

## UAE national day weekend : Flight ticket fares soar up

- A Monitor Desk Report

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**Dubai: UAE residents with travel plans during the extended National Day weekend will have paid 15-30 per cent more to book a flight - whether to India or the US - compared to September fares.**

In fact, to certain destinations, ticket rates from the UAE have doubled compared to the off-peak phase during September.

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For example, return Economy airfares for travel from November 28 to December 3 average Dh1,482 (Dubai to Mumbai) to Dh3,805 (Dubai to London), compared to Dh875 to Dh2,530 just a month ago.

And those to popular South Asian destinations such as Bangkok (Dh2,975) and Tokyo (Dh5,725) have also surged compared to post-summer lows of Dh1,790 and Dh4,270.

In fact, on some high in demand routes, there was an additional spike in ticket rates after UAE authorities announced the National Day weekend will include that Monday (December 4) as well.

The most significant rate hikes have happened on flights to most airports in India

(Dh1,286 to Mumbai and Dh1,510 to Delhi, compared to Dh870 to Dh770 in September) and the United States (Dh4,373 to New York and Dh7,685 to Houston, versus Dh3,850 to Dh5,730) have seen the most significant increases.

Fares have held steady to certain destinations, while for the UK, they see an additional 10-15 per cent increase as the Christmas and New Year breaks approach.

### **Stable fares to Europe**

Those to Europe remain stable, and Shanawaz Khan, founder of Trips Away, said that persistent delays in Schengen visa appointments from the UAE are compelling travellers to defer their European holiday plans until well after January 10, 2024, which is still off-peak by European holiday standards.

Direct Economy return airfares to European destinations are averaging from Dh1,511 (Prague) to Dh2,845 (Paris) and Dh3,705 (Barcelona) to Dh2,125 (Athens).

"Fares have more or less remained steady since September," said Khan. "The demand, however, is low due to delays in visa appointments. Many are already planning their Summer 2024 Europe trips to avoid visa hassles during that time."

### **Long weekend, higher fares**

Moreover, since the National Day holidays (December 2-4) stretch over Saturday to Monday, some travelers, especially families, are pushing their trips by another week. This way, they avoid the peak rates during the National Day break.

And for families, traveling after December 9 makes sense since schools would close for the winter break, said Rashid Abbas, Managing Director of Arooha Travels.

"The fares, however, are pretty high for a quick getaway, even to popular destinations like Baku (Dh1,115) and Georgia (Dh1,462)," he said. "The ones who are steadfast on their holiday plans are instead going to nearby destinations like Istanbul, where fares are relatively low (Dh870 for a return ticket).

"Many are also looking at local staycations or trips to nearby destinations such as Musandam (Oman). A majority are leaving only after December 9."

### **Package deals**

To save on high costs, travellers are opting for group and custom travel packages for travel agencies. "There is a lot of demand for group travel packages among families and young couples after December 9," said Khan.

"For example, a group luxury package to Maldives is available for Dh2,999. However, direct bookings will cost the person Dh3,800 and above. People are opting for these fares to cut costs."

Top destinations include - Georgia, Armenia, and Kazakhstan. Trips to Salalah, Oman, are sold out, according to Holiday Factory.

For their December vacation plans, many travellers are also choosing connecting flights instead of a direct flight.

"A non-stop Dubai to London flight is over Dh3,000," said Abbas. "However, with one layover, a traveller only has to pay Dh1,491. This is becoming an increasingly

popular option among UAE residents.

“They are extending their holiday days by one to two days to save on time.”

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