

BY KARMAH ELMUSA

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The **JET SET**

High-flying lawyers share their insights on the good, the bad, and the to-be-avoided at airports around the world.

For many attorneys in the Golden State, extensive business travel is an unavoidable part of the job. Trips to meet with clients based everywhere from Texas to Taiwan, quick jaunts between Northern and Southern California, and frequent flights to East Coast offices are common in a profession where face-to-face contact is still a high priority.

Whether you're heading down the Coast for the day or across an ocean, though, knowing a little—or a lot—about the airports you'll visit can make the trip more bearable. "Sometimes I feel like I live in airports," says Luanne Sacks, a partner at DLA Piper's San Francisco office and a "Million Miler" with United Airlines—she flies more than 100,000 miles nearly every year. Sacks and six other lawyers share their insights on the good, the bad, and the to-be-avoided at airports around the world.



Singapore's sleek Changi Airport—with shopping, movie theaters, eateries, and spas—is the crown jewel for travelers headed to Asia.



		Skytrain to T1 & T2	往 T1及T2 轻轨列车 Ke - T1 & T2 ターミナル1 2 行き
		Cash Machine (ATM)	自动提款机 Mesin Wang 現金自動預け払い機
		Toilets	洗手间 Tandas お手洗
		Shops & Cafés	商店和咖啡座 Kedai dan Kafe ショップ&カフェ

California Airports

San Francisco International Airport's polished new Terminal 2, which is home to Virgin America and American Airlines and is LEED Gold Certified, earns high praise all around. Perks at the SFO renovation include comfortable and ample seating, a bevy of food options from sushi to burgers, and shopping, including a museum-wares store called Mosaic Gallery. Still, this Northern California hub is not without its flaws, particularly for business travelers who are on a tight schedule.

James S. DeGraw, a partner at Ropes & Gray's San Francisco office, says parking can be problematic because the long-term lots are located so far away from the terminals, and BART service is too infrequent.

Luanne Sacks, co-chair of DLA Piper's class-action litigation practice, says her biggest issue with SFO is the wait-time to retrieve luggage. She tries to avoid checking a bag

don. "In the winter, you can predict a little better in advance whether it's going to be a problem." The food options at SFO beat out Oakland and other local airports, he adds.

Like many California lawyers, Cardon spends much of his time shuttling between the Bay Area and Los Angeles. During one week in March, for example, he was scheduled to be in San Francisco on Monday, Los Angeles on Tuesday, Orange County on Wednesday, San Francisco Thursday, and back in L.A. on Friday. For quick turnarounds, Cardon often skips SFO all together and books the Oakland-to-Burbank option. "Flying in and out of Burbank (BUR) is the greatest thing," he says. "It's the easiest airport. You can get there half an hour before your flight, hand the [car] keys to the valet, and you're off. The TSA agents know your name. It has a very 1950s feel to it, but I like it." Still, sometimes Cardon flies into Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) instead, if only because of the frequency and pricing of flights.

S. Christian Platt, a litigation partner based in Paul Hastings's San Diego office, tells us that San Diego International (SAN) is great for a quick exit with its notoriously short runway. "You taxi for five minutes, and you're out of there," he says. But Noah D. Mesel, general counsel at Assia, a broadband technology company headquartered in Redwood City, warns that connections in San Diego might take longer than expected, particularly if your next flight is on Southwest Airlines. "Two or three [Southwest] gates are isolated from the rest," he says.

Dion N. Cominos, managing partner at Gordon & Rees's San Francisco office, says that smaller airports such as those in San Jose (SJC) and Santa Barbara (SBA) should not be overlooked in favor of the behemoths nearby. "San Jose has a great airport," he says. "It's not as heavily traveled, it's very clean, and it's well designed. Santa Barbara, too, has a nice airport. Just be aware that there's very little in the way of shopping and food options once you clear security."



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whenever she flies into San Francisco International. "On the rare occasions I do," says Sacks, "I assume it's going to be up to an hour to pick it up at baggage claim."

