



AIR NZ PASSENGERS STRANDED IN HONG KONG RETURN HOME

News / Airlines



Air New Zealand passengers who had to spend a night sleeping on chairs at Hong Kong [Airport](#) are back in New Zealand.

Eighty travellers spent the night camped out at the airport after flight NZ80 was cancelled due to engineering issues.

The airline was unable to find accommodation for them because Hong Kong was booked out with a festival and national holiday.

Flight NZ80 was supposed to leave Hong Kong for Auckland at 7pm local time (midnight Saturday New Zealand time), but after two hours of waiting on board passengers were told the plane had engine failure.

They were then told they would be put on the next available flight at midnight local time (5:00 a.m. New Zealand time), which was then pushed back to 1:50 p.m. local time (6:50 p.m. New Zealand time).

The flight eventually landed in Auckland at 6:15 a.m. on Monday morning.

Only 19 rooms for families with children and elderly could be found in Hong Kong. The rest of the passengers were forced to sleep at the airport. Among those stranded was Air New Zealand board chairman Tony Carter.

South Islanders Kay Hannam and Brian Williams were among those who spent the night camped out in Hong Kong airport, but were philosophical about the wait.

The couple said the delay was just a part of travelling and while there were one or two angry people, most people understood it was better to be safe.

Williams said the fact that airline ground staff couldn't share much information and their delay coincided with a Chinese holiday meant things didn't run as smoothly as they otherwise could have.

They were returning to Blenheim on Monday morning after two months in France.

On Sunday (NZ time), passenger Anita Easton expressed frustration with the delay.

"We all know they need to fix the plane and we all know the hotels were busy, but they have communicated badly and provided little support," Easton said.

She said people were exhausted from a lack of sleep.

In a statement, Air New Zealand said the delay was due to engineering issues affecting one of the engines.

"We have been unable to secure hotel rooms to accommodate all of the customers on this flight. We have accommodated as many customers as possible in the rooms we have been able to secure, and a number of locally based customers returned home for the night.

"Unfortunately Hong Kong is currently extremely busy due to the Mid-Autumn Festival and national holiday and this has been compounded by very poor weather conditions in the region which has caused the cancellation of a number of other carriers' flights out of Hong Kong".

"We appreciate this situation has been very frustrating for our customers and thank them for their continued patience."

The passengers given meal vouchers, blankets and pillows as well as water and snacks. They would be offered a cash payment as a gesture of goodwill for their inconvenience, Air New Zealand said.

In July last year the airline came under fire after passengers from Hawaii to Auckland were grounded in Honolulu for three days.

The Boeing 767 aborted its original take off due to an indication failure and passengers were forced to return to the airport every day to check on progress of its repairs.

They were eventually given NZ\$1000 each in compensation but at the time travellers said communication had been lacklustre.

05 OCTOBER 2015

SOURCE: STUFF

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