Qatar Airways boosts flight frequencies to 18 destinations during holiday season

Qatar Airways continues to increase flight frequencies to major destinations around the world, adapting to the travel demand increases to popular destinations across the globe during the peak winter holiday season. This increase is part of the airline’s ongoing efforts to provide greater choice and connectivity to passengers as they discover the world via the airline’s home and hub Hamad International Airport (HIA).

The airline launched extra flights to top destinations including:

- Colombo: Increasing from daily to two daily flights from December 1.
- Clark: Increased from five weekly to daily flights from November 18.
- Cebu: Increased from weekly to daily flights from December 20.
- Berlin: Increasing from four weekly to daily flights from November 1.
- Phuket: Increasing from daily to three daily flights from December 9.
- Bangkok: Increasing from five weekly to daily flights from December 17.
- Kuala Lumpur: Increasing from weekly to daily flights from November 1.
- Medina: Increased from four weekly to daily flights from December 17.
- Cairo: Increased from three weekly to daily flights from December 17.
- Dublin: Increasing from daily to three weekly flights from December 18.
- Brussels: Increasing from three weekly to daily flights from December 17.
- Colombo: Increasing from three weekly to daily flights from December 17.
- Copenhagen: Increasing from five weekly to daily flights from November 18.
- Munich: Increasing from three weekly to daily flights from December 17.
- Beirut: Increasing from weekly to daily flights from December 17.
- Cairo: Increased from three weekly to weekly flights from December 17.
- Sharjah: Increased from weekly to daily flights from December 17.
- Jeddah: Increased from three weekly to weekly flights from December 17.
- Frankfurt: Increasing from three weekly to weekly flights from December 17.
- Helsinki: Increasing from three weekly to weekly flights from December 17.

On December 1, the airline launched direct flights from Doha to Cebu, increasing the frequency of passengers flying to the Philippines.

Al-Kaabi leads Qatar delegation to OAPEC Ministerial Council

HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida Al-Kaabi headed Qatar’s delegation to the 107th Ministerial Council meeting of the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), which was held virtually on Saturday.

The meeting discussed various issues including plans to enhance the OAPEC’s activities, as well as a global petroleum export report and the latest developments on the environment and global warming front.

The meeting was attended by the OAPEC’s chief executive officer, HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida Al-Kaabi.

Qatar Airways CEO and chief executive officer, HE Akbar Al Baker, said: “Qatar Airways continues to develop its schedule by increasing flight frequencies to many popular destinations across the world to further boost its network by increasing its connectivity to passengers as they discover the world via the airline’s home and hub Hamad International Airport (HIA). This includes Qatar Airways’ inaugural services to Phuket, launched with three weekly flights from yesterday, and Cebu, with two weekly flights from January 1, 2022. The airline also recently launched direct flights to Almaty, Kazakhstan.

The increase in flight frequencies is part of Qatar Airways’ ongoing efforts to provide greater choice and connectivity to passengers as they discover the world via the airline’s home and hub Hamad International Airport (HIA), while adopting the strictest safety measures both on the ground and in the air, to ensure the safety and well-being of passengers and staff. This increase will provide even greater choice to our business and leisure passengers, who can connect seamlessly to some 18 popular destinations across the globe during the peak winter holiday season. This increase is part of the airline’s ongoing efforts to provide greater choice and connectivity to passengers as they discover the world via the airline’s home and hub Hamad International Airport (HIA). This includes Qatar Airways’ inaugural services to Phuket, launched with three weekly flights from yesterday, and Cebu, with two weekly flights from January 1, 2022. The airline also recently launched direct flights to Almaty, Kazakhstan.

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Huawei Cloud announces ‘Spark’ startup ecosystem support for Mideast SMEs

H uawei Cloud has announced the launch of a new startup ecosystem support programme to accelerate the development of technology enterprises and ecosystems in the Middle East.

The initiative is the first step towards supporting Huaweis Cloud partners. According to the company, the programme, which Huawei announce in June 2022 will empower more SMEs in the region, will have a 90% success rate, with nearly 90% of the businesses that apply to the programme are expected to receive support.

Frank Dai, president, Huawei Cloud Middle East, said: “Huawei Cloud is committed to empowering more SMEs in the Middle East, and is committed to providing comprehensive, in-depth and continuous training and support to help them achieve their business goals.

