

Find Best Airfare Deals

Finding The Best Airfare Deals Available

We can never dispute the fact that airfare of many airline companies today are intensely costly, especially if it's the peak season for international travel. Even cheap international flights can get too pricey if you don't get them at the right time. Getting some savings out of your travel cost might not be possible if you are lazy and avoid searching for the best airfare deals in the market.

If you want to cut down on the total of your travel cost then you better do your best to find the best airfare deals available for you. Here are some ideas on how to do just that.

Look For Discounts On The Internet

Most airline and travel companies on the Internet offers low airfare rates and is quite convenient for consumers since they can easily book the flights they want in the convenience of their own home or at the office.



This is Patna Airport. Passengers happily board a plane after booking through NC Airways

It's quite easy to look for the best airfare deals on the Web since you can utilize search engines to make lookup much easier to deal with. You can go for travel-related companies affiliated with known airlines and have them book your flights

for you. One advantage to using these services is the ability to help you which days offer lower rates in terms of departure and arrival time, or on specific dates.

You might also want to check out on other possible deals that will help minimize your travel costs with other benefits – such as travel or vacation packages that include hotel accommodations, transportation costs, and of course, your airfare.

Consult A Travel Agent

Travel agents are quite handy to have around if you need to have your flight booked according to your specifications without having to do it on your own. One advantage of getting these experts to do your work for you is their contacts in the travel industry to find the best airfare deals for you in the shortest possible time. Provide them with the details of your travel, such as the exact date you want to leave and return from your destination, budget, and the likes.

Try Out Off-Peak Hour Flights

If you want to get the cheapest airfare deals in the industry then you might want to book your flight during off-peak hours – which is to say around late in the evening or early in the morning. In most cases, these airlines offer quite a discount for last-minute deals just to get as much passenger as

possible for every trip.

The only drawback to this solution is that there are many bookings for these seats in advance due to its cheap price. It is advised to consider at least 3 or 4 airline companies for this method so that you will have some seat available when you need them.

Go For Cheap Airlines

If all else fails, you can always look for the best airfare deals on cheap airlines in the market. There are quite a lot of them around since many find it affordable to opt for this method of travel than getting one from known airline carriers. They are not known for quality or luxurious accommodations and seating is a bit cramped – at least it gets you where you're going without emptying your wallet.

Ask The Expert: Why is Spicejet in a Hand-to-Mouth Situation?

India's budget carrier airline, SpiceJet, presently operates nearly 630 daily flights to various domestic and international destinations. It has an impressive fleet size of 118 aeroplanes, comprising 82 Boeing 737, 32 Bombardier Q-400s and four B737 freighters.

SpiceJet has recently signed a codeshare agreement with the Gulf carrier, Emirates. Code-sharing enables an airline to book its passengers on its ally carrier and present seamless travel to destinations where it does not operate.

Also Read: Jet Airways pilots look to join SpiceJet, IndiGo pilots see injustice

This is the first-ever codeshare agreement signed by SpiceJet. The codeshare will permit opening of new routes and destinations for the passengers of both the air carriers. An initial agreement between the two airlines was signed in April 2019. Thus, travellers from all over the world can book a single ticket with lucrative rates to any of Emirates' nine points across India and connect onwards to 172 domestic routes on which SpiceJet operates.



However, the overall financial health of SpiceJet does not present a rosy picture. The company is facing a liquidity crunch. It has very low amounts of cash shown on its books. Media reports have said that the SpiceJet is bolstering its balance sheet with a fundraise through a qualified institutional placement (QIP), it is in talks with potential investors. SpiceJet has denied such reports. The so-called potential investors are missing too.

The fact of the matter is:

-As on 30 September, SpiceJet had cash and cash equivalents worth ₹93 crore.

-It had a net worth of about ₹850 crores (*negative*).

On the other hand, Spicejet's competitor, IndiGo run by InterGlobe Aviation Ltd had cash and cash equivalents worth

about ₹18,736 crores and a net worth of about ₹6,200 crores. SpiceJet's free cash flow was ₹115 crore compared to IndiGo's ₹3,111 crores for the first half of FY20.

IndiGo is India's largest airline by market share. SpiceJet is India's second-largest airline by market share after IndiGo.

