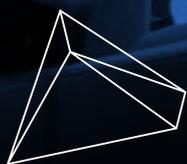


Insights:

DESIGNING PASSENGER-FRIENDLY AIRPORTS



CHAPMAN TAYLOR
TRANSPORTATION



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THE AIRPORT EXPERIENCE IS NOT USUALLY A RELAXING ONE - FOR MOST OF US, IT OFTEN INVOLVES CROWDS, QUEUES, SECURITY, CONFUSION, ROUNDING UP FAMILY OR GROUP MEMBERS AND, OFTEN, A DASH TO CATCH FLIGHTS ON TIME. IN THIS PAPER FOR OUR INSIGHTS SECTION, TRANSPORTATION DIRECTOR **PETER FARMER** LOOKS AT HOW, EVEN IF ELIMINATING STRESS ALTOGETHER IS IMPOSSIBLE, PASSENGER-FRIENDLY DESIGN CAN HELP SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF TRAVELLERS WHEN NAVIGATING AIRPORTS.

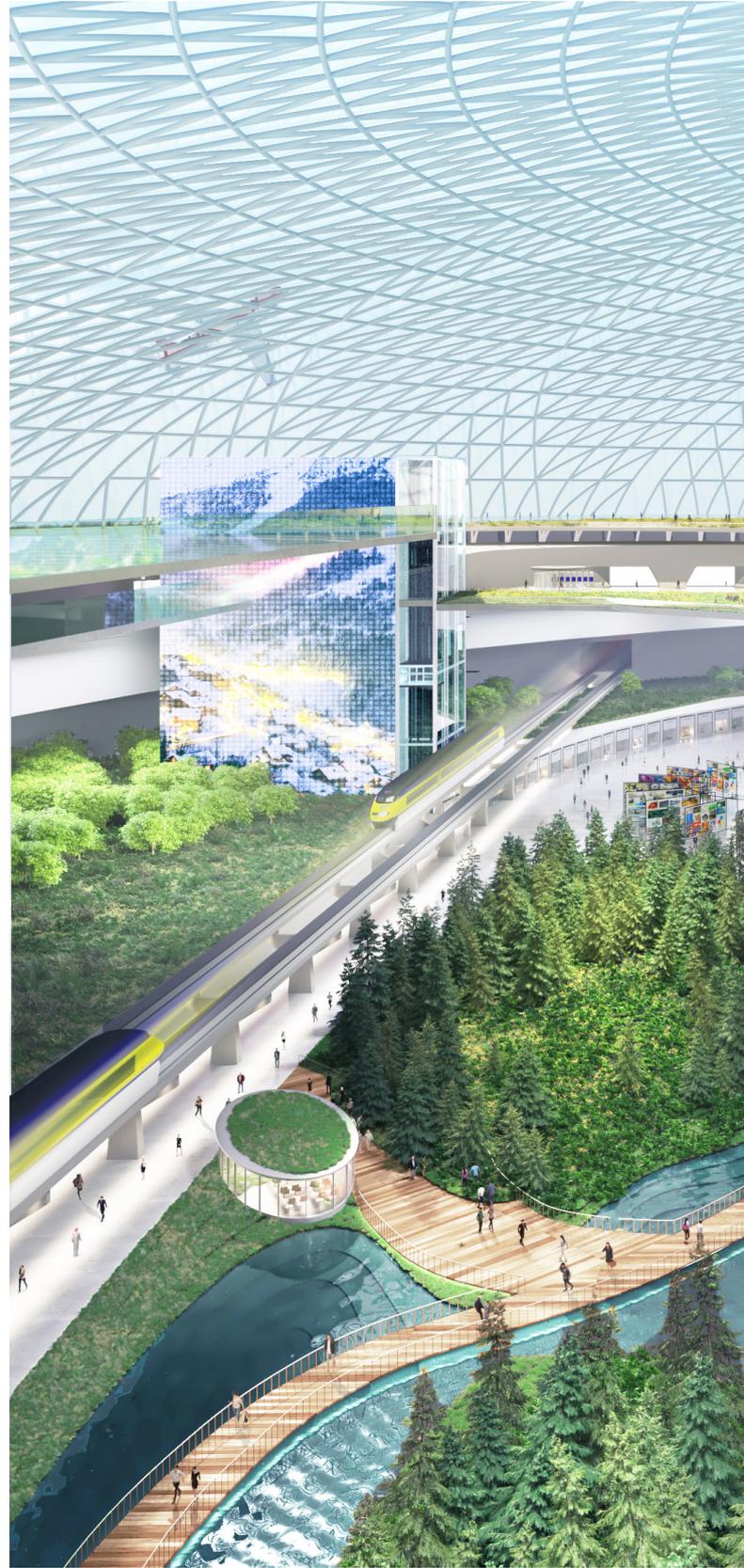
What is 'passenger-friendly' design?

Passenger-friendly can mean many things but, for me, it is a place that is easily and intuitively navigated, where queues and stress, particularly at key processing points, are kept to a minimum, and where everyone, whether a business traveller or a tourist, feels special and looked after.

It requires the provision of easily accessible and comfortable lounge seating and welfare facilities. Passengers ought to be able to relax before being bombarded with commercial offers - providing quality flight and gate information facilitates this. The space should be naturally readable, with wayfinding being as intuitive as possible, backed by well-designed signage and information.

As with any public space, passengers respond positively to daylight and views - transparency between the interior and exterior space can help to calm nerves and provide a visual focal point which can help take the passenger mentally away from the hustle and bustle of many airport environments.

