

VA pulls out all stops to launch MEL-HKG

YESTERDAY'S launch of flights from Melbourne to Hong Kong was a packed program for Virgin Australia, which kicked off the celebrations with an early morning dragon dance at Melbourne airport.

Guests were then whisked through immigration, with those up the front in "The Business" cabin treated to a few minutes in the Etihad lounge before boarding the A330-200 which left right on time.

During the flight VA co-founder Sir Richard Branson distributed fortune cookies and generously consented to scores of selfies with passengers, while the in-flight menu also featured a range of Hong Kong inspired treats.

Upon arrival the passengers were greeted by more noisy dragons and lions, wishing good auspices for the fledgling route which will boost capacity by more than 71,000 seats annually.

The Peninsula Hong Kong hosted a welcome reception at its swanky Felix venue, while today the formalities continue with an official welcome press conference this afternoon.

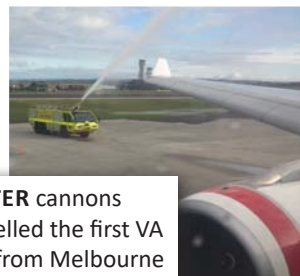
More pics from the events at facebook.com/traveldaily.



JOHN Borghetti, Virgin Australia ceo with Federal Minister for Trade, Tourism and Infrastructure Steven Ciobo, and K.S. Tang, vice chairman of Hong Kong Airlines Limited which has a strong codeshare partnership with Virgin Australia.



VISIT Victoria ceo Peter Bingeman with Melbourne Airport ceo Lyell Strambi at the launch event.



WATER cannons farewelled the first VA flight from Melbourne to Hong Kong.



JANE McKeon, head of government relations for Virgin Australia with Velocity Frequent Flyer ceo Karl Schuster at the Peninsula welcome event.



NOISY good luck lion dancers greeted Virgin Australia ceo John Borghetti and Virgin Group founder Sir Richard Branson as they disembarked in Hong Kong.



VIRGIN Australia's "official chef" Luke Mangan with Margo McNeill and Andrew Clark of Hong Kong Tourism.



TASTY tarts on offer to guests as they boarded in Melbourne.