

Media Release

lastminute.com Announces New Venture With Flights-Focused OTA To Boost Middle East Ambitions

- *lastminute.ae is an Online Travel Agency (OTA) based in Dubai. It offers attractive flight prices to consumers with a simple booking flow tailored to Middle Eastern markets.*
- *It leverages the iconic brand name of lastminute.com, which adds technology prowess and global experience to lastminute.ae's strategic partners, content and deep local knowledge.*
- *A bespoke website, in Arabic and English, will initially cater to travellers from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.*
- *The official launch comes as the Middle East is expected to record strong gains in airline traffic with an anticipated increase of 8.8% in 2025, according to IATA.*

Amsterdam / Chiasso 22 January 2025 - lastminute.com, European Travel Tech leader in Dynamic Holiday Packages, is delighted to announce its second Joint Venture outside of Europe with the official launch of lastminute.ae.

lastminute.ae has been created to boost the availability of affordable tourism services in the Middle East with its localised presence and own commercial agreements in the region.

This is the second venture in the MENA region that lastminute.com has embarked on following the launch of lastminute.co.il with Israeli travel giant, Issta Lines Group in 2021. And the knowledge and experience from the first JV has been brought to bear here.

While the start-up began in 2021 and the website has been in an agile test-and-learn phase since 2023, the timing is now right to launch, especially following the unprecedented, rapid development in tourism in the region, including the accelerated shift from offline to a boom in online booking, and the real need for an OTA that can provide travellers of all budgets with the best range and price points for flights.

Combining lastminute.com's technological expertise and vast experience in online flights with lastminute.ae local knowledge and customer base, the new OTA aims to deliver unparalleled service tapping into the wants and needs of Middle Eastern travelers.

Operations Director of lastminute.com, Corrado Casto, backed the partnership to have a long-term impact in helping travellers in the region explore the world.

He said: *"This is our second Joint Venture outside of Europe and we believe this collaboration will bring huge benefits to the tourism sector in the Middle East. While we've been pioneers of online travel for more than 25 years, we've learned that local knowledge on everything from traveller intent, to how people want to pay, is crucial for launching in a new region.*

We're delighted our technology expertise and experience have helped streamline the time to market, and we can't wait to see this partnership take off."

2025 sees lift-off for regional travelling

The launch comes as the online flight ticketing market in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait has experienced significant growth in recent years, driven by increased internet penetration, digital adoption, and a preference for the convenience of online bookings.

The Sharjah Airport Authority (SAA) announced that Sharjah International Airport in the UAE welcomed 17,101,725 passengers in 2024, an impressive 11.4 per cent increase compared to 15,356,212 passengers in 2023*. The increase in passenger numbers in the region has sparked the approval of the construction of a new passenger terminal at Al Maktoum International Airport in Dubai, with an investment of AED 128 billion (\$35 billion)** which will make it the world's largest airport, with a capacity of up to 260 million passengers.

In Saudi Arabia, King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah served 49.1 million passengers in 2024, around 15% more than the previous year***. Kuwait City airport has also seen rises in passenger numbers in recent years, with Kuwait's triangular terminal, set to open in 2025, increasing capacity to 50 million passengers****.

Notes to Editors

About lastminute.com

lastminute.com is the European Travel-Tech leader in Dynamic Holiday Packages. Our mission is to simplify, personalise, and enhance customers' travel experience by leveraging our technology. Thanks to the iconic brand lastminute.com and a rich portfolio of vertical brands, we meet the most diverse needs of travellers across the entire holiday experience. As one of the few fully licensed European tour operators, we offer unlimited real-time travel combinations thanks to our proprietary Dynamic Holiday Packaging engine, providing additional customer protection and exclusive deals. lastminute.com N.V. is a publicly traded company listed under the ticker symbol, LMN on the SIX Swiss Exchange.

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About lastminute.ae

We are lastminute.ae, the home of booking flights at a fraction of the cost. We aim to become one of the leading online tourism brands in the Middle East. We believe with our vast experience of selling millions of flight tickets every year we will achieve that goal. By providing cost-effective flights, from neighbouring countries to global destinations like India, we can cater to the widest range of travellers possible.

There are exciting times ahead for the Middle East as one of the most rapidly developing areas in the world for inbound and outbound tourism. And our bespoke digital platform, born from technological excellence, will allow holidaymakers or business travellers a seamless online booking experience.

lastminute.ae is registered in UAE as MenaStar DMCC

Sources

* [MSN](#)

** [Reuters](#)

*** [Saudi Gazette](#)

**** [MSN](#)