

SAUDIA Airlines group plans increased Hajj and Umrah participation



Officials at SAUDIA and the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah discuss the new MOU signed recently

[SAUDIA Airlines](#) and [Saudi Airlines Catering Company](#) (SACC) will be playing a greater role in the kingdom's Hajj and Umrah observances and this week, and the catering arm of the airline will be part of a three-day event where it will showcase its efforts.

Under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Khaled Al-Faisal, Governor of Makkah Province, SACC will be part of the Hajj and Umrah Services Conference and Exhibition March 21-23 at the Jeddah Superdome.

SAUDIA also announced this week it has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah to collaborate on the development of products and services that will cater to guests coming to the kingdom to perform pilgrimage.

The three-day conference and exhibition provides a platform for SACC to review progress to date and explore future services and initiatives, as well as discuss the allocation of resources and capabilities to contribute to their successful implementation, in cooperation with the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah.

This week, Wajdi Al-Ghabban, CEO of Saudi Airlines Catering Company, praised HRH Prince Khaled Al-Faisal's support for the important event. Al-Ghabban also expressed his pride in participating in the

three-day conference, which precedes the holy month of Ramadan and Hajj for this year.

“We are anticipating the flow of pilgrims for this year to be greater in numbers than during the pandemic period,” he said. “This expected growth comes in conjunction with the state's easing of restrictions and precautionary measures against COVID-19, particularly as social distancing at the Two Holy Mosques and PCR tests to enter the Kingdom are no longer required.”

Julien Pescheux, Executive Vice President for Catering and Facilities at Saudi Airlines Catering Company, stated that the company is moving ahead to implement programs and integrated solutions designed to enrich the experience of pilgrims. SACC will showcase innovations in food and beverage, hospitality, laundry, and facilities management this week..

Pescheux confirmed that SACC will explore the future of the Hajj and Umrah sector during the conference and look inot potential partnerships to ensure the best services for pilgrims. He emphasized that the market is much larger than the five days of Hajj alone, and underlined the company’s commitment to providing the best food, beverages, and laundry solutions for hotels and other entities operating in the sector throughout the year.

Meanwhile, SAUDIA will undertake several initiatives under four main tracks which are Digital Development and Integration, Training, Communication Awareness, and Measuring Satisfaction.

This agreement will lead to the development of the [specialized online platform](#) for marketing Umrah products and issuing electronic visas (eVisa). It will also enable the airline to host more guests from different countries by integrating the platform with the "Eatmarna" application for easier Umrah bookings.

Areas of cooperation also include coordination with the Ministry to improve the performance of the Hajj pilgrim’s movement during the pilgrimage, coordination with organizations that campaign for Hajj education, as well as preparing a procedural guide for pilgrims.

Other initiatives will focus on measuring the satisfaction of guests and building awareness programs for Pilgrims on board by establishing a "Hajj and Umrah" channel in the in-flight entertainment system.

The signing of the memorandum between the two entities showcases SAUDIA’s desire to stay aligned with the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah plans of increasing the number of pilgrims through projects that are currently being implemented, such as adding new international destinations the airline’s network and offering more flights and increasing seat capacity.