TOP 50
U.S. AIRPORTS

The Layover Survival Guide

Fifty airports, the way they really run: the layout, the ride into the city, the security reality, and one insider tip for each.

TakeOff AI by ActorTonyB Travel · travelwithactortonyb.com

How to use this guide

Find your airport by its three letter code, the same code on your ticket. Every entry runs the same way: the layout first, then how to get into the city, then how security and connections work there, then one insider tip. Times are honest general guidance, not promises, and airport construction never sleeps, so check your airline app on the day. When in doubt, arrive early and let the guide take the stress out of the rest.

Your home base matters. If you fly out of one airport most of the time, read its entry twice: knowing which checkpoint runs faster and where the quiet corners are is worth real money and real calm over a year of trips.

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Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport

The layout. Two domestic terminals, North and South, feed one long airside spine of Concourses A through F plus an international terminal. The underground Plane Train and walkway link all concourses. Delta anchors the airport, with Southwest also large in the domestic terminals.

Getting to the city. MARTA trains run from inside the domestic terminal to downtown and Midtown, about 20 minutes to downtown. Taxis and rideshares are plentiful. Driving downtown is quick off peak but can slow heavily in rush hour and around big events.

Security and layovers. One of the busiest checkpoints in the country, so the main checkpoint can pinch at morning banks. You can reach any concourse airside once screened. Allow generous time for tight connections, because concourse changes and train rides add up.

Insider tip. If the main checkpoint line looks brutal, try the South or North checkpoint for the same airside access. Frequent flyers also love the walkway between concourses for the art, quieter pace, and a break from the crowded Plane Train.

DFW · Dallas-Fort Worth

Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport

The layout. Five semicircular terminals, A through E, arranged around a central highway. The Skylink train connects all terminals airside in minutes. American Airlines, the dominant hub carrier, operates from every terminal, with other carriers concentrated mainly in Terminal E and international Terminal D.

Getting to the city. DART light rail serves Terminal A and TEXRail serves Terminal B, both handy for Dallas and Fort Worth. Rideshares and taxis are abundant. Downtown Dallas is about 30 minutes by car in normal traffic, Fort Worth a little longer.

Security and layovers. Each terminal has its own checkpoints and some are much quieter than others. Skylink makes airside terminal changes fast, so connections are forgiving if you move promptly. Check which terminal you depart from, because check in is terminal specific.

Insider tip. Use the Skylink even for a long layover to explore Terminal D, which has the best mix of shops, art, and dining. If one security line is long, a neighboring checkpoint in the same terminal is often noticeably calmer.

DEN · Denver

Denver International Airport

The layout. One main Jeppesen Terminal feeds three airside concourses, A, B, and C, reached by an underground train, with a walkable bridge to Concourse A. United anchors B, Southwest is largest in C, and Frontier and most international flights use A.

Getting to the city. The A Line commuter train runs from the airport transit center to Denver Union Station downtown, about 40 minutes. Rideshares, taxis, and regional buses are plentiful. Driving downtown takes about 35 to 45 minutes depending on traffic on Pena Boulevard.

Security and layovers. The main terminal has large checkpoints on both sides, and lines can surge with ski and summer banks. All concourses connect airside by train. Walks in Concourse B can be very long, so build in extra time for high numbered gates.

Insider tip. Walk the pedestrian bridge to Concourse A on a clear day for mountain views and a quieter start than the train. Arriving passengers should follow signs carefully for the train to baggage claim, because the ride is part of every arrival.

ORD · Chicago

Chicago O'Hare International Airport

The layout. Terminals 1, 2, 3, and 5 sit around a central core. Terminals 1, 2, and 3 connect airside by walkways, while Terminal 5 is separate. United anchors Terminal 1, American anchors Terminal 3, and most international departures use Terminal 5.

Getting to the city. The CTA Blue Line runs from Terminal 2 to downtown Chicago, about 45 minutes to the Loop. Metra, taxis, and rideshares also serve the airport. Driving downtown can take 30 minutes off peak and far longer in rush hour or snow.

Security and layovers. Checkpoints vary a lot by terminal and time of day, and Terminal 5 requires a landside transfer from the others. The Airport Transit System links terminals landside. For connections involving Terminal 5, allow substantial extra time to rescreen.

Insider tip. Frequent flyers heading downtown skip the traffic gamble and take the Blue Line when the expressways are jammed. Inside Terminal 1, the underground walkway between Concourses B and C is calmer than you would expect and worth the short detour.

