

UAE Travel disrupted as Oman airline suspends flights to India

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Muscat : Oman’s low-cost carrier SalamAir has halted its India operations, effective October 1, with multiple sources confirming the news.

The recently announced connections from the UAE’s Fujairah Airport to three Indian cities, including Jaipur, Lucknow, and Thiruvananthapuram, have also been affected, it was confirmed.

The airline’s official reservation offices in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Trivandrum also confirmed the development, with the latter stating via email: “Please note, all our schedules to and from MCT [Muscat] to India stands cancelled from OCT [October] onwards [sic].”

While an official statement is still awaited from the airline, its online booking system shows no flights are available on any of the four Indian routes SalamAir serves, including Calicut, from October 1.

Agents has confirmed those holding confirmed bookings will receive full refunds.

A report in the Times of Oman has cited an email sent to trade partners by the

airline, which states the decision was ‘not made lightly’ but was taken ‘due to the limitation of flight rights allocation to India’.

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Operations for Oman Air, the sultanate’s flag carrier, appear to be unaffected.

The Indian sector is popular in the GCC in light of the large expat population that resides in the region. While Gulf carriers such as Emirates, Etihad Airways, Qatar Airways and Saudia continue to operate with daily flights to several cities across India, the country has been pushing back for its domestic carriers to serve these popular routes.

The SalamAir news comes as a blow to Indian expats in the sultanate, who saw airfares between Oman and India surge over the summer period following a cancellation in operations of India’s Go First airline, which used to operate three weekly flights from Muscat to Kochi, along with two flights to Kannur and daily operations to Mumbai.

In March, India’s Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia told media it was looking towards the country’s domestic carriers to fly long-haul and recapture control of Indian travel from foreign rivals.

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Scindia said India was not looking at increasing air traffic quotas with Gulf states and instead wanted Indian carriers to offer non-stop services on larger planes.

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