



AIR SERBIA FLIES INTO THE BIG APPLE, WITH HELP FROM ITS FRIENDS ETIHAD

News / Airlines



Its first direct flight from Belgrade to New York since 1992

New York // Air Serbia, the Balkan airline in which Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways holds a 49 per cent stake, has reopened services to New York after a 24-year absence.

An Airbus A330 that took off from Belgrade on Thursday morning will touch down later today at John F Kennedy Airport after an -inaugural flight that was regarded as testimony to the benefits of the alliance with the Abu -Dhabi carrier.

The aircraft was leased and maintained by Etihad and its network, and its crew trained by Etihad and Alitalia, another Etihad partner.

James Hogan, the chief executive of the Etihad Aviation Group holding company, said: "Cooperation and collaboration between the equity partners has been second to none. The group is all about driving innovation and efficiency, and as our equity investments mature, so too will the benefits and synergies become more apparent.

"By developing our unique -equity strategy over the past four years, we have created a compelling alliance of partners to share business and cost -synergies that are driving -benefits straight to the bottom line," he said.

Mr Hogan, who has been the architect of the strategy of forming international equity and code-sharing alliances, said: "We have developed our global network significantly, and in doing so, shared massive cost synergies that demonstrate a commitment to work together to reach our goal. We invested time, effort, resource and manpower to initiate, drive and develop these relationships."

Mr Hogan, who is also the vice chairman of the Air Serbia supervisory board, said: "The introduction of non-stop services between Belgrade and the Big Apple is a terrific achievement that underlines its progress so far, as well as the strength of its business strategy.

"On top of that, it demonstrates the benefits of Etihad Airways partners, whose member airlines provided support every step of the way, with Air Serbia pilots undergoing training in Rome with Alitalia, the cabin crew completing service and safety training in Abu -Dhabi with Etihad Airways, and the A330 being leased from Jet -Airways."

The New York service has been scheduled to provide long-haul customers with easy onward connections over Belgrade to cities across Europe, working with Etihad Airways Partners to increase network reach. It will fly five times per week.

The aircraft, which can carry 254 passengers, features menus inspired by Serbian cuisine, fully lie-flat seats and in-flight entertainment systems at every seat with the latest films, music and TV shows in English and Serbian.

Flights between Belgrade and New York were halted during the Nato-led intervention in the Balkans conflicts of the 1990s.

Zorana Mihajlovic, the Serbian deputy prime minister and minister of transport, who was a passenger on the flight, said: "Today is a very proud and happy day for Air Serbia and the country and people of Serbia. It feels great to be back in New York. This is the first flight operated by a Serbian carrier to the United States since 1992 and it shows the huge steps we have taken to develop our economy and reposition our country, and Belgrade, on the world map."

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