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AIRLINE BUSINESS DAILY news @ Routes

BRINGING YOU THE NEWS FROM ROUTES DUBAI NETWORKING FORUM – DAY ONE: SUNDAY 17 SEPTEMBER

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Gulf-US takes centre stage

THE BATTLE FOR MARKET share in the fledgling Gulf-US market is heating up, with major carriers on both sides adding capacity and revealing new routes.

Some carriers including Etihad and United Airlines have already firmed up plans for new non-stop services linking the Middle East and USA. Several others have broad plans to launch services in the market but are still pondering their options and will take advantage of contacts with airports made at Routes before selecting their city pairs.

Capacity on routes between the Gulf states and the USA is being added at a tremendous pace, with the number of weekly frequencies roughly doubling over the last two years to 30, according to Innovata. This figure will rise again after Abu Dhabi-based Etihad launches a daily Abu Dhabi-New York JFK service on 26 October with Airbus A340-500s. It will be the first non-stop service between Abu Dhabi and New York, Etihad's second North American destination after Toronto.

Sheikh Rashid terminal at Dubai's international airport is a focal point for visitors to Routes but the airport could be one of many in the region to benefit from route development between the Gulf states and the USA

United Airlines also plans to launch at the end of October a non-stop Kuwait-Washington Dulles service three times per week using Boeing 777s. The signing at the end of August of an open skies accord between Kuwait and the USA should lead to more expansion of commercial services between the two countries. Kuwait Airways has operated services to the USA since 1978 under a mutual government accord and currently flies three-times weekly between Kuwait and New York JFK with 777-200s.

United will be the first US carrier to fly into the Gulf since 2001 when TWA dropped its New York-Cairo-Riyadh service. Continental Airlines and Delta Air Lines, both of which now serve Israel, are pondering launching new services to the Gulf from their Newark and New York JFK hubs. Continental and Delta will be at Routes along with American Airlines and US Airways.

Emirates is driving most of the traffic growth in the Middle East-US market. It began flights to New York JFK two years ago and upped the frequency to double-daily in November last year. The carrier plans to add a third daily New York connection, via Hamburg in Germany from 29 October. Emirates has even more ambitions for the USA and is mulling destinations on the West Coast and in the Mid-West.

Emirates is already the largest carrier in the Gulf-US market, followed by Royal Jordanian with 10 weekly A340 flights to three US destinations – Chicago, New York and Detroit. Saudi Arabian is the third largest with weekly Boeing 747-400 flights on a Washington-New York-Jeddah-Riyadh routing. Kuwait Airways is the fourth and last Gulf carrier currently in the market.

Qatar Airways is another Middle Eastern carrier eyeing the other side of the Atlantic, having just taken delivery of the first of 10 A340-600s.

Qatar, Etihad and Emirates will all attend Routes and use the event to forge new contacts with North American airports. ■

TALKING SHOP - EVENTS AROUND ROUTES TODAY

Routes opens today with chairman Mike Howarth, anticipating a record 25,000 one-to-one meetings between airlines and airports.

"With high level delegations from the likes of the USA, India, Russia, Malaysia, Scandinavia and Australia, Routes in Dubai is a truly global event," he says. The 300-plus airlines and 600-plus airports, industry organisations and manufacturers represented are further bolstered by the co-located ICAO Liberalisation Conference at the Dubai International Conference and Exhibition Centre, at which a high number of officials from the world's civil aviation authorities will attend.

Today's programme includes a number of events:

0715 - 1500	The 5th Annual Routes Golf Tournament at Arabian Ranches Golf Club
0900 - 1600	Orientation Tour of Dubai City
1130 - 1300	African Networking Lunch at the Novotel
1330	Registration Desk and Diary Advice & Extra Meetings Desk Open and Hosted Networking Stands Open – Open House in the Networking Village
1400 - 1500	Industry Briefing: Airport Infrastructure presentation by Richard Tollis, Partner, Ernst & Young in Dubai Rooms C & D, Level 1
1500 - 1530	Industry Briefing: Olivier Onidi, Head of International Air Transport Agreements, Directorate General for Energy & Transport, European Commission in Dubai Rooms E & F, Level 1
1600 - 1700	Industry Briefing: Aircraft Manufacturer presentation by Airbus (pre-booking necessary) in Dubai Rooms C & D, Level 1
1730 - 1930	Welcome Reception hosted by Dubai Department of Civil Aviation in the Networking Village

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Life returns to Beirut airport

CARRIERS ARE GRADUALLY RESUMING services to the Lebanese capital Beirut after the introduction of a ceasefire that halted hostilities between neighbouring Israel and Lebanese resistance fighters Hezbollah and the lifting of a military blockade.

Home carrier Middle East Airlines (MEA) has been gradually reintroducing services from Beirut and the carrier says its entire fleet has now been repatriated to Beirut from the Syrian capital Damascus, where MEA operations were based during the conflict.

British Airways franchise partner BMed and Qatar Airways have both restarted commercial flights to Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport following approval from the Lebanese authorities.

Etihad Airways has resumed its four-times weekly Abu Dhabi-Beirut service, alongside the daily service by low-cost carrier Air Arabia from Sharjah.

German flag-carrier Lufthansa has restarted its five-times weekly services from Frankfurt, and Gulf Air, Kuwait Airways and Emirates have also returned to the Lebanese capital.

DAVID KAMINSKI-MORROW

Emirates will initially operate three-times weekly from Dubai while Gulf Air's service will be daily.

Air France has resumed service at four-times weekly flights at first, three less than before the start of the hostilities. "Demand will determine whether we go back to those levels. But the first flight was nearly full," says Air France. The French flag carrier is also taking over services previously operated by merger partner KLM.

The airport was severely damaged during fighting, with runways and taxiways sustaining bomb damage that forced airlines to withdraw. The terminal buildings, however, were largely undamaged and it is business as usual for the airport's shops.

KLM DROPS MIDDLE EAST TRIO

KLM will cease serving Amman in Jordan and Damascus in Syria on 29 October and has also announced that it does not intend to resume services to Beirut in Lebanon, adding that the route was "already loss-making" before the conflict.

It will instead rely on a codeshare with Air France.

Following their merger last year, the two carriers cut several services, leaving cities such as Doha, Jakarta and Manila with service from only one carrier. They say they are now going through the final phase of their joint restructuring.

inshort

MAS and Gulf Air to codeshare

Malaysia Airlines (MAS) and Gulf Air have agreed to codeshare on flights between Kuala Lumpur and the Middle East. Under the terms of the agreement MAS will add its code to Gulf Air-operated flights to the Malaysian capital from Bahrain and Muscat. MAS is seeking new codeshare agreements with foreign carriers as it is scaling back international operations as part of a restructuring plan.

BMed expands network

British Airways franchise partner BMed plans to extend its network to West Africa at the end of October with a thrice weekly service from London Heathrow to Freetown in Sierra Leone and Dakar in Senegal. It will be the only airline operating direct links from the UK to the two African countries, not served by BA since the early 1990s.

China Postal goes international

Chinese freight carrier China Postal Airlines has launched its first international services with flights between Beijing and the South Korean capital Seoul. Flights are being operated three times a week with Boeing 737 freighters and the carrier says it plans to expand its fledgling international network with services to Japan. China Postal is a joint venture between China Post and China Southern Airlines.