LAX · Los Angeles

Los Angeles International Airport

The layout. Nine terminals form a U around the central area, numbered 1 through 8 plus the Tom Bradley International Terminal. More terminals now connect airside by walkways, but not every move is simple. Southwest uses Terminal 1, Delta Terminal 3, American Terminals 4 and 5, United Terminals 7 and 8.

Getting to the city. The LAX Metro Transit Center, served by Metro C and K lines, links to terminals by shuttle, with a new airport people mover completing the connection. FlyAway buses, taxis, and rideshares remain popular. Driving downtown takes about 30 to 60 minutes with traffic.

Security and layovers. Each terminal screens separately, so your checkpoint experience depends entirely on your airline and hour. Some connections require leaving security and rescreening. Roadway congestion inside the U can be the real delay, so arrive earlier than the security line alone would suggest.

Insider tip. Check whether your terminals connect airside before planning to rescreen, because recent walkways have quietly made many LAX connections much easier. For pickups, meeting at departures level is often faster than fighting the arrivals curb at busy hours.

JFK · New York

John F. Kennedy International Airport

The layout. Five terminals are in active use, numbered 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8, linked landside by the AirTrain, with major new terminal construction underway. Delta and many international partners use Terminal 4, JetBlue anchors Terminal 5, and American anchors Terminal 8.

Getting to the city. AirTrain connects to the Long Island Rail Road at Jamaica and to the subway at Jamaica and Howard Beach, for Manhattan trips of about an hour in total. Taxis and rideshares are plentiful. Driving to Manhattan takes about 45 to 90 minutes with traffic.

Security and layovers. Terminals are not connected airside, so changing terminals means exiting, riding AirTrain, and screening again. That makes short cross terminal connections risky. Confirm your terminal before you travel, because rebuilding work is shifting airline locations in phases.

Insider tip. For Manhattan, AirTrain to Jamaica and then the Long Island Rail Road is usually the fastest and most predictable ride. Always double check your departure terminal the day before, since JFK assignments have been moving during construction.

SFO · San Francisco

San Francisco International Airport

The layout. Four terminals form a ring, Terminals 1, 2, 3, and the International Terminal, linked by AirTrain landside and by airside walkways between several terminals. United anchors Terminal 3 and much of the International Terminal, while Alaska is a major tenant in Terminal 1.

Getting to the city. BART trains run from the International Terminal to downtown San Francisco, about 30 minutes. Caltrain connects by BART at Millbrae, and SamTrans buses, taxis, and rideshares are plentiful. Driving downtown takes about 25 to 40 minutes depending on traffic.

Security and layovers. Checkpoints are spread by terminal and boarding area, and international banks can create surges. Many terminals now connect airside, which helps with lounges and dining. Still confirm your boarding area, because a ring layout can mean a longer walk than expected.

Insider tip. The outdoor terrace and aviation museum areas are calm escapes during a long wait, and locals know SFO has strong local food throughout. If BART fits your destination, it beats sitting in Highway 101 traffic at peak times.

SEA · Seattle

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport

The layout. One main terminal feeds Concourses A, B, C, and D, plus North and South Satellite terminals reached by an underground train loop. Alaska Airlines, the hub carrier, operates across the main concourses and North Satellite, while Delta is strong in Concourse A and the South Satellite.

Getting to the city. Link light rail serves the airport station with trains to downtown Seattle, about 35 to 40 minutes. Taxis, rideshares, and buses are plentiful from the garage and ground transport areas. Driving downtown takes about 25 to 40 minutes depending on Interstate 5 traffic.

Security and layovers. A single set of central checkpoints serves the main terminal, and cruise season mornings can be very busy. All gates connect airside, including satellites by train. Give yourself extra time when your gate is in a satellite, especially during morning banks.

Insider tip. Locals heading downtown take Link light rail to avoid Interstate 5 altogether. Inside, the central food court area with big windows over the airfield is the most pleasant place to wait, eat, and watch planes between flights.

LAS · Las Vegas

Harry Reid International Airport

The layout. Two separate terminal buildings, Terminal 1 and Terminal 3, serve five concourses, A, B, C, D, and E. Trams link terminals to their concourses, and Concourse D can be reached from either terminal. Southwest is the largest carrier, mainly through Terminal 1.

