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## Business Aviation

# Etihad Airways first quarter profit surges 30% to 'record' on strong traffic growth

Abu Dhabi airline carried five million passengers during the January-March period

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[Etihad Airways](#) announced a record profit for the first quarter of 2025, up 30 per cent annually, as demand for travel continues to soar worldwide.

The Abu Dhabi airline reported after-tax profits of Dh685 million (\$187 million) for the first three months of this year, compared with Dh526 million for the [same period in 2024](#).

Total revenue rose 15 per cent year-on-year to Dh6.6 billion in the first quarter, driven by both passenger and cargo business, it said in a statement on Wednesday.

Passenger revenue grew by 16 per cent to Dh5.5 billion, [driven by increased capacity](#), continued network expansion and more frequent flights. Cargo revenue

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rose 8 per cent year-on-year, despite a 4 per cent reduction in volumes, the airline said.

Passenger traffic grew 16 per cent on an annual basis to five million, boosted by a 14 per cent rise in available seat kilometres. Passenger load factor, which measures how much an airline fills its available seats, stood at 87 per cent.



"We're executing a clear strategy: grow sustainably, operate efficiently and never lose focus on delivering remarkable experiences to our guests," said Etihad chief executive Antonoaldo Neves.

"Our network continues to expand, with 16 new routes announced for 2025 and additional aircraft joining our fleet. As we grow, we remain disciplined and focused on quality, efficiency and creating value for our customers and stakeholders."

The airline's earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation rose by 32 per cent annually in the first quarter to Dh1.4 billion.

Etihad was operating 80 destinations in March 2025, with 98 aircraft in operation at the end of the quarter, including the reintroduction of its sixth Airbus A380. An additional A350-1000 jet was also delivered in April.

"Etihad's turnaround strategy is delivering dividends," Saj Ahmad, chief analyst at StrategicAero Research, told *The National*.

"The shift to the new terminal at Abu Dhabi's Zayed International Airport is making connectivity on Etihad's network drive further efficiencies into the airline and its partnerships with the likes of Air Arabia Abu Dhabi," he said. "Also, more

international connections means they are monetising the routes they operate far better than before."

[Zayed International Airport](#), Etihad's home base, handled 28.8 million passengers last year, up from 22.4 million in 2023, state-owned operator Abu Dhabi Airports said in February.

Airlines in the Middle East, including Emirates and Qatar Airways, have [reported strong profit growth](#) as demand for travel continues to rise globally.

Global passenger traffic rose 5.3 per cent year-on-year in the first quarter of this year, reaching 2.16 trillion revenue passenger kilometres, according to the International Air Transport Association.

Traffic in the Middle East rose 4.2 per cent year-on-year, with capacity up 2.9 per cent, bringing the average passenger load factor to 80.2 per cent, the aviation trade body said. Air ticket bookings in the first quarter for travel in the second quarter to the Middle East indicate a "positive outlook overall", despite some isolated declines, it said.



### Future flight path

"Etihad's future performance should be strong given that it is in a secure niche with the geographically well-positioned Emirates, Qatar and Turkish operators who share long-haul connecting traffic through their hubs," aviation analyst Ernest Arvai, president of US-based AirInsight Group, told *The National*.

Etihad has also outlined plans for its so-called Journey 2030, a seven-year growth agenda announced in November 2023. The strategy calls for doubling its fleet to 170 planes and tripling the number of passengers it carries annually to 33 million as it expands its global network.

Last week, during US President Donald Trump's visit to the UAE, the airline announced an order for 28 [Boeing wide-body aircraft](#) with GE engines, valued at \$14.5 billion. Delivery of the aircraft, which include 787s and the 777X, will start in 2028.

The carrier already had 53 aircraft on order from Boeing and another 34 from Airbus, bringing the total to 115 new aircraft to be taken up over the next eight years, Mr Arvai said.

"Etihad's recent confirmation of more 787s and now 777Xs to join its existing wide-body fleet means the airline is well placed to continue its growth as we head into the traditionally busier summer period," Mr Ahmad said.

"The challenge however, remains navigating erratic fuel prices and opening up new gateways."

The further expansion of Zayed International Airport will be key, but with it being a TSA approved preclearance facility, Etihad will probably look to further expand US services and capitalise on the market's higher yielding traffic, he added.

Etihad last week said it would add Charlotte, North Carolina, as its sixth US destination, beginning in May 2026. It joins New York, Chicago, Washington, Boston and Atlanta, which will be launched on July 2.

*With contributions from Kyle Fitzgerald*

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