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Dubai International Airport rolls out the red carpet

(12th World Route Development Forum)

Dubai International Airport is proud to host the 12th World Route Development Forum for the year 2006. We are involved in identifying new air service opportunities and spearheading the expansion plans of the Dubai International Airport. The present is impressive. The future is ambitious with the construction of Terminal 3, Concourses 2 and 3 and a Cargo Mega Terminal. The project on completion, will have a capacity to handle over 70 million passengers by 2008 as against 25 million today. As Dubai International Airport steps up growth plans for tomorrow, the curtain is raised on the most awaited show of the aviation industry. The timing couldn't be more perfect.

Host - 2006

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Jet plots next European push

India's Jet Airways, which only began operating international flights in May 2005, is here at Routes and says it is in the final stages of deciding its next wave of European services. Several cities are being studied, including Brussels, Frankfurt, Munich, Paris and Rome, says Emmanuel Menu, general manager UK & Ireland for Jet Airways.

The flights will transit through these cities on their way to North American points like Chicago, New York or Toronto, with Jet seeking to begin operations at the start of the 2007 winter season. The timing and number of routes to be launched "depends on when our 777s and A330s are delivered", says Menu. The carrier has 10 Airbus A330s and 10 Boeing 777-300ERs on order. Jet will also look to operate US services to San Francisco, most probably via China.

As it plans its European expansion, Jet is building its UK-India services. "We are reallocating aircraft to the UK and accelerating our development," says Menu. From July, the carrier has been operating twice daily A340 services between London Heathrow and Mumbai, and in the same month it launched a new route between Heathrow and Amritsar in northern India. Jet also flies daily from Heathrow to Delhi. The three times weekly Amritsar service will rise to six weekly in January as Jet takes more aircraft.

Jet will later move into serving regional UK cities like Birmingham, Glasgow and Manchester, says Menu, but before that it will add another Indian city to its London network during 2007, says Menu.

Although competition between the UK and India has soared, with Jet entering or expanding into the market along with bmi, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic, it is comfortable having won what it claims is a "fair share" of the UK market, says Menu. Jet now offers 22% of the available seats on the London-Mumbai market and 16% on the London-Delhi market.

Overall, the India-UK market is growing at 20% per year, however capacity has risen faster. In the past two years, the total seats offered in the London-Mumbai market has increased by 114%, and by 60% between London and Delhi.

Jet is also expanding its international network into Asia. Its latest service began on 6 September linking Delhi with Singapore on daily 737 flights. The airline already serves Singapore daily from Chennai and Mumbai.

Saudi ready for low-cost revolution

Saudi Arabia's National Air Services (NAS) is planning to launch a low-cost carrier with the UK's easyJet a potential partner. NAS, which already operates all-premium carrier Al-Khayala, lodged an application with the Saudi Arabian General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) last month for a domestic low-cost carrier licence.

NAS has asked UK-based low-cost player easyJet if it can use its brand but NAS marketing manager Yasir Niazi says it is prepared to launch a low-cost carrier later this year with or without a foreign partner. EasyJet says it will likely not decide on the franchise proposal from NAS until early 2007.

"NAS is committed to launching this low-cost airline," Niazi says. "We are able to launch as soon as we get permission…but it will take three or four months to get the licences."

To help fund the launch, NAS has raised additional capital through a new shares offering led by investment firm Abraaj Nas. EasyJet is not being asked to invest but only sell its name.

EasyJet says it is "evaluating an opportunity to franchise its brand following a recent joint approach by Jeddah-based NAS and Dubai-based Abraaj Capital". It says there would not be any overlap with its current business because the new carrier will only fly within the Middle East. EasyJet just extended its network to Turkey but has no plans to expand further east. Niazi says the start-up will be limited to domestic routes for the first two years.

NAS became the first privately owned aviation company in Saudi Arabia in 1999 when it launched a business jet fractional ownership and charter service. Its fleet has since expanded to 47 aircraft and last year it launched an all business-class service connecting key cities in Saudi Arabia and neighbouring countries with Airbus A319s and A320s.

NAS is now in a position to expand into the lost-cost sector following liberalisation at GACA, which is now considering applications from six Saudi companies seeking to launch airlines. Sama, founded by Investment Enterprises and headed by Prince Bandar bin Khalid al Faisal with support from UK-based Mango Aviation Partners, also has applied to GAMA for a licence to launch a low-cost airline by year-end. The other four applications are from travel group Al-Tayar; the Al-Mamiaka company, proposing to operate Burj Airlines; Petrogal, on behalf of Al-Watan Airlines; and Saudi trading company Ikhwan.

GACA plans to complete initial evaluations by the end of September and award new licences by year-end.

The opening up of the Saudi market is part of a region-wide push to expand its fledgling low-cost industry, which now only includes Sharjah-based Air Arabia and Kuwait's Jazeera Airways.

Capitol growth as United gears up

United Airlines is preparing for a new Southwest Airlines assault by beefing up service at Washington's Dulles International Airport, which has been United's major East Coast hub for 20 years –and which will be Southwest's newest airport in October.

United plans to increase its Dulles service by 13% in a build-up that will add 22 new flights from Dulles, including domestic and international elements aimed at its eastward global expansion.

By November, United will be providing 321 daily departures. Mark Treadaway, the air services planning and development vice-president for the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, says: "The move confirms that Dulles is the East Coast international hub for United, confirms its commitment to Dulles as an international gateway and as a point for strong domestic feed."

The United flights include a new service to Kuwait under a just-signed open skies bilateral with the Middle Eastern state, daily service to Narita, Japan, and, if it wins a Department of Transportation competition, a new route to China.

Its Dulles-Beijing service bid puts United in competition with a plan by American Airlines for more Dallas/Fort Worth service to China, as well as rival bids from Northwest and Continental Airlines, and represents United's eastward focus as the airline trims in response to transatlantic competition. Its recent sale of its New York JFK-London Gatwick route to Delta Air Lines is a sign of this.

From Dulles domestically, United will offer new daily service to West Palm Beach, Florida, beginning in December, followed by Fort Myers, Florida and Tucson, Arizona, both in late October. It is also adding services to around a dozen cities already served from Dulles. United is filling a void left after the demise of low-cost carrier Independence Air in January. Air traffic at Dulles has grown since that time, climbing from 1.5 million passengers a month in February to more than 2 million in June.

Hoping to strike it rich

AIRPORTS IN THE WESTERN USA ARE BIG PLACES - and many of them sit on buried treasure. As the world energy crisis pushes the price of oil and gas higher, these airports are finding ways to exploit the energy reserves underneath their property.

Denver International Airport inherited oil and gas drilling when it was built in the 1990s, and now is about to expand it as other airports in the West are finding the resources a way to strike it rich.

D/FW, as the 18,000 acre Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport is known to nearly every business flyer who has ever had to change aircraft, thinks it is close to striking it rich. Not with new routes or concessions or parking lots, but literally. The airport, between the two North Texas metropolises, has become the latest to sign a deal to allow natural gas drilling.