Also Read: SpiceJet considers taking over Jet Airways' aircraft, staff

In six months ending 30 September, SpiceJet lost ₹200 crores. It did not expect such a loss. It had assumed that the operating environment will not remain bad. When Jet Airways shut operations in April 2019, other airlines like Spicejet assumed that they will benefit greatly. However, that did not pan out as per their expectations, yields did not show any marked improvements. SpiceJet expanded rapidly in recent times, taking advantage of Jet's closure to take up over 30 of Jet's former 737 NG planes, flying more passengers and raising fares. SpiceJet has also received some of Jet's domestic and international airport slots.

In SpiceJet's case, the grounding of Boeing 737 MAX planes did hurt to some extent. SpiceJet seems to have placed very high hopes on the so-called virtues of the MAX, like 12-15% lower fuel consumption and 10% lower maintenance costs. It made the cardinal sin of assuming this as the key to profitability.

Most aviation analysts view this as an almost a hand-to-mouth situation for SpiceJet. Things may worsen further if Spicejet does not apply a course correction. A saving grace is a fact that the fuel prices haven't increased too much.

When a company is viewed as financially strong, it is in a better position to get better deals from suppliers, vendors and aircraft makers. Even for a fundraising exercise, the investors investigate its finances and then invest.



SpiceJet and other airlines like SpiceJet are not presently able to pass through such rough weather. They invariably have low cash on their books because they allow their businesses to heavily depend on variables beyond their legitimate control like fuel prices and competitive pressures. They are neither aware of the true value of their net worth nor they are able to make the optimum utilisation of their resources – which is quite strange. Most of the time, they find themselves very difficult to sustain.

Also Read: IndiGo worst performing airlines for consumers; Air India's luggage policy best: Parliamentary panel

IndiGo has much higher cash holdings, it can sustain longer, it need not resort to lame excuses when things (fuel prices, currency fluctuation, or competition) become severe for the aviation sector. IndiGo's secret is open. Its business model is different from others. Apart from generating revenue from aircraft operations, it also has additional sources of revenue. Sale-purchase and leaseback of aircraft form a major source of revenue for IndiGo. A robust cash holding position enabled IndiGo to order over 100 aeroplanes in 2006-07.

Bihar Govt Didn't Open

Counselling Centres for 0.5 Million who Applied for 166 Gr D Vacancies

The various opposition parties, including Congress, have been targeting the BJP-JD(U)-led state government in Bihar when nearly 0.5 million applicants, which include graduates, post-graduates, B Tech, M Phil, MBA and MCA degree possessors, applied for 166 Gr D vacancies in the Bihar Vidhan Sabha where only a 10th pass qualification is needed. Around 1,500 to 1,600 candidates are appearing in the interview on a daily basis since September 2019 and the process shall continue till January 2020.

The controversy – people who are overqualified applying for Group-D posts in the state – get bigger. Such people are willing to serve as peons, gardeners, guards and cleaners in Bihar Vidhan Sabha.



'Failed can Pass' says a hoarding at Hazratganj in Lucknow

The Bihar minister of rural development and parliamentary affairs, Shrawan Kumar of Janata Dal (United) dismissed it. He said, "What can a government do if people apply for jobs? People apply for jobs on their own accord. It's not like the

government tells them to apply for a particular job. The only thing the government can do is to ensure the meritorious applicants are selected,” Kumar told media persons.

Also Read: Emotional Intelligence for Working Professionals: Why is it Important

Kumar, however, recognised that development is a matter of serious concern. He swiftly blamed the “increasing competition” around the world for the same. “While it is worrisome, the entire world is going through a phase of tough competition,” he said.

What to do when 0.5 million people have applied for 166 Gr D vacancies:

The Bihar government did not show any pro-active intent to address the issue of unemployment. Its security department, namely, the police force is faced with severe manpower crunch. Bihar is among the most populous regions in the world, it requires enough number of police personnel to secure its various establishments, highways, and railways apart from VIP security. It is an irony that while the departments cry for more manpower, thousands of the state’s citizens have to continuously search for jobs.

When it saw 0.5 million people have applied for 166 Gr D vacancies, the Bihar government did not open any counselling centre to speak to its citizens. Such an initiative would have required nearly 15 counsellors working in a 24-hr shift to counsel about 2000 people a day. The government could have empanelled such candidates and prepared a database for any future job consideration. Unfortunately, the government didn’t make any use of this opportunity.