Getting to the city. There is no rail to the airport. Buses, including routes to downtown and the Strip, plus taxis and very busy rideshare garages serve both terminals. The Strip is only a few miles away, about 10 to 15 minutes in normal traffic.

Security and layovers. Terminal 1 and Terminal 3 are not connected airside, so arriving at the wrong terminal costs real time. Checkpoints can surge after conventions and on Sunday afternoons. Confirm your terminal from your airline, not just your concourse letter.

Insider tip. Double check Terminal 1 versus Terminal 3 before your rideshare driver drops you, because fixing a mistake means a shuttle ride. Frequent visitors use the less obvious checkpoints in Terminal 1 when the main lines spill into the ticketing hall.

MCO · Orlando

Orlando International Airport

The layout. Terminals A and B sit in one main building, with a newer Terminal C south of it. Airsides 1 through 4 are reached by automated people movers from Terminals A and B. Southwest and Delta are large in the main complex, JetBlue anchors Terminal C.

Getting to the city. SunRail commuter trains and Lynx buses are reached by shuttle and transit links, while most visitors use rental cars, hotel shuttles, taxis, and rideshares. Downtown Orlando is about 25 minutes by car, and the theme park areas are roughly 25 to 35 minutes.

Security and layovers. The main checkpoints for Terminals A and B can back up badly during family travel peaks. Terminal C has its own screening and a calmer feel. You cannot walk between airsides, so the people mover ride is part of every departure and connection.

Insider tip. Orlando rewards arriving extra early on holiday weekends, when families with strollers and first time flyers slow every line. If you fly from Terminal C, enjoy the shorter walks and newer food court before other travelers discover how calm it feels.

EWR · Newark

Newark Liberty International Airport

The layout. Three terminals, A, B, and C, form a loose ring, linked landside by AirTrain Newark. The new Terminal A serves several carriers, Terminal B handles most international flights, and United, the hub carrier, dominates Terminal C and also uses Terminal A for some flights.

Getting to the city. AirTrain connects to the Newark Airport rail station for NJ Transit and Amtrak trains to New York Penn Station, about 30 minutes from the station. Buses, taxis, and rideshares are plentiful. Driving to Manhattan takes about 45 to 90 minutes with traffic.

Security and layovers. Terminals are not connected airside, so a terminal change means AirTrain and rescreening. Terminal C checkpoints can surge at United banks. Build extra time for any itinerary that changes terminals, and confirm gates early because United flights can shift between terminals.

Insider tip. For Manhattan, the train from the airport station is far more predictable than a car through the tunnels. In Terminal C, walking a little farther to a less crowded checkpoint entrance often saves more time than the walk costs.

MIA · Miami

Miami International Airport

The layout. One long main terminal is divided into North, Central, and South terminals with Concourses D through J. MIA Mover and walkways help inside the complex. American Airlines, the hub carrier, dominates Concourse D and the North Terminal, while the South Terminal serves many international carriers.

Getting to the city. The MIA Mover connects to the Miami Intermodal Center for Metrorail, Tri Rail, and rental cars. Metrorail reaches downtown in about 20 minutes from there. Taxis and rideshares are plentiful. Driving downtown takes about 20 to 30 minutes, longer to Miami Beach in traffic.

Security and layovers. Checkpoints are tied to concourse groups, and Concourse D can be very long from curb to far gates. Most concourses connect airside in linked groups, but not all moves are possible. Allow walking time, especially for high numbered D gates.

Insider tip. Use the Skytrain inside Concourse D for far gates instead of walking the whole length on a tight connection. For South Beach, build in traffic time, because the causeways jam quickly after storms, events, and cruise ship surges.

CLT · Charlotte

Charlotte Douglas International Airport

The layout. One main terminal feeds five concourses, A through E, all connected airside by walkways with moving belts. American Airlines, the overwhelming hub carrier, operates from every concourse. Other carriers are concentrated mainly in the newer parts of Concourse A.

Getting to the city. CATS buses connect the airport with uptown Charlotte, and a Sprinter bus is the main transit option, since there is no rail at the airport yet. Taxis and rideshares are plentiful. Uptown is about 20 to 30 minutes by car in normal traffic.

Security and layovers. A central checkpoint area feeds all concourses, and American connection banks can make it and the atrium very crowded. Once screened you can walk to any concourse. Tight connections are common here, so move directly to your gate before stopping.

