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# Air Canada doubles India capacity as airlines navigate costly "hole in the sky"

Michael Pihach

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**Michael Pihach**

Michael Pihach is an award-winning journalist with a keen interest in digital storytelling. In addition to PAX, Michael has also written for CBC Life, Ryerson University Magazine, IN Magazine, and DailyXtra.ca. Michael joins PAX after years of working at popular Canadian television shows, such as Steven and Chris, The Goods and The Marilyn Denis Show.

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"With the ongoing Middle East situation, from March 7 to 21 we're adding a frequency for double-daily **Toronto-Delhi** service and using larger aircraft on select **Toronto-London-Mumbai** flights to provide routing options," the airline wrote.

It comes amid a wave of airline cancellations [triggered by airspace closures](#) across the Middle East, where tensions have escalated since Feb. 28, when strikes by the **United States** and **Israel** on **Iran** – followed by Iranian retaliation – ignited a sharp rise in regional violence.

## A hole in the sky

This week's airspace closures have left a "hole in the sky," as CNN's travel beat [called it](#).

Because most airlines have been unable to use Russian and Ukrainian airspace during the prolonged war, the Middle East has become an even more critical corridor for flights connecting Europe and Asia.



**READ MORE:** [Minister Anand seeks potential access to Oman's airspace, no gov't evacuation planned](#)

The region hosts some of the world's most influential aviation megahubs – **Dubai International Airport**, **Hamad International Airport** and **Zayed International Airport** – as well as global carriers such as **Emirates**, **Qatar Airways** and **Etihad Airways**, whose business models are designed around linking East and West through tightly-coordinated long-haul networks.

When that airspace shuts down, the ripple effects are swift and far-reaching.

Flights are forced onto longer routings, increasing journey times and fuel burn while triggering disruptions to aircraft rotations and crew schedules – all of which drive up costs.

Aircraft can end up out of position, crews may be stranded, and operational uncertainty intensifies.

The knock-on effects also extend to insurance exposure, fare pricing ([reports](#) are already emerging of sharply rising prices) and the broader financial sustainability of airline operations.

**Ernest Arvai**, an aviation analyst at U.S.-based **AirInsight**, told [The National](#) that detours of two to three hours on wide-body aircraft could add about \$6,000 to \$7,500 per flight hour in operating costs.

"Losses will be dependent on the type of aircraft and its cost structure," he told the outlet, adding that financial losses for airlines come from two sources: "the loss of revenue from flight cancellations or delays, and from higher operating costs for additional time, fuel, crews and lower load factors, if passengers prefer to avoid the region during a conflict."

## Canada requests access to Oman's airspace

Meanwhile, Canada is exploring options for getting stranded travellers home.

As [reported](#), Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister **Anita Anand** is working to get stranded Canadian citizens from the Middle East.

Speaking to the **Toronto Board of Trade**, Anand made her case for charter flights for Americans wishing to leave the Middle East.

She emphasized that Canada's primary concern amid the ongoing

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# Airports resume limited operations

Airspace in the Middle East is restarting, but due to the volatile nature of military situations, it's a slow and gradual one.

Following more than 48 hours of a complete shutdown, **Dubai Airports**, which is served by **Emirates**, says it is now operating flights, but it's limited.

Shortly after 6 p.m. on Monday (March 2), the authority overseeing both **Dubai International Airport (DXB)** and **Al Maktoum International Airport (DWC)** confirmed that a "small number of flights" would be allowed to operate.

Flight at both airports were first suspended on Feb. 28, after the United Arab Emirates closed its airspace in response to attacks on Iran by the United States and Israel.

The strikes triggered retaliatory action across the Gulf region, including in the UAE.

The shutdowns have left thousands of travellers stuck in Dubai and elsewhere, with officials scrambling to secure temporary accommodation for transit passengers and those scheduled to depart.

As services gradually restart, passengers are being urged not to head to either DXB or DWC unless their airline has contacted them directly with a confirmed departure time.

**Abu Dhabi Airports**, home to Etihad Airways, has also announced a resumption of partial operations at AUH as of Monday.

**Israel** is considering a gradual reopening of its airspace earlier than the start of next week, depending on security developments, [local reports say](#).

Doha-based **Qatar Airways**, meanwhile, said Wednesday (March 4) that its flight operations remain temporarily suspended due to the closure of Qatari airspace.

U.S. President **Donald Trump** has [indicated](#) the conflict with Iran could last weeks and said wars can be fought "forever" with America's stock of ammunition, reports *NBC News*.

The death toll in Iran is now nearly 800, according to the Iranian Red Crescent.

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