What should a government do

Many candidates who applied for these posts have said that unemployment was the major reason for filing these applications. They feel that a higher education degree doesn't guarantee a basic salary of Rs 10,000 in the private sector. As such, the youth prefer government jobs over private jobs.

The government could have tried to see the reasons and solutions. By counselling the candidates and considering their strengths, weaknesses, aspirations and family backgrounds the government could have averted such a situation. It could have advised the candidates other means of livelihood.

Opposition leaders from the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and the Congress have blamed the BJP-JDU government for the current scenario of rising unemployment in the state.

They have said, "There is a job crisis and a state of unemployment in Bihar. Hence 0.5 million young men and women from neighbouring states have also applied for 166 Gr D vacancies. This includes people holding an MBA, BCA degrees and higher qualifications who are applying for Group D jobs.

Also Read: CBSE Fails Even Before Exams, Does not Trust its own Examinee

The situation is mainly due to the education policy the country has been following. In its New Education Policy, the government has clearly mentioned that until now the country was in a grip of a flawed education system. It has produced products which are mostly unemployable in the industry. The country has seen ages of indoctrination by the Indian middle-class fathers and mothers, who influence their kids that their

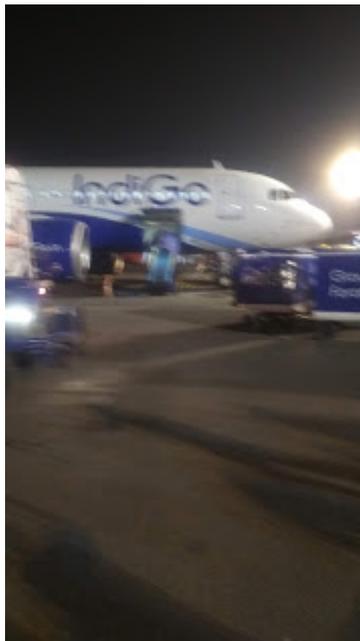
prosperity, self-merit, and marriage prospects are directly linked to the college they have attended and the job they do.

This situation shows that unemployment in the state is at an alarming level. Youths with higher qualifications are ready to work as peons. Nothing can be more unfortunate than this. People from other states like Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand are also coming here for jobs, which means that even these states are reeling under unemployment.

Ancillary Services Rescue Airlines

Airlines in India are succeeding to some extent in milking a few millions of additional rupees from their customers for “extra” services that are now used to be included in their fare prices.

The Role of Ancillary Services



Airlines all over the world are on their way to rake in nearly \$110 billion in revenue this year from the sale of so-called

“ancillary services”. These services have nothing to do with the operations of the aircraft: fuel consumption, maintenance, landing, parking or navigation charges. They are simply the extras best described as marketing gimmicks. These extras range from a choice of the seat to the volume of leg-space. Depending upon the way an airline fancies its marketing strategies, these may also include the ability to check one or more bags, chose an aisle seat, select seats together and/or in advance, to get reduced ticket change fees or additional frequent flier mileage points, or to get favoured check-in and security clearance procedures. Airlines clearly have today established the practice of charging more for such ancillaries.

Also Read: Silly Gimmicks Used by IndiGo for Marketing

The latest trend for the airlines has been:

to present a fully-stripped down, seat-only “Basic Economy” fares as well as various higher-priced “branded fares” that include various combinations of additional services.

But in the process, airlines have found in their customer feedback notes that they have disappointed more than half of their customers and left as many as 75% of them unhappy with their airline adventures. Such services historically were included in the price of the air-ticket. The airlines are yet to learn how to use customer data effectively to present fare options specifically tailored to the preferences of individual consumers. The skills required for revenue optimization (how a company dynamically adjusts the prices of its services to get, ideally, the highest revenue from a customer who is ready to pay for a service or product) have not yet been developed.

Also Read: AAI’s Unused Airfields Yet to be Put on Use

More and more evidence is coming up which shows that a large

segment of travellers:

- leisure travellers,
- less frequent travellers,
- high mileage business travellers and/or
- very frequent fliers

are surely not very happy with the kind and constituents of various fare price options that the airlines offer. There is indeed a visible sense of hopelessness across the spectrum of airline patrons.



