

Airlines tap nostalgia trend as pilot trading cards make comeback

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Dhaka: As commercial aviation approaches a new wave of centennial celebrations, airlines are increasingly leaning into nostalgia to engage passengers. One of the latest examples comes from American Airlines, which is introducing retro-style trading cards for travelers as part of its anniversary-themed initiatives.

Beginning in early May, passengers on select flights will be able to receive collectible cards directly from pilots, with a wider rollout planned ahead of the busy summer travel period. The airline says the initiative is intended to celebrate its 100-year history while strengthening the connection between crew and passengers.

The collectible series features both modern aircraft and historically significant models that played key roles in the airline's development. Alongside current fleet aircraft such as the Airbus A321neo and Boeing

787, the cards also highlight vintage planes including the DC-3, Boeing 707-123, and MD-80.

Company representatives describe the cards as a way to showcase a century of aviation milestones. Each card includes aircraft images, technical specifications, and brief historical notes, making them appealing to both casual travelers and aviation enthusiasts.

The cards will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis during flights, with millions expected to be printed to meet demand. Pilots will hand them out directly to passengers who request them onboard.

The trend reflects a broader shift within the airline industry toward nostalgia-driven passenger engagement. Similar initiatives have already proven popular elsewhere, with airlines such as Delta Air Lines maintaining long-running pilot trading card programs that have recently expanded into centennial-themed editions.

Social media has further amplified the trend, with travelers frequently sharing experiences of collecting cards directly from flight crews, turning them into informal souvenirs of their journeys.

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