It signed a deal with Oklahoma-based Chesapeake Energy that will gain it at least $181 million plus royalties in return for the right to operate five drilling rigs. Chesapeake will have access to about half the airport acreage. D/FW's runways, taxiways, terminal areas and other off-limits areas would be protected, but the energy company, by drilling down and then out in L-shaped patterns, can reach areas under the airport. The FAA will closely watch the placement of drilling equipment.

D/FW sits at the eastern edge of a geological formation called the Barnett Shale, an underground area that holds vast amounts of gas. As the market price of gas and oil have risen, energy companies have retuned to this once-neglected area, drawn by the combination of higher prices and improved exploration technology and drilling techniques.

D/FW is not alone on sitting on buried treasure; there are about 50 active oil wells at the Will Rogers World Airport in Oklahoma City, and at Denver, a huge 34,000 acre facility. As many as 90 wells were pumping away when it was built in the 1990s, and 53 are still active. Now Petro-Canada Resources, which owns 10 of those active wells, is set to increase drilling on the airport. Denver, which took in $3.8 million in royalties in 2005, stands to take in more, but is not yet certain how much. "Oil and gas exploration is not and an exact science so we can't say for sure how much revenue these operations will bring to the airport," says airport chief financial officer Stan Koniz.

CEBU LANDS AT CHANGI'S BUDGET TERMINAL

Singapore Changi airport's budget terminal, which was opened earlier this year, now has two carrier tenants. Following in the slipstream of Singapore's low-cost Tiger Airways, which moved into the terminal in March, Philippines-based Cebu Pacific has opted to use the airport's budget terminal.

This follows approval from the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) for Cebu to fly scheduled passenger services from Manila to Singapore. A daily non-stop service from Manila to Singapore was launched at the end of August.

Cebu Pacific is credited with being Asia's first no-frills airline and first launched a Manila-Singapore service in October 2002 using Boeing 757s but later suspended the service.

The carrier will be competing on the route against Singapore-based low-cost carrier Jetstar Asia and full-service carriers Singapore Airlines and Philippine Airlines. Tiger Airways operates from Singapore to Clark, a secondary airport near Manila.

Ho Beng Huat, CAAS deputy director-general of civil aviation, says: "We are very happy to welcome Cebu Pacific as the second carrier to operate out of Singapore's budget terminal. The terminal's operating model of "no frills" efficiency and low-cost operations will serve very well Cebu Pacific's business model."

He adds: "Passenger traffic between the Philippines and Singapore has been growing strongly. Last year, passenger traffic was 994,000, up 19% over 2004. For the first seven months of this year, traffic increased by a further 24%."

The number of weekly flights at the budget terminal has also increased by about 50%, from 124 in March to 188 today, says the airport.

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Sabre now at the cutting edge

One Routes exhibitor uses the annual event as a milestone to judge its growth, and here, in one of the fastest growing cities in the world it is appropriate that Sabre's airport consulting practice is finding itself as one of the fastest growing consulting services in the industry.

In 2003 at Routes Edinburgh, it accounted for only a handful of international clients, and less than 3% of its total consulting revenues.

The practice now comes to Dubai following a series of acquisitions, partnerships, and a greater corporate focus on the airport industry, as one of the largest and fastest growing airport consulting service providers in the industry. And it says, there is more in the pipeline.

Some 120 airports across the globe currently work with Sabre's airport consulting business ranging from regional airports such as Groeningen in the Netherlands, through to a wide range of global carrier hubs including Dallas/Fort Worth, and Singapore's Changi.

Of those 120 clients, Sabre says that 65 were new first time clients in 2005.

In the early years, Sabre offered almost exclusively market information services but has expanded its offerings to include comprehensive commercial and air-service development solutions, and has recently expanded further into more operations and cargo related areas.

It has also begun investing in new market analysis related products attempting to capitalise on its position as the industry's largest MIDT provider.

This includes the launch of the Sabre ADI online data service. This comprehensive traffic, schedule and capacity data tool has already proven popular with more than 35 airports, airport management companies, and government agencies contracted onto the service within its first eight months of operation.

Speaking at the build–up to Routes, Damian Brooke, Sabre's Partner responsible for the International Airport and Government practice says "We truly believe that going forward, Sabre is the best positioned of all of the airport consulting service providers, through its combination of experienced consultants, and direct access to industry-leading analysis and technology solutions.

"We have the distinct advantage of being able to provide our clients with solutions generated from the same systems which are being provided to the airlines by the product-arm of Sabre, with methodologies which the airlines already understand.

"For example, we have the ability to provide our air-service development airport clients solutions using the same forecasting tools that their target airlines are using. This has led to the airlines having a greater comfort level with the analysis being presented by our clients. Not many competitors are able to offer that level of comfort"

Brooke says that Sabre expects to continue its growth over the next few years, through internal and external strategic initiatives, as well as through continuing to expand its service offerings.

"We opened our first international office dedicated to airport consulting in Australia in August of 2005, and that has resulted in over a dozen new Asian clients in the past 12 months. We will be opening a European office immediately after Routes Dubai, and we expect to continue the same and greater levels of growth to occur in Europe and the Middle East over the same period," he said.

Flight Support takes off at Manchester

Flight Support, the UK's newest ground handling company, makes its debut at the Routes event on the back of its acquisition of Manchester Handling giving it a presence at Britain's third largest airport.

The Isle of Man-based company has also just won a new contract to provide ground support to Scottish low cost carrier flyglobespan.com at Manchester and Liverpool Airports. On November 2, Flyglobespan begins long haul flights from Manchester to Cape Town and Toronto with Boeing 767-300 aircraft. From John Lennon Liverpool Airport it launches flights to Prague and Tenerife, using the B737-800 and B757-200. New York follows in May 2007.

Flyglobespan becomes the latest customer at Flight Support's growing Liverpool Airport base, where it already looks after such customers as VLM, WIZZ, Balkan Holidays, Air Europa, Avia Jet and EuroManx, plus the Royal Mail flights operated by Air Charter Services and air freight company DHL. Flight Support took over the Liverpool operation from Aviance in October 2005 and this base now supports 39 staff.

Isle of Man Ronaldsway Airport is Flight Support's largest base, supporting 43 staff. Customers include EuroManx, VLM, Flybe, BNWA, Blue Islands (nee RockHopper), plus the mail contractors.

"Since our creation just over a year ago, we have set out to offer a fresh, 'can do' approach for all our customers. We go all out to try and exceed their expectations and believe the attention is in the detail," says Flight Support chief executive Brett Turner.

inshort

Innovata pens new agreement

Atlanta based database and software services company Innovata, and leading ground handling company Penauille Servisair, will today announce a long-term data partnership agreement.

Innovata is to supply a weekly extract of its SRS Schedules data into Penauille Servisair's central database which is used to supplement operational data to more than 140 locations. The SRS database, marketed in association with IATA, is managed and maintained by Innovata with over 900 airlines participating in and regularly updating the database directly. Innovata's data will also be supplied to Sabre Airline Solutions.

ATI AIR TRANSPORT INTELLIGENCE

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▶ EC BLOCKS UK ROUTE SUPPORT SCHEME

UK ROUTE DEVELOPMENT support for air links with non-European destinations is to be halted by the European Commission (EC) with effect from June next year.

