



Flight prices set to skyrocket: How Qatar's falling out with Middle East could affect air travel

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The fallout between Qatar and several Arabic nations is set to cost commuters both time and money due to changing flight paths.



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Qatar Airways has been barred from flying in the Gulf states' airspace after political turmoil between Qatar and Saudia Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt due to allegations of links to terrorism.

According to AirInsight aviation analyst Addison Schonland said consumers and the airline are already feeling the fallout.

"The impact is already bad because it has driven up flight times and therefore costs. As the airspace tightens, the problem grows much worse," he said.



Passengers of cancelled flights wait in Hamad International Airport (HIA) in Doha, Qatar. Source: AP Images

"Operationally, this is a constraint for the airline that is almost certainly now seeing its profits cut deeply."

Qatar is almost completely encircled by Bahraini airspace that covers a large part of Gulf waters, and its planes usually cross Saudi airspace on their way to the rest of the Middle East, Africa and South America.

Qatari planes are now instead using Iran's airspace to get to Europe and skirting the south-eastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula to avoid Saudi territory.

Increased flight times

According to flight detecting websites a Qatar Airways trip to Sao Paulo, Brazil has increased by about two hours.



Source: AP Images

Flights to North Africa are now travelling over Iran and Turkey towards the Mediterranean, instead of flying more directly over Saudi Arabia and Egypt.



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Ticket prices

Experts say the transit traffic is likely to be scooped up by Qatar Airways' regional competitors Emirates and Etihad.

Mr Schonland said Emirates will benefit due to the airlines' capacity to carry passenger on its A380 (superjumbo).

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But demand for flights in the long term could see ticket prices skyrocket according to aviation analyst Kyle Bailey.

"There is no doubt that Emirates and Etihad would surely be reaping the benefits... In the long term, the increased passenger loads on the other carriers may push up demand causing ticket prices to go up on the other carriers," he said.

The Centre for Aviation said in a statement there would be "few winners" from the change and that "Gulf aviation becomes less attractive for all."



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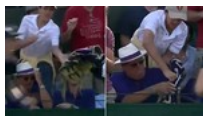
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