Biophilic design is a key tool in reducing stress - extensive greenery, water features, daylight, natural materials and even the use of LED screens and projection to provide entertainment and images of the natural environment can all be used to help soothe nerves.







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Also important to passenger-friendliness is the fact that passengers come from many cultures, religions, identities and nationalities, as well as being of different ages and levels of ability. The increasing proportion of PRMs (passengers of restricted mobility) is having a significant effect, and there is an increasing recognition that we seek to accommodate a vast range of issues, not just physical, but increasingly within the area of cognitive needs. This diversity of characteristics needs to be carefully considered at the very outset of the design process.

Key considerations when designing this kind of space

The functional aspect of the airport experience is important, but facilities need to be enjoyable. People travel for very different reasons, but all have similar human needs – they don't want to be stressed by inefficient processes, and they desire a decent level of comfort and service. Though each type of passenger might want to spend their dwell-time differently, they are crossovers - business travellers still browse shops, albeit maybe for different offers.

While an airport has to cater for a wide range of needs, the requirements of high-quality space, natural light and comfort are universal. Welfare facilities are a key focus, including ensuring ease of access, cleanliness and sufficient capacity. We are often under pressure to 'optimise' areas which do not generate revenue, but it is often these touchpoints which influence a passenger's experience. A poor experience does not inspire loyalty or the propensity to dwell and spend. Spaces need to help to destress a passenger, both from a commercial and a wellbeing point of view.

In recent years, we have seen human interfaces increasingly reintroduced at airports to help with information and problems because a depopulation of staff has been recognised as having often been a false economy.

Reducing passenger stress at Jersey Airport

Chapman Taylor is acting as Design Team Lead on the reconfiguration of Jersey Airport, a project which was in part initiated by the growth of the airport as well as by the need to adjust some of the airport infrastructure to meet regulatory requirements. This has provided the opportunity to develop a scheme which will meet the client's and team's aspiration of creating a world-class modern gateway to Jersey which provides a much better passenger experience.

The project includes the remodelling and extension of the existing airport terminal to increase capacity and encourage passengers to dwell. The current arrivals building will be removed on a phased basis, with construction of the redesigned, integrated arrivals and departures terminal taking place in a manner which allows the airport to continue operating.

Natural light plays important part in our design for the new terminal at Jersey Airport. Exposure to skylight increases the brain's release of serotonin, which is associated with mood boosting and helping a person feel calm and focused.

The existing building has a generous rooflight and clearstory glazing, which we are making the most of. We are introducing new mezzanines, which will bring passengers closer to these light sources, and we are also using the rooflight as a key orientation and wayfinding element.

We have introduced extensive glazing in the extension building, providing passengers with views across the airport and island. This element has had to be balanced with solar gains and the MEP requirements this causes.

The materiality that we are proposing, including the use of wood and extensive soft furnishing, aims to create an environment that reflects the values of the airport and the island. The concept for the main lounge area is to create 'The Jersey Lounge', which will offer a level of lounge service for everyone that you would normally only expect in an executive airline lounge.

THE FUNCTIONAL ASPECT OF THE AIRPORT EXPERIENCE IS IMPORTANT, BUT FACILITIES NEED TO BE ENJOYABLE.

Passenger experience design trends

Design for a stress-free passenger experience will always need to get the basics right first – such as providing efficient circulation, excellent signage and wayfinding, thorough security measures and a relaxed gate experience.

The technical and functional aspects of the airport are the foundations on which the rest of the development's features depend, and getting these right has to be put before all other considerations.

Nonetheless, the nature and purpose of airports is changing, and we are on the cusp of a new era in which the popular understanding of what an airport is for will change dramatically. Designers and airport operators have the opportunity to help shape this new landscape. The challenge is to encourage people to spend more time at the airport and to transform the experience on offer to them.

With the increasing focus on the need for curation, churn and change within these environments, flexibility is important. Therefore, very definitive and fixed floor and ceiling patterns and features are becoming less common.

At the same time, airports are very conscious of maintenance costs, requiring us to ensure solutions are robust and that, as far as possible, we use as few materials and fittings as possible. There is a blurring between commercial spaces and public spaces. While the department store might be struggling in the high street, airports and individual terminals will be challenged to adopt the model.

We are looking to express values closer to those of Harry Selfridge, as if curating a resort. Why segregate airline lounges from everyone else? What if, instead, we create an all-encompassing members club for which the fee is the ticket to fly? The space would offer the comfort and sense of belonging seen in places like Soho House, or a favourite hotel, restaurant, or gym – all the while marrying a development suited to the local context and crispness of operational efficiency.

Part of the passenger-friendly experience will include creating a new 'lounge' environment – a safe, interesting, fun and comfortable space that people will choose to arrive at two or three hours before a flight. Ultimately, the goal will be to ensure that the environment we design is friendly not only to passengers, but also to the many people who will come to the airport as a destination in its own right.

Chapman Taylor has decades of experience working extensively at airports and their commercial areas. Our airport expertise, combined with our work at other transport hubs, means that we have a strong understanding of the functional and commercial requirements of airports – with a focus on creating a more relaxed and passenger-friendly environment which will encourage earlier and longer visits, more spending and an improved experience for everyone.



About the author

Peter heads up our Transportation sector in the UK. He undertakes a key role in the continuing development of this sector, related research, masterplanning, due diligence and sustainability.

With over 25 years' specialist experience across the UK, Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Australia and the Caribbean, he has an in-depth understanding of the political and business drivers of projects with multiple stakeholders and complex design and delivery teams. Special areas of interest is the emerging PRS / Build-to-Rent sector where she is a regular contributor at round table events and guest speaker at residential sector industry events.