The Scottish Executive's Route Development Fund (RDF) was established in 2002. It offers financial assistance to encourage the creation of otherwise unlikely direct air routes. Similar schemes have been initiated in Northern Ireland and Wales.

EC representative for Scotland Neil Mitchison says that the UK recently sought European approval for the funding initiatives, but the EC decided that with effect from June next year, support can only be given for intra-European routes.

Around 40 services, either currently operated or due to start next spring, are supported by the Scottish RDF. This includes Emirates' Dubai-Glasgow service and Continental's link between Edinburgh and Newark. Existing deals on routes to non-European destinations covered by the scheme, and those agreed before next May's deadline, will still be allowed to run for three years, which is the normal duration of a Scottish RDF grant.

Scotland's Glasgow airport - many services are supported by the RDF

Mitchison says the EC encourages the development of intra-European air links, but that the lack of open skies deals with some non-European countries could limit competition. "The situation might well be reviewed once we have an open skies agreement," he adds.

Independent financial services body Scottish Financial Enterprise says that the RDF has helped to develop Scotland's air links, aiding local business growth. It says that the body would be "very disappointed" if the scheme, which brings "tremendous advantages" to the sector, did not go on.

Route funding through the Scottish RDF has, to date, averaged $2.30 per passenger. It is paid to airports to offset the costs associated with starting a new route and can be passed onto airline operators through airport charging structures.

▶ FRAPORT MIGHT INVEST IN CHINA'S GUANGZHOU AIRPORT

German airport group Fraport is considering investing in New Baiyun International Airport in Guangzhou, southern China.

Guangzhou airport operator Guangdong Airport Management has "talked with Fraport and both sides have agreed to co-operate", says the state-run *China Daily*, citing remarks made by Liu Zijing, president of Guangdong Airport Management.

Liu says they are speaking to Fraport because his group is seeking capital to fund the second-phase of the airport's development plus it wants to draw on western management expertise.

New Baiyun International Airport's second-phase expansion, "due to begin in 2010", is a 17.5 billion yuan ($2.2 billion) investment that includes new cargo terminals for FedEx and a runway capable of handling the Airbus A380, according to the report.

FedEx announced in 2005 it would be moving its Asia-Pacific hub from Subic Bay in the Philippines to the Guangzhou airport starting 2008.

China's government in recent years has handed management control of the country's airports to local and provincial governments, with the exception of Beijing Capital International Airport and a few airports in Tibet, and it has allowed foreigners to buy equity in Chinese airports.

▶ NARITA EXTENDS

Tokyo Narita International Airport is extending its second runway so it can handle larger aircraft and to effectively boost the airport's capacity.

Japan's land, infrastructure and transport minister Kazuo Kitagawa has just granted approval for the runway extension to 2,500m (8,200ft) from 2,180m and the work is due to be completed in March 2010.

▶ ALOHA JETSTAR

Qantas Airways' low-cost carrier Jetstar has firmed up the launch dates for its Honolulu service, which will be commencing during Australia's peak travel season. Jetstar says in a statement it will be launching its thrice-weekly Sydney-Honolulu service on 27 December and it will commence the twice-weekly Melbourne-Honolulu service on 29 December.

▶ inbrief

▶ Tiger roars on

Singapore low-cost carrier Tiger Airways plans to dramatically increase services to Thailand and Macau. As of October 29 Tiger will be increasing its Singapore-Krabi service to eight flights per week from five, Singapore-Hatyai to 12 flights per week from 11 and Singapore-Macau to 10 flights weekly from seven, Tiger says in a statement. It also says on 1 December it will be increasing the frequency of its Singapore-Phuket service to 21 flights per week from 14 and the Singapore-Bangkok service will also increase to 21 flights per week from 14.

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OAG NEW AIRLINE HALL

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT INFORMATION provider OAG will again host the New Airline Hall at Routes in Dubai, after two previous years' participation at the event.

OAG monitors start-up airline activity on a worldwide basis from conception to the first operation to ensure it holds the schedules of new airlines from launch.

The New Airline Hall houses carriers from all over the world, giving them the opportunity to meet airports, airlines and industry suppliers all under one roof. The pre-arranged meetings provide an opportunity to discuss expansion plans, increasing revenues and cutting costs, as well as accessing resources and information critical to route development needs.

Details of selected airlines and operations, both current and planned, are listed where available. The information comes from OAG and the Flight Group's online news service, Air Transport Intelligence, as well as Airline Business.

New York-based Eos began life in October 2005.

ARABJET

BASE: Dubai.

Arabjet is a regional, all business class, premium service scheduled passenger start-up airline.

AIR ASTURIAS

BASE: Oviedo, Spain

Air Asturias is a low-cost start-up, based in the Asturias region of northern Spain. It plans to begin operations to several European and Latin American destinations in 2006 with two leased Airbus A320s and one Boeing 767-300ER.

DALMATIAN.HR

BASE: Split, Zagreb and one other, Croatia.

Dalmatian.hr aims to commence flight operations during the spring of 2007 with a mixed fleet of Airbus A320 and Boeing 737-300 aircraft within domestic Croatia and to other European destinations.

During the summer period of 2007, Dalmatian.hr will commence low-cost long-haul flights from Croatia to cities in the USA, Canada, Asia and Australia. Customers will be able to travel direct or via Zagreb at low fares in comparison to legacy carriers. The airline intends to gradually increase its fleet throughout the first five years adding additional aircraft and increasing its European network alongside its long-haul destination network in North American, Asia and Australia.

It is anticipated that by the end of year five operations, the Dalmatian.hr fleet will exceed 50 aircraft.

EOS

BASE: New York.

Eos is a privately held start-up airline focused exclusively on the international business traveller. The airline began operations with its inaugural flight on 18 October 2005 from Kennedy to London's Stansted Airport using a specially configured business-class Boeing 757-200. Eos runs a loyalty programme for travellers and offers premium services such as car service and kerbside escort.

EXPRESSJET EUROPE

BASE: Cork, Ireland.

ExpressJet Europe is a proposed regional feeder carrier planning to develop the capacity purchase agreement concept (CPA) in Europe. It hopes to begin operations at the end of 2006 or early 2007. The carrier will acquire its fleet through a combination of purchase and lease agreements.

FAROEJET

BASE: Sørvágur, Faroe Islands.

Established in December 2005, Faroejet is a privately backed start-up airline, operating scheduled services between Copenhagen and the Faroe Islands using a leased Avro RJ100. The airline plans to add aircraft to its fleet and further destinations within Denmark in 2007.

FLY GIBRALTAR

BASE: Gibraltar.

Gibraltar's first low-cost and locally based airline plans to launch low-cost flights from Gibraltar to London Stansted, Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Dublin and Cork from April 2007 but expects to start ticketing from October 2006. Backed by Gibraltar-based Property Development (International), the new carrier will operate two leased aircraft in a one-class configuration carrying 148 passengers.

GADAIR

BASE: Madrid

Gadair European Airlines is a Spanish start-up airline planning to launch operations this year with a twice-weekly service from Madrid to Doula in Camaroon. Services from Madrid to Quito in Ecuador and from Quito to New York will be added later.

GOLDEN INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES

BASE: Istanbul

Golden International Airlines is a start-up airline that plans to operate full charter services on behalf of tour operators using Boeing 757s formerly operated by Turkey's Atlasjet.

