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UAE-S Arabia weekly flights hike 13pc during Ramadan

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Dubai: Air travel between the UAE and Saudi Arabia has seen a significant increase, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan, as devotees flock to perform Umrah rituals.

The General Civil Aviation Authority's (GCAA) latest statistics reveal a 13.3 percent rise in the number of flights between the two countries in March, coinciding with the start of Ramadan. This surge amounts to approximately 383 weekly flights, up from around 338 in February.

The GCAA highlighted that flydubai played a major role in this increase, boosting its flights to the Kingdom by 40 percent from February to March. The airline now operates 130 weekly flights covering an extensive network of destinations within Saudi Arabia. Similarly, Etihad Airways expanded its operations by more than 22.2 percent, offering 77 flights in March to key cities including Dammam, Jeddah, and Riyadh.

Emirates and Wizz Air Abu Dhabi also contributed to the increased flight operations, with Emirates running about 67 weekly flights and Wizz Air Abu Dhabi operating around 21.

Air Arabia was not left behind, with approximately 88 weekly flights connecting various Saudi cities to the UAE. This expansion in air travel reflects the growing demand for Umrah pilgrimages during Ramadan, especially in the last ten days of the holy month.

Etihad Airways reported transporting around 45,000 passengers to its destinations in Saudi Arabia from March 11 to April 7, highlighting the peak of Umrah season. Jeddah emerged as the most popular destination among Etihad's routes in Saudi Arabia during this period. The airline achieved a passenger occupancy rate exceeding 95 percent on its Jeddah flights, underscoring the high demand and efficiency of its service.

The majority of travelers heading to Saudi Arabia for Umrah were from the UAE, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia. Etihad Airways serves three key destinations in the Kingdom with a variety of aircraft. Specifically, Dammam and Riyadh are served using Airbus A320 aircraft, while Jeddah benefits from a mix of Airbus A320, Boeing 777, and Boeing 787 aircraft.

As of March 15th, Etihad Airways has permanently increased its service frequency to Jeddah and Riyadh due to sustained demand. The airline now offers a total of 77 weekly flights to Saudi Arabia: 28 each to Jeddah and Riyadh, and 21 to Dammam.

This uptick in air travel between the UAE and Saudi Arabia not only facilitates religious pilgrimages but also strengthens cultural and economic ties between the two nations. The aviation sector's responsiveness to increased demand during significant periods such as Ramadan showcases its pivotal role in enhancing regional connectivity and supporting religious tourism.

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