



ETIHAD AIRWAYS FIRST UAE AIRLINE TO BE AWARDED COVETED FIVE-STAR RATING

News / Airlines



Etihad Airways has received the most coveted quality standard in the airline industry, the Skytrax certified five-star rating.

Etihad is the first airline in the UAE to be awarded five stars, although in July, Emirates was named the world's best airline in the Skytrax awards – with Etihad coming sixth.

The only airline in the Middle East to already have the five-star rating is Qatar Airways. "This makes us part of a very elite group of world-class airlines," said Etihad's chief executive Peter Baumgartner.

"It's one thing to be proud about having a five-star logo on your advertising, but what it really means for us is that our strategy works. We didn't follow the conventions of aviation, we did it our own way. We've been disrupting the industry by trying things that have never been done before. That takes a lot of courage.

"This is a proof point for us that our strategy, our airline business model works, and that gives us a

lot of confidence for the future."

The news came as a surprise to many in the industry, because in 2014, Etihad had pulled out of the awards scheme in a dispute over the way airlines were rated, stating at the time only that it had carried out a review of the criteria and measurement of the Skytrax Airline rating system.

The audit follows a rigorous three-month audit by the London-based research consultancy Skytrax. Airlines are assessed on criteria across all cabins, including seating, safety procedures, in-flight entertainment, cabin cleanliness, comfort amenities, catering, duty free sales and reading material.

"Skytrax didn't leave any stone unturned," said Mr Baumgartner. "They really looked at all the details of our service delivery and the travel experience, for economy, first class and residency for guests."

He revealed that sometimes the Skytrax auditors travelled "mystery shopper" style, unbeknown to the airline, and on other flights their presence was made aware to Etihad staff – "because they wanted to be able to see behind the scenes, get access to staff and talk to them", said Mr Baumgartner.

The only other airlines in the world to receive the five-star Skytrax rating are ANA All Nippon Airways, Asiana Airlines, Cathay Pacific Airways, Eva Air, Garuda Indonesia, Hainan Airlines, Qatar Airways and Singapore Airlines.

"After just 13 years in the industry, no one else in the industry has ranked up in such a short period of time to that level," said Mr Baumgartner. "It's not just a significant day for Etihad, but for Abu Dhabi."

"We proudly take the values and the vision of Abu Dhabi to the world, and we take our role as brand ambassador of Abu Dhabi very seriously."

Skytrax's chief executive Edward Plaisted said that the five-star rating was testament to Etihad's innovation, high-quality service and comfort. "Of particular note is Etihad's attention to detail and a meticulous approach to design, which has brought us – among other unique products – the airline's revolutionary Airbus A380 and Boeing 787 cabins, which are clearly best in class."

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