STAR WARS TAKES FLIGHT WITH EMIRATES AIRLINE

News / Airlines



The world is going crazy over the latest Star Wars movie and Emirates airline was quick to join the frenzy with a unique package for passengers.

Starting next month, the first six of the Star Wars films will be available on the carrier's in-flight entertainment system.

"With a total run time of over 13 hours, customers could watch all six films at one go on some of our long-haul flights," says Patrick Brannelly, Emirates' divisional vice president, customer experience.

But Emirates wasn't the first to announce a Star Wars tie-up – that award goes to Japan's ANA, which has the full film set and a fleet of Star Warsinspired planes flying the skies right now.

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Emirates' Star Wars offering, the first in the Middle East, can be played on a variety of long-haul destinations, such as Los Angeles and San Francisco. The airline also announced that the latest release from the franchise will air on flights early next year.

It is one of many upgrades to Emirates' entertainment experience. Last month it announced it was boosting its library to include 4,300 hours of programming. That's over half a year of constant entertainment.

There's good reason for this. The airline entertainment industry is already valued at US$2.85 billion, and expected to surpass $5.8bn by 2020 according to MarketsandMarkets. And in a recent Airline Passenger Experience Association study, Asian travellers valued in-flight entertainment higher than other cabin products.

"Although passengers bring their own devices and rapid innovations in the consumer electronics space are opening up the in-flight entertainment market, airlines still invest heavily in in-seat entertainment systems," says Raymond Kollau of airlinetrends.com. "Being able to watch a recent Hollywood movie on long-haul flights is still very high on passengers' wish lists."

Travellers with Etihad can access 110 movies and 300 TV shows encompassing 750 hours of entertainment on the eBox system, however the carrier also boasts seven live TV channels.

Emirates currently offers live TV on 75 aircraft.

Meanwhile Qatar Airways' Oryx One System offers 2,000 entertainment options.

And while Qantas has been testing virtual-reality headsets in their first-class cabins, Qatar Airways chief executive Akbar Al Baker believes the future is in streaming entertainment to passengers' personal devices. "I think this is the way forward because putting IFE in the airplane is first weight and excessive cost by the suppliers."

Q&A

Are there any other new Emirates routes I can take in the Star Wars franchise?

Emirates will be launching flights to both Yinchuan and Zhengzhou in China in May, as well as the world's longest flight from Dubai to Panama City on February 1, giving passengers the chance to enjoy 17 hours and 35 minutes of entertainment in one go.

What else is Emirates adding to its entertainment experience?

Passengers in Emirates' first class cabin will now experience a 32-inch high definition flat screen in their suites, that's a 40 per cent increase on what they had before, and with this they boast the largest television screens in first class in the world.

What about business class?

While the business class screens haven't changed, they still boast an impressive 23 inch and those in economy now have 13-inch widescreens.

There is all this focus on entertainment, but what about Wi-Fi?

Wi-Fi is becoming increasingly important to business travellers and Emirates stated that 2.6 million of their passengers logged on to the internet while airborne between January and September this

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year alone.

Tell me more about ANA’s Star Wars planes.

True Star Wars fans can book themselves on to ANA’s special 777, 767 and 787 aircraft; each has a unique Star Wars design on the aircraft, a collection of Star Wars movies, and even headrests and cups with the franchise branding.

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