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# WHAT'S COOL



TRAVEL

## The Road Warrior's Guide to America's Best Airports

To airline industry insiders, the hours spent idling in airport terminals because of delays or extended layovers are known as “dwell time.” To millions of time-constrained business travelers, the experience is more commonly known as “hell.”

There's good news, however, for beleaguered execs on the go. Airports big and small are discovering that there's goodwill to be earned—and money to be made—by providing stranded road warriors with Internet connections, well-stocked business centers, and even “hypercharge” power stations that juice up cell phones in minutes. To find out which airports are the most business-friendly, we quizzed travelers, analyzed stats, and cross-checked passenger polls. The task wasn't easy: Every U.S. airport has its share of detractors, and none compares to the best overseas airports—not yet, anyway. Still, U.S. airports are making strides. So if you have to be stuck in purgatory on your next business trip, here's where you'll want to be.

continued ▶

✈ **Minneapolis-St. Paul International (MSP)**

Sometimes it's the little things that matter most. In addition to one of the best on-time flight records in the country, this Northwest Airlines hub has one of the latest and greatest advancements for time-pressed road warriors: "hypercharge" stations that can restore laptop, cell phone, or PDA power faster than standard outlets. Ann Ferraguto, an airport consultant at AirProjects, says the service is important for short layovers. "Business travelers need the second leg of a flight to be as productive as the first," she says.

**Average wait at security (peak hours):** 12 minutes

**Wi-Fi:** Airportwide; \$8-\$10/day

**Internet kiosks:** Four stations in the main terminal; \$8/half-hour

**Power supply:** Five "hypercharge" stations; \$10/half-hour.

Twelve battery-recharge bays; \$5/half-hour.

**Workstations:** Three private offices and 12 self-service cubicles available 24 hours a day; \$20/hour. Laptop rental; \$18/hour.

Commerce in King of Prussia, Pa., likes CLT for its size and convenience. "It's a great alternative to Atlanta," he says.

**Average wait at security (peak hours):** 9 minutes

**Wi-Fi:** In the main terminal (airportwide by year-end); free

**Internet kiosks:** None

**Power supply:** Electrical outlets only

**Workstations:** Business center open 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. weekdays with 11 computers, Internet access, phones, fax, and printers; \$15/hour. Meeting rooms; \$50/hour, \$375/day.

**Extras:** The spa offers everything from a 25-minute full-body massage for \$55 to an oxygen bar that'll give you a preflight dose of fresh air for \$12.

✈ **Denver International (DIA)**

Long ridiculed for near-certain delays and its disastrous experiment in electronic baggage handling, DIA now scores big on business traveler satisfaction surveys. The United Airlines hub

has seen ticket prices drop since the arrival of fare-buster Southwest. And while schedules have returned to pre-9/11 levels, last year more planes arrived on time at Denver International than at any other airport in the nation. "It has great dining options, is easy to navigate, and is easy to get to," says business travel columnist Christopher Elliott.

**Average wait at security (peak hours):** 24 minutes

**Wi-Fi:** Airportwide; \$10/day

**Internet kiosks:** Eight booths in the terminals; \$15/hour

**Power supply:** Electrical outlets only

**Workstations:** Two business centers provide 24 computers, phones, printers, and high-speed Internet access; \$9/two hours

**Extras:** Chair and full-body massages

are available in two terminals. United's Red Carpet Club offers private work cubicles, a tended bar, and large-screen TVs for \$50 per day.

