

Saudia, Etihad : Only two airlines offering dedicated prayer areas onboard

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Abu Dhabi : Muslims who pray regularly often face a challenging situation on long-haul flights since they usually cannot get enough space to perform their prayers onboard. However, to their delight, many Middle East based carriers have taken the initiative to create a dedicated prayer area for Muslims onboard. The purpose is to ensure passengers can perform their prayers conveniently even while flying.

The most prominent airline to offer a prayer space is Saudia, the flag carrier of Saudi Arabia. Since most of its passengers are the local Muslim population, a prayer space has turned out to be an attractive feature for the fliers.

Saudia has installed a prayer space in the rear of all of its wide-body aircraft such as A330s, 777s, and 787s. The space is made by removing a section of economy seats ahead of the last galley in the center area. Some aircraft also feature a display pointing to find the Qibla, the direction of prayer for that moment.

Larger aircraft can accommodate up to 10 passengers on the carpeted floor and feature curtains for privacy.

However, since making the space for the prayer area requires removing 6-9 seats at least, most airlines are not opting for this move.

Nevertheless, UAE's flag carrier Etihad has also made space for a prayer section on its 787s and A380s.

Passengers are offered a prayer mat and area near the door that can be curtained off to pray. The screen also points out the direction towards Mecca.