

UAE travel: Airlines drop fares, offer major discounts

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dubai: Right now is turning out to be the best time for those wanting to travel, with return airfares to multiple destinations from the UAE seeing a 15-20 per cent drop. After the extreme increases in ticket rates all through summer, the drop will come as belated relief for those with upcoming travel plans.

It will help corporate travelers, with even Business class rates recording sizeable dips. Also, those UAE residents planning short breaks can also use the present to keep their expenses in check.

They will have until November and early December to enjoy the rates, after which peak holiday season travel pushes fares higher by 10-15 per cent. Even more. Heavy airline promotions.

UAE and Gulf airlines have launched massive promotions to keep fliers interested between now and the holiday season travel at the year-end.

Saudia is offering a massive 50 per cent discount on all flights until November, while Etihad Airways' global sale starts at Dh895 Wizz Air Abu Dhabi is offering tickets for as low as Dh70 Emirates' featured fares include return flights to Mumbai for Dh1,125 and Dh2,915 to Munich.

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“Seasonality has come into play, and the market is getting corrected automatically,” said Ranjit Peter, Business Head for Air MEA at TBO.com. “Airfares to leisure routes have calmed down due to a slight drop in demand. However, we expect to see an uptick in corporate travel movement starting the middle of this month.”

In the year-to-date, business travel has seen a massive comeback, with travel agencies reporting a rise in group corporate bookings. Plus, the coming weeks will see Dubai and the UAE's season of trade shows and exhibitions - big and niche alike - open big and wide. All of this would add to quite a busy time for airlines, but for travellers the comfort of paying less than what rates were in summer 2023.

UAE and leading regional airlines have boosted their capacities to major travel hubs in Europe, Central Asia, the Americas and Southeast Asia. Emirates has just announced it will operate all A380 flights to Sydney from November.

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Pocket-friendly

Fares have dropped across the board, including on the hyper-busy Subcontinent routes, said Ashish Pratap Singh, CMO of the online travel agency Rehlat.

“And if we look at GCC to North Africa, fares to some destinations have decreased by 7-10 per cent (for travel from September 15 to 22),” said Singh. (For instance, fares to Cairo are at Dh772 (vs. Dh900 in July).) But fares to some GCC and MENA destinations have actually gone up. Tickets to Beirut are running high, with the average being Dh1,318 vs. Dh822 in summer.

Flights to Marrakesh, for example, had been averaging Dh2,705 for the past two months.” There is a slowdown in demand to this destination

due to the Morocco earthquake,” according to Rashid Abbas, Managing Director of Arooha Travels.

Flying to the US

Fares to North America (including Canada), however, have remained consistent at Dh3,500 to Dh6,000 vs. the July highs of Dh5,500 to Dh7,000. This is despite UAE carriers boosting capacities significantly to American destinations and activating codeshares with Air Canada and United Airlines.

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New flights, lower fares

UAE carriers are using this lean period to boost airline frequencies and introduce new routes. Etihad Airways, Air Arabia Abu Dhabi, flydubai, and the likes of Qatar Airways, Oman Air and Gulf Air introduced an array of new services to multiple locations. Saudi airlines flynas and Saudia too are making a solid impact by aggressively expanding their networks to offer cost-effective flights to highly sought-after destinations in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, posing stiff competition to other regional carriers.

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