

Let's talk meta with Emirates, Etihad and Unum

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Airlines and inflight entertainment providers are beginning to see that some aspects of the metaverse are here to stay

Tell a superhero fan that you don't know what the metaverse is and you are going to get a strange look. Tell your Friendly Neighborhood Airline and you just might get a virtual lounge or cabin tour from a metahuman cabin crew.

Household brand Facebook rebranded to '[Meta](#)' last year marking an important move into social technology, and many airlines are not far behind in their pursuit of staking a claim in the metaverse.

[Emirates](#) and [Qatar Airways](#) have both introduced meta tech to give passengers a look inside the cabin before boarding. Supplier [Unum Aircraft Seating](#) tells *PAX Tech* it has plans to bring virtual reality (VR) components to Hamburg this month. Airlines and suppliers are beginning to see the benefits of metaverse – and they want in.

What is metaverse?

An April 2022 article published by [WIRED](#) says metaverse represents a massive shift in how people use tech.

“To help you get a sense of how vague and complex a term ‘the metaverse’ can be, here’s an exercise: Mentally replace the phrase ‘the metaverse’ in a sentence with ‘cyberspace.’ Ninety percent of the time, the meaning won’t substantially change. That’s because the term doesn’t really refer to any one specific type of technology, but rather a broad (and often speculative) shift in how we interact with technology,” said Eric Ravenscraft at WIRED.

Augmented reality (AR) is technology that enables people to interact with virtual objects and information in their direct field of vision. This might look like pointing a smartphone at the street and it providing more information on the names of businesses or intersections. And, [Epic Games](#), the force behind the popular video game Fortnite, has started hosting live concerts within its digital world. Most recently having hosted an Ariana Grande concert last August that players could watch as their own customized avatar.

The [University of Toronto describes](#) VR as the use of computer technology to create a simulated environment that can be explored in 360 degrees. Unlike traditional AR, VR places the user inside the virtual environment to give an immersive experience.

“We are at the beginning of the next chapter for the internet,” said CEO Mark [Zuckerberg at Meta’s launch](#).

New universe venture

Qatar Airways recently tapped into the metaverse with the launch of [QVerse](#) in April, a VR experience for visitors to the airline’s website.

Website visitors can virtually tour the Premium Check-in area at Hamad International Airport (HIA) and check out cabin interiors of the airline’s fleet, including the [Business Class Qsuite](#) and the Economy Class cabin. It is all accessible on personal electronic devices.

According to the April 2022 [press release](#), Qatar is the first global airline to introduce a metahuman cabin crew, offering a digital interactive passenger experience.



Qatar Airways is the most recent airline to tap into the metaverse having launched QVerse in April 2

“With physical boundaries beginning to be challenged by the metaverse on an increasingly larger scale, it is exciting to embrace a technology that enables all travel enthusiasts to enjoy a unique immersive experience of our award-winning products and services,” said Akbar Al Baker, Qatar Airways’ Group Chief Executive.

The experience was developed using Epic Games’ Unreal Engine, an advanced real-time 3D creation tool, and [MetaHuman Creator](#), a cloud-based app for creating high-fidelity digital humans.

“Qatar Airways is the first global airline to introduce a metahuman cabin crew, featuring a digitally-created high-fidelity 3D human model named Sama – whose name is of Arabic origin and translates to sky,” said the release.



Emirates is repurposing its Emirates Pavilion at the Expo 2020 site to create a center for innovation

In September 2021, Emirates launched what it called the first airline VR app on the popular [Oculus Rift](#) platform, designed to allow travelers to explore the cabin from home.

Via the app, passengers can explore Emirates’ fully-enclosed [Gamechanger First Class Suites](#), the airline’s signature A380 Onboard Lounge, and get a look at the cabin view around their seat from the comfort of home.

“Available on emirates.com to anyone with an Internet connection, via the Emirates app, and now on the Oculus Store for Oculus Rift users, Emirates has taken the next step in its ambition to reach and engage audiences around the world with cutting-edge VR technology,” said a [September release](#).

Unum Aircraft Seating is set to exhibit at [Aircraft Interiors Expo](#) in June and told *PAX Tech* it is bringing

VR tech of its own to encourage visitors to get up-close and personal with its [Unum One Business Class seat](#), launched in [March](#).

“I am personally so excited to be in Hamburg again for AIX after all this time,” said Alan McInnes, Vice President of Business Development at Unum. “We are bringing along some VR goggles we have set up to allow visitors an up-close look at Unum One.”