Despite that impediment, despite the still-not-well-defined way of unbundling and re-bundling service packages in their unpredictably priced fares, airlines' efforts at raising ancillary revenues are setting new records with every passing year.

Ancillary revenue now signifies 12.2% of global airline revenue. That's more than double considering the industry's forecasted 5% operating profit margin in 2019. In other words, ancillary revenues have impacted greatly on airlines'

profitability.

The global industry's \$109.5 billion in ancillary revenue now is more than half of the industry's total amount spent on fuel. In 2019, the fuel bill is expected to be around \$206 billion. This trend reveals that the rapidly evolving ancillary revenues have become a vital hedge against escalating fuel prices.

The Role of ATF Prices

Airlines in India have long rued the high cost operating environment and high fuel prices. On November 20, 2019, the Parliament was informed through a written reply by the Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in the Rajya Sabha that four domestic airlines including Jet Airways and JetLite, have shut their operations over the last three years for want of funds and unavailability of aircraft. The government has said that it is conscious of the financial difficulties being faced by the airlines and is responding to the industry situation.

The Minister listed out a slew of measures taken by the government to enable growth in the aviation sector. He said that the government was coordinating with all the stakeholders to resolve their issues.

As a result:

- the central excise duty on aviation turbine fuel (ATF) has been reduced,
- 100 per cent FDI has been allowed under the automatic route to ensure modernisation of airports and establish high standards,
- foreign airlines are allowed to invest up to 49 per cent in Indian carriers under the automatic routes and liberalisation of domestic code-share points in India within the framework of

the Air Service Agreement (ASA).

However, the Minister made it clear that the government has no role in raising funds for private airline companies as it is an internal matter of the airline and each airline has to prepare its business plan on the basis of its own market assessment and liabilities.

The Aviation Sector Elsewhere.

In Thailand, Thai AirAsia, Thai Smile Airways, Thai Airways International, Nok Air, Bangkok Airways, Thai VietJet Air and Thai Lion Air have submitted a request to the government to cut the excise tax on jet fuel to avoid downsizing or shutting down operations. They said they have been badly affected by the weak economy, the local currency's strength, and intense competition. This has reduced tourist inflows.



The Excise Department has proposed the seven low-cost and full-service carriers to increase the frequency of flights to second-tier provinces to enhance tourism there in return for a reduction in the excise tax on jet fuel. The Excise Department

will cut the excise tax provided the airlines offer proposals that benefit the public, including more frequent flights to second-tier provinces.

"The government support is surely required if airlines are expected to take part in stimulating tourism in particular provinces," the airlines say. "Promoting travel in second-tier provinces is crucial for Thailand's tourism."

The United Arab Emirates's (UAE) is home to two of the biggest global airlines, Emirates and Etihad. The share of the aviation and tourism sector in UAE economy is set to double to \$128 billion; is likely to support 1.4 million jobs in the next 20 years, from 800,000 jobs now as per International Air Transport Association (IATA) observations.

Also Read: Atf Price Cut Is Steepest In Last Two Years

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IITs Still Struggling With Students Drop-out Problem

27 Sept 2019. The Council for Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) chaired by Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank had to come up with solutions for the number of perennial problems faced by the IIT management during the past 20 years or so. The Council, headed by the HRD Minister, is the highest decision-making body of all the 23 IITs, the country's premier engineering institutions.

Overview.

It was the 53rd meeting being held in New Delhi. The IIT Council identified such problems as shortcomings :

- there are 'academically weak students' at the IITs who drop out from the IIT system,
- IITs do not have sufficient financial or admin autonomy yet,
- their 'internationalisation' through renewable contracts for foreign faculty and test OCI (Overseas Citizens of India) students directly for JEE Advanced is not being encouraged,
- the system sees overlap and duplication of beneficiaries,
- IITs do little on research. They do not identify thrust areas and do not set up national-level laboratories for the same,
- the IITs do not mentor other nearby engineering colleges.

As per HRD Ministry data, nearly 2,500 undergraduate and postgraduate students dropped out from the 23 IITs across the country in the last two years. (both at the undergraduate and postgraduate level). These include cases of expulsion on account of weak academic performance. For instance, in 2019, IIT-Kanpur expelled 18 students on the grounds of poor grades, of which half were B.Tech students.