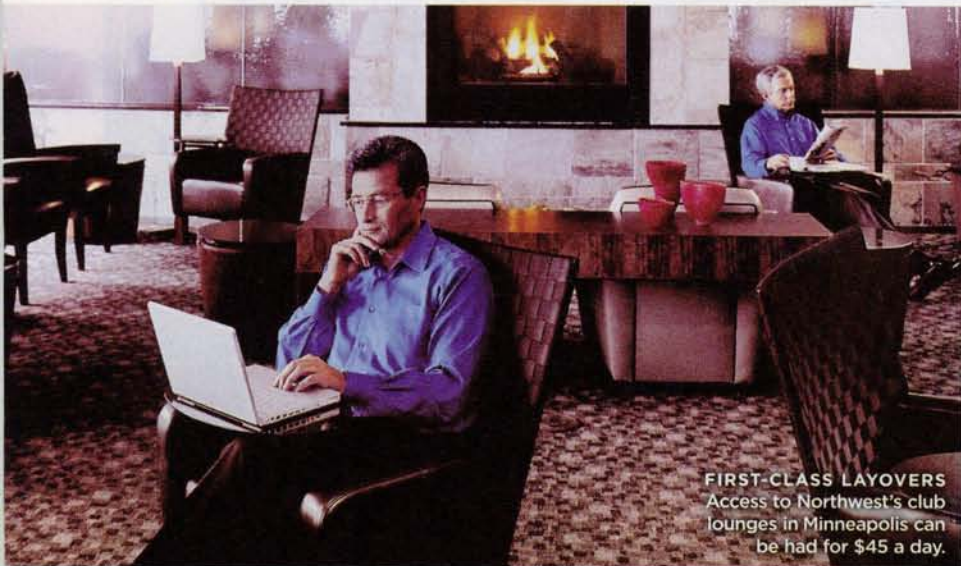
✈ **San Francisco International (SFO)**

SFO is often maligned for its frequent weather delays, but the United Airlines hub has one of the fastest security checkpoints in the country, and the airport's spacious international terminal makes it the perfect place to connect on flights to Asia. Opened in 2000 after a \$1 billion renovation, the international terminal features sushi from local hot spot Ebisu, a meditation room, and a 24-hour business center. SFO is also testing new technology that lets passengers zip through security in seconds without removing their shoes, keys, or laptops.

**Average wait at security (peak hours):** 5 minutes

✈ **Charlotte Douglas International (CLT)**

For those traveling to or from the Southeast, Charlotte is rapidly becoming a popular substitute for Atlanta's infamous Hartsfield-Jackson, the country's busiest airport and among the worst for on-time performance. In 2005 this US Airways hub added free Wi-Fi service, a business center, and a day spa. Newcomer JetBlue has helped drive down fares, and an additional runway is in the works to accommodate growth. Mike Lynch, a travel manager for procurement-services provider ICG



**FIRST-CLASS LAYOVERS**  
Access to Northwest's club lounges in Minneapolis can be had for \$45 a day.

**Extras:** Two Northwest club lounges offer free Wi-Fi access, TVs, snacks, alcohol, dressing rooms, and semiprivate workstations equipped with phones; a day pass costs \$45. If you have time to get out of the airport, a light-rail system will whisk you from the terminal to Mall of America in 15 minutes.

**Wi-Fi:** Airportwide; \$10/day

**Internet kiosks:** Two stations in the international terminal; \$8/half-hour

**Power supply:** 12 self-service battery-recharge stations throughout the airport; \$5/session

**Workstations:** Private work stalls plus laptops, printers, copiers, and small conference rooms in the international terminal's business center; \$15-\$65/hour

**Extras:** A full-service spa is open daily. Travelers with extended layovers can take BART trains directly from the international terminal to downtown in 30 minutes.

## Dallas-Fort Worth International (DFW)

In just the past year, this American Airlines hub has pulled off a once unthinkable turnaround. What used to be an exhausting trek to reach gates along horseshoe-shaped terminals is now a breeze, thanks to a first-class train system that takes passengers where they need to go in nine minutes or less. DFW also boasts a shiny new international terminal, "smart parking" technology that points drivers to open stalls, and crowd-free lounges with comfy Herman Miller chairs. Brian Noyes, chief architect at iDesign in Alexandria, Va., used to avoid DFW like the plague. Not anymore. "I can actually get work done there," he says.



**HIGH-SPEED TURNAROUND**  
DFW's train system is part of a makeover that has reversed its rep among business travelers.

**Average wait at security (peak hours):** 12 minutes

**Wi-Fi:** Airportwide; \$10/day

**Internet kiosks:** 52 stand-up booths scattered throughout the terminals; \$6/hour

**Power supply:** Electrical outlets only; 12 self-service battery-recharge bays slated for the fall

**Workstations:** Eight business centers with small semiprivate workstations featuring electrical and phone outlets, leather couches, and flat-screen TVs tuned to CNN; free

**Extras:** An onsite hotel rents meeting rooms, provides courier, printing, and graphics services, and features a full-service spa. — LIA STEAKLEY