

Emirates expands Travel Rehearsal program to Istanbul



An Emirates agent assists a participant during the Travel Rehearsal program at Istanbul Airport

[Emirates](#) has expanded its “Travel Rehearsal” program to Istanbul Airport ([IST](#)), bringing its accessible travel initiative to Turkey as part of a broader global rollout across 17 airports.

The program allows autistic children and their families to experience each stage of the air travel journey in a structured, supportive environment before an actual flight. The initiative is part of Emirates’ Accessible Travel for All strategy, designed to make travel more predictable and comfortable for passengers on the autism spectrum.

“Accessible travel is not a single initiative for Emirates; it is a systematic approach embedded into every step of the journey,” said Sami Aqil Abdullah, Senior Vice President, Emirates Airport Services Outstation & Business Support. “Through the Travel Rehearsal program, we aim to eliminate pre-flight uncertainty for children with autism and their families, making the airport and aircraft experience more predictable and reassuring.”

During the Istanbul session, participants moved through the full airport journey from check-in and passport control to lounge access and an aircraft tour guided by trained Emirates and airport teams. The rehearsal familiarizes families with procedures, environments and sensory elements encountered during travel, helping reduce anxiety and build confidence.

Emirates became the world’s first Autism-Certified Airline after more than 30,000 cabin crew and

ground staff completed specialized autism awareness training. The training equips employees with knowledge of the autism spectrum, common misconceptions and individualized support strategies tailored to passenger needs.

Abdullah said the Istanbul implementation reflects the airline's broader accessibility commitment. "Accessibility is not only about assistance, it is about independence, confidence and dignity," he said. "By expanding the Travel Rehearsal program across global destinations including Istanbul, we are turning this commitment into meaningful, measurable action."

Emirates has delivered Travel Rehearsal experiences in multiple cities worldwide, including Dubai, Barcelona, Brussels, Budapest, Christchurch, Durban, Luanda, Madrid, Nice, Oslo, Paris and Venice. Additional destinations are joining the program each month as the airline continues to scale inclusive travel initiatives across its network.