IITsIIT students

As per the latest All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), a study by the HRD Ministry, the number of students who enrolled into BTech and Bachelor of Engineering (BE) courses fell by 0.05 million: from 4.25 million in 2014-15 to 3.77 million in 2018-19. More than 75 engineering and technical colleges across the country have opted for “progressive closure” in 2019. Such institutions will not take fresh admissions from this year.

The data on the steep fall in engineering admission and drop-out rates at the IITs is thus worrying the HRD ministry.

The Council, in its meeting, thus admits that there are indeed ‘weak’ students since they have to drop out while they are halfway into their studies in the IIT. As such, the said IITs have not achieved their objectives. They are still struggling with the inherent flaws in the system which were finally revealed in the solution proposed by the Council :

“Academically weak students, who are not able to secure the required credits for promotion to the next semester, maybe allowed an exit option with a degree programme after the second semester, rather than being forced out of the programme.”

How did the situation arise

It has been surveyed that most drop-outs from IITs and IIMs are from the reserved category. Nearly 48 per cent of students dropping out of the IITs and over 62.6 per cent from IIMs in the past two years are from the reserved category.

- Quota system allows students with below-par merit being inducted into IITs,
- Due to reservations, fundamentally weak students somehow though manage to get into the IITs, but inside they have a really tough time keeping up with the pace of studies,
- Teachers are not able to cultivate and motivate,
- IITs do not examine the intelligence of the students nor develop their creativity,
- The credibility and reputation of the IITs get gradually eroded.

The HRD minister had brought up this issue in the Parliament in July 2019. “Dropouts in undergraduate programmes are attributed to withdrawal due to wrong choices filled, poor academic performance of students, personal and medical reasons,” he had said.

The Irony

The Council assumes that this suggestion will be good for the weak student who can't cope up with rigours of IIT study. It said that those who are unable to keep pace with the required academic standards can be allowed an 'honourable' exit after the second semester. Officials say that academically weak students will be able to choose BSc degree after the second semester and leave after three years, provided they have met the minimum academic standards.

However, it becomes logically wrong to label people as 'academically weak' if they are exiting the program early. If such students are labelled as weak, then the BSc solution will be like a loser's option. The student may be reluctant to accept it. Moreover, the industry and the potential recruiters also may not give such students any importance. What's the point in getting into an IIT and getting out of it as a weak student carrying a BSc paper?

Thus the so-called BSc scheme will not be of any use. Being professional, the IITs should not have kid gloves for weak students. It will be prudent if reservation policy is given a rethink and only students with merit are offered seats. The aspirant should be good enough for IITs and avoid getting inside IITs through the reservations route because it defeats the purpose of social justice. If such selected students turn out to be weak, then there is an equal possibility that some students who did not get selected may have been bright after all.

An estimated 0.9 million students take JEE (main) that's held twice a year. Out of these, about 13,500 get an IIT seat.

Since students get into the IITs after clearing a cut-throat competition, they are presumably quality students but are not able to cope up with the academic requirements at times. It was felt they should be given an exit option rather than the entire effort going waste.

The proposal reveals that the HRD ministry does not wish to consider improving the entrance test and admission process that matches the IIT education standards so that the right candidates are selected rather than selecting candidates and later giving degree discounts to weak students.

The Council could not provide any solution to other students who could have continued but failed due to admission of less suitable candidates through the quota system. The Council did not recommend any reforms for the process of JEE selection which urgently needs some tinkering. Let there be a uniform policy for all IITs if the brand has to be saved.

IITs Autonomy

Autonomy on the lines of the IIMs under the new IIM Act still eludes the IITs. The recent Council meeting also proposed a new model of financial autonomy for the IITs in consultation with the NITI Aayog. The institutes will charge tuition fees based on actual costs (nearly Rs 0.07 million a year) from the students. Currently, IIT students pay only Rs 0.02 million per annum as tuition fee. Moreover, almost half of the BTech students at IITs under the SC/ST category are exempt from paying any tuition fee. The institutes bear the difference between actual cost and income through their internal accruals and block grants received from the government.

The government, while following socialism principles, will provide financial help directly to the students through scholarships or "in any other manner as it deems fit". Formulae like direct fee reimbursement to students through DBT instead of subsidising them are under discussion. The IITs will not receive the block grants from the government. They will be free from government restrictions on using their financial resources.