Insider tip. The rocking chairs in the atrium are a beloved Charlotte tradition and a genuinely calm place to regroup between flights. If your connection is short, check the concourse on landing and walk briskly, because gate distances surprise first timers.

PHX · Phoenix

Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport

The layout. Two main terminals remain in use, Terminal 3 and Terminal 4, linked landside by the PHX Sky Train. Terminal 4 is by far the largest, with Southwest and American, the two hub carriers, operating there. Terminal 3 serves most other domestic carriers.

Getting to the city. The PHX Sky Train connects Terminals 3 and 4 to the Valley Metro Rail station for trains downtown, about 25 to 35 minutes. Taxis and rideshares are plentiful. Driving downtown takes about 15 to 20 minutes in normal traffic.

Security and layovers. Terminal 4 checkpoints can surge at morning and late afternoon banks, but there are several checkpoint entrances to choose from. Terminals are not connected airside, so confirm your terminal first. Within Terminal 4, concourse walks can be long in the desert sized complex.

Insider tip. Sky Harbor earns its friendly airport nickname when you use a less busy Terminal 4 checkpoint and walk airside to your concourse. For downtown, Valley Metro Rail from the Sky Train station is easy and avoids event traffic around the arena district.

IAH · Houston

George Bush Intercontinental Airport

The layout. Five terminals, A through E, sit in a central complex. The Skyway train connects all terminals airside and the subway train connects them landside. United, the hub carrier, operates from Terminals B, C, D, and E, while Terminal A serves most other domestic carriers.

Getting to the city. METRO buses serve the airport, but most travelers use taxis, rideshares, hotel shuttles, or cars, since there is no rail link. Downtown Houston is about 40 to 60 minutes by car depending on traffic on Interstate 69 and the Hardy Toll Road.

Security and layovers. Each terminal has its own screening, and United connections often involve a Skyway ride rather than a rescreen. Terminal C and E checkpoints can pinch at international banks. Wayfinding during ongoing terminal work can change, so follow current signs closely.

Insider tip. Ride the airside Skyway for terminal changes and save your walking for inside your departure terminal, because distances here are Texas sized. Arriving drivers should watch terminal letters carefully, since pick up curbs are separated and circling takes time.

LGA · New York

LaGuardia Airport

The layout. A rebuilt airport with Terminal B serving most carriers through two island concourses reached by skybridges, Terminal C serving Delta, its hub carrier, and a smaller Terminal A, the historic Marine Air Terminal. Terminals are separate and are linked by landside buses and roads.

Getting to the city. There is no rail at LaGuardia. Buses connect to subway stations in Queens and to Manhattan, and the Q70 bus to Jackson Heights is the classic transit link. Taxis and rideshares are plentiful. Manhattan is about 30 to 60 minutes by car with traffic.

Security and layovers. Terminal B and Terminal C each screen separately, and you cannot move airside between terminals. The new terminals flow much better than the old LaGuardia, but morning banks still fill checkpoints. Confirm B versus C before leaving for the airport.

Insider tip. The skybridges in Terminal B give you plane views and a calmer walk than most airports offer, so enjoy them on the way to your island concourse. For Manhattan on a budget, the free Q70 connection to the subway is the local move.

BOS · Boston

Boston Logan International Airport

The layout. Four terminals, A, B, C, and E, form a compact loop linked by walkways and shuttle buses, with some airside connections between linked terminals. Delta uses Terminal A and E, American and others use B, JetBlue anchors Terminal C, and international arrivals use Terminal E.

Getting to the city. The MBTA Silver Line bus runs from every terminal to South Station downtown, and the Blue Line is reached by a free shuttle to Airport station. Downtown is about 15 to 30 minutes depending on tunnel traffic. Taxis, rideshares, and Logan Express buses are plentiful.

Security and layovers. Each terminal screens separately, though some terminals connect airside after screening. Checkpoints are generally efficient but can surge before transatlantic departures in Terminal E. For a terminal change, plan on rescreening unless your specific pair is connected airside.

Insider tip. The Silver Line to South Station is free from the airport and drops you right downtown, which locals use constantly. On a clear day, the walkways and windows facing the harbor give Logan some of the best city views of any airport.

MSP · Minneapolis-Saint Paul

Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport

The layout. Two terminals, Terminal 1 Lindbergh and Terminal 2 Humphrey, sit apart and are linked by light rail landside. Terminal 1 has seven concourses, A through G, with trams and walkways. Delta, the hub carrier, dominates Terminal 1, while Terminal 2 serves Southwest, Sun Country, and other value carriers.

