

Abu Dhabi's terminal A cuts check-in times to seconds

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 29 November, 2023



Abu Dhabi: A lot of things have changed at Abu Dhabi International Airport's gleaming new Terminal A, including bring the flight boarding times to 3 seconds. And check-ins to 10 seconds flat, compared to a minute and more at older airport terminals.

So much so, passengers can expect to go from curb to gate in about 12 minutes.

Terminal A, which opened November 1, has deployed biometric services at five touchpoints across the airport. And plans are underway to expand these to nine, including airport transfers and retail operations.

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Applicable to any visitor

The biometrics installed at the Terminal are nothing short of state-of-

the-art. "At present, they are used for auto-enrolment, self-service check-in, self-service bag drop, immigration e-gates, and boarding gates," said Andrew Murphy, Chief Information Officer at Abu Dhabi International Airport, during a media tour of Terminal A on Monday.

Previously, passengers needed an extra touchpoint to submit biometric data for a seamless travel journey. "With auto-enrollment, your data is automatically registered," he said.

The services apply to UAE nationals, residents, and tourists. "As long as you've travelled through any UAE airport in the past 7 years, the services will apply to you," Murphy said. (The processes tie in with the immigration authorities' records, ensuring the data remains with them.)

Facilities to navigate through immigration and boarding processes without the need for physical documents were introduced at the airport last year.

The self-service check-in is currently available only to Etihad Airways customers. Plans are in place to extend services to all customers of all airlines operating at the airport.

Biometrics in retail

In the next phase, the biometric services will be rolled out across nine touchpoints in the airport. "These will be rolled out to the check-in itself, an additional touchpoint," said Murphy. We are also looking at retail and for the lounges."

Auto-enrolment would be limited to passenger operations and safety.

From a retail perspective, passengers can voluntarily join a loyalty scheme, enabling the use of biometric profiles for smooth experiences in duty-free shopping or when it comes to hiring a car, for example. This also applies to airline lounges, providing a personalised experience for Business Class travellers.

Commenting on expanding the retail operations at the airport, Maureen Bannerman, the Chief Commercial Officer at Abu Dhabi Airports, said, "We have 124 outlets, and we anticipate an increase to 163, accommodating additional brands along with five more F&B and service establishments in the pipeline to meet growing demand."