HANSEFLUG
BASE: Hanover

Hanseflug is a German start-up carrier with head offices in the city of Hanover.

LAC AIR CONGO
BASE: Kinshasa

LAC Air Congo (ex Air Congo - ex Air Zaire) has resumed flights after years of inactivity. The first flight in August connected Kinshasa with Kisangani and Bunia. The company is expecting to put additional aircraft into service and to cover more destinations, initially domestic ones, but later on some international or intercontinental destinations. LAC will have a Boeing 767 available later this month.

PTL AIRLINES
BASE: Poland and Czech Republic

PTL Airlines is planning to launch operations in December 2006. The carrier intends to serve both domestic and international routes using four aircraft. PTL Airlines is currently finalising the acquisition of its air operator's certificate. It plans to offer a point to point regional business service in Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy and Poland. It is the owner/operator of Saab aircraft and other ACMI aircraft for charter. In 2007-8 it plans to extend scheduled services to Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, and charters between North America, Israel and Dubai and Montenegro.

Cargo services are set to start in 2008.

RAK AIRWAYS
BASE: Ras al-Khaimah, UAE.

RAK Airways is a start-up airline planning to launch in 2007 serving destinations in the Indian sub-continent, Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states, Lebanon, Europe and Africa. The carrier has been established through an Emiri decree as a national carrier for Ras Al Khaimah.

STAR AIR AVIATION
BASE: : Karachi, Pakistan

Star Air Aviation (Private), is a local operator from Pakistan which has AOC and charter licences for domestic and international operations from Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority. Star Air is engaged in commercial cargo operations on scheduled domestic (night) operations and also conducts day charter flights as and when inquiries are received from the market. Star Air currently operates four freighter aircraft on wet lease. These aircraft are parked during day time at Lahore / Islamabad / Multan and Karachi Airport and are available to perform immediate day charter flights at short notice.

Brendan Sobie reports from the World Low Cost Airline Congress, London on the eve of Routes, Dubai

Sharjah carrier predicts great growth ahead

THE FLEDGLING MIDDLE EASTERN low-cost market is poised for a period of major growth, led by Air Arabia and several potential-start-ups.

Sharjah-based Air Arabia, which became the first low-cost carrier in the Middle East when it launched services in 2003, expects rapid growth over the next few years as governments in the region begin opening their skies to new carriers.

"We've seen huge shifts in the attitudes of authorities," says chief executive Adel Ali. "I think it will be another year or two before everything opens up."

Air Arabia now serves 27 destinations with 140 weekly flights using seven Airbus A320s. But it is fully utilising all the route authorities it has secured and is unable to serve several Middle Eastern countries including Jordan and Saudi Arabia. All the countries in the region also prohibit fifth-freedom flights, restricting Air Arabia to routes from its Sharjah hub.

"If we have Arab open skies, we'll grow four to five times from what we are today," Ali says.

To support growth from its largest carrier, Sharjah airport will be expanded and renovated. Ali says Air Arabia plans to stay in Sharjah rather than move to nearby Dubai because "it is close enough and it is not as congested".

Last year Air Arabia was joined by Kuwait's Jazeera Airways, which is now the only other low-cost operator in the region. But several new low-cost carriers are preparing to launch services in Saudi Arabia by early next year *(see story page 5)* and Ali expects new low-cost competitors will also emerge in Egypt, Air Arabia's largest destination.

Ali says Saudi Arabia initially is only opening its domestic market to new Saudi operators but eventually restrictions will also be lifted on international routes. The Saudi Arabian domestic market has the biggest potential in the Middle East because it accounts for 70% of the region's population and is currently underserved, according to the chief executive of Saudi proposed low-cost carrier Sama, Andrew Cowen.

"Saudi Arabia badly needs some low-cost competitors," Cowen says. "The opportunity in Saudi Arabia is tremendous. From my standpoint, it's the biggest airline opportunity in the world."

"If we have Arab open skies, we'll grow four to five times from what we are today"
Adel Ali
Chief Executive
Air Arabia

Kulula aims for expansion

South Africa's Kulula aims to expand its network to secondary cities using turboprops that would be operated by a new regional subsidiary or partner.

Kulula chief executive Gidon Novick says it considering acquiring SA Express or hiring another South African regional carrier to operate 50 to 70-seat turboprops on its behalf. Kulula seeks turboprops to launch services to domestic destinations that do not have enough traffic to support narrowbody aircraft but present opportunities because of limited competition and high fares.

"In terms of our route network it's a challenge. We're at the tip of Africa so we can't fly south, east or west," Novick says. "We've tried smaller routes but they are just too small for our Boeings. We are looking at different types of aircraft, especially turboprops."

Africa's first and only low-cost carrier currently operates a 16-aircraft fleet consisting of Boeing 737-200s, 737-400s and MD-80s. Novick says Kulula's first priority is to replace its remaining 737-200s and MD-80s with more 737-400s or similar-sized Airbus or Boeing aircraft. He says it will then focus on acquiring smaller and larger aircraft, with ATR 42/72 and Bombardier Dash 8s under consideration for the former requirement and Boeing 757s or 737-900Xs under consideration for the latter requirement.

Kulula, which is owned by British Airways South African partner Comair, is not interested in operating turboprops on its own. SA Express already operates a fleet of 13 turboprops and regional jets for South African Airways on several of the routes Kulula is eyeing but Novick says its high cost base would have to be restructured if it was acquired by Kulula. If Kulula does not succeed in buying SA Express from the South African government its planned fleet of turboprops will be operated by one of a few South African carriers that already operate 19 to 50-seat turboprops.

Nok opens door on international routes

Thai low-cost carrier Nok Air is expanding its fleet from five to eight aircraft in October as it looks to further bolster its domestic market share ahead of the launch of international services.

Nok chief executive Patee Sarasin says two additional Boeing 737-400s will be used to launch services from Bangkok to Krabi and Sarat Thani, giving it 11 domestic destinations. It will also take delivery next month of a second ATR 72, to be used mainly as a spare aircraft.

"After seven [737] aircraft Thailand will be saturated from our point of view. Then we'll be moving internationally," Patee says.

He says Nok plans to launch services to its first international destination, Bangalore in India, in January. Services to Chennai and Hyderabad, also in India, will follow later in 2007.

Nok launched in 2004 and already enjoys about 20% of the Thai domestic market. Patee expects Nok's market share will grow further next year as its part-owner, Thai Airways International, withdraws from all domestic routes except Bangkok-Chang Mai and Bangkok-Phuket. But he also expects growth from Thailand's other two low-cost carriers, One-Two-Go and Thai AirAsia, which have similar shares of the Thai domestic market. "My objective is not to compete with others but to compete with ourselves," he says.