When flying out of the Bay Area, Craig Cardon, a partner in Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton's Century City and San Francisco offices, bounces back and forth between Oakland International Airport (OAK) and SFO depending on time of day and season. At SFO, the early morning tends to be smoother before delays stack up, but the airport "should be avoided in the summer—it's the worst for fog," says Car-

Domestic Airports

If you're heading to another major metropolitan area in the United States, you usually have a few airport options. For trips to New York City, there are, of course, the big three: John F. Kennedy and New Jersey's nearby Newark Liberty (EWR), both international airports, and LaGuardia (LGA), which is domestic. Tammy Albarran, a securities partner at Covington & Burling's San Francisco office, is a newly minted Newark fan. "I've had some really positive experiences with Newark," she says. "LaGuardia doesn't seem to have as many flights, and I've had an easier time getting to the city from Newark than from JFK. Also, I recently left my laptop in the United lounge at Newark, and the airport sent it back to me within two days—they were really helpful."

Ropes & Gray's DeGraw, for his part, agrees that ground transportation in and out of JFK is a big issue because of unpredictable traffic. "You're rolling a huge set of dice if you take a cab to get to JFK," he says. "It drives me nuts." DeGraw often travels on a tight schedule (as in no over-



Newark Liberty International Airport is a short hop from Manhattan.



“I’ve had an easier time getting to [New York City] from Newark than from JFK.”

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COVINGTON & BURLING

night stays), and he notes that both JFK and Newark have showers in the airline lounges. Assia’s Mesel adds that flights returning from abroad are often backed up to land at JFK’s international terminal. “It can take ten minutes,” he says, “or it can take an hour and a half.”

In Chicago, Midway Airport (MDW) can be a viable option, but most travelers concede that O’Hare International (ORD) is unavoidable if the Windy City is a frequent destination. That doesn’t mean, however, that you have to like it: “I think O’Hare has to be the worst,” says Cominos. “There you have the combination of weather issues, an aging structure that is very poorly laid out, and then you have the décor: It’s like being in a bad European disco.”

Folks flying in and out of Washington, D.C., face the dilemma of using Reagan National (DCA), located just outside the capital city’s border, or Washington Dulles (IAD), which is a solid 45-minute drive away. Here, the story is the same as with so many areas: The bigger airport (Dulles) has more flights, but that may be outweighed by the inconvenience of a lengthier commute once you’re on the ground. Tammy Albarran opts to fly in and out of Reagan whenever possible.

Here’s the quick-and-dirty on a few other airports: Beware of short connection times in Houston (HOU); prepare for a hike in Miami (MIA) because of the unwieldy layout; both Dallas (DFW) and Atlanta (ATL) are big but generally well laid out. And Las Vegas—well, in Vegas (LAS), there are slot machines at the airport, which can be a joy or an annoyance, depending on your penchant for noise, bright lights, and gambling.

TRICKS OF THE TRIP

GET CLEARED. If you’re a frequent international flier, sign up for Global Entry, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection program that allows expedited clearance for pre-approved members when they land in the United States. You bypass the customs lines by using completely separate, automated kiosks. (Noah Mesel, a high-level frequent flyer with United Airlines, says the airline paid the \$100 fee for him.)

TREAT YOURSELF. Luanne Sacks says layovers can present an opportunity to relax or keep up your grooming routine. Many airports—including San Francisco International, Vegas, O’Hare, and Dulles—have spa services available. Have a massage or manicure/pedicure while you wait for your boarding call. That way, you’ll get off the plane looking good and feeling even better.

USE THE LOUNGE (OR SKIP IT). Most lawyers swear by airport lounges as the best places for getting work done, grabbing a shower, or in the case of Luanne Sacks, holding a conference. “In the Red Carpet Club in O’Hare, for example, there’s a conference room you can rent,” she says. “If we have folks who are flying in from multiple locations for a meeting, we can meet there and all go get right back on the plane.” Craig Cardon, on the other hand, thinks airport lounges are “the most overrated and under-serviced facilities on the planet.” They’re frequently overcrowded, Cardon says, so if you can’t find a seat, he recommends heading to the gate: “There’s often no one there.”



The Red Carpet Club at Chicago’s O’Hare offers a conference room to rent for meetings.

