



ETIHAD AIRWAYS CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF CONNECTING ABU DHABI AND JOHANNESBURG

News / Airlines



Etihad Airways is marking a major milestone in Africa this December as the airline celebrates 20 years of flights connecting Abu Dhabi with Johannesburg. The city is one of its longest-standing gateways in Africa and a strategically important market within the airline’s rapidly growing global network. Since launching the route in 2005, Etihad has carried almost two million passengers between the UAE and South Africa, helping strengthen cultural, business, and tourism links between the two nations. In 2025 alone, Etihad carried more than 100,000 guests on the route, reflecting sustained demand and the market’s continued importance to the airline.

Today, Etihad's services to Johannesburg provide nonstop access to the capital of the UAE as well as seamless onward connectivity to the Middle East, Europe, North America, the Indian Subcontinent and Asia Pacific via Zayed International Airport. Beyond Abu Dhabi, Johannesburg travellers continue onward to key destinations such as Jeddah, Istanbul, Mumbai, Bangkok and Phuket, underscoring the route's role as a vital gateway to Etihad's global network. The route is further strengthened by Etihad's expanding partnerships across Southern Africa, enabling smoother connections across the region.

Javier Alija, Vice President Global Sales & Distribution at Etihad Airways, commented: "Johannesburg has played an important role in our African network for two decades. The strong performance we continue to see both in passenger demand and corporate travel, highlights the long-term relationship between the UAE and South Africa, and the value Etihad brings in enabling trade and tourism. Africa remains a key pillar of our global strategy, and we are proud to continue supporting this dynamic market as part of our wider Journey 2030 ambitions."

Johannesburg's 20-year milestone comes at a time when Africa is strengthening Etihad's global network growth. The continent continues to demonstrate strong and resilient travel demand, supported by a rapidly growing population of international travellers and deepening economic and cultural ties with the UAE.

Etihad's recent network developments reflect this momentum. The airline has expanded its presence with new services launched in the past year to key African gateways including Tunis, Addis Ababa, and Nairobi. Established connections to destinations such as Casablanca and Cairo continue to perform strongly, benefitting from access to Etihad's growing global network.

The airline's strategic partnership with Ethiopian Airlines further enhances Etihad's reach across Africa, offering guests improved connectivity to a broad range of destinations across the continent beyond Etihad's own network.

The Johannesburg route continues to show robust performance from the corporate segment, with corporate revenue in 2025 increasing by more than 50 per cent year-on-year. The market benefits from strong UAE–South Africa economic relations and Abu Dhabi's growing position as a global business hub.

As Etihad celebrates 20 years in Johannesburg, the airline remains committed to deepening its presence across Africa with enhanced services, broader partnerships, and an expanded network to meet rising demand across the continent.

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