

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

LAX debuts first US luxury airport terminal for VIPs only

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The Private Suite is LAX's new luxury terminal. Image courtesy of LAX

By DANNY PARISI

Los Angeles International Airport, better known as LAX, is joining a growing list of airports catering to wealthy travelers with the addition of an exclusive terminal for VIPs.

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Set to open next week, the new terminal is called The Private Suite and comes with a host of features exclusive for affluent fliers. LAX is now in the company of airports in London, Dubai, United Arab Emirates and other countries that cater to luxury travelers.

"For wealthy people flying commercially, it is a godsend," said Doug Gollan, editor in chief of both [PrivateJetCardComparisons.com](#) and [DG Amazing Experiences](#), New York. "Arriving LAX customs and immigrations is notoriously clogged up for incoming international travelers.

"You hear regular stories of people waiting one to two hours. Some airlines have tried to create their own VIP experiences for departing passengers," he said. "For example, American Airlines has a private check-in for its first class passengers on intercontinental flights, to the east coast and VIPs, however, you have to go through a public security channel although they cut you close to the front of the line.

"You also empty out into the main terminal and use lounges shared with other passengers. I'm surprised it took this long for somebody to do it in the U.S."

Mr. Gollan is not affiliated with LAX, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. [LAX](#) was reached for comment.

Private Suite

LAX's latest addition to its premises is a new luxury terminal called The Private Suite.

This terminal caters exclusively to luxury travelers, bringing them the kinds of benefits and perks reserved for wealthy customers.

The terminal will include its own private TSA line as well as luxurious suites for customers to await their planes when they arrive at the airport.

Additionally, LAX is promising direct transportation to the tarmac in a BMW 7 Series sedan.



VIPs can get a ride straight to the plane

No expense is spared at The Private Suite, where each traveler gets their own team of staff members who will guide them to their private suites and attend to their needs as they begin their journey.

The traveler's luggage will be taken care without any additional input from them so that they can focus on relaxation.

These perks do not come without a heavy price however. Travelers must pay at least \$4,000 for an international flight and \$7,500 for a yearly membership, according to reporting from [Travel + Leisure](#).

While an excellent luxury experience, the addition of a luxury terminal is unlikely to affect another luxury travel sector: private jets.

"It won't likely have much impact on the private jet market. LAX already has two separate FBOs (private jet terminals) for private jet use," Private Jet Card Comparisons and DG Amazing Experiences' Mr. Gollan said. "Saving time and hassle on one end at the ground doesn't replace the reasons to fly privately 99 percent of the time."

Luxury travel

Luxury partnerships with airlines are a common sight. Many brands have worked with both airlines and airports to offer their products in-flight, such as a partnership between Lalique and Singapore Airlines.

Through the partnership, the airline will retail co-branded in-flight products such as toiletries and glassware in its suites and first class cabins. For Lalique, this represents an opportunity to introduce its brand range to a captive audience of affluent travelers ([see story](#)).

It is not yet clear what brands, if any, LAX will be working with in The Private Suite. LAX did not respond to requests for comment.



A private suite at The Private Suite

Another potential issue will be what gestures towards sustainability takes in setting up this luxury terminal, as these can have an influence on choices consumers make when planning a trip.

As environmental issues become not just a hot button topic in society, but also a main driver in how many

consumers behave, travel is also becoming a large part of that conversation. A survey from AIG Travel shows that consumers are now making their travel decisions based on the sustainability of the hospitality brands ([see story](#)).

While LAX's luxury terminal is the first of its kind in the U.S., other countries have similar projects already established. If The Private Suite is a success, expect this trend to continue at other airports.

"As the airport experience gets worse - both in fact and perception - these services are a good way for C-level executives, VIPs, celebrities, royalty and wealthy travelers to save both time and hassles," Private Jet Card Comparisons and DG Amazing Experiences' Mr. Gollan said.

"FBO chain Signature Flight Support, which has an FBO at LAX, has more than 150 locations worldwide and already does this in London's Gatwick Airport," he said.

"They have FBOs in San Francisco, Newark, NJ and other major airports that would be ideal to replicate what they are doing in the U.K. and what the Private Suite is doing at LAX."

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