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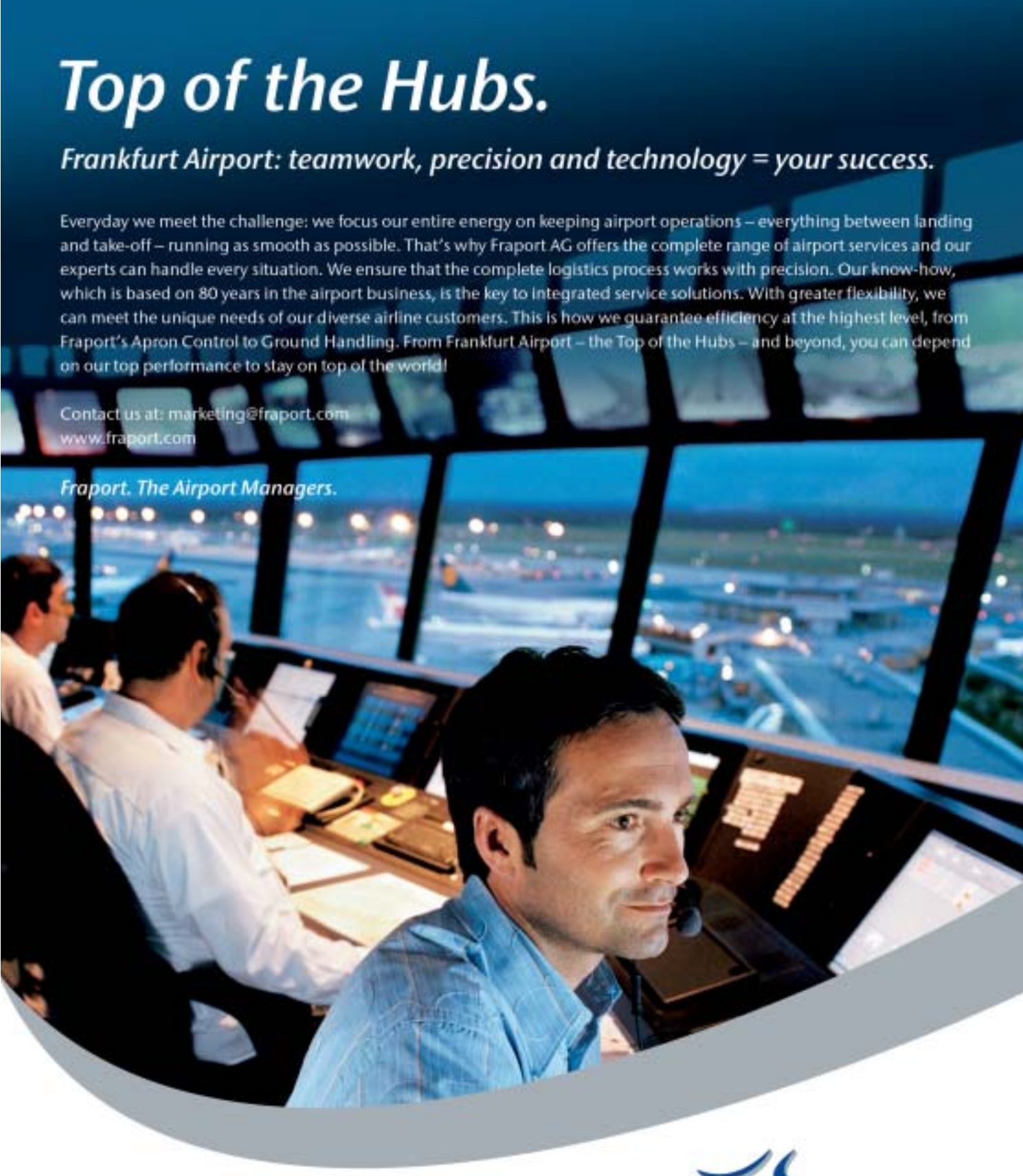

Fraport

The concept of wealth built on energy resources is a familiar story in the Middle East but one carrier, here at Routes, believes access to the energy world will help take it to the next level too.

Milton's Paradise REGAINED

Factfile: Robert Milton

- Robert Milton, 47, grew up in the USA, UK, Singapore, Belgium and Hong Kong as his father, an international banker, moved around the world.
- He remembers when he first "got hooked"– on a flight from the New York City area to St Louis in an executive jet. "They let me up in the flightdeck, and that did it," he says.
- Milton graduated in 1983 from Atlanta's Georgia Tech with a degree in industrial management and a gift from his father to buy a new car. He used the money instead to start an air courier dubbed Midnight Express, which he sold to Piedmont Aviation.
- In 1993 he become a full-time Air Canada employee, rising through the ranks until in 2000 he led the purchase of rival Canadian Airlines International, while fending off a hostile takeover attempt.
- In 2003 he put Air Canada in reorganisation under CCAA, the Canadian version of Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. A year later he brought Air Canada out in the form of ACE Aviation Holdings. He sold stakes in Aeroplan and Jazz and in August announced plans to sell a stake in Air Canada itself. The sale of its services unit is also on the cards.
- Milton is married with two children.

ROBERT MILTON, THE chairman and chief executive of Air Canada parent, ACE Holdings, says the airline's route strategy relies on keeping its hub airports well fed and nourished.

On the surface, that would be a challenge since the airline has three major hubs across the nation, two of them, Toronto and Montréal, straddling Canada's major population and business centres and one of them oriented eastward: Vancouver. But Milton and the airline are benefiting from the larger world economic forces: the Asia-Pacific trade boom and perhaps ironically from the world's global energy crisis.

Canada sits close on the Pacific Rim and as importantly sits on some of the globe's most sought-after natural resources: energy. It is the energy boom that is making the western provinces into boomlets.

Pick up any Canadian newspaper or tune into any Canadian broadcaster and the news is about the billions of dollars in investment pouring in to exploration and production in the plains of the west.

Oil drilling, oil-sands extraction and natural gas development mean business travellers and, as importantly, workers to staff the projects.

Because many oil and gas workers have been recruited from the nation's Maritime east, in particular Newfoundland, where unemployment has been chronic, a new travel pattern has emerged as workers fly monthly or even weekly between their homes on the rocky Atlantic coast and their work in the oil-rich west. This has given the airline an opportunity to exploit a product that Milton is really pleased with: its multi-pass products. The passes are ideal, Milton says, explaining: "The airline gets cash in advance and also gets a pretty good idea of how much traffic it is going to be getting on specific routes, while the customer gets a healthy discount and some real service advantages".

The energy boom has also given Air Canada enough traffic to justify a route that would have been economically unviable just a few years ago: direct service between Edmonton, in the northern part of Alberta, and London Heathrow. The non-stop Boeing 767 flights will operate three days a week, starting 31 October and will go daily next April.

Edmonton is closer to some of the energy operations than the province's other main point, Calgary, which is an Air Canada mini-hub. And so Edmonton has enjoyed more growth than it might otherwise have, with nine new services this year, including the London service, plus nonstops to Las Vegas; Los Angeles; Montreal; and several warm weather spots including Las Vegas; Cancun; Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, and three western Canada destinations (Yellowknife, Victoria, and Kelowna).

And the airline is poised to exploit a market opening that presented itself about a month after Milton spoke with *Airline Business* in the Montréal headquarters of Air Canada's parent, ACE Aviation Holdings: the demise of CanJet. Based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, CanJet halted all scheduled flights on its 10 Boeing 737s in early September, and Air Canada and its Jazz regional affiliate will add daily flights on four routes this month, with some extra capacity possible in November as the demand situation clarifies.

