

TRAVEL

q Explore city breaks, activities...

I tried out the futuristic new airport security lane where you don't even show your passport

Dubai's new fully automated, AI-powered passenger corridor means you barely have to break your stride, let alone stop at a customs desk



114



Gift this article free



Robert Jackman did not have to remove his glasses or cap when the new system was used on him



Robert Jackman

29 October 2025 12:00pm GMT

It's the world's busiest international airport – handling more than five million seats this month alone (compared with second-placed Heathrow's 4.2 million)

via a frantic schedule of round-the-clock long-haul flights. But has Dubai International found a way to take all the fuss out of one of the most fiddly features of airport security?

That's the latest claim emanating from the ever-ambitious [Gulf megacity](#), whose airport (known as "DXB" to frequent fliers) recently unveiled its brand new "red carpet" system – a fully automated, AI-powered passenger corridor allowing passengers to breeze through passport control without showing a single document.

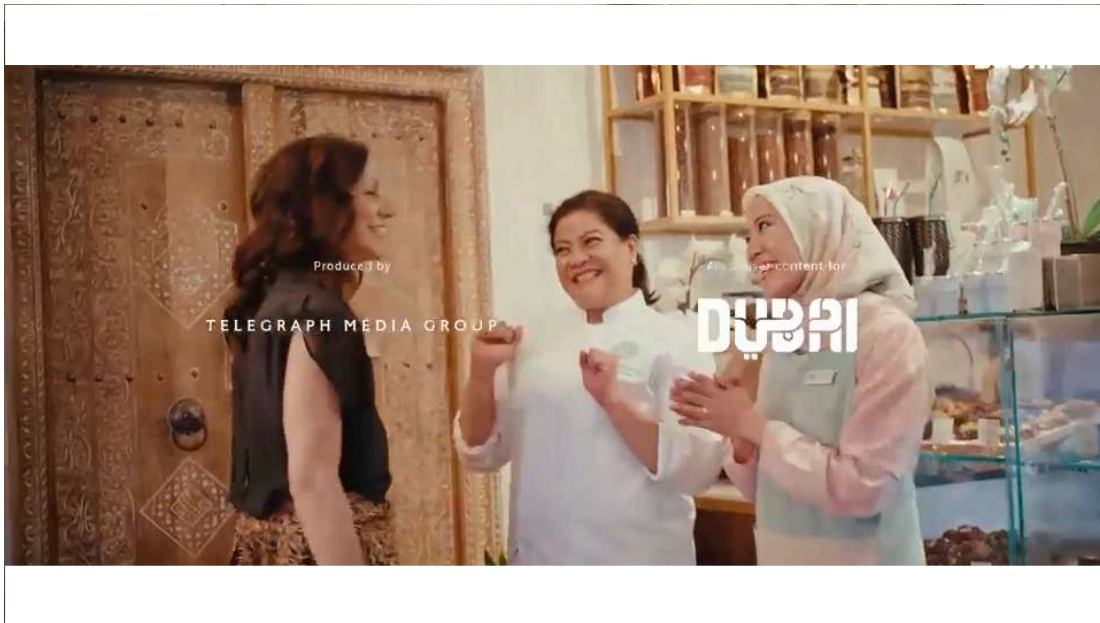
How will it work? Instead of a manual passport check, the red carpet will scan the faces of passengers as they walk past and use [artificial intelligence](#) to match them with the passenger records already on its system. Provided everything looks good, the system clears them to walk straight through to the baggage scanners without having to show any identification.

How to use Dubai airport's "Red Carpet"



As futuristic as it may sound, the system runs on technologies that are already in use around the world: passport e-gates already run on [facial recognition](#), for example, and airports already have data on who's flying where and when. The clever thing about the red carpet is that it combines all of that to create an end-to-end system.

Advertisement



How accurate is it? Extremely so, say experts. “The AI models behind facial recognition can convert the unique features of every face into a special numerical scorecard,” says Richard Dempers, of airport security experts Rheinberry.

That should mean they can match your face to your record in 99 per cent of cases. In the rare cases where the AI is unsure, it will instruct a border guard to check your papers the old-fashioned way.

Is it a massive step forward for travellers or the stuff of dystopian nightmares? On a recent trip to Dubai, I had a chance to try the system myself.

At this point, it's worth clarifying a couple of things. At present, the red carpet system comes into play when you're leaving Dubai, rather than when you arrive. It's also in operation only at Terminal 3 – the one used by Emirates – and you need to be flying business class or first to use it.

