

The Transition of Airport Hotels

There's an interesting phenomenon at airports these days. It's called the hotel.

Airport hotels have seen a surge in popularity during the past few years. Just look at the number of airport hotels that now have electronic arrival / departure boards tucked away in their lobbies.

Yes, in this era fraught with flight delays and cancellations it makes sense for many frequent travelers to stay near the airport. You don't have to rush from a business meeting to the airport hours ahead of time, only to sit about a terminal packed to overflowing while there's a good chance their flight might be delayed — or, even worse, cancelled.



But the real surge in popularity isn't coming from frequent travelers over-nighting, but from traveling executives who are finding airport hotels to be a good counterbalance to all of the craziness of the terminal between flights, or who want to avoid the hassle of traveling into a city just for a single meeting.

Many business executives are using airport hotels as a haven for productivity — setting up their laptops in lobbies, restaurants and day-rooms. Others use the hotels as a place to chill out in a restaurant or spa, only a short walk or shuttle ride from check-in. It certainly beats trying to get work done amid the chaos of Gate 29B, and provides the opportunity to dine in a real restaurant, not some boisterous beer bar next to the newsstand. And thanks to alerts via cell phone and helpful hotel staff, there's no longer that worry about missing your flight while you're halfway through dessert.



To take advantage of the trend a number of existing airport hotels are being renovated. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2007 the industry spent \$5.5 billion in renovating these properties, second only to luxury hotels.



More luxury hotels are also moving nearer the tarmac including the InterContinental Chicago O'Hare (with an in-house theatre and art gallery) and the Radisson SAS at London's Stanstead.

As discount airlines, such as JetBlue, Southwest and others who cater to the business traveler continue to expand into secondary airports, might luxury hotels follow? Then again, the lure of those airports is the lack of congestion that has driven travelers to those big airport hotels in the first place.

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