

Five Star Layovers

THESE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS MAKE WAITING IN AIRPORTS WELL WORTH THE WAIT.

BY ANNIKA S. HIPPLE

FOR MOST PEOPLE, airports are just places to get through as quickly as possible. However, at some of the world's top airports, the amenities and services rival those of five-star resorts. Here are a few airports where a long layover may not be such a bad thing after all. In fact, you might even be slightly disappointed to hear your flight called.

Seoul Incheon International Airport

Check any list of the world's best airports and Seoul Incheon invariably appears near the top. Bright, clean and easy to navigate, Incheon offers plenty of comforts for layovers, including an upstairs relaxation level with showers, reclining lounge chairs, free Internet computers, TVs and a massage parlor. For a proper sleep, there's a transit hotel at either end of the terminal. Duty free shopping leans toward high-end apparel, jewelry, cosmetics and perfumes, but if those aren't for you, there are other ways to pass the time. How about a round of golf at the 18-hole putting course and driving range? Or why not

catch a free musical performance at one of the Korean Traditional Culture Centers?

Changi Airport Singapore

Travelers go crazy for Singapore's Changi Airport—another frequent list-topper. For rest and relaxation, there's a transit hotel with three locations inside the terminal, as well as specialty lounges offering nap rooms, showers and spa services. You'll even find a fitness center, a rooftop swimming pool and themed gardens featuring koi ponds, butterflies, sunflowers and other plants. Adults and kids can while away the hours at the free gaming rooms, music stations, movie theaters and TV lounges. Changi also boasts free Internet access and a huge selection of shops and restaurants. And if all that's not enough to keep you busy, passengers with layovers of at least five hours can sign up for free, two-hour Singapore tours (subject to entry visa requirements).

Hong Kong International Airport

Like Incheon and Changi, Hong Kong International Airport sets a global standard that few airports can match. Efficient and modern, the airport is a destination in its own right, with a movie theater, nine-hole golf course, sports simulators, Playstation games and film- and aviation-themed entertainment centers in the public areas. Transit passengers can take advantage of several pay-in lounges and shower facilities, as well as free rest areas with reclining chairs and miniature gardens. There's also free wireless Internet access and great shopping and dining—not to mention massage and reflexology services that will magically smooth away the aches and pains of travel.

Dubai International Airport

For shopping, it's hard to beat the huge, award-winning duty-free marketplace at Dubai International Airport. Not only can you find an incredible array of merchandise, but the shops



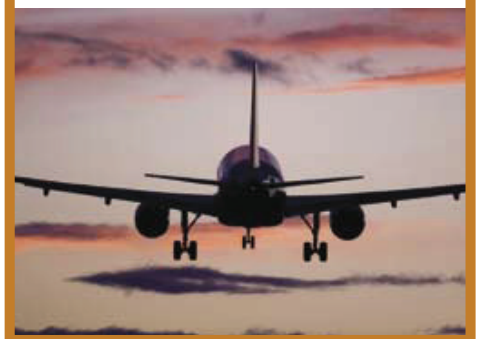
Left to Right: Changi Airport, Singapore; Seoul International Airport; Amsterdam Airport Schiphol.

NORTH AMERICA

North America's airports can't yet compete with the world's best, as few offer the range of services found at the top facilities in Asia and Europe. Still, they are getting some things right, and recent construction projects around the U.S. and Canada have focused on upgrading and expanding outdated terminals.

Among domestic U.S. airports, travelers praise the clean and bright **Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport** for its variety of sculptures, colorful lighting and fountains, as well as its shopping and dining options. The **Portland International Airport** also earns good reviews for its spacious architecture, free wireless Internet access and diverse restaurants and shops—including multiple outlets of the famous local bookstore Powell's. Oregon's lack of sales tax makes shopping here even more attractive.

In Canada, **Vancouver International Airport**, one of the West Coast's busiest airports (queues for Canadian immigration can be very long during peak hours), earns positive reviews for its integration of nature through waterfalls, streams and forest landscaping. Add some beautiful carvings and other works by Northwest First Nations artists and you have an airport that truly reflects its British Columbia setting. The Fairmont Hotel in the pre-security area is a luxurious option for long layovers and has a full-service spa and health club which are available at drop-in rates for non-hotel guests. Several post-security branches of the spa offer manicures, pedicures and chair massages.



actually offer some surprisingly good deals. For non-shoppers—or those whose feet or wallets need a little rest—lounges at either end of the terminal offer reclining chairs suitable for napping. Another option is to relax in the pool or whirlpool spa at the G-Force Health Club, which also offers fitness equipment and massage services. If a real bed is what you crave, there's a deluxe hotel inside the transit area.

Amsterdam Airport Schiphol

Schiphol earns widespread praise from travelers for its services and civilized atmosphere. Quiet upstairs lounges offer chairs designed for napping, and showers are available for passengers who want to freshen up. Schiphol also has two hotel options within the transit area, one with standard rooms and the other with cabins similar to train compartments. To pass the time, there are plenty of duty-free shopping and dining options, as well as spa services including a variety of massages. If you're feeling lucky, stop by the Holland Casino, with five gaming tables and more than 100 slot machines. Travelers with plenty of time can even catch the train straight to the heart of Amsterdam from the station directly below the airport.

Honorable Mentions

Many travelers consider Malaysia's Kuala Lumpur International Airport to be right up there with Asia's top three. KLIA offers an in-terminal transit hotel and a five-star luxury hotel adjacent to the terminal. There's also free Internet, plenty of shops and restaurants, and a reflexology and massage center to help you relax before your next flight.

In Europe, Zurich Airport typically ranks among the world's best for its efficient service and comfortable facilities, including day rooms, showers, and a pay-in rest area with reclining chairs. If you've got a longer layover and want to see the sights, it's easy to catch a train for the short ride into the city. The trademark Swiss punctuality means you don't have to worry about missing your flight due to rail travel delays.

Munich International Airport is also widely considered one of the finest in Europe, particularly for shopping and dining. The airport even has its own brewery and beer garden. The central atrium hosts special events, including a Christmas market. Two locations offer arcade games, slot machines, and other games. Massages and other spa services are available in the transit area, and there's a five-star Kempinski hotel located between the two terminals. [KLI](#)