Assuming you're eligible to use the new system, it isn't difficult to find: it's the roped-off lane in passport control, with an actual red carpet – or at the very least a large adhesive sticker – on the floor. The effect may not be subtle, but it does make you feel more of a VIP as you approach.

From that point, the process really is as simple as they say: you just walk along the carpet and straight through to the baggage security line. I'd estimate that the entire thing took less than a minute.



Passengers can go straight through to the baggage security line after walking along the red carpet Credit: Alexandre Fagundes/Alamy

There was no need to stop or peer at a screen – the cameras are perfectly capable of capturing your image as you waltz through – and nor did I have to remove my glasses or cap. My [passport](#) and boarding card both stayed tucked safely inside my jacket pocket.

My only mistake, if you can call it that, was to pause at the end so that the bored-looking Emirati guard could wave me through. It turns out you don't even have to do that. In fact, I could see from watching the guard's screen afterwards that the vast majority of passengers were “cleared” within a few seconds of stepping on to the carpet.

As speedy as it was, it's worth reiterating that we're dealing with outgoing passport checks here. Even at the fussiest airports, the exit checks are usually much easier than crossing the border in the first place. That said, most frequent fliers will have experienced the frustration of being stuck behind a slow line when all you want to do is get home.



The red carpet system is currently being used only on outgoing passport checks at Dubai International Airport Credit: eye35.pix/Alamy Stock Photo

So could this kind of ultra-speedy facial recognition soon be the norm when it comes to airport security? In truth, it probably depends on where you're flying to. The likes of Singapore's Changi Airport and Abu Dhabi's Zayed International have both used facial recognition for a while now, as have some American airlines.

So far, European airports have been much slower in adopting biometrics, partly due to stricter laws around data privacy. No doubt the bosses of [Heathrow](#) and [Gatwick](#), however, will be keeping a close watch on how well things work out at airports such as DXB for when they eventually make the shift to biometrics.

They'll certainly have plenty to keep their eye on in Dubai. In seven years, the emirate is set to unveil its massive new airport – [Dubai World Central](#) – to take the place of DXB as the primary gateway to the United Arab Emirates. The airport's boss, former Gatwick managing director Paul Griffiths, says facial recognition will be the norm across the airport.

By the sound of it, then, I should savour that VIP feeling I got from using the red carpet while I still can. In a few years' time, it could well be the norm.

RECOMMENDED

Emirates and Stansted are aviation's most unlikely alliance

[Read more →](#)

Read more essential travel advice

The Telegraph's [travel advice page](#) has everything you need to know to plan the perfect trip, including where to go and when, [tips on saving money](#) and help with [travel insurance](#), [car hire](#) and [flight delay compensation](#).

Got a specific travel problem you'd like help solving?

Gill Charlton takes on a different case each week – send your problems to her for consideration at asktheexperts@telegraph.co.uk, along with your full name and, if your dispute is with a travel company, your address, telephone number and any booking reference

What did you think of this article?

Share your thoughts



Your feedback will be used in accordance with our [Privacy Policy](#).

Join the conversation

Show 114 comments

The Telegraph values your comments but kindly requests all posts are on topic, constructive and respectful. Please review our commenting policy.



Related Topics

Aviation, Dubai International Airport, Artificial Intelligence, Passports, Heathrow airport, Gatwick airport

[License this content](#)



Robert Jackman

29 October 2025 12:00pm GMT

More Stories



Lawyer who painted £2.6m house black told to restore it to white



Greta Thunberg banned from Venice after dyeing canal green



The Turkish barbershops hiding a vast criminal network



Italian government turns on its own judges over British man's off-grid family

More from Travel



Low prices, no crowds: The best places for a winter staycation in Britain

[Save](#)

What Britain could learn from countries with women-only train carriages

[Save](#)

The world's 10 best small ski resorts

[Save](#)

This Mediterranean city of 84 people is luring crowds far beyond its size – and it's easy to see why

[Save](#)

A skier's guide to the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games

[Save](#)

The 21 best things to do in Stockholm

[Save](#)

The 22 best restaurants in Stockholm

[Save](#)

All hotels have been independently reviewed and selected. We will earn a commission if you book via the links below but this never affects our rating



The best hotels in the world

[View all >](#)

Noka Camp

Hotel | Lapalala Game Reserve, South Africa

10/10 Telegraph expert rating

The villas at Noka Camp are in a realm of their own in terms of luxury and setting. They combine ... [Read expert review](#)