Another boon to Air Canada is the advent of increased open skies with the US. Although full implementation of a deal set for 1 September has been delayed, Air Canada and indeed its low-fare rival WestJet are beefing up US service, in particular flights to warm weather spots such as Las Vegas, Palm Springs, and Fort Lauderdale.

Milton, like top management at most other airlines, loathes restraints on where to fly, limits on who it can invest in it and a dependence on what Milton calls "natural and abusive monopolies such as airports." It was his interest in fighting these barriers that led him to accept a somewhat surprising invitation from IATA director general Giovanni Bisignani to chair the association's board of governors for 2005-6. That term expired in May, but Milton will not end his often sharply worded advocacy for the issues he believes the industry needs to address.

He says: "We have to work together to get traction on these issues. We may not be able to reverse some of the mistakes that we now have to deal with but maybe we can keep something stupid from getting started."

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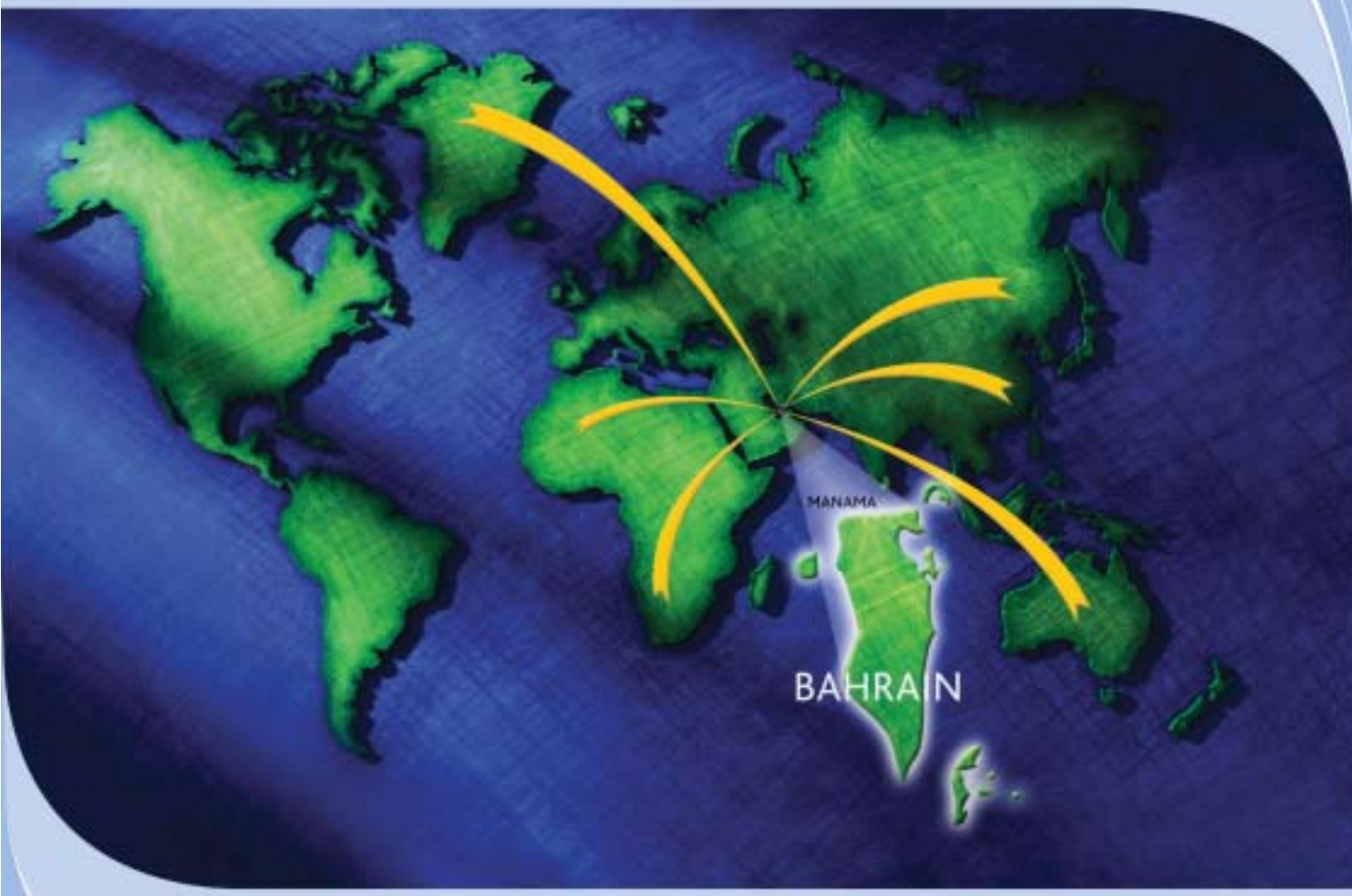

For more information, contact Bahrain International Airport Marketing and Promotions at Tel: +973 17 321094, Fax: +973 17 321139 or email: marketing@bahrainairport.com

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TOP ROUTES BY SEATS OFFERED

Europe

RANK	AIRPORT 1 NAME	CODE	AIRPORT 2 NAME	CODE	SEATS PER WEEK	LEAD CARRIERS CARRIER 1	CARRIER 2
1	Barcelona	BCN	Madrid	MAD	148,627	Iberia	Spanair
2	London Heathrow	LHR	New York JFK	JFK	83,846	British Airways	American Airlines
3	Rome Fiumicino	FCO	Milan Linate	LIN	82,420	Alitalia	Air One
4	Paris Orly	ORY	Toulouse	TLS	62,012	Air France	EasyJet
5	Paris Orly	ORY	Nice	NCE	57,084	Air France	EasyJet
6	London Heathrow	LHR	Paris CDG	CDG	54,766	Air France	British Airways
7	Oslo Gardermoen	OSL	Bergen	BGO	54,471	SAS Braathens	Norwegian
8	London Heathrow	LHR	Amsterdam	AMS	53,620	KLM	British Airways
9	Oslo Gardermoen	OSL	Trondheim	TRD	51,367	SAS Braathens	Norwegian
10	London Heathrow	LHR	Dublin	DUB	50,958	Aer Lingus	bmi

North America

RANK	AIRPORT 1 NAME	CODE	AIRPORT 2 NAME	CODE	SEATS PER WEEK	LEAD CARRIERS CARRIER 1	CARRIER 2
1	Honolulu	HNL	Kahului	OGG	71,937	Hawaiian Airlines	Aloha
2	Chicago O'Hare	ORD	New York LaGuardia	LGA	67,518	American Airlines	United Airlines
3	Los Angeles	LAX	Las Vegas	LAS	63,953	Southwest Airlines	America West
4	Las Vegas	LAS	Phoenix	PHX	62,658	Southwest Airlines	America West
5	Toronto Pearson	YYZ	Montreal Trudeau	YUL	60,905	Air Canada	WestJet
6	Atlanta	ATL	New York LaGuardia	LGA	60,190	Delta Air Lines	AirTran Airways
7	Los Angeles	LAX	San Francisco	SFO	59,918	United Airlines	American Airlines
8	Atlanta	ATL	Orlando Int'l	MCO	59,357	Delta Air Lines	AirTran Airways
9	Lihue Municipal	LIH	Honolulu	HNL	59,205	Hawaiian Airlines	Aloha
10	Atlanta	ATL	Dallas Fort Worth	DFW	58,254	Delta Air Lines	American Airlines

