

SAUDI ARABIA HAS AMBITIONS TO BECOME A GLOBAL TRANSPORTATION HUB



Riyadh Air aims to compete with Gulf airlines such as Emirates, Qatar Airways or Etihad and turn the kingdom into a transportation hub. Saudi Arabia has the means of its ambitions as it has just placed a record order with Boeing.

The record B787 order from Boeing is another step of Saudi Arabia to become a global transportation hub. Saudi Arabia has ordered 49 B787s (39 B787-9s and 10 B787-10s) for its airline SAUDIA, with an option for 10 additional aircraft, doubling the size of the existing fleet.

The order also includes 38 B787-9s for the new Riyadh Air airline with an option for 33 additional aircraft. Saudi Arabia has also selected GE Aerospace GENx engines to power the aircraft. Riyadh Air aims to become a global airline by becoming the largest in the Middle East with routes to 100 destinations from King Khalid Airport in Riyadh.

For Boeing, this combined order is the fifth largest in the company's history.

"We are proud to have American companies anchor Saudi Arabia's new flagship international airline as well as a new international airport. In 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt provided King Abdulaziz al Saud with the first Saudi aircraft, a DC-3 Dakota. Today's announcement is a fitting tribute to an economic partnership between our two countries that is now in its eighth decade," said U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. The U.S. has been in negotiations for the contract for three years.

Saudi Arabia aims to become a major tourist hub in the Middle East. **It aims to welcome 330 million passengers and 100 million visitors per year by the end of the decade.**

It is already a country of enormous importance to Sunni Muslims around the world as it is home to several holy places such as the al-Harâm Mosque in Mecca, the Al-Masjid an-Nabawi Mosque or the Prophet's Mosque, located in Medina, the Quba Mosque also in Medina and the Hira cave near Mecca where it is believed that Muhammad received the first revelation from God through the angel Gabriel.

The importance of religious tourism is not to be overlooked when there are 1.9 billion Muslims in the world, including 231 million in Indonesia, 213 million in Pakistan, 194 million in India, 153 million in Bangladesh, 99 million in Nigeria, and 95 million in Egypt.

The UAE's airline Emirates, however, is not falling behind. The airline has increased its operations by 31% since the start of its fiscal year and plans to further increase seat capacity this year. In the coming months, established routes to Europe, Australia and Africa will be served by more Emirates flights, while routes to more cities in East Asia will resume.

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