

ETIHAD AIRWAYS MARKS GROWTH IN INDIA WITH RECORD PASSENGER FIGURES

Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, today announced a 63 per cent increase in full-year passenger traffic with partner Jet Airways to and from India reinforcing the strength of the equity tie-up and the airline's commitment to one of world's largest travel markets.

Together, the airlines carried a record 3.3 million passengers between Etihad Airways' Abu Dhabi hub and India in 2015, representing a sharp rise on the 2 million flown during the previous 12 months.

Etihad Airways became the first foreign airline to invest in an Indian carrier under the current Indian Foreign Direct Investment Rules when it invested USD 750 million in Jet Airways for a 24 per cent equity stake in 2013. Etihad Airways today operates 175 flights each week to and from 11 Indian gateway cities. The combined networks of Etihad Airways and Jet Airways offer over 250 weekly flights between Abu Dhabi and 15 cities across India.

Together, both carriers are the market leader in terms of travel between India and the UAE. In terms of the overall international market, they fly between them approximately 20 per cent of all worldwide travellers to and from India representing a large share of the country's booming air travel industry.

In addition, Etihad Airways Cargo operates 14 weekly freighters to four cities in India and flies around 120,000 tons of cargo each year in and out of the country – representing around nine per cent of the total international market.

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The figures underscore the importance Etihad Airways places to the Indian market – one of the airline’s largest sources of business – to its close partnership with Jet Airways, and reaffirm the strong ties between the UAE and India.

It is the growing bilateral relationship enjoyed between the two nations that was the focus of joint government discussions in Mumbai and Delhi last week which resulted in a raft of new agreements across various sectors to further boost strategic ties and economic trade.

Trade between the two countries is estimated to grow by more than 60 per cent in the next five years from the current level of around US\$60 billion, with investments and imports/exports in a variety of sectors, including energy, defence, manufacturing, aerospace, health, education, tourism, science and technology. The UAE is the 10th biggest foreign – and largest Arab – investor in India.

James Hogan, Etihad Airways’ President and Chief Executive Officer, said: “Bilateral relations between the UAE and India continue to grow based on years of friendship and deep commitment to strengthen economic, cultural and trade ties.

“With Etihad Airways and Jet Airways together offering over 44,000 seats each week between Abu Dhabi and India, we are clearly are a key contributor to India’s dynamic economy. There is further room to grow and we are looking at the many opportunities that exist to develop our operations.

“Our investment in Jet Airways was aimed at being part of the Indian success story. Before the Jet deal, Etihad Airways carried only two per cent of the international traffic to and from India. We have helped bring Jet Airways back to profitability. Today, Jet Airways is our number one equity partner for revenue and passenger contribution on Etihad Airways, and India is Abu Dhabi’s number one source market for international visitors.”

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Etihad Airways' hub at Abu Dhabi International Airport serves as a primary connector of air travel between India and rest of the world, offering consumers ease of transfer and more travel options through multiple frequencies from across India to Abu Dhabi and beyond.”

Since launching flights from Abu Dhabi to India in September 2004 with scheduled services to Mumbai, Etihad Airways has rapidly increased its presence across India by introducing 10 additional gateways and increasing frequency on many sectors, including thrice-daily flights on seven routes. From May 1, the airline will launch its award-winning Airbus A380 operations to Mumbai.

Etihad Airways' current Indian destinations from Abu Dhabi are Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kochi, Kolkata, Kozhikode, Mumbai and Thiruvananthapuram. Jet Airways offers the additional Indian gateways of Pune, Lucknow, Goa and Mangalore, as well as numerous domestic connections.

Etihad Airways' commitment to India is reflected by its engagement with the business community. Last year, the airline became a founding member of the UAE Business Council in India. The organisation's key objective is to act as a catalyst for commercial entities to exchange ideas and promote economic synergy between the UAE and India.

Added Mr Hogan: “India is a crucial market not only for Etihad Airways but the UAE itself, therefore we welcomed the opportunity to become a founding member of the UAE Business Council in India. Our strategic partnership with Jet Airways means we are both carrying greater numbers of business and leisure travellers between the UAE and India. We look forward to using these ties to make a strong contribution to the UAE Business Council in India.

“As an airline, we play an integral role in facilitating business, and seeing the tremendous investment opportunities in India from the UAE, we are delighted to be part of India's growth story.”

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Aside from physical investments, Etihad and Jet Airways are entering into the second of a three-year agreement as exclusive airline partners and principal sponsors of the Mumbai Indians, crowned cricket champions of the Pepsi Indian Premier League (IPL) last year. Both carriers have also jointly sponsored other key sporting and community events, twice taking the Manchester City Football Club coaching clinics to India offering youngsters from different backgrounds top level training.

Next month, Etihad Airways will take part in India Aviation 2016 in Hyderabad, the biennial conference and exhibition showcasing India's aviation industry. Organised by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the event provides the airline with a further platform to engage with policy makers, aviation experts and other key figures from across the Indian aviation industry.

By 2020, domestic and international passenger traffic through Indian airports is expected to double to 450 million. The UN World Tourism Organisation predicts more than 50 million Indians travelling overseas annually by 2020. Etihad Airways' commitment to tap into the large outbound travel market and to contribute to growing inbound tourism is fundamental to its growth strategy.

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About Etihad Airways

Etihad Airways began operations in 2003, and in 2015 carried 17.4 million passengers. From its Abu Dhabi base, Etihad Airways flies to, or has announced plans to serve, 116 passenger and cargo destinations in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas. The airline has a fleet of around 120 Airbus and Boeing aircraft, with approximately 200 aircraft on firm order, including 66 Boeing 787s, 25 Boeing 777Xs, 62 Airbus A350s and five Airbus A380s.

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Etihad Airways holds equity investments in airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Alitalia, Jet Airways, Virgin Australia, and Swiss-based Darwin Airline, trading as Etihad Regional. Etihad Airways, along with airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Alitalia, Etihad Regional, Jet Airways and NIKI, also participate in Etihad Airways Partners, a new brand that brings together like-minded airlines to offer customers more choice through improved networks and schedules and enhanced frequent flyer benefits. For more information, please visit: www.etihad.com