



“MICE and weddings are major thrust areas”

Established in 1993, operating only one aircraft for its flights to Salalah Oman Air has grown substantially in 20 years and today operates 296 flights a week within a network of 43 destinations in 19 countries out of its primary hub in Muscat. It has the maximum presence in India operating out of 10 cities and growing. In a freewheeling interview with Global Destinations, **Hamed M. Al-Harthy, Country Manager – India, Oman Air – Mumbai** highlighted the airlines success and plans for the Indian market. Excerpts

How do you view the growth of the airline?

Starting off as a regional player we have made rapid strides globally. We fly to ten destinations in India - Mumbai, Chennai, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Hyderabad, Delhi, Lucknow, Bangalore, Kozhikode and Jaipur. Apart from these we operate direct international flights to major Gulf destinations, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia, Tanzania, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, UK, Germany, France and Italy. The airline operates domestic flights from Muscat to Salalah and Khasab.

We have also won several awards. For the second year running we won ‘Best Business Class Airline Seat’ at the prestigious World Airline Awards, run by Skytrax. We also won the “Best In-flight Connectivity & Communications” award in The 2011 Passenger Choice Awards.

What facilities do you provide to your premium travelers?

Our chauffeur drive airport transfer service has been much appreciated. Our First and Business Class passengers can now avail of our complimentary Chauffeur Drive airport transfer service at select destinations across our network including India mostly limited to 50 Kms. The Chauffeur Drive service is offered in Paris, Frankfurt, Munich, London Heathrow, Bangkok, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Muscat and Colombo. Our premium travelers can relax in our lounges in Muscat relishing complimentary food and beverages, free WIFI and complimentary PC's, complimentary 15 minute massage.

Technology is on the forefront for many airlines. Whats the scene at your airline?

We were the first airline in the world to offer both in-flight mobile phone and WiFi connectivity in 2010 (see box). We were also the Second Middle East carrier to issue e-Ticket (ET). Muscat, Salalah and Dubai routes were ET enabled in 2005.

What about your frequent flyer program?

Sindbad is our frequent flyer program and allows members to earn miles when they use the services of our partners and code share airlines around the worlds. The programme has three tiers, which are Green, Silver and Gold each of which features their own unique benefits and privileges such as duty free discounts and allowance for extra baggage.

How does the air line help in developing Oman as tourism hub?

Oman Air has played a major role in making Muscat a major traffic hub in the Middle East providing a fillip to commercial, industrial and tourism activities. Infact way back in 2001 Oman

Air bagged The Oman award for Excellence, as tourism promoter. The award is instituted by OCIPED to recognise accomplishments of individuals and organizations that contribute to the Oman economy.

How do you promote MICE?

MICE and weddings are major thrust areas for both us and Oman tourism department. We have quite a few hotels that can



cater for over 500 guests at a time. Recently we flew 500 people to Muscat for a conference.

Three months before the team had visited Muscat and were quite impressed by the facilities as well as our top

end hotel capabilities to host big events. We flew guests from 5 cities. We regularly co-ordinate with Ministry of Tourism to promote MICE.

Oman Air goes hi-tech

There's a huge demand for in-flight connectivity and foreseeing this need Oman Air becoming the first airline



in the world to offer both in-flight mobile phone and WiFi connectivity. This decision has been appreciated by many global travelers and the airline has experienced major growth in usage of its in-flight services, with a +130% increase in internet package sales and a

+180% rise in connectivity revenues last year.

Oman Air now offers WiFi connectivity in a range of packages, designed to suit customers' differing requirements, aboard its Airbus A330 long haul fleet. We feel along with cash it would be also a good idea to have passengers redeem miles for in flight connectivity packages.