

UAE-India flight fares drop by 80pc

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dubai: After a spike in airfares during the festive December season and peak winter travel, travellers on UAE-India routes are now enjoying relief, with ticket prices dropping to Dh1,000 or below for Economy class.

This is typical for the off-peak season, which runs from January to mid-April. However, fares to tier-2 cities remain relatively higher. For example, tickets to destinations like Jaipur (Dh1,128), Varanasi (Dh1,755), and Indore (Dh1,235) exceed Dh1,000. In contrast, fares to major cities like Mumbai (Dh753) and Delhi (Dh900) remain below Dh1,000 for travel between mid-January and early February.

Despite lower demand during the off-season, travellers heading to smaller cities may still need to budget more, according to Rashid Abbas, Managing Director of Arooha Travels.

"Travellers looking for last-minute tickets for trips during the upcoming weekend (January 24-28) can find fares as low as Dh850 to Mumbai and Dh1,125 to Kochi," said Abbas.

During the December holiday season, fares to these cities were priced above Dh2,500. Abbas added, "These recent fare reductions offer significant relief, especially for budget-conscious passengers planning their trips in the quieter months."

According to travel agents, the most affordable Economy fares to India's major metro cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru, are under and a little over Dh1,000. "It is also a good idea to book tickets for February - March travel immediately to take advantage of really low fares," said Mehar Sawlani, Director of Sales at Richmond Gulf Travels. "To Mumbai, ticket prices drop to Dh813 during late February and March," she said.

According to travel agents, the stable rates are expected to remain until early April despite these months being a high season for inbound travel from the UAE.

In the case of tier-2 cities, the fares are higher due to lower flight frequencies. "Full-service airlines don't fly to almost all the smaller cities in India, including Air India. The airline stopped the service in 2022. Only budget carriers, like Air India Express, IndiGo, and Spice Jet, operate in the smaller cities. And since the frequencies are limited to one to a maximum of two flights a day, it results in higher fares," explained Afi Ahmed, Chairman of Smart Travels.

Some of the pricier cities to travel to during this time are Kolkata (Dh1,480), Nagpur (Dh1,385), Jaipur (Dh1,583), and Goa (Dh1,286).

Fares to most of the hyper-busy South sector are above Dh1,000 but below Dh1,500 for immediate travel. Kochi fares are priced at Dh1,125, Mangalore airfares cost Dh1,380, Chennai rates average Dh1,086, and Bengaluru fares are Dh1,158. However, these fares are relatively lower than the December 2024 highs of Dh1,900 to Dh3,100.

Airfares are projected to remain high in 2025 due to robust passenger demand and a slowdown in aircraft deliveries. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), aircraft deliveries have significantly dropped from their 2018 peak of 1,813 planes. The

estimate for 2024 deliveries stands at 1,254 aircraft—a 30pc reduction from initial projections.

“Deliveries in 2025 are expected to increase to 1,802, down from the previously forecast 2,293, with further reductions likely,” IATA stated.

Additionally, the backlog of new aircraft orders has reached 17,000 planes this year, the highest in the industry’s history. Current delivery rates would take 14 years to clear this backlog.

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