Asia-Pacific

RANK	AIRPORT 1 NAME	CODE	AIRPORT 2 NAME	CODE	SEATS PER WEEK	LEAD CARRIERS CARRIER 1	CARRIER 2
1	Tokyo Haneda	HND	Sapporo Chitose	CTS	229,676	All Nippon Airways	Japan Airlines
2	Tokyo Haneda	HND	Fukuoka	FUK	194,656	Japan Airlines	All Nippon Airways
3	Hong Kong	HKG	Tapei CKS	TPE	181,304	Cathay Pacific	China Airlines
4	Tokyo Haneda	HND	Osaka Itami	ITM	153,356	All Nippon Airways	Japan Airlines
5	Seoul Gimpo	GMP	Jeju	CJU	132,719	Korean Air	Asiana
6	Beijing	PEK	Shanghai Hongqiao	SHA	107,916	Air China	China Eastern
7	Hong Kong	HKG	Shanghai Pudong	PVG	97,572	Dragonair	China Eastern
8	Bangkok	BKK	Chiang Mai	CNX	93,123	Thai Airways	Nok Air
9	Tokyo Haneda	HND	Okinawa Naha	OKA	87,724	Japan Airlines	All Nippon Airways
10	Mumbai	BOM	Delhi	DEL	85,220	Jet Airways	Indian Airlines

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A shopping paradise

SHOPPING IS UNDOUBTEDLY one of Dubai's greatest draws and it's not without reason that the city is often regarded as the 'shopping capital of the East'.

The unrivalled collection of goods and low import duties make Dubai a shoppers' paradise

Depending on what you're after, there are two kinds of shopping experience to choose from: Browse in one of the many malls across the city, or wander around the souks (marketplaces) with their sights and sounds reminiscent of another time.

Although the seasonal Dubai Shopping Festival and Dubai Summer Surprises are the two biggest attractions, special promotions tend to run through the year.

Deira City Mall, with 1.2 million square feet of unadulterated retail space, is one of the city's most popular malls, housing more then 280 stores. Among other popular malls are Mercato, a unique renaissance-themed mall located in Jumeirah, and Wafi City Mall, which is widely regarded as Dubai's most elegant shopping complex... and of course the new Mall of the Emirates where you can enjoy a bit of downhill skiing on real snow when the shopping gets a bit too much.

The best-value items in malls tend to be electrical goods and designer labels.

There are plenty of local markets, and though much has changed since their heyday, souks still have plenty worth haggling over, from spices and silks to electronics and gold. Shops selling the same or similar goods cluster together, so the spice souk, for example is a feast for all the senses and quite a tourist attraction, while Meena Bazaar is the place all the taxi drivers will take you to if you ask for the textile souk.

The buzzing gold souk on Sikkat al-Khali Street offers some great deals on gold, with prices among the lowest in the world. The gold souks are also strictly regulated, so there is little chance of customers being ripped off in terms of quality, although prices do vary and bargaining is essential.

If you fancy another variety of fishing make sure you get a whiff of the fish souk, where each morning fishermen unload vast amounts of fresh fish.

One thing for sure is that wherever you go, it's hard to leave Dubai empty handed.

ALL YOU NEED: here are some useful telephone numbers to help smooth over your visit to Routes in Dubai.

USEFUL INFO

TOURISM:
Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM)
Welcome Bureau
✆ 228 5000
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Website:
www.dubaitourism.co.ae

EMERGENCY:
✆ Police: 999
Fire: 997
Ambulance: 998/999
Coastguards: 345 0520

PHARMACIES:
Most pharmacies are open from 9am to 9pm and many can be found at leading supermarkets. Check local newspapers for 24-hour pharmacies.

LOST OR STOLEN ITEMS:
You must report any lost or stolen items to Dubai Police. The Police operator can be contacted on 269 2222 or fax: 221 5158

POST OFFICES:
Post Offices are open Saturday to Thursday 8am – 8pm. However stamps are generally available from most supermarkets and grocery shops.

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Al Baraha Hospital
✆ 271 0000
Al Maktoum Hospital
✆ 222 1211
Al Wasl Hospital
✆ 324 1111
American Hospital
✆ 336 7777
Belhoul European Hospital
✆ 345 4000
Dubai Hospital
✆ 271 4444
International Private Hospital
✆ 221 2484
Iranian Hospital
✆ 344 0250
Rashid Hospital
✆ 337 4000
Welcare Hospital
✆ 282 7788

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Dubai Transport Corporation
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Cars Taxi
✆ 800 4825
Dubai Taxi
✆ 208 0808
Golden Taxi
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Sabre now at the cutting edge

One Routes exhibitor uses the annual event as a milestone to judge its growth, and here, in one of the fastest growing cities in the world it is appropriate that Sabre's airport consulting practice is finding itself as one of the fastest growing consulting services in the industry.

In 2003 at Routes Edinburgh, it accounted for only a handful of international clients, and less than 3% of its total consulting revenues.

The practice now comes to Dubai following a series of acquisitions, partnerships, and a greater corporate focus on the airport industry, as one of the largest and fastest growing airport consulting service providers in the industry. And it says, there is more in the pipeline.

Some 120 airports across the globe currently work with Sabre's airport consulting business ranging from regional airports such as Groeningen in the Netherlands, through to a wide range of global carrier hubs including Dallas/Fort Worth, and Singapore's Changi.

Of those 120 clients, Sabre says that 65 were new first time clients in 2005.

In the early years, Sabre offered almost exclusively market information services but has expanded its offerings to include comprehensive commercial and air-service development solutions, and has recently expanded further into more operations and cargo related areas.

It has also begun investing in new market analysis related products attempting to capitalise on its position as the industry's largest MIDT provider.

This includes the launch of the Sabre ADI online data service. This comprehensive traffic, schedule and capacity data tool has already proven popular with more than 35 airports, airport management companies, and government agencies contracted onto the service within its first eight months of operation.

Speaking at the build–up to Routes, Damian Brooke, Sabre's Partner responsible for the International Airport and Government practice says "We truly believe that going forward, Sabre is the best positioned of all of the airport consulting service providers, through its combination of experienced consultants, and direct access to industry-leading analysis and technology solutions.

"We have the distinct advantage of being able to provide our clients with solutions generated from the same systems which are being provided to the airlines by the product-arm of Sabre, with methodologies which the airlines already understand.

"For example, we have the ability to provide our air-service development airport clients solutions using the same forecasting tools that their target airlines are using. This has led to the airlines having a greater comfort level with the analysis being presented by our clients. Not many competitors are able to offer that level of comfort"

Brooke says that Sabre expects to continue its growth over the next few years, through internal and external strategic initiatives, as well as through continuing to expand its service offerings.

"We opened our first international office dedicated to airport consulting in Australia in August of 2005, and that has resulted in over a dozen new Asian clients in the past 12 months. We will be opening a European office immediately after Routes Dubai, and we expect to continue the same and greater levels of growth to occur in Europe and the Middle East over the same period," he said.

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Damian Brooke, Sabre's Partner responsible for the International Airport

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