

# Are Airports Our Newest Shopping Malls?

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Given that the Holiday season is soon approaching, many of us will choose to travel by air to reach our destinations with the intent of spending more quality time with family & friends.

However, air travel can turn out to be a stressful & an overwhelming experience nonetheless. There is a certain level of anxiety from the moment you wake up, usually very early, to the moment you are seated on the aircraft. Will I make it to the airport in time? Do I have everything: passport, ticket, clothes etc?

Bear in mind that major airports stand prime examples, of a mixed marriage between a border crossing and a shopping mall. As much as this creates a certain mystery & intrigue, it also makes us uneasy.

Perhaps it is that most of us frequent the airport on an ad hoc basis, unlike our shopping mall where we go frequently. Often things have changed since our last air trip. We are no longer in our comfort zone and this creates stress.

The more stringent security measures have forced us to arrive at the airport much earlier than previously. The fact that air carriers are now flying larger aircraft results in a reduction of the number of flights and, therefore, connecting passengers have longer layovers at airports.

Consequently, airport operators have responded positively to the longer times between flights and decreased onboard food service. They are well aware that they hold a captive market and especially in the last decade have taken great strides to change the perception that airports are boring, offer limited choices & high pricing.

Considering this, you will observe that the new or expanded Passenger Terminals across the country, once with wide open waiting areas, have been redesigned into transit-hubs with more retail, dining, luxury services & entertainment. Airport operators have put a lot of emphasis in providing a variety of new goods & services to the passengers. They are most aware that people today are expecting a more enriched travel and service offerings and have taken their services and amenities up a notch or two. What makes an airport great? The answer is simple: Amenities.

If you're going to be stuck there for hours on end, or even if you're just there for a brief stint, having good amenities can make or break your airport experience.

The new amenities introduced at airports have started to cater to an increasingly rapt customer base. As a result, airports are increasingly becoming more consumer-centric offering a range of activities, goods and services, keeping travelers happy while waiting for take off.

What are some of the new perks?

If you are a Canadian travelling to USA, your trip will be much less stressful & more expedient if you use the self-service kiosk for new Automated Border Clearance (ABC) process. Up to four travelers residing at the same address can be processed at the same time.

For the hungry travelers new and upgraded food and beverage concessions have opened. One new concept launched is bringing the flavor of the community inside the passenger terminals. Local well known chefs have brought their specialties to new restaurants, and now travelers from around the world will be able to sample this cuisine while waiting for their flights. Such is the case at Toronto Pearson where Chef Mark McEwen

& Devin Connell have opened these new dining options that offer healthier food and offer guests free access to Apple iPads at every seat. The iPad platform allows international travelers to easily communicate, order chef-inspired food, and check their flight status and much more.

Hoping to zone in on a special very Canadian keepsake to give for someone special! You will likely find a gift of your choice at one of the many shops promoting Canadian products. What's more! MOBILE IS GETTING BIGGER AND BIGGER.

Without a doubt, this is the next big thing for airports. Mobile communication tablets, smart phones, laptops, iPods and other similar devices are sighted as often as luggage and neck pillows at airports across the world.

For that reason, airport operators have reacted. You will now find Best Buy and iStore outlets at airports to purchase electronics, outlets to charge your electronics, free Wi-Fi, computer stations, a great place to sit and be comfortable, a place to store your luggage.

For those who like to browse and shop at the airports, visit



the duty free shops . At Toronto Pearson, Nuance, offers quality brand products such as Michael Kors, Gucci, Lacoste, Longchamp.

At Vancouver airport fashion and accessories get a good showing from French fashion retailer Hermes and Les Boutiques (both located at D53) including some really good lines from Burberry, Bvlgari, Salvatore Ferragamo and Hugo Boss.

The Fashion and Fun store, has great collections from Gucci, Givenchy, Tag Heuer amongst many, covering watches, sunglasses, jewelry and fashion. The Beauty Shop (again D53) has the added benefit of beauty advisors to talk you through some new ranges in addition to collections by Lancome, Chanel, Dior and Chanel.

If, on the other hand, you prefer tranquility and relaxation & want comfort and convenience the airline lounges or the new common pay for use lounges, At Edmonton, Vancouver & Toronto Pearson Premium Plaza may be just what you need. At Calgary look for either the Chinook lounge or the Rocky Mountain lounge.

For an affordable amount, you can have access to these lounges too. Imagine arriving at the airport with a boarding pass already in hand and greeted by someone knowledgeable

and trustworthy. You will feel comfortable, at home. Any stress disappears.

Looking for something different? Ask the information desk or one of the wandering airport ambassadors what services are provided.

Treat yourself to a manicure at one of the nail salons, take advantage of the extra time to have a massage at the airport location or at one of the nearby spas, meditate during your downtown time in the yoga room if you are at Vancouver or vent any woes exercising in the new Goodlife fitness center at



Toronto Pearson.

Travelling with CHILDREN or pets? Ask about the children's play areas activities or pet areas. EDMONTON, Halifax, Toronto & Vancouver have designated areas.

As you can see, there are plenty of perks these days at airports that are available to enhance your airport travel experience while awaiting for your flight. The boring hours of waiting for delayed flights is a thing of the past! Before your trip take



a moment to check out the airport web sites to familiarize yourself with the amenities that the different airports offer. This way you can plan to make your airport stopovers part of your trip and a better experience.

During the Holiday season keep an eye out for Santa Claus offering Holiday greetings & candy and should you spot carolers join them and embrace the Holiday season.

Better still, if you have guest arriving at Pearson Airport tweet @ torontopearson with the name and flight details of your loved one, Carolers will sing a Christmas song when your loves one or ones arrive or depart.