

## Experiencing the inaugural flight of Air Arabia to VIENNA

SHARJAH! Why Sharjah? That was the first thought that came to mind when I received the invitation to be on board of the inaugural flight of Air Arabia from Sharjah to VIENNA. I never took a flight from Sharjah to anywhere. I only landed once in that airport when a flight to Dubai got diverted to this Northern Emirate. So here I am with all my negative perceptions of getting to Sharjah navigating thru heavy traffic.

How wrong I was! Driving in the morning from Dubai to Sharjah airport is a joy. From where I live - in the Arabian Ranches - it only takes five minutes longer to reach Sharjah Airport than famous DXB.

Sharjah airport is also quite small. Checking in and getting thru the security control is quite a browse. Not to forget how easy it is to get a taxi upon return compared to up to one hour of waiting for a taxi at DXB in the middle of the night. And arriving in the afternoon or evening is great as again the drive back to Dubai is against the traffic flow. But I digress...



My flight took off at 7 AM and was quite full for an inaugural flight. I was seated next to the Director of Sales of Air Arabia, She told me that VIENNA is the second destination of Air Arabia in the Schengen area after Prague. Many visitors from the GCC and India love to explore the scenic and architectural splendors between VIENNA and Prague. This new flight will open the opportunity to fly to one of these two cities and to return from the other back home.

But not only Indians and Gulf Arabs are the target group for this new route. Air Arabia foresees a big demand for people living in the catchment area of Vienna to fly to the UAE and beyond to India and Asia.

Air Arabia is a budget airline, but a benign one if I can call it like that. The aircrafts are modern and the biggest surprise to me was the leg space. It is similar to the one offered by Emirates in their A380 Economy class. The food selection is generous for a budget airline and the prices are reasonable. The quality of the food that I was served was excellent.

For sure, Air Arabia being based in Sharjah is a dry airline meaning they don't serve any alcohol on board.

Recently, Air Arabia introduced their own inflight entertainment system. However there are no screens on board; movies are streamed directly via WiFi to your own device (tablets, smart phone).



The flight was a real joy and the landing in Vienna soft and on time.

The price for a return ticket is currently AED 1600. They operate now four flights a week alternating between morning and afternoon flights to Vienna and afternoon and night flights back to Sharjah. Soon the frequency will be increased to one daily flight.

Air Arabia promises to keep the prices always at half of those of Emirates at the maximum.

All in all Air Arabia offers an excellent alternative for flights to Austria, not only, but definitely especially for those being price conscious.

