

Gulf hub shutdown pushes Asia–Europe airfares above USD 2,700 amid capacity crunch

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Dhaka: Airfares between Asia and Europe have surged sharply after the shutdown of major Gulf aviation hubs, triggering a sudden capacity shortage across one of the world’s busiest long-haul corridors.

Dubai International Airport, which normally handles more than 1,000 daily flights, has remained closed for six consecutive days as of March 5, 2026. The disruption stems from the ongoing US-Israel war against Iran, which has also affected other Gulf transit hubs.

The closure has grounded large portions of operations by major Middle Eastern carriers, including Emirates and Qatar Airways. Together, Gulf carriers account for roughly 30% of total passenger traffic between Asia and Europe, making the shutdown a major shock to global aviation networks.

With traditional connections via Gulf hubs unavailable, travelers are rushing to secure seats on direct services or alternate routes through Asian hubs such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and Bangkok. The sudden shift has pushed ticket prices sharply higher as available capacity struggles to absorb the surge in demand.

Economy-class fares on the Hong Kong-London route operated by Cathay Pacific reached HKD 21,158, equivalent to USD 2,705, for one-way tickets departing March 11. Later departures in the same month are priced at HKD 5,054.

Meanwhile, Thai Airways reported that economy seats on its Bangkok-London service are fully booked until late next week. A one-way ticket for March 15 is currently priced at THB 71,190, equivalent to USD 2,265. Fares fall to THB 27,045 by March 18 as additional availability appears.

On the Beijing-London route, Air China shows no near-term economy-class availability. Business-class tickets on the service are listed at CNY 50,490, equivalent to USD 7,330.

Travel agencies are also reporting a sharp rise in booking changes. Australian travel retailer Flight Centre said customer inquiries have surged by about 75% as travelers attempt to reroute flights through alternative hubs in Asia or North America.

Airlines such as Singapore Airlines and Turkish Airlines are seeing increased demand as passengers avoid Middle Eastern transit points.

Industry analysts estimate that the shutdown of Gulf hubs has reduced Asia-Europe flight capacity by roughly 20%, forcing airlines and travelers to rely on a limited number of direct services.

Although alternative routes remain available, longer flight paths are raising fuel costs at a time when global oil prices are also increasing due to the ongoing conflict.

Aviation observers say ticket prices and limited seat availability are likely to persist through mid-March, with gradual normalization expected later in the month if flight operations at Gulf hubs resume.