FROM
£727 per night



The Peninsula Shanghai

Hotel | Shanghai, China

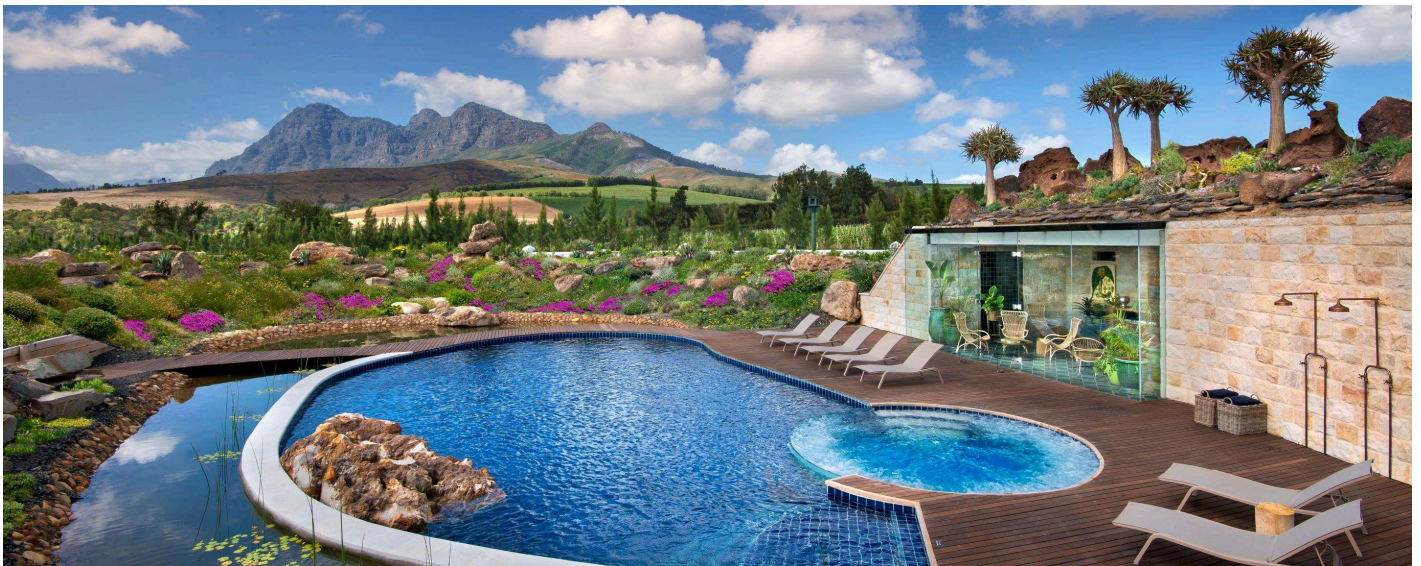
10/10 Telegraph expert rating

This handsome modern take on Art Deco doesn't put a foot wrong. Built to the Peninsula hotel grou... [Read expert review](#)

FROM

£815 per night[Check availability](#)

Rates provided by



Babylonstoren

Hotel | Simondium, Franschhoek, South Africa

10/10 Telegraph expert rating

Often rated the best hotel in Africa, this is so much more than a place to stay: a delve into his... [Read expert review](#)

FROM

£669 per night[Check availability](#)

Rates provided by



Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok

Hotel | Bangkok, Thailand

10/10 Telegraph expert rating

The grande dame of Bangkok, perfectly positioned on the banks of the Chao Phraya River, has welco... [Read expert review](#)

FROM
£708 per night

[Check availability](#)

Rates provided by

Sponsored content



The best tech toys and home buys for the



Four of the best ski resorts in Austria



Embark on immersive and incredible



Your guide to the world's most desirable

More from The Telegraph



Labour council bans couple from building flagpole for Union flag



We thought my dad's brain surgery had worked. Two days later he woke up screaming



Starmer must go, but the delusional soft Left may just push Labour over the edge



We're gay and our Right-wing beliefs have lost us friends



'Woke' activist backlash at French DIY chain's advert



Labour foot-dragging 'risks thousands of defence jobs'

Follow us on:



Download the Telegraph App

Recommended

Podcasts

Syndication and Commissioning

Help Centre

Betting

Branded Content

Privacy

Reader Prints

Theatre Tickets

Careers

About us

Announcements

Puzzles

Guidelines

Terms & Conditions

Newsletters

Crosswords

Tax Strategy

Advertising terms

Subscribe

Cryptic Crossword

Modern Slavery

Subscription Terms & Conditions

Gift Subscriptions

Plusword

The Chelsea Magazine Company

Manage Cookies