The Council will also consider empowering the Board of Governors of an IIT to pick its members and chairperson. Currently, the HRD Ministry appoints them. IIT directors, according to the agenda, will continue to be selected by the government. However, apart from the IIT Council's approval, the IIT Act will also have to be amended to finally empower the IITs.

The council has indicated that it was open to all templates on greater financial and administrative autonomy for IITs. The institutes should be affordable for students from all sections of society. Each IIT must review the 'Merit-cum-Means' scheme to ensure that there was no overlap and duplication of beneficiaries. The council also called upon the IITs to concentrate on research. Each IIT should identify 4-5 thrust areas and set up national-level labs. Each IIT should mentor 10 engineering colleges in its vicinity. To 'internationalise' the IITs, the council felt it was necessary to recruit foreign faculty on renewable contracts rather than the current five-year tenure.

Also Read : 96-year-old Kerala woman tops literacy mission exam with 98 per cent score

Also Read: CBSE Fails Even Before Exams, Does not Trust its own Examinee

Virgin Atlantic Could Not Grow In India Due to Jet Airways Collapse

New Delhi: The closure of Jet Airways (India) Limited changed the India growth plans of Virgin Atlantic. The British airline, which had a code share partnership with Jet Airways, then started its own services between London and Mumbai, as per the airline's country manager (India) David Hodges.

"We had a code-share partnership with Jet Airways, and we planned to grow that," Hodges said adding, "Unfortunately, the grounding of Jet Airways changed our growth plans."

Also Read : [Explainer: Jet Airways crisis](#)

One airline books its passengers on its partner carriers and provide seamless travel to destinations, where it has no presence by virtue of Code-sharing.

Virgin Atlantic will now start its own daily flights between London and Mumbai from 27 October to utilize the space vacated by Jet Airways, which operated three daily flights on this high demand sector. Jet Airways also flew a daily flight between Mumbai and Manchester.

"There was a lot of capacity (between Mumbai and London/Manchester). We were looking to increase our presence in the partnership with Jet Airways and probably fly one

Virgin Airways flight between England and India (of the flights flown by Jet Airways)," Hodges said. "We need to be quick and nimble (after Jet's grounding). So, we decided to start our own services between London and Mumbai."



Virgin Atlantic currently also has a daily flight between London and New Delhi.

Jet Airways suspended operations in April because of a severe cash crunch. A consortium of 26 banks led by the State Bank of India (SBI) has approached the National Company Law Tribunal (NMCLT) to recover dues worth more than ₹8,500 crore.

As things stand, Jet Airways has run a loss of more than ₹13,000 crore in the past few years. Its total liabilities amount to more than ₹15,000 crore even as lenders have been trying to sell the beleaguered airline as a going concern, but without much success.

Hodges said Virgin Atlantic was looking at forging new partnerships with Indian airlines, which could help the airline get traffic from smaller Indian cities and town. The airline, which already has an interline partnership with Vistara, is looking to forge more such partnerships or code share agreements with other Indian airlines.

"Now, the plan is how we grow in India. Having a code-share with Vistara is definitely an option for us," Hodges said. "Interline with Vistara has given us great connections from Mumbai and New Delhi. It's however not very simple. Lots of commercial considerations and decisions will have to be made for this alliance."

An interline agreement is typically signed between two or more airlines to handle passengers when their itinerary involves travelling on multiple airlines. Such agreements allow passengers to change flights to one on another airline without having to check-in again.

Interlining agreements differ from code-share agreements as the latter usually refers to numbering a flight with the airline's code even though the flight is operated by another airline.

Meanwhile, going ahead, Virgin Atlantic could look to operate between cities other than New Delhi and Mumbai, and London as the airline plans to tap the number of passengers traveling to England and Europe from other Indian metros.

"I have spoken to a number of Indian airports, and this is an interesting opportunity. There are also other high growth cities across South and North India," Hodges said. "Bangalore is the next natural city we want to fly from in future, and one that we are currently not flying from."

Virgin Atlantic will operating its Boeing 787-9 (Dreamliner) fleet between London and Mumbai. The airline currently operates Airbus 330 aircraft on its London-Delhi route. The airline hopes to also provide onward connections to destinations in Europe, South America, North America and South Africa from London for its passengers flying from India.

"Ultimately, we want to be able to compete with bigger airlines like British Airways in terms of network and network size," Hodges added.

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