

# On the map: Muscat International Airport crowned best in region

**Muscat:** Muscat International Airport has made the country proud once again by winning the title of Middle East's Leading Airport 2019 at the World Travel Awards.

Oman Airports took to their official Twitter account to make the announcement, congratulating the Sultanate for this great achievement. "We are proud to announce Muscat International Airport as the Middle East's Leading Airport in 2019.

"Congratulations to our beloved country for this honourable achievement, which came due to the efforts of the whole airport family," the officials said.

Opened on March 20, 2018, Muscat International Airport is built over a floor area of approximately 580,000sqm and has the capacity to serve 20 million passengers per year, with an expansion potential of up to four times that number.

The Muscat airport has won several awards since its operations began, including the prestigious 'World's Leading New Airport' prize at the World Travel Awards 2018. It saw an increase in the passenger traffic by 5.7 per cent to 16.1 million.

According to the report by Oman Aviation Group for 2018, the new Muscat International Airport is operating at a lower cost than expected despite its size being six times that of the old terminal.

Oman Airports, represented by Saud Nasser Al Hubeishi, Senior Vice President, accepted this prestigious award at the award ceremony, which was attended by a wide spectrum of professionals in the aviation, airports and travel industry

across the world with a network of senior representatives of more than 200 companies from all sectors of the airports, aviation, travel, tourism and hotel industries.

## **Oman Air**

Meanwhile, Oman Air has been crowned the Middle East's best airline in both business and economy class.

Additionally the national carrier was also awarded best in-flight magazine. The awards were given at the World Travel Awards 2019.

In a statement, Oman Air said: "An unprecedented achievement for Oman Air, winning three prestigious awards in one night: Middle East's best airline in both Business and Economy Class, and best in-flight magazine at the World Travel Awards 2019. We thank you for your incredible endorsement and support."

Commenting on the award, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Airports, Sheikh Ayman bin Ahmed Al Hosani, said: "On behalf of the Executive Management of Oman Airports, I would like to congratulate all the employees of Muscat International Airport and all the official and commercial companies and airlines operating at the airport as well as all our strategic partners who contributed directly to this achievement. This award recognises the exceptional efforts and services by all our staff and partners who demonstrate outstanding dedication to the betterment of Muscat International Airport as well as all the other airports of Oman.

He added, "We are proud of this new achievement, which represents a valuable addition to our national success stories and which is the result of our endeavour, at Oman Airports, to continuously expand our global presence as a primary way to help the various actors operating at our airports achieve their strategies through state-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities and record level of services to all our customers. He concluded: "May God bestow success on us and guide us along

the path of achievements and expansion at international level. Congratulations to all of us.”

On his part, Saud Al-Hubeishi, Senior Vice President at Muscat International Airport said: The exceptional efforts exerted by the airport family have set us on the road of achieving an exceptional travel experience for the airports users. Muscat airport redefines the passenger experience through its state-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities housed within its exceptional terminal characterised by its modern architectural design, along with the efforts of many colleagues who worked hard to secure the mobilization of the best trademarks and partners to deliver greater and better results through our airports, which have certainly led to an ideal experience for airport users, and reinforced our dedication to raising our aspirations, ambitions and expectations to attain to the very highest echelons of services and achievements. We are committed to sparing no effort to consolidate all aspects of partnership with all the parties working at the airport and to bring together our efforts as one family towards attaining the best in delivering impressive services to all travelers through our airport.”

“It is our aim to expand our global presence and to increase the international visibility of Muscat International Airport, the Jewel of Oman airports, and position it as a leading player in the innovation and uniqueness scene.

The report also highlighted that Oman Airports has reached a 95 per cent Omanisation rate and hired 115 nationals in 2018.

Additionally, 364 locals were hired at Oman Air, including 234 fresh graduates and 48 pilots which means a total of 2,683 Omani employees, with an Omanisation rate of 75.9 per cent (excluding female cabin crew). However, the female workforce ratio makes up 35.1 per cent of staff at Oman Air. Passengers travelling through Muscat International Airport rose by 8.7 per cent in March 2019 to 4 million, compared to the same time

period last year, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The monthly statistical report by NCSI also revealed that the total number of flights at Muscat International Airport rose 1.5 per cent to 28,775 flights in March 2019, compared to 28,346 flights for the same period in 2018.

The number of international flights at the Muscat International Airport increased by 2.1 per cent to 26,334 flights during the three-month period of 2019, up from 25,789 flights for the same period of the previous year.

The total number of international passengers at airport rose by 9.4% at the end of March 2019, reaching 3.72 million passengers. This included 1.86 million passenger arrivals, 1.85 million passenger departures, and 9,969 passenger transits.

Meanwhile, domestic flights at the airport fell by 4.5 per cent to 2,441 flights at the end of March 2019, against 2,557 flights during the same time in 2018. The arrival and departure of domestic flights also dropped by 4.4 per cent and 4.7 per cent respectively. However, the total number of domestic passengers at the airport rose by 0.1 per cent to 278,052 passengers in March 2019, against 277,799 passengers for the same period of the previous year. This included 137,362 passenger arrivals and 140,690 passenger departures, the NCSI report highlighted.

According to the report, the total number of passengers at Salalah International Airport increased by 2.7 per cent to 339,706 passengers at the end of March 2019 compared to 330,725 passengers for the same period of 2018. The total number of flights at Salalah International Airport rose by 5.6 per cent to 2,794 flights in March 2019 compared to 2,647 flights in March 2018.

The total number of international flights at Salalah

International Airport surged by 21.9 per cent to 1,217 flights till the end of March 2019 while the number of domestic flights fell by 4.4 per cent to 1,577 flights in March 2019. The total number of international passengers recorded a rise of 11.2 per cent to reach 135,773 passengers while the number of domestic passengers fell by 2.2 per cent to 203,933 passengers.

However, there was a drop in the total number of passengers at Sohar International Airport by 42.5 per cent to 48,716 passengers at the end of March 2019 compared to 84,717 passengers for the same period of 2018. The total number of flights at Sohar International Airport also fell by 26.4 per cent to 524 flights in March 2019 compared to 712 flights in March 2018.

Duqm Airport saw a rise in the total number of passengers by 26.8 per cent to 14,075 passengers at the end of March 2019 compared to 11,103 passengers for the same period of 2018. The total number of flights at Duqm Airport till the end of March 2019 reached 148, which is a drop by 3.9 per cent compared to 154 flights in March 2018, the report showed.

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