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Airport Amenities Enhance Layovers

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Airport Amenities Enhance Layovers

By Doreen Pendgracs



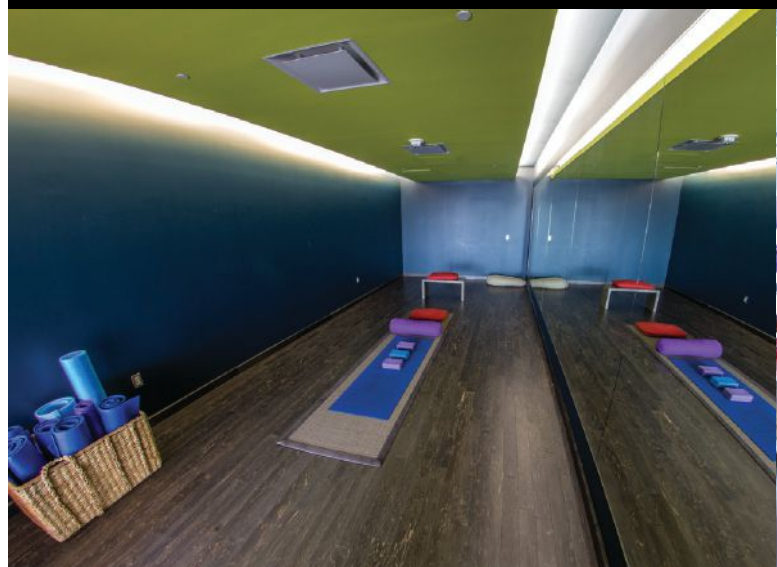
Munich International Airport

Check out the Boeing 737NG iPilot flight simulator on your way through the "Best Airport in Europe" according to SKYTRAX



Changi Airport

Singapore's airport boasts a number of green areas throughout the facility including the Orchard Garden with over 700 flowers.



San Francisco International Airport

Practice your downward dog in the world's first Yoga Room at an airport located in T2 of SFO.



Schipol Airport

There is great chocolate shopping at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam.

Most travellers used to dread layovers as there was little to do at airports except eat and drink. That's no longer the case, with many airports around the world becoming destinations unto themselves, offering spas, museums, incredible shopping, and so much more.

Toronto's Pearson International Airport in Canada's largest city is a prime example with a full-service spa (in the lobby level

of the Sheraton Gateway Hotel located in Terminal 3) that offers unique services such as chocolate body wraps and walk-in hair design offered by an international staff. Pearson Airport also has a number of high-tech amenities including the iPad® Food Bar that enables customers to place and pay for their order via an iPad®.

Amenities featuring advanced technology are popular at many airports. Munich International Airport boasts

a Boeing 737NG iPilot flight simulator in its Terminal 2 to give passengers the chance to see what it feels like to sit at the controls of a commercial airliner. More at http://www.munich-airport.de/en/consumer/erlebnis/events/t2/ipilot/index.jsp?visit=visit_58630496. You can also take 50 and 90-minute guided airport tours.

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Munich Airport is the first European airport to have received a five-star rating from SKYTRAX, a highly respected London-based aviation research institute, and has received numerous other SKYTRAX accolades including Best Airport in Europe for the past two years and third best airport in the world (behind Singapore and Seoul). Munich Airport has been chosen the best airport in the world in the 30-40 million passengers per year category. That's a lot to be proud of, for an airport that is not often top of mind with North American travellers.

Visitors to Seoul, Korea, have the opportunity to visit any of seven themed oases that include the Museum of Korean Culture, a skating rink and live performances of Korean chamber music at Incheon International Airport, voted to be the cleanest airport in the world.

For travellers who love shopping, Incheon Airport's duty-free shopping mall will be of interest, as it has repeatedly won the award for Best Airport Shopping by *Business Traveller* magazine. And even though Incheon Airport is said to be the world's eighth busiest airport, with roughly 41 million passengers passing through its gates during the course of a year, it also boasts one of the best rates for efficient baggage handling, losing the least amount of luggage compared to other airports in its class.

Back in the US, San Francisco International Airport recently completed a \$253 million expansion that added 53,000 square-feet to its East Concourse in Terminal 3. SF International Airport now offers enhanced passenger lounges, and three animal relief areas to give your dog the opportunity to stretch out, relieve himself, and enjoy a drink of fresh water. You'll also find a yoga studio, new original art installations to enjoy, an Aviation library and the Louis A. Turpen Aviation Museum in the International Terminal.

There are several other American airports that offer on-site museums to help pass your time, including Santa Paula, California; Manteo, North Carolina; Cleveland, Ohio; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Phoenix, Arizona; and Las Vegas, Nevada.

Prefer a more active airport stay? You'll find airport gyms throughout Canada and the US listed at <http://airportgyms.com>.



Which airports seem to be most efficient? Salt Lake City International Airport reports that only 12.9 per cent of its flights are delayed. Compare this to Chicago's Midway International Airport with a delayed flight rate of 35.7 per cent. See how your airport compares at <http://airportgyms.com/blog/worst-airports-for-flight-delays-in-america/>.

Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam, Netherlands, has won more than 200 awards since 1980, including Best Airport in Europe by SKYTRAX (up until 2013 after which Munich won in 2014 and 2015) and Best Airport for Business Travellers by *Business Traveller* magazine. With more than 100 shops, there is something for everyone.

If you love chocolate, you'll be pleased to learn that the Schiphol Airport has a terrific chocolate bar featuring the chocolates of assorted Dutch chocolate makers. Café Chocolat is located in Lounge 1 adjacent to Bubbles Seafood and Wine Bar—which makes excellent sushi, and boasts an extensive wine list and salt water aquarium.

If you have to incorporate a long layover on any European itinerary, Schiphol is a superb choice for travellers, with seven hotels right on site. See the full list of facilities and amenities at http://www.schiphol.nl/index_en.html.

Singapore's Changi Airport offers an extensive list of really unique airport amenities and services that include free tours of Singapore! If you have at least 5.5 hours for your layover, the airport will give you a free Heritage Tour or City Lights Tour of the city. Details at <http://www.changiairport.com/en/airport-experience/attractions-and-services/free-singapore-tour.html>.

On-site at Changi Airport, you'll find a rooftop pool and Cactus Garden in Terminal 1, the Orchid Garden, Sunflower Garden, and Enchanted Garden in Terminal 2, and the Butterfly Garden, world's tallest slide, and a 24-hour movie theatre in Terminal 3.

Changi is proud of its 4.6/5 rating by travellers, but is determined to become the world's favorite airport with plans to open a fourth, more spacious terminal by 2017 to provide better service to travellers. One can only imagine what kind of unique attractions and services you will find there.

The best advice any travel agent can offer to travellers facing long layovers is to conduct a search of the airport's website in addition to other online authorities, such as Wikipedia, for information on airport amenities, as some airports don't readily have the information on their sites in English if at all. But it is there for the knowledge-thirsty traveller in search of experiences to make the journey exciting, every step of the way.

Doreen Pendgracs is an avid traveller and regular contributor to THOR Advantage who enjoys discovering new ways to consume her time at airports—particularly when there's chocolate involved. Follow her travels at <http://chocolatour.net>. ✎

