

**13 January 2014**

**Saudia Airlines Return to Manchester Airport with New Direct Jeddah Route**

Saudia Airlines, the national carrier for Saudi Arabia, has announced a return to Manchester Airport with a direct route between Manchester and Jeddah starting in March 2014.

Flights will commence three times a week from April 2014 and passengers can enjoy a 5% discount if they book direct through Saudia's website.

Ken O'Toole, Chief Commercial Officer for Manchester Airports Group (MAG), said: "We are delighted to welcome Saudia Airlines back to Manchester Airport with their introduction of Jeddah services. The introduction of the new three weekly Jeddah route will further strengthen the Middle East connections from Manchester and sees another direct long haul service added to our network of connections.

"The introduction of this route is testament to the strength of Manchester airport's catchment and we look forward to this direct service supporting the strong commercial, ethnic and educational relationships that exist between Saudi Arabia and the North West."

Saudia Airlines last operated from Manchester Airport in 2007 and the new Jeddah route is expected to attract a range of leisure and business passengers.

Mr Rashid Alajmi, General Manager of Passenger Sales and Services for the European Region at Saudia Airlines said: "We are very happy that our plans to return to Manchester have now come to fruition, and that we are now able to offer North West customers a non-stop service to Saudi Arabia. Commercial ties between the North of England and Saudi Arabia have traditionally been very strong and this new service will give business customers in the region the opportunity to travel to Saudi Arabia without having to transfer en-route.

"The North of England's large Muslim population will also benefit from this new Manchester to Jeddah service when travelling to perform their religious pilgrimages of Hajj and Umrah. The flight is so timed that they can reach the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina at the most convenient time. The many Saudi students who choose the North of England to further their studies in one of the region's many fine educational establishments, will find that using the our service from Manchester Airport will be the easiest and most comfortable way home."

The flights will depart from Manchester Airport's terminal two on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sunday starting from March 28th. Manchester Airport is the third largest airport in the UK and passenger numbers have risen to over 20million during 2013.

Manchester Airport's Middle Eastern connections will be made even stronger by the addition of the Jeddah route and the airport is the largest outside of London capable of servicing this route.

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