

Flyadeal to launch in India

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Riyadh: Saudi budget airline Flyadeal plans to expand its operations to India within the next 12 months, according to CEO Steve Greenway.

A subsidiary of Saudia, Flyadeal currently operates from Jeddah, Riyadh, and Dammam, serving around 30 domestic and international destinations.

Greenway said the airline now has set its sights on travellers from India, China, and Southeast Asia.

"China is on the radar, but India, in particular, is key due to the prevalence of worker traffic and religious traffic from the Subcontinent," said Greenway at the Skift Global Forum East in Dubai on Wednesday. "That's certainly something we are looking at over the next 12 months. The market size in India is huge."

"What many people don't realize is that we already codeshare with

Saudia. This means we connect to Saudia's hubs in Riyadh and Jeddah, and passengers flying from the Subcontinent can connect with Saudia's European routes.

"This complementary network benefits both of us. As we expand into India, we'll be bringing passengers not only to the Kingdom but also to Saudia."

flyadeal, an all-Airbus operator, will have a fleet of 38 aircraft by the end of the year. It plans to grow to 88 within the next three years, comprised of a mix of aircraft in the Airbus A320 family.

"We'll be adding 320s, and soon, the A321s will start joining us in Q1 of 2026. These fantastic aircraft will allow us to operate longer routes," he said.

Last May, flyadeal placed its biggest order for 51 Airbus A320 family aircraft, including 12 further A320neos, with a delivery schedule beginning in 2026. The overall goal is to reach 100 aircraft in its fleet by 2030.

"There's a massive mandate from the government (of Saudi Arabia) to bring pilgrims, workers, and high-volume, low-yield traffic into the kingdom. To cater to that market, we need widebody aircraft," said Greenway.

"We are targeting long-haul routes for pilgrims coming from the UK for Hajj or Umrah, as well as worker traffic from Southeast Asia—places like Thailand—and beyond."

According to media reports, the budget carrier is expected to decide on its 15-aisle wide-body order by the end of the year. The Saudi airline currently operates five leased wide-body aircraft on certain routes, and Greenway said he would consider operating the widebodies to the Subcontinent.

He said it makes sense to operate the bigger aircraft in some Indian markets, such as Kolkata.

"We have five this year and seven next year. We're expanding our fleet and already operating widebodies on certain routes. There are specific markets in the Subcontinent where widebodies make sense, especially for cargo. A widebody can carry 20-25 tons of cargo, which we can't do

with narrow bodies.

"Cargo is also an important part of the market."

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