

Etihad Airways pulls out of Entebbe route

By Benon Ojiambo

All does not seem well in the aviation industry. After only two-and-a-half years of plying the Abu Dhabi-Entebbe route, Etihad Airways has thrown in the towel on the Entebbe route.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) national flag carrier and the second-largest airline of the UAE, launched its services between Abu Dhabi and Entebbe in May 2015.

In a statement that was issued on Monday, the carrier said: "Today, we have confirmed the cancellation of Entebbe service, effective March 25, 2018".

Re-booking or rerouting

However, Etihad Airways offered options to passengers who had purchased tickets on or before December 18, for travels on or after March 25, 2018. The options included rebooking, rerouting and cancellation refund.

"For partially or fully unused tickets, re-booking or rerouting is available on Etihad Airways (EY) and Kenyan Airways (via the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport," the statement read.



Etihad has confirmed cancellation of the Entebbe route

However, it added that booking must be done on the lowest available reservation booking designator (RBD) in the same cabin.

The RBD is the code used in reservation transactions to identify the booking class for example business and economy classes.

"Any date change fee as well as fare differences arising from the rerouting or re-booking is

waived for this one instance only," the statement added.

"Refund is permitted free of charge whether the ticket is wholly utilised or partially utilised as long as there are travel segments on or after March 25, 2018 which are impacted by the cancellation. Refund on partially utilised tickets must be calculated based on pro-rata mileage flown," the statement read.

Other cancellations

The announcement comes on the heels of a reduction in flight frequency on the Johannesburg-Entebbe route by South African Airways (SAA) recently.

Effective September 29, SAA reduced the frequency of its flights on the Entebbe route from 7 to 6.

Yogi Biriggwa, the SAA's Uganda country manager, however, described the frequency reduction in routes as normal in the aviation industry, but said this is in most cases driven by demand for the services.

Also, British Airways (BA) opted out of the London-Entebbe route over economic inviability of the route.

Despite the increasing number of passengers arriving at the Entebbe International Airport, airlines' profitability margins have come under increasing pressure as several other international airlines have flocked the country.

As of 2015, Entebbe airport was receiving about 1.5 million passengers, a 0.2m increase from 1.3 million received a year before.

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