Getting to the city. Metro Blue Line light rail serves both terminals and runs to downtown Minneapolis, about 25 minutes from Terminal 1. Taxis, rideshares, and buses are plentiful. Driving downtown takes about 20 to 30 minutes depending on traffic and winter weather.

Security and layovers. Terminal 1 has north and south checkpoints that vary in wait, so checking both helps. All Terminal 1 concourses connect airside. Connections between terminals require leaving security and riding light rail, so allow much more time for those rare itineraries.

Insider tip. In winter, build weather margin into everything, even though MSP handles snow better than almost any large airport. Frequent flyers check both Terminal 1 checkpoints on arrival, because one is often dramatically shorter than the other just a short walk away.

DTW · Detroit

Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport

The layout. Two main terminals, the McNamara Terminal and the Evans Terminal, sit on opposite sides of the airfield and are not connected airside. McNamara has Concourses A, B, and C with an indoor ExpressTram in A, and serves Delta, its hub carrier. Evans serves all other carriers.

Getting to the city. There is no rail to the airport. SMART buses and the Michigan Flyer coach serve the region, while most travelers use cars, taxis, and rideshares. Downtown Detroit is about 30 to 40 minutes by car in normal traffic via Interstate 94.

Security and layovers. Each terminal screens separately, and McNamara runs efficiently even at Delta banks thanks to its size. Concourse A is very long, so tram rides matter for tight connections. Never plan an airside move between McNamara and Evans, because none exists.

Insider tip. Ride the ExpressTram in McNamara Concourse A just for the light and tunnel experience, and use it seriously for far gates. The fountain and wide central atrium in McNamara make it one of the most pleasant hub terminals to wait in.

FLL · Fort Lauderdale

Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport

The layout. Four terminals, numbered 1 through 4, form a U, each with its own concourses and checkpoints, linked by landside shuttles and walkways rather than airside. Spirit has historically been the largest carrier, with JetBlue, Southwest, and Delta also large across the terminals.

Getting to the city. Tri Rail is reached by a free shuttle to the nearby Fort Lauderdale Airport station, for trains toward Miami and West Palm Beach. Broward buses, taxis, and rideshares are plentiful. Downtown Fort Lauderdale is about 15 minutes by car, the beach a little longer.

Security and layovers. Each terminal screens on its own, and cruise passenger surges can overwhelm midday checkpoints. You generally cannot move airside between terminals, so start in the right one. Rental car facilities are shared in a central garage reached by walkways and shuttles.

Insider tip. Cruise days are the trap here, so fly in the day before a sailing and leave extra security time after ships dock. If your terminal allows, use the garage walkways for a calmer, covered route between parking, rental cars, and check in.

BWI · Baltimore

Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport

The layout. One main terminal with five concourses, A through E, all reachable from a central terminal and several linked airside. Southwest, the dominant carrier, uses Concourses A, B, and C. Concourse D serves most other domestic carriers and E handles international flights.

Getting to the city. A free shuttle connects to the BWI Rail Station for MARC and Amtrak trains to Baltimore and Washington, and light rail also serves the airport directly. Baltimore is about 20 minutes and Washington about an hour by train. Driving varies widely with Interstate 95 traffic.

Security and layovers. Multiple checkpoints feed linked concourses, so a quieter checkpoint can still get you to your gate airside in many cases. Southwest banks create the main surges. The terminal is compact by hub standards, which makes connections here comparatively forgiving.

Insider tip. BWI is the savvy Washington area choice when fares beat DCA and IAD, and the train station shuttle makes it genuinely easy. Look for the less crowded checkpoint serving your concourse group before joining the longest central line you see first.

SLC · Salt Lake City

Salt Lake City International Airport

The layout. One new central terminal feeds two long parallel concourses, A and B, linked by underground pedestrian tunnels with moving walkways. Delta, the hub carrier, anchors Concourse A. All other carriers use Concourse B, and the rebuild was completed with final B gates opening in late 2026.

Getting to the city. UTA TRAX Green Line trains run from the terminal station to downtown Salt Lake City, about 25 minutes. Taxis, rideshares, and ski and hotel shuttles are plentiful. Driving downtown takes about 15 minutes, while Park City is roughly 45 minutes in normal conditions.

Security and layovers. One central checkpoint serves both concourses, so lines are shared and can surge at Delta banks and ski weekends. Everything connects airside on foot, but the tunnel walk to far B gates is long. Start walking early rather than waiting near security.

