

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

TRAVEL

Step Inside the World's 9 Best-Looking Airport Lounges

From Tokyo to Zurich to Philadelphia, these design-forward airline lounges are almost worth the price of the ticket that grants you access

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Photo: Courtesy of Qatar Airways

Travel is transformative. Getting there? Often far less so—unless, that is, you're a fan of historically long TSA lines, "weather delays," lost luggage, and the kid behind you who keeps kicking your seat. Thankfully, the options for de-stressing between flights have improved considerably in recent years, with the world's best airport lounges offering not only full bars and back rubs—complimentary Wi-Fi these days is obviously a given—but also clean, contemporary design that rivals the chicest of hotel lobbies. These nine airport lounges can't help you bypass security (except in one very posh case), but they can give you plenty of reasons to love a long layover.



Photo: Courtesy of Japan Airlines



Japan Airlines' First-Class Lounge at Tokyo Haneda International Airport

Conceived by Japanese interior designer [Ryu Kosaka](#) around the Japanese minimalism concept of *Ma*, which celebrates the negative space between objects as much as the objects themselves, JAL's showpiece lounge is divided by custom-made *byobu* screens into distinct rooms that include the library, playroom, sake bar (featuring sakes from Tokyo craft beer and whiskey haven [Hasegawa Liquor Store](#)), and the darkly cozy Red Suite, which features artwork by Japanese master plasterer Shuhei Hasado.



Photo: Courtesy of Qantas



The Qantas London Lounge at London Heathrow Airport

The brand-new bilevel London reprieve for Qantas passengers features an upstairs gin bar with runway views, a menu by Aussie celeb chef Neil Perry, and modern-minimalist design details like chevron wood flooring and a concrete cocktail bar.



The VIP Lounge Club at Punta Cana International Airport

Looking to savor every last vacation moment? Designed by renowned Dominican architect [Antonio Segundo Imbert](#), PUJ's new VIP lounge builds on the airport's modern-tropics style—open-air terminals feature midcentury furnishings and thatched palm roofs—with an outdoor infinity pool offering elite travelers panoramic views of the airstrip.



Photo: Courtesy of American Express for the Centurion lounges



The Centurion Lounge at Hong Kong International Airport

Airport lounge—or the living room of your dreams? Hard to tell at the new Centurion lounge at HKG, which features midcentury-modern classics throughout—custom-covered Bertioia barstools, Eero Saarinen tables, Warren Platner chairs, and Tom Dixon lamps. Just as memorable: the lounge's custom scent, designed by New York-based sister team [12.29](#).



Photo: Courtesy of Swiss



The Swiss First Class Lounge at Zurich Airport

Of Swiss' nine upscale lounges at its Zurich home base, the airline's newest wood-and-stone masterpiece outdoes them all, with a champagne bar—and private bedrooms outfitted in Bulgari to sleep off excess fun—plus an outdoor terrace offering fondue, raclette, and unobstructed Alps views.



Photo: Courtesy of Lufthansa



The Lufthansa First-Class Terminal at Frankfurt Airport

Designed by Frankfurt firm *Hollin + Radoske*, the grande dame of airport lounges—a lounge so exclusive it's its own building—features a marble-and-oak candy bar, a cigar lounge, nap rooms (with soaking tubs), and a play area to stash the kids, as well as a (human) personal assistant who'll escort you through security and customs, just like that.





Photo: Courtesy of Qatar Airways



Qatar Airways' Al Safwa First Lounge at Doha Hamad International Airport

Centered around a stories-tall, Vegas-ready water fountain, Qatar Airways' most impressive lounge, done up in sandstone and marble detailing, takes design cues from Doha's *Museum of Islamic Art*. It also takes actual art from the museum, with a rotating selection of original artwork and artifacts on loan.



The Centurion Lounge at Philadelphia International Airport

American Express' newest stateside lounge is 6,300 square feet of home design inspiration, with floor-to-ceiling windows; furniture by Vitra, Knoll, Verpan, and Hans Wegner; custom live-edge wood tables by New York artisan [John Houshmand](#); and bespoke pillows. An Israel-inspired menu by James Beard Award-winning chef [Michael Solomonov](#) provides the base layer for Philadelphia-inspired cocktails like the Liberty Bell Ringer, a twist on the gin sour, and the Philadelphia Flyer, a reimaged Air Mail.



The Emirates Lounge at Dubai International Airport

As much a feat of architecture as anything else—the lounge spans the entire length of the terminal—Emirates' lounge recently underwent an \$11 million makeover to include a Moët & Chandon champagne lounge on one end and a Voss-branded “health hub” featuring salads, juices, and smoothies on the other (one definitely sounds more fun). You can't miss the bar, hand-decorated with 2,400 gold leaves—but of course that's the point.