



## Press release

Paris, January 25<sup>th</sup> 2022

### Direct flight from Paris to the historic oasis of AlUla (Saudi Arabia) French visitors among the first to experience Saudi's nature and culture heritage

The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU), SAUDIA Airlines and the French Agency for AlUla development (AFALULA) announce the opening of a direct flight from Paris to AlUla (Saudi Arabia).

This new air route provides a unique opportunity for French travellers and travellers from neighbouring countries to be among the first explorers to visit this extraordinary region. Arguably the biggest archaeological program in the world at the moment, the globally significant heritage destination also offers stunning nature and cultural experiences in exceptional landscapes. Among them, the UNESCO World heritage site of Hegra, the second city of the great Nabataean Kingdom of Petra in Jordan, several archaeological sites dating back to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC and a 25 km long lush oasis stretching in the middle of desert mountains and rock formations.

The direct flight will depart from CDG airport every Sunday from January 30<sup>th</sup> to March 27<sup>th</sup>. After a comfortable 5 hours flight in a Boeing 787 "Dreamliner" operated by SAUDIA, and already given a flavour of Arab hospitality, the guests will land at AlUla airport with only a 30-minute drive to their hotel. AlUla is a perfect place for a 3 or 4 sunny day stay enjoying all the nature and culture experiences it has to offer and a smooth entry point to other destinations in Saudi Arabia.

This new flight will be inaugurated this Thursday January 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Phillip Jones, Chief Destination Management & Marketing Officer said:** *"This is indeed an historic moment for AlUla and an important step forward in our ambitions to share our piece of history and our stunning destination with the world. We know that the French are intrepid travellers, always keen to be the first to experience the new. We are excited to work with Saudia to welcome the first European direct flight to AlUla and hope that many Europeans will take the opportunity to visit our heritage sites and perhaps take in some of our winter events as the flights will run till March 27."*

The winter events season is in full swing in AlUla with four major festivals on offer until the end of March 2022 under the events banner of AlUla Moments. Winter at Tantora, AlUla Arts, AlUla Skies and AlUla Wellness. Flagship events include musical concerts at Maraya with international and regional performers on the bill; equestrian events include The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Endurance Cup 2022, January 29, and the Richard Mille AlUla Desert Polo on February 11 – 12. In arts, the second edition of Desert X AlUla, the site responsive outdoor art exhibition starts on February 11. In skies, Hot Air Balloons will offer a serene bird's eye view of AlUla, and Light Sky Constellations, February 27 – celebrates the bright stars in the dark sky. AlUla Wellness offers many unique sensory experiences out in nature, including Five Senses Sanctuary, March 13. There are also many immersive and exciting new dining experiences.

**Hazem Sonbol, Passenger Sales Vice President of SAUDIA Airlines stated:** *"As the Kingdom's flag carrier, we are delighted to welcome this inaugural direct flight from the heart of Europe into the ancient city of AlUla. This is our first international direct flight to AlUla and we believe one of many as more of our guests around the world are showing an eagerness to explore our country's history and culture."*

**Gérard Mestrallet, Executive President of AFALULA, declared:** *" Since the intergovernmental agreement signed by Saudi Arabia and France in April 2018 on AlUla sustainable development, the collaboration between the Saudi and French economic and cultural ecosystems, led by the Royal Commission for AlUla and AFALULA,*



*has proven to be increasingly intense and fruitful. The numerous partnerships sealed between the RCU and French companies as well as the achievements on the ground reveal the success of this cooperation. Following the access, since September 2019, to tourist visas for Saudi Arabia, the opening of a direct air route from Paris will bolster the attractiveness of this unique cultural destination. "*

---

#### **About AFALULA (French Agency for the Development of AlUla)**

Born from an intergovernmental agreement signed by France and Saudi Arabia in April 2018, the French Agency for the Development of AlUla (Afalula) was founded in Paris in July 2018. Afalula aims to support, in a spirit of coconstruction, its Saudi partner, the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU), in the sustainable economic, touristic, and cultural development of AlUla, a region with an exceptional natural and cultural heritage located in the Northwest of Saudi Arabia. The agency's mission is to mobilize all French know-how and expertise and to bring together the best operators and companies in the fields of archaeology, museography, architecture, urban planning, tourism, hospitality, infrastructure, education, security, agriculture, botany, and sustainable management of natural resources.

---

#### **About RCU (Royal Commission for AlUla)**

The Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) was established by Royal Decree in July 2017 to preserve and develop AlUla, a region with outstanding natural and cultural heritage, located in northwestern Saudi Arabia. The RCU's long-term plan takes a sensitive, sustainable, and responsible approach to urban and economic development in order to preserve the natural and historical heritage of the region, while making AlUla a privileged place where it is possible to live, work and visit. The plan encompasses numerous initiatives in the fields of archaeology, tourism, culture, education, and the arts, to address different priorities in economic diversification, empowerment of local communities and the preservation of heritage, as part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 agenda.

---

#### **About Saudi Arabian Airlines (SAUDIA):**

Saudi Arabian Airlines (SAUDIA) is the national flag carrier of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Established in 1945, the company is one of the Middle East's largest airlines.

SAUDIA is a member of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the Arab Air Carriers Organization (AACO) as well as a member airline in the SkyTeam alliance since 2012.

Most recently, the organization received the prestigious World Class designation by the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX) and maintained its ranking as a Global Five-Star Major Airline. The carrier was also named the World's Most Improved Airline in 2021 by Skytrax. SAUDIA also received the accolade in 2017.

For further information on Saudi Arabian Airlines, please visit [www.saudia.com](http://www.saudia.com)

---

#### **Press Contacts :**

**Mathias Curnier (AFALULA)** [mathias.curnier@afalula.com](mailto:mathias.curnier@afalula.com), Tel : +33 6 77 04 56 18

#### **Media Relations Saudia:**

Media Center:

Saudi Arabian Airlines Headquarters

Jeddah 21231, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Email: [mediarelations@saudia.com](mailto:mediarelations@saudia.com)