Insider tip. The walk is the famous SLC surprise, so wear comfortable shoes and treat the tunnel as part of your connection time. After screening, the central plaza with mountain views is the best place to eat and regroup before the long walk to your gate.

SAN · San Diego

San Diego International Airport

The layout. Two terminals, Terminal 1 and Terminal 2, sit side by side on a compact waterfront site, with a major new Terminal 1 replacing the old one in phases. Southwest, the largest carrier, uses Terminal 1, while Terminal 2 serves most other carriers including Alaska and Delta.

Getting to the city. The San Diego Trolley is reached by shuttle to the Middletown station, and buses run directly downtown, which is only about 10 to 15 minutes by car. Taxis and rideshares are plentiful. The airport is famously close to downtown, so ground trips are short.

Security and layovers. Each terminal screens separately, and the compact site means curbs and checkpoints can feel crowded at morning banks. There is no airside link between terminals, so start in the right one. Within a terminal, walks to gates are short by big airport standards.

Insider tip. Enjoy the approach, because the descent past downtown buildings is one of the most dramatic landings in the country. With the airport so close to the city, a rideshare downtown often beats waiting for parking shuttles or rental car lines.

DCA · Washington

Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport

The layout. Terminals A, B, and C form one connected complex along the river, with Terminal B and C piers linked airside and Terminal A separate and older. American Airlines, the hub carrier, dominates Terminals B and C. A perimeter rule limits most flights to shorter routes.

Getting to the city. Washington Metro Blue and Yellow lines serve the airport station directly, reaching downtown in about 15 to 20 minutes. Taxis and rideshares are plentiful, and the airport sits just across the river from the city. Driving downtown is short but traffic and bridge delays vary.

Security and layovers. Checkpoints are organized by pier in Terminals B and C, and some piers pinch at congressional travel peaks, especially Thursday and Monday. Linked piers connect airside within B and C. Slot controls keep the airport busy but manageable in size.

Insider tip. Take Metro into the city, because it is faster and calmer than any road at rush hour. If you have time, the historic Terminal A lobby and the river facing windows in the newer terminals are worth a slow walk before your flight.

MDW · Chicago

Chicago Midway International Airport

The layout. One compact terminal feeds three concourses, A, B, and C, all connected airside from a single central area. Southwest Airlines, the dominant carrier, operates the overwhelming majority of flights, mainly from Concourses A and B. Concourse C is small and serves a few other carriers.

Getting to the city. The CTA Orange Line runs from the airport station to downtown Chicago, about 25 to 30 minutes to the Loop. Taxis, rideshares, and buses are plentiful. Driving downtown takes about 30 minutes off peak and much longer in rush hour or snow.

Security and layovers. One main checkpoint area serves all concourses, famous for very long lines at Southwest banks despite its size. Once screened, walks to gates are short. This is an airport where arriving early matters more than clever routing, because there is a single screening funnel.

Insider tip. Midway is the local secret for a simpler Chicago trip when fares match O Hare, with shorter walks everywhere. Eat before security in the central market area if lines allow, because options and seating feel calmer there than at the gates.

TPA · Tampa

Tampa International Airport

The layout. One central landside terminal connects by automated shuttles to four airsides, A, C, E, and F, each a self contained concourse. Southwest is largest in Airside C, American in F, Delta in E, and most international flights use F. A newer Airside D is in development.

Getting to the city. There is no rail to the airport. HART buses, taxis, rideshares, and a large rental car center reached by SkyConnect train serve travelers. Downtown Tampa is about 15 to 20 minutes by car, and St. Petersburg and the beaches take roughly 30 to 45 minutes.

Security and layovers. You screen in the main terminal, then ride a shuttle to your airside, so allow time for both steps. Each airside has its own feel once you arrive. Connections are less common here, and most travelers are starting or ending their trip in Tampa.

Insider tip. Tampa is consistently praised for being easy, and the outdoor terraces and local food in the main terminal reward arriving a little early. Note your airside letter on parking, because the shuttle system makes returning to the right garage much simpler.

BNA · Nashville

Nashville International Airport

The layout. One main terminal with a large central lobby feeds Concourses A, B, C, and D, plus a separate satellite concourse reached by shuttle. Southwest, the largest carrier, is centered in Concourse C. Recent expansion added a grand lobby, more gates, and a hotel at the terminal.

