



The SAS Group
Denmark Norway Sweden
SAS Corporate Communications
SE-195 87 Stockholm, Sweden
Telephone: +46-8-797 0000
Fax: +46-8-797 1515

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Star Alliance approves Blue1, South African Airways and TAP Air Portugal's Membership Application

At a meeting in Singapore the Chief Executive Board of Star Alliance, unanimously approved the Finnish airline Blue1, South African Airways and TAP Air Portugal's application to join the alliance.

Blue1

Blue1 will become the first regional member of the alliance. In terms of customer benefits, regional members will be offering the same advantages as members carriers e.g frequent flyer benefits, lounge access and through check-in.

In order to become a regional member, aside from meeting certain requirements, the carrier in question must be sponsored by and have close ties to an existing member to achieve a quick and easy integration. The sponsoring airline will represent the regional member within the alliance. As Blue1 is owned by Star Alliance member carrier SAS, these prerequisites are fulfilled.

Blue1 operates more than 110 flights per day. The fleet, one of the youngest in Europe, consists of nine Avro RJ and five Saab 2000 aircraft. In 2004 Blue1 is expected to carry more than 1 million passengers between Finland and Scandinavia and Europe.

Blue1's integration into Star Alliance is expected to be completed by the end of 2004.

"We are very proud that Blue1, a SAS Group Company, will be the first regional member of Star Alliance," said Jørgen Lindegaard, President and CEO of the SAS Group. "This way the airline will further strengthen its own and Star Alliance's position in the Finnish market."

South African Airways

South African Airways, which celebrates its 70th anniversary this year, has one of the youngest fleets in the world serving more than 20 destinations across Africa as well as flying to 34 cities in 26 countries on six continents.

"With South African Airways in the fold, we significantly strengthen our position in Africa in terms of schedule, network reach and service quality," said Jaan Albrecht, CEO, Star Alliance. "We're thrilled to have SAA on board and look forward to the official inauguration in 2005."

TAP Air Portugal

TAP Air Portugal offers an average of 180 daily flights to 40 destinations in 25 countries in Europe, Africa as well as North, Central and South America.

"TAP Air Portugal solidifies our reach on the Iberian Peninsula through its network spanning Europe, Brazil and Africa," said Jaan Albrecht, CEO, Star Alliance. "When combined with member carriers Spanair and VARIG, TAP will play a pivotal role in delivering quality service and connectivity between South America and Europe."

Star Alliance was established in 1997 as the first truly global airline alliance to offer customers global reach and a smooth travel experience. The members are Air Canada, Air New Zealand, ANA, Asiana Airlines, Austrian, bmi, LOT Polish Airlines, Lufthansa, Scandinavian Airlines, Singapore Airlines, Spanair, Thai Airways International, United, US Airways and VARIG Brazilian Airlines.

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