

Etihad will not require vaccination for travel

Whereas there has been a move toward a COVID-19 vaccine requirement in order to travel for various airlines and countries, Etihad Airways currently has no plans to initiate such a condition.

In November, Australian airline Qantas announced the requirement that full inoculation would be necessary for international travelers on its airline. Korean Air and Delta airlines are reportedly also both considering this prerequisite.

Recently Kuwait's government declared a travel ban on any citizens not vaccinated with the exception of those who are unable to be vaccinated due to age.

Etihad Airways has been at the forefront of COVID-19 protection and awareness. It was one of the first airlines in the world to have its entire crew vaccinated, and last August introduced PCR testing on departures and arrivals.

Martin Drew, Etihad Airways' SVP global sales & cargo, says: "I think that throughout this pandemic we've gone above and beyond in terms of ensuring we keep our guests safe. In addition to that, our wellness proposition as well is something that's been incredibly well received in terms of the lengths that we've gone to, to really give the guests that peace of mind that travelling with Etihad is one of the safest ways to travel."

Etihad is also one of the carriers currently trialing the IATA Travel Pass. For this trial, those flying to Chicago, New York, Washington and Toronto from the UAE capital will be able to create a "digital passport" to store test and vaccine information.

As with virtually everyone in the travel and tourism industry, Drew says an international standard is necessary. "As we start to come out of this pandemic, certainly what's needed is some sort of uniform international protocol as to how people are really going to start travelling again," said Drew. "The IATA is a potential solution to that."

He added: "In addition to the IATA Travel Pass that we're trialing, we are speaking to a number of other companies that are able to aggregate data from multiple sources to enable other types of digital passports as well. There's a number of companies out there as you'd expect that have this sort of technology that's being trialed."