

## **Etihad airways expands global network**

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Abu Dhabi: Etihad airways, Abu Dhabi's national carrier, has announced the launch of direct flights to Sochi, Russia, starting May 29.

The new route will connect Zayed International Airport (AUH) in Abu Dhabi with Sochi International Airport (AER), offering three weekly flights. Sochi, known as the gateway to the northeastern coast of the Black Sea, is a popular tourist destination.

Tickets are now on sale, and the flights will be operated using Etihad's modern Airbus A320 family aircraft.

The announcement is the latest new route that Etihad has unveiled. It is the 14th new destination the airline will add to its network this year. Etihad will also commence flights to Atlanta, Hanoi, Hong Kong and Taipei, as well as to the European capitals of Prague and Warsaw. Expanding its network across North Africa, Etihad will begin flying to

Algiers, Tunis and Al Alamein.

Etihad will also bolster its network across Southeast Asia with new connections directly to stunning holiday locations, including Chiang Mai and Krabi in Thailand, Medan on the island of Sumatra and the cultural city of Phnom Penh. These join existing destinations across South East Asia, including Phuket and Bangkok.

"The new route (to Sochi) gives more opportunity for guests to visit Abu Dhabi, either as a stopover or a destination," the airline said in a statement.

The new route will provide guests with nonstop access to the Krasnodar Krai region - home to stunning summer beaches and lush mountains and winter skiing and snowboarding in the nearby Caucasus Mountains, made famous by the 2014 Winter Olympics.

On Thursday (Feb 13), Etihad Airways said it welcomed 1.7 million passengers in January, up 18 per cent on last year.

On January 24, Reuters reported that Etihad Airways and flynas are gearing up to list on local stock markets this year, marking the first IPOs by Gulf carriers in nearly two decades. The airline is looking at a listing this quarter, the people with knowledge of its plans said, with one of them saying the airline would target both local and international investors, reported agency.

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