

US AIRPORTS AIM TO IMPROVE PASSENGER EXPERIENCES WITH MODERNISATION AND EXPANSIONS



American airports see hoards of visitors pass through their terminals on a daily basis and they want to ensure that they return on future visits, which is why many examples across the country are eradicating the outdated image of terminals and airport facilities via multi-million dollar expansions and development projects.

Revitalisation and modernisation is the best place for these American airports to start, and in some cases they are truly vital if they want to keep up with the competition. The best example of an airport in need is LaGuardia, who are currently working to replace the terminal building that dates back to 1964, although New York as a whole is moving with the times, with Kennedy International also carrying out upgrades. Elsewhere, LA International is undergoing a \$1.9 billion renovation and Orlando are spending \$1.1 billion on modifications that are set to be unveiled to the public in 2017, including an automated people mover, four more international gates and a rail centre.

With passenger needs changing and competition growing, America's airports need to go a step further with their renovations.

Modernisation is great, it brings outdated building from decades long past into a new era and gives a breath of fresh air to a stale environment; the problem is that in this world of social media and high passenger expectations, airports need to go further to prove that they can compete against flashy, designer terminals and give the consumer the experience they desire. Travellers want the full package from an airport and this means retail opportunities, high-end facilities for the whole family, great accommodation and travel links to their final destination. These needs have been duly noted by a number of US airports such as Dallas Fort Worth, which is adding a new line on the city's rapid transport system between Dallas and the airport (remarkably the first passenger rail link to service the airport); Denver International, which is spending \$544 million on a 519-room conference centre, a hotel and bus and rail links to Union station; and Louis Armstrong New Orleans International where a whole new north terminal, complete with power station and hotel, is being built for \$828 million in what the mayor is calling the most "most transformative project for New Orleans since the Superdome". Despite these budgets and plans, these airports have a long way to go to match the heights of passenger experience found in San Francisco's new Terminal 3. Here travellers are greeted by a wealth of facilities and retail opportunities underneath circadian lighting, with art installations and egg chairs for the adults and a play area for the kids - all of which is just part of a grander, \$4.2 billion capital improvement plan.

A great passenger experience is not just beneficial for the passenger themselves but also for the airport because it can help to improve visitor numbers and revenue, as well as placing them in more direct competition with their rivals. US airports need to put in a lot of work to stand out and impress travellers, and if that means a multi-million dollar refit and designer chairs in the lounges then so be it.

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