

Abu Dhabi's new terminal A to open on Nov 1

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dubai : Abu Dhabi International Airport Terminal A will begin operations on 1 November 2023 bringing a major increase to passenger capacity in Abu Dhabi and strengthening the emirate's standing as a global aviation hub.

Etihad Airways' ceremonial flight will take place on 31 October, ahead of opening to the public on 1 November. The new terminal will enhance travel experiences through state-of-the-art facilities for passengers and airlines in the region.

Airlines will transition into Terminal A in three phases over a two-week period. Wizz Air Abu Dhabi and 15 other international airlines will start flying from the new Terminal on 1 November. From 9 November, Etihad Airways will operate 16 daily flights, before going fully operational from its new home on 14 November, together with Air Arabia Abu Dhabi and 10 other airlines. From 14 November, 28 airlines will be fully operational from Terminal A.

In preparation for the opening, operational readiness trials will conclude on 17 October. In total, the trials have involved more than 11,000 volunteers from the Abu Dhabi community. These included Abu Dhabi Airports staff members, students, families and stakeholders from the aviation community. Those taking part in the robust simulations stress-tested end-to-end passenger journeys encompassing

systems, equipment, staff and procedures in key operating areas such as check-in, baggage, security screening, immigration and boarding. The successful completion of these trials is a key milestone in ensuring Terminal A is ready for opening to the public in November.

Elena Sorlini, Managing Director and Interim CEO at Abu Dhabi Airports, said: “With final preparations almost complete, I am proud to say we are ready to open Terminal A to the public on 1 November. We will see a rapid increase in the number of flights operating from Terminal A from 1 to 14 November, and I’m excited by the new opportunities and experiences, which the iconic facility will bring to both airlines and passengers. Terminal A will drive the growth of the aviation sector in Abu Dhabi and play an instrumental role in welcoming more businesses and tourists to the emirate for decades to come.”

When fully operational, Terminal A will have 35,000m² of retail space with 163 shops and food and beverage outlets, offering passengers a wide variety of shopping and dining opportunities. These include Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent, Ferragamo, and the world’s first Muji airport store.

Dining outlets include Jones the Grocer, Taste of India, Starbucks, Camden Food Co., McDonalds and TGI Fridays. Additionally, Todd English will open his first airport restaurant providing diners with a wide selection of cuisines from around the world. There are also two health and beauty spas along with a 138-bedroom hotel plus a modern open-air lounge offering renowned Arabic hospitality.

Terminal A will prioritise the passenger experience, facilitating a streamlined service. It will also be the first in the world to include all nine biometric airport touchpoints. In the first phase, this will see biometric solutions installed in key areas, such as self-service bag drops, immigration eGates and boarding gates. When fully operational, it will use facial recognition technology to screen passengers and minimise wait times. Combined with other hi-tech facilities including an advanced baggage handling system capable of processing up to 19,200 bags per hour, Terminal A aims to deliver a seamless passenger journey to travellers.

The X-shaped building has been designed to improve operational efficiency and passenger flow with four themed piers inspired by Abu Dhabi’s desert, sea, city and oasis natural landscapes. It also features the Sana Al Nour, which is one of the largest indoor public art features in the Middle East, standing at 22 metres tall and 17 metres wide.

Terminal A is designed to reduce water consumption, while more than 7,500 solar panels power a 3MW plant will save 5,300 tons of carbon dioxide annually. A state-of-the-art Advanced Surface Movement Control System, the first of its kind in the Middle East, will allow planes to land quickly and safely during low-visibility weather conditions.

Terminal A is one of the largest airport terminals in the world, which will enhance Abu Dhabi’s position as a global hub for tourism, business and entertainment. The terminal will double the current airport capacity, with the capability to accommodate up to 45 million passengers per year. At triple the size of the previous terminal, and with flights to 117 destinations worldwide, it will increase both the frequency and reach of flights to and from Abu Dhabi.

