

Mohamed Ahmed

CEO, Salam Air

As a respected figure in the GCC's aviation industry, Captain Mohamed Ahmed brings over 30 years of experience to the table in building Oman's low cost airline sector from the ground up.

Captain Ahmed's passion for flying started in his childhood, but unlike the vast majority of kids who dream of flying, he was able to pursue it as a career. After getting his pilot's license, he flew different types of planes, from the Boeing 737 and 767 to the Airbus A340 and A320, while serving as the chief pilot for Gulf Air for almost 16 years. In 2003, Captain Ahmed joined the startup team to become the director of operations for Air Arabia, which was just starting out as the first low cost airline in the Middle East. As Air Arabia expanded its network in the region, Captain Ahmed played a crucial role in the operations and maintenance department and most of the hubs and subsidiaries of the company.

It made perfect sense, then, that Mohamed Ahmed was appointed the CEO of the newly established Salam Air, the first low cost carrier in Oman, in 2017. Immediately, he started building the organization, hired a professional team, and established the short and long term growth plans for the company. To this day, he is proud to have a very dynamic and ambitious team, which includes a good mixture of highly experienced people and young talents that the company trained in-house. *"The culture that we have in our offices is our strength that will drive us forward,"* he says.

Oman's vision for the future involves, among other things, developing the tourism sector, and Salam Air is looking forward to participating in making it a reality. The airline has been very well received by the Omani community, not only because of the affordable prices, but also because it introduced many new connections that never existed before, like flights from Sohar to

Salalah, or from Muscat to Khartoum, Baku, or Alexandria. Salam Air has already carried 1.7 million passengers since it started operations, and as Captain Ahmed explains, people in Oman in general are starting to travel more and more. Even though the aviation market is a challenging one, often affected by geopolitical situations and fuel prices, being the first low cost airline in Oman has been a huge advantage for Salam Air, opening the door to a whole world of new opportunities in this unexplored sector.

As part of its growth strategy, Salam Air recently upgraded its website to become one of the most advanced platforms in the region, and introduced more products, like insurance, car rentals, and hotel booking, so that the customers can have everything conveniently in one place. Salam Air currently only has four Airbus 320s in its fleet, each with a capacity of 174 to 180 passengers, but, according to Captain Ahmed, the airline's fleet size will triple this year, going from three in 2018 to nine aircrafts by end of 2019, and will include the brand new Airbus 320neo, one of the best and most fuel-efficient aircrafts available today.

In order to remain competitive in the market, Captain Ahmed and his team make sure they always keep an eye on the current trends and listen to the customers' feedback. Salam Air's goals include expanding its fleet to 20 aircrafts and traveling to 65 destinations by 2022, in order to increase connectivity between Muscat and any underserved location that's around four to five hours away. If everything goes according to plan, Captain Ahmed is expecting the airline to break even after three years from starting its operations.

As part of its long term strategy and vision, the Omani government has made many investments recently in the infrastructure of the aviation sector, many of which helped Salam Air on the journey to achieve its objectives. One of them is the new airport terminal in Muscat, which provides a fantastic travel experience and has an increased passenger capacity. The same upgrades are under construction or already finished in other cities like Salalah, Duqm, and Sohar, in order to meet the growing demand for traveling.

Salam Air's mission is to offer people all the benefits

My message to youth:

You have a lot of potential and a bright future ahead, so follow your passions and do what you like doing—regardless of what everyone else says. People who are passionate about their job will always achieve their goals.

My message about Oman:

Oman is a wonderful country. It is rich in culture. The country has a long term vision for economic sustainability and growth and its being executed to perfection with friendly foreign policy which encourages investments. I invite everyone to come discover Oman, because it has a lot to offer.

of a low cost carrier, but without compromising on the quality of the services. It aims to give more people the opportunity to explore new parts of the world and connect with their friends and family more often. Captain Ahmed says expansion is not always an easy thing to do and it comes with a lot of challenges that are specific to each destination, like country-specific protocols, policies, and regulations. However, given his broad experience in the low cost sector, he knows exactly how to handle these issues to take the airline to the next level.

Mohamed Ahmed is thrilled to announce that Salam Air has a number of surprises in store for its customers this year, but the names of the new destinations still remain undisclosed. He is determined to keep going forward towards building a sustainable and profitable business and providing a great product for customers, in order to make Salam Air a leading airline in Oman and the region. With Captain Ahmed driving the change in the tourism sector, Oman might be achieving its vision sooner than it thought.

Affiliations, Awards & Honors

Top Arab CEO's 2018



DOB: April 9, 1969

Marital status: Married to Suha Al Ali

Education:
1989 - Commercial Pilot License, Oxford
Air Training Academy, London, UK

Spoken Languages: Arabic, English, Persian
& some Hindi

Interests & Hobbies : Fishing, Diving, Squash,
Reading

Sector: Aviation

Ownership: Private

Established in: 2016