

Sunday 17 November, 2013

ETIHAD AIRWAYS ANNOUNCES 'STEP-CHANGE IN BUSINESS STRATEGY' WITH THE LAUNCH OF ETIHAD REGIONAL

- **Branded operation to start following acquisition of 33.3 per cent stake in Swiss carrier Darwin Airline**
 - **Etihad Regional to connect passengers from secondary markets into Etihad Airways' European network and hubs of equity alliance partners**
 - **Etihad Airways announces daily flights from Abu Dhabi to Zurich, complementing current daily service to Geneva**

Etihad Airways, the national carrier of the United Arab Emirates, today announced a 'step-change in global aviation,' with the launch of its first branded regional operation, after taking a 33.3 per cent stake in Swiss carrier Darwin Airline.

Following completion of the minority investment, which is subject to regulatory approval, Darwin Airline will rebrand its operations as Etihad Regional and align its network to connect passengers from secondary European markets onto the main networks of Etihad Airways and its equity alliance partners.

Etihad Airways will also launch daily services on June 1, 2014 from Abu Dhabi to Zurich, which will become one of Darwin Airline's main operating hubs.

James Hogan, Etihad Airways' President and Chief Executive Officer, said: "This is a step-change for Etihad Airways. With our new partner

Darwin Airline, we are creating a unique approach to network development for global airlines.

“European travellers will now be able to connect from a far, far wider range of European towns and cities on Etihad-branded aircraft, through Abu Dhabi to our destinations worldwide.

“We are also linking the new Etihad Regional network into the key hubs of our equity alliance partners, bringing benefits to the customers of airberlin and Air Serbia.

“This is not just a great new offer for European travellers. It is also great news for Darwin Airline, which will see increased investment, greater sales and marketing opportunities, and the chance to benefit from Etihad Airways’ global network.”

Mr Hogan said the new approach could be extended to other markets over time.

“This new model is one that can bring the Etihad badge of quality to air travellers around the world,” he said. “In just a decade, we have established the Etihad brand as one of the most recognised and most highly regarded in aviation. This model offers a new direction for that brand in future.”

Darwin Airline is headquartered in Lugano, Switzerland, with its major hub in Geneva. It currently offers scheduled flights to 21 destinations in Europe using a fleet of 10 50-seat Saab 2000 turboprop aircraft.

Subject to regulatory approvals, Etihad Airways will invest in Darwin Airline through the acquisition of 33.3 per cent of an enlarged share capital. Darwin Airline, which will continue to focus on secondary markets, will become the seventh member of the Etihad Airways equity airline alliance, the fourth partner in Europe, and the first to operate using a new sub-brand called ‘Etihad Regional’.

The investment will give Etihad Airways access to regional markets in Europe, and enable a major expansion of Darwin Airline's operations.

The new 'Etihad Regional' logo will be displayed prominently on each side of the fuselage of the Darwin Airline aircraft, while the rear of the plane will carry the words "Operated by Darwin Airline", and the Darwin Airline's present logo, as well as continuing to proudly display the Swiss flag. All flights will continue to be operated under the Darwin Airline designator code.

By mid-2014, Darwin Airline will add 21 new routes and 18 new destinations. Its network will then include six European gateways served by Etihad Airways – Geneva, Amsterdam, Paris, Düsseldorf, Belgrade and, commencing in June, Zurich.

Darwin Airline will be able to connect to the network of airberlin, Etihad Airways' equity partner, through new and existing routes to Berlin, Düsseldorf and Zurich. Berlin and Düsseldorf provide excellent connections to the US with airberlin.

Darwin Airline will also be able to connect to the network of Air Serbia, through its hub at Belgrade.

Subject to regulatory approval, Etihad Airways, airberlin and Air Serbia will codeshare on Darwin Airline routes, while Darwin Airline will codeshare on Etihad Airways, airberlin and Air Serbia flights from a range of European gateways. This will provide deeper access to Europe for the three larger carriers and significant new international connectivity and feeder traffic for Darwin Airline.

Maurizio Merlo, Chief Executive Officer of Darwin Airline, believes the Etihad Airways partnership will enable Darwin Airline to build upon its success to date and enjoy significant growth, not only by providing a larger network for customers within Europe but also greater access to Europe for travellers from around the world.

He said: “We have built a solid position in regional markets across Europe and through this partnership we can add another major dimension, enabling our customers to access the global network of destinations offered by Etihad Airways, while providing fresh options for overseas visitors to travel through Europe on our flights.”

“This arrangement is new and exciting for both airlines and represents fresh thinking in our industry. It also demonstrates clearly the strategy of thinking globally and acting locally to benefit the customers of both companies.”

Darwin Airline’s expanded network, to be implemented in stages from April 2014, will provide significant new opportunities for travellers to fly between major regional centres in Europe and the global network of Etihad Airways, via its hub in Abu Dhabi, capital of the UAE.

In April 2014, Darwin Airline will launch nine new routes, from Dusseldorf to Berlin, Cambridge and London City; from Berlin to Poznan and Wroclaw; from Geneva to Toulouse; from Zurich to Leipzig; and from Rome to Tirana and Zagreb.

In May 2014, it will start flights from from Zurich to Geneva, Florence and Turin; and from Geneva to Belgrade.

In June 2014, it will launch flights from Zurich to Linz, Graz, Verona and Lyon; and from Geneva to Bordeaux, Marseille, Nantes and Verona.

In addition to network and efficiency benefits, Darwin Airline will adopt the Etihad Guest loyalty program.

Etihad Airways’ minority shareholdings include 29 per cent of airberlin, 40 per cent of Air Seychelles, 19.9 per cent of Virgin Australia and 3 per cent of Aer Lingus. Etihad Airways has also received regulatory approval

to acquire 24 per cent of India's Jet Airways, and from January 2014, will acquire 49 per cent of Air Serbia.

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NEW NONSTOP ROUTES TO BE INTRODUCED BY DARWIN AIRLINE

<p>APRIL 2014:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Düsseldorf - Cambridge • Düsseldorf - London City • Düsseldorf - Berlin • Berlin - Poznan • Berlin - Wroclaw • Zurich - Leipzig • Geneva - Toulouse • Rome – Tirana • Rome - Zagreb 	<p>MAY 2014:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geneva – Belgrade • Geneva - Zurich • Zurich - Florence • Zurich - Turin <p>JUNE 2014:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geneva – Bordeaux • Geneva – Marseille • Geneva – Nantes • Geneva – Verona • Zurich - Linz • Zurich - Graz • Zurich – Lyon • Zurich - Verona
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About Etihad Airways

Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, began operations in 2003, and in 2012 carried 10.3 million passengers. From its hub at Abu Dhabi International Airport, Etihad Airways offers flights to 97 passenger and cargo destinations in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas, with a fleet of 86 Airbus and Boeing aircraft. Etihad Airways holds equity investments in airberlin, Air Seychelles, Virgin Australia and Aer Lingus, and has received regulatory approval to acquire 24 per cent of India's Jet Airways. Etihad Airways will acquire 49 per cent of Air Serbia from January 2014. For more information, please visit: www.etihad.com

About Darwin Airline

Darwin Airline is a Swiss-based regional carrier founded in 2003 and serving a range of key secondary markets in Europe. The airline operates two-class flights with a fleet of ten 50-seat Saab 2000 turboprop aircraft to a network stretching from southern Italy to the UK. The airline's major hub is the Swiss city of Geneva. For more information, please visit www.darwinairline.com.