By empowering more SMEs in the Middle East, we can help to create a more competitive and innovative industry landscape. We believe that SMEs are essential contributors to the Middle East’s economy and are critical to the region’s growth and development.”

In the region, 99% of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and 70% of the country’s workforce. Similarly, the SME sector represents more than 94% of all companies operating in the UAE and provides jobs for more than 64% of the private sector’s workforce.

Apple has announced a new support programme for the SME sector, contributing to significant revenue boost and business resilience. A flagship by the UAE’s Ministry of Economy, known as Digital SMEs by 2022, aims to empower small businesses in the Middle East to attract new customers, 64% were able to generate profit growth, and 59% were able to access new markets.

In the region, 94% of SMEs accessing digital training recorded an increase in sales averaging +12% and could process payments seven times faster than non-digital payments.

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Evergrande and Kaisa cut by Fitch to default

In its note on Evergrande, the ratings agency cited “increasing uncertainty around the company’s ability to fund the repayment of its debt” and “the significant length of time required for an eventual resolution”.

Kaisa, Fitch said, had “degraded” rights of Evergrande shareholders and its bondholders had not yet been paid.

In its note on Kaisa, Fitch said the group had the ability to fund payments of its debt in the short term, but “the potential for substantial pressure on cash flows in the medium term remains high, and the future prospects for the group are uncertain”.

Fitch said it had downgraded Evergrande’s bond rating over the “marketed-oriented control” exerted by the government.

Evergrande’s bonds were cut to “restricted default”, meaning they were at high risk of default, while Kaisa’s bonds were downgraded to “defaulted”.

Fitch said it had not yet started to write down the value of Evergrande’s bonds, but had applied a “cross default” provision to Kaisa’s bonds.

Fitch said it expected to review plans to hire more staff in anticipation of a business revival.

Evergrande confirmed it had not begun winding-up processes, but had started work on a restructuring plan after it missed a coupon payment.

Kaisa is expected to soon sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) with Lazard, the adviser of a group of bondholders, the source said.

The group of Kaisa offshore bonds, which companies were worth more than $300 million in liabilities, and other indebted Chinese property companies has prompted financial markets in recent months amid fears of knock-on effects around the world.

Fitch cut the ratings of South Africa’s biggest foreign markets. The downgrade comes after more than 80% of the world’s big emerging market economies were rated as junk by Fitch, resulting in South Africa being the last major country in the world to avoid being downgraded.

Kaisa’s bonds were cut to “defaulted” status as the company’s plans to restructure its debt were in doubt.

The move follows the “cross default” provision applied to Evergrande’s bonds, which the agency said would not undermine Hong Kong’s capital market.

Fitch said it had no plans to change its rating on Evergrande.

Fitch also downgraded Kaisa’s bond rating, citing “real risks” to its ability to fund payments of its debt in the short term.

Fitch said it expected to sign an “expanded” agreement on December 17, but declined to confirm the terms of it.

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**Worker victories over gig economy giants**

A growing number of countries are taking on gig economy giants like Uber, Bolt and Deliveroo, who traditionally treat their workers as self-employed and not as employees with normal labor rights.

A report published by the European Commission last October estimated that gig economy companies in Europe are worth €300 billion and employ 6.4 million people, mostly on short-term, irregular contracts.

In November, the EU announced plans to consider reclassifying gig workers as employees under a forth-coming EU Directive on workers’ rights.

Under the proposed rules, gig workers would have the legal right to freedom of movement, a mandate to improve gig workers’ rights.

The draft proposal, seen by Bloomberg, could cost the sector up to €4.5bn for the 15 EU countries, or €5.9bn for the Netherlands.

It would likely give millions more workers for big tech companies such as Amazon, delivery and ride-hailing giants including Uber, Bolt, Deliveroo and others.

In the report, the EU executive noted that gig economy drivers were “subject to disparities in working conditions across countries”, with gig workers in some countries paid below the minimum wage, while in other countries they were paid more than €20 an hour.

The report also said the gig economy had “led to a weakening of competition”, with gig economy companies such as Uber and Deliveroo having a “proportionally less effective” ability to compete with traditional taxi companies.

**Food delivery, ride apps to pay billions more in new EU gig workers plan**

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