Getting to the city. There is no rail to the airport. WeGo buses, taxis, rideshares, and hotel shuttles serve the city. Downtown Nashville and Broadway are about 15 to 20 minutes by car in normal traffic, longer on event nights and during rush hour.

Security and layovers. A single large central checkpoint now serves the main concourses, which simplified screening but concentrates crowds at peak banks. Satellite gates require an extra shuttle ride after screening. Live music in the terminal can make waits feel shorter than they are.

Insider tip. Build in time to enjoy a live set, because BNA books real Nashville musicians inside the terminal every day. If your gate is in the satellite concourse, go straight there after screening, because the shuttle adds a step you cannot rush.

AUS · Austin

Austin-Bergstrom International Airport

The layout. The main Barbara Jordan Terminal has one long concourse with gates on both sides, while the smaller South Terminal is a separate low cost facility a short drive away. Southwest is the largest carrier in the main terminal, with Delta and American also large.

Getting to the city. CapMetro buses run from the main terminal to downtown, but most travelers use taxis, rideshares, and rental cars, since there is no rail link. Downtown Austin is about 15 to 25 minutes by car depending on traffic on Highway 183 and Interstate 35.

Security and layovers. The main terminal has several checkpoints spread along its length, and one is often much quieter than the others. The South Terminal screens separately and cannot be reached airside. Confirm which terminal your airline uses, especially on low cost carriers.

Insider tip. Austin programs live music at stages inside the main terminal, a genuine local tradition worth catching on a layover. If one checkpoint is jammed, walk to the next one along the terminal, because all of them lead to the same single concourse.

IAD · Washington

Washington Dulles International Airport

The layout. One iconic main terminal feeds four midfield concourses, A, B, C, and D, reached by the AeroTrain and, for some gates, mobile lounges. United, the hub carrier, dominates Concourses C and D. Most other and international carriers use A and B.

Getting to the city. Washington Metro Silver Line serves Dulles directly, reaching downtown Washington in about an hour. Taxis, rideshares, and express buses are plentiful. Driving downtown takes about 45 to 75 minutes depending heavily on Interstate 66 and toll road traffic.

Security and layovers. Main terminal checkpoints can surge before evening transatlantic banks. All concourses connect by AeroTrain airside in the main system. Walks and train rides are long here, so a connection that looks comfortable on paper can feel tight in practice.

Insider tip. Concourse B is widely considered the nicest for waiting, with better food and calmer seating, and it is an easy AeroTrain ride from the United concourses. For downtown, the Silver Line removes the guesswork from notorious Washington area traffic.

HNL · Honolulu

Daniel K. Inouye International Airport

The layout. Terminal 1 serves Hawaiian Airlines interisland and mainland flights, Terminal 2 serves most other domestic and international carriers, and a small Terminal 3 serves commuter flights. Open air walkways and the Wiki Wiki shuttle link terminals. Hawaiian is the home hub carrier.

Getting to the city. Skyline rail now serves the airport at Lelepaua station, running west and to a Kalihi area terminus, with bus connections onward downtown. TheBus W Line runs directly to Waikiki. Waikiki is about 25 to 40 minutes by car depending on traffic.

Security and layovers. Checkpoints are spread by terminal, and open air design keeps lines moving in the island climate. Terminals have separate screening in places, so confirm where to enter for your gate. Interisland flights are simpler and quicker than mainland and international departures.

Insider tip. Skyline reached the airport in late 2025, but it does not yet run to Waikiki, so use TheBus or a car for the beach. Inside, enjoy the open air gardens between terminals, a calm break few large airports can offer.

DAL · Dallas

Dallas Love Field

The layout. One modern terminal with a single concourse of about 20 gates, all reached from one central lobby and checkpoint area. Southwest Airlines, the home carrier, operates the overwhelming majority of flights. Alaska and Delta have a small presence at a few gates.

Getting to the city. Dallas Area Rapid Transit is reached by shuttle bus to nearby light rail stations, including Inwood Love Field station. Taxis and rideshares are plentiful, and the airport is close in. Downtown Dallas is about 15 to 20 minutes by car in normal traffic.

Security and layovers. One central checkpoint serves every gate, so the process is simple and walks are short. Southwest banks create the only real surges. This is one of the easiest big city airports in the country to originate from, with no terminal confusion at all.

Insider tip. Love Field rewards locals who value time over choice, because curb