

Abu Dhabi Airports to launch biometric tech with touchless boarding



Abu Dhabi International Airport

Abu Dhabi Airports reports it is gearing up to launch advanced biometric technology, which uses a passenger's facial features as their passport to offer a seamless experience throughout their travel journey at Abu Dhabi International Airport, from the time they arrive at the airport to the time they board their flight.

The technology uses smart cameras to capture an image of the passenger's face and confirms whether they are cleared to travel. The same information is then used prior to boarding, avoiding the need to present documents again. The use of biometric technology in the aviation industry is a game-changing advancement that will, without a doubt, transform the way we travel. Abu Dhabi Airports are spearheading this transformation.

The technology will be implemented gradually, and its first phase is currently being tested at the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) facility in Abu Dhabi International Airport, the only US immigration preclearance service in the region that allows passengers to clear US immigration while they are still in Abu Dhabi. It will also enable a smooth and quick airport experience upon arrival in the United States.

The introduction of the advanced technology at Abu Dhabi International Airport will herald the start of tailored travel and give passengers a unique travel experience.

Commenting on this major technological milestone, His Excellency Eng. Jamal Salem Al Dhaheri, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Abu Dhabi Airports said, "We are looking forward to leveraging this holistic biometric technology, the first of its kind in the UAE and the world, to further enhance our passenger journey. The project will commence at Abu Dhabi International Airport and then be transferred to the new Midfield Terminal in the future as we continue to be committed to enhancing the airport services and experience. We also take this opportunity to recognize Etihad, the first airline to use this technology, as well as NEXT50, our technology partner, and the UAE Federal Authority for Identity and Citizenship, without which today's ground-breaking announcement would

not have been possible.”

His Excellency Major General Suhail Saeed Al Khaili, the Director General of the Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Security said: “This advanced technology provides a smooth passenger customer journey, by leveraging biometric data records, which will enable travelers at Abu Dhabi International Airport to check in, clear immigration, access lounges and board their flights using only biometric data, without the need to present passports or boarding passes.”

This move comes ahead of Etihad increasing flights to John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York from four to 11 flights per week from November 15, 2022. The USCBP technology is also in place at JFK meaning guests flying to Abu Dhabi from New York will also enjoy a seamless boarding experience.

Mohammad Al Bulooki, Group Chief Operations Officer, Etihad Aviation Group said, “This innovation is an important next step in Etihad’s self-service journey. It means Etihad’s US flights become even more streamlined, on top of the benefit of arriving as a US domestic passenger without the need for further delays. This is a showcase of Abu Dhabi’s progress in the expanding field of biometrics, making the journey easier for guests while maintaining stringent security.”

This system, wholly financed by Abu Dhabi Airports and delivered by NEXT50, an Abu Dhabi tech-based company, will be tested on Etihad Airways flights to the US and is phase one of a major roll-out that will be introduced throughout the entire airport for all airlines to benefit from, in the coming months.

Ibrahim Al Mannaee, Chief Executive Officer of NEXT50, added: “We are committed to supporting the realization of Abu Dhabi's vision by deploying cutting-edge technologies in the aviation industry. The biometric implementation is a testament to our promise to work hand-in-hand with AD Airports, Etihad Airways, and key partners to enable Abu Dhabi International (AUH) to become the most technology-enabled airport in the region. The deployment of the innovative biometric solution facilitated by NEXT50 on US flights seeks to deliver a seamless passenger experience to customers.”

The introduction of this advanced technology was announced on day one of the Abu Dhabi Air Expo 2022, which was hosted by Abu Dhabi Airports at Al Bateen Executive Airport from November 1 to 3, bringing together industry leaders, professionals and enthusiasts of the aviation and aerospace sectors.