks to operations to India.

With some 70-odd Finnish companies, like Nokia and industrial cranes major Kone, having major expansion plans in India and Indian software giants like Infosys, Sasken and Wipro setting up bases in Finland, the airline sees a huge potential.

Bangalore and [Chennai](#) are some of the Indian cities that Finnair is keen on starting new services to. The airline is also tapping the traffic to [Europe](#) from India, with Helsinki as the base.

'The visas issued by our embassy in India is also growing - from 40,000 in 2006 to around 60,000 in 2007. People are finding Finland interesting. We have Santa. We have lakes. We have saunas. We have reindeer. The interest is growing.'

Tornstrom said Finnair offers the shortest possible links between Europe and India, and with improved connectivity, its services between India and the US, too, has been upgraded in terms of time.

'We now offer the second-fastest connection between Mumbai and New York, with a travel time of around 17 hours,' Tornstrom said. The Air India flights between the two destinations, the shortest currently, take around 15:30 hours.

'The potential is huge as the Asian traffic is growing by the day. Our Asian growth has been more than 30 percent last year mainly due to the growth of our flights to India,' she added.

Even though the Finnish national carrier started its scheduled services to India in 2006, it has been operating to India for more than two decades with chartered operations to Goa.

'We operate more than 20 charters to Goa now during the winter season. Many are repeat travellers.'

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