Virgin Australia Airline Services to the Indian Ocean Territories
Frequently Asked Questions

Virgin Australia is committed to delivering the best services possible to our guests who fly with us to the Indian Ocean Territories (IOT).
Detailed below is information about our services to the IOT and our responses to frequently asked questions from the IOT communities.

What services are available on Virgin Australia's IOT services?
- Complimentary snacks and beverages are available on IOT flights.
- The Virgin Australia "In-Flight Entertainment" system is available on A320 aircraft which operate on the IOT services.
- Guests can download the Virgin Australia In-Flight Entertainment app onto their portable device prior to boarding the flight so that they can access the content onboard the aircraft.
- The Virgin Entertainment app can be downloaded from the Google Playstore or through iTunes.
  - https://www.virginaustralia.com/au/en/experience/on-board-the-flight/in-flight-entertainment/#getting-started
- Below is a link for additional information:
  - https://www.virginaustralia.com/au/en/experience/on-board-the-flight/in-flight-entertainment/

How many flight crew are required on each IOT flight?
- Due to the crew hours required for an IOT flight rotation, Virgin Australia operate the services with the following crew:
  - Three pilots
  - Five cabin crew
  - One engineer.

What are the On Time Performance (OTP) results for Virgin Australia's IOT operation?
- Operations to Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands require extensive planning, considering the remote location of these ports and the weather cycles in these areas. In planning for flights to the IOT, Virgin Australia must consider – among other things – fuel supplies and associated contingency airports, weather and air traffic requirements.
- OTP is measured by events that are within the control of the airline.
- The measure of a delay is determined by a departure beyond 15 minutes of the scheduled departure time.
- For the period 1 January to 31 May 2022, Virgin Australia's "controllable" OTP (departing within 15 minutes of scheduled departure) result for IOT services was 92.7%.

Do I need travel insurance when travelling to the IOT?
- Virgin Australia encourages its guests to obtain travel insurance before travelling to the IOT.
- In the event of flight delays within Virgin Australia's control, assistance will be provided in accordance with the "Standard Disruption Guidelines." However, in the event of a delay attributed to operational weather conditions (that is, beyond Virgin Australia's control), the guest is responsible for any additional costs that are incurred.

What are the bag limits?

- The standard passenger baggage limit on IOT services is one piece of checked baggage at a maximum of 23kg and 1 carry on item at a maximum of 7kg.
- Additional baggage allocations vary depending on an individual's Velocity status.
- Additional "standby" bags can be purchased at the airport, online or through the Virgin Call Centre, however these additional bags are accepted on a space-available basis, meaning that if they cannot be uplifted on the nominated flight, they will be uplifted on the next available flight.

Can I take oversize items?

- Oversized and fragile items can be lodged on IOT services however they are generally uplifted on a standby basis
- See link for more details:
    - https://www.virginaustralia.com/au/en/travel-info/baggage/oversized-fragile-items/

Why have my bags been offloaded?

- In the event of high passenger numbers and adverse weather conditions, there are occasions when additional fuel is required to operate the IOT service.
- This is generally associated with the Tuesday service when we operate direct to Christmas Island.
- Guests are asked to nominate their "priority" bag and any other baggage is accepted on a standby basis.
- The "standby" baggage will be the first to be selected in the event that baggage is required to be offloaded and this baggage is generally uplifted on the next service operating to the IOT (subject to weather conditions, passenger numbers and the amount of checked baggage).
- It is important that guests are aware excess baggage is sold on a standby basis and if there are food products that need to travel, they should be nominated as the guest's "priority" piece of baggage.
- Virgin Australia has regular meetings with the Perth Airport ground handling team to ensure they are aware of the need to deliver a consistent baggage offloading process.

When is Virgin Australia obliged to pay for guest accommodation, transfers and meals?

- Virgin Australia's Compensation and Assistance Policy outlines guest entitlements in instances of cancellations, delays and in cases where guests are denied boarding.
- For cancellations and delays, we differentiate our policy based on whether an event was within our control or whether it was beyond our control.
- Our Conditions of Carriage provide information to advise guests of our policies in this regard.
- Further information can be found at:
https://www.virginaustralia.com/au/en/information/domestic-and-short-haul-international/guest-compensation-policy/

How quickly can a recovery flight occur in the event of a major delay?

- In instances where a recovery flight is required for an IOT service, Virgin Australia will respond quickly to ensure all guests are transported to the destination without undue delay.
- The time taken to organise a recovery service is influenced by crew and aircraft availability, as well as expected operational weather conditions. Continued disruptions caused by COVID on the aviation sector can also affect recovery services.
- Virgin Australia understands the impact that a major delay has on guests travelling to the IOT and we work to mobilise recovery flights to not cause further disruptions.

Why did I not receive an SMS message alerting me to a flight delay when on Cocos (Keeling) Islands?

- Virgin Australia proactively issues communications to notify guests of delays as soon as a potential disruption is identified.
- When an IOT service is delayed, an SMS and an email containing the updated flight itinerary is sent to all guests travelling on that service. The Virgin Australia website is also updated with this information.
- The Ground Handling team at Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands Airports also post details of the delay and recovery flight on the Islands' Facebook sites and communicate with guests at the airports.
- An email is also sent to tourism and accommodation operators to provide information on the developments regarding the IOT service that has been affected.
- It is important to note that on Cocos (Keeling) Islands, the mobile roaming network is not available. We encourage guests to proactively seek information relating to communications while staying on Christmas or Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

Why are seats available on an IOT service when I travel, but the booking system shows the service is sold out?

- Virgin Australia carefully manages its IOT flights to ensure that we can cater to demand and operational requirements on these services.
- To ensure sufficient fuel is carried to meet the requirements of remote island operations, we are required to limit the number of available seats sold on a flight, which is why some seats may be unoccupied on the IOT services, even though the flight could show as 'sold out'.

Why are there no direct flights from Perth to Cocos (Keeling) Islands?

- Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands are designated as 'Remote Islands' under the Australian Civil Aviation regulations, which require Airline Operators to carry enough fuel to divert from either island to a suitable alternate mainland aerodrome, irrespective of the weather conditions on either Island.
- Virgin Australia uses Learmonth Airport as an alternate for the IOT operation. This has been the alternate since COVID affected the use of international locations, such as Jakarta, for an alternate aerodrome location.
- Learmonth Airport is also used as a fuel stop for the Friday flight to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. This refuelling provides the ability to uplift the required freight, passenger and baggage loads and meet regulations for fuel loads and alternate aerodrome diversions.
- The Tuesday service can fly direct to Christmas Island because it is closer to Perth Airport, and therefore does not require a fuel stop in Learmonth.

Why do flights sometimes return to the mainland when they are approaching landing in the IOT?

- Flights operating into the IOT need to carry enough fuel to hold overhead of the destination, have multiple landing attempts or to divert to a mainland alternate aerodrome.
- There have been occasions when, due to the operational head winds, a flight has burnt more fuel on a sector that expected and close to the destination has had to divert to the alternate aerodrome due to the amount of fuel left in the tank.
- Even if conditions are clear at the destination, aviation safety regulations do not give the crew the option to continue and they must divert.

If a flight is unable to land in either Christmas or the Cocos Islands, what aerodrome will it divert to?

- Virgin Australia currently uses Learmonth Airport as an alternate for the IOT operation.
- Previously Virgin diverted to Jakarta, if weather conditions there were suitable, in the event of an unsuccessful landing in Christmas or Cocos.
- However due to the potential COVID risk of having an aircraft and passengers having to overnight in Jakarta, this location has been removed as a suitable alternate until further notice.

Why aren't additional passenger services being scheduled for coming months, given high demand and booked-out flights?

- Additional passenger flights are scheduled based not only on demand but also on availability of appropriate aircraft to service the IOT route and crew.
- COVID continues to have significant impacts on the aviation sector including crew availability, while there is also high demand for services across the network.
- At this time, there is no capacity for additional flights but Virgin Australia will continue to work with the Government on additional services where possible and appropriate.

Freight services to the IOT

- Virgin Australia is aware of the key role that the Toll air freight service and our passenger services play in delivering essential freight and resources to the IOT. The Toll freighter continues to operate every fortnight on a Friday and we have been uplifting the maximum amount of freight on this service, with additional freight uplifted on the twice-weekly passenger services.
- Virgin Australia and the Government has also supported a number of additional air freight services over recent months in response to high demand. While additional flights can provide a short-term solution, this option is not always logistically available.
- Air freighters currently carry approximately 12 tonnes per flight, depending on the expected operational conditions on the day.
- Freight is prioritised as follows:
    - Medical
    - Perishable
    - Mail
    - Priority General
    - General

Why do CI get additional freight services and CKI miss out?

- Virgin Australia works with its contractors to ensure equitable freight services for Cocos and Christmas Islands, considering population sizes and freight demand.
- Due to its geographical location and aviation regulations including additional fuel requirements, a maximum of six tonnes of freight can be uplifted to CKI, making a CKI-only freight service unviable.
- Where Christmas Island has a standalone freight service scheduled, this allows for the prioritisation of airfreight for Cocos on adjacent freight and passenger services.
- To increase additional freight capacity to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Virgin Australia is investigating the reinstatement of arrangements using Jakarta as a contingency airport for weather disrupted freight flights, as less fuel is required for that location to meet flight safety requirements. A timeframe for this option is yet to be determined and will be subject to the ongoing COVID situation.

Why have perishable goods or priority items recently not been given appropriate priority on freight services?

- Freightshop has initiated a process with Toll whereby, in the event of freight required to be offloaded at short notice due to additional fuel required, the lowest category of freight is segregated on delivery and targeted for offload.
- This will ensure that critical perishable items are not offloaded in these instances.

What is the preferred process for booking of perishable food?

- In order to streamline the freight process, a system is being trialled, meaning all perishable items lodged for IOT freighter services need to be pre-booked through Freightshop.
- From a freight planning perspective, this gives Freightshop a better understanding of when other non-perishable freight will be able to be uplifted on the Toll services

How can I raise an issue or make a complaint in relation to my freight?

- Queries relating to freight should be directed to Freightshop to review and respond to, at the following email address:
  - perth@freightshop.com.au

Why are flights disrupted when there is volcano activity in Indonesia?

- It is important to know that volcanic activity or volcano ash cloud dispersal around the destinations that we operate to, or at the planned alternate airport, may disrupt flights to the IOT.
- This may require a reduction in passenger numbers, baggage or freight on impacted services.
- Such volcanic activity could also result in a recommendation to delay or cancel the planned service, due to safety reasons.
- When a delay or cancellation is communicated, it is done in the interest of safety and we will ensure to reaccommodate affected guests on to the next available service.