DON’T CHECK YOUR BAG. On this topic, almost all frequent-flying attorneys have the same advice: Carry on your luggage if there’s any possible way to do so. And if you can’t, be sure you have sturdy luggage tags and take pictures of your bags to help the airline locate them in case they get lost. Running shoes can take up space, and some hotels now rent exercise clothes to help their guests pack lighter, so check that out ahead of time. Big items like golf clubs should be shipped overnight in advance. And for airport security checkpoints, slip-on shoes and a jacket with multiple pockets should be your uniform.

JUST RELAX. When you’re in travel mode, try(!) to slow down and relinquish control. There’s very little you can do about delays, bad food, canceled flights, and lost bags, so stressing out is a waste of time. —K.E.

International Airports

In Asia, the gaggle of brand-new airports gets high marks overall from California attorneys. Singapore's impressive Changi Airport (SIN), which underwent a major expansion about five years ago and is set for another lavish upgrade, is the continent's crown jewel. It has extensive shopping opportunities, movie theaters, spas, and tons of food in the form of local delicacies, to name just a few of the amenities. Jim DeGraw has spent plenty of time both there and in Hong Kong International Airport (HKG), and he says they are unlike anything in the U.S. or Europe. "These are new structures that are well thought out," he says. "There's a service mentality associated with them, the lines move quickly, they're easy to get to, it's easy to change planes, and there are decent places to eat and sit." That ethos, DeGraw adds, totally changes the Asian airport experience. "In Japan when you're going through the security screening, someone shoves your stuff through the machine for you—[in the U.S.], they scream at you to do it."

More than once, DeGraw has flown to Hong Kong for a one-day visit (spending the nights before and after on the plane), which he says is possible thanks to the efficiency built into the system. "You can get really good dim sum and a shower in the airport, and then take the Airport Express [train] right into the city." Paul Hastings's Platt shares a similar tip about Narita (NRT), Japan's international airport: "The best way to get into Tokyo is by taking the Narita Express train. For under \$100 round-trip [business class], it takes you directly from the airport to Tokyo Station in less than an hour."

Other Asian airports that earned honorable mentions were in Seoul, South Korea (ICN), and Hanoi, Vietnam (HAN). Like London and Beijing, Seoul hosted the Olympic Games fairly recently, which attorneys point out often brings airport upgrades. (Noah Mesel says Rio de Janeiro-Galeao International (GIG) could benefit from a face-lift before the 2016 Olympics.) Craig Cardon, who often flies to China, almost always heads for Shanghai's newer airport, Pudong (PVG), when he can. "If there's one thing that China does well, it's build airports and train stations," he says. "They are modern and glistening and efficient. All of the Chinese airports that I've spent time in are fantastic."

Cardon offers these insights about flying in Chinese skies: "Fares to Shanghai are much lower than the fares to Beijing. Also, if you're flying internally in China, you should know that all the air traffic is controlled by the military. Flights are often delayed and you don't know

why. If you fly Air China, pick the biggest planes that you can find, and odds are, a Chinese official will be on your flight and it won't be delayed."

As for North America, Platt warns travelers to Canada to remember that customs inspections coming into the United States are done *before* you board your returning flight, so build in extra time at the airport in Vancouver or Toronto. And Albarran—who is of Mexican descent herself—says Mexico City's airport (MEX) can deliver a bit of culture shock due to a heavily armed military presence there. Still, she's never had trouble with connecting flights.



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—JAMES DEGRAW, ROPES & GRAY

In Europe, Cardon recommends Geneva (GVA) for its all-around "Swiss competence." Luanne Sacks favors Munich Airport (MUC) over Frankfurt (FRA) for connecting flights in Germany. "If you're headed to Frankfurt for a layover, you'd better be wearing comfortable shoes because it's so big," she says. "It can take a long time to get through."

Some attorneys criticize London's Heathrow as too large and disorganized, but Mesel says that compared to American airports, things move right along at LHR. "They have a traffic cop directing people to different lines at passport control," he says. "And also, when you arrive at security [in the U.K.], you have to take off so much less of your clothing than you do in America, it really speeds things up. I personally think it's a more pragmatic approach. I don't feel safer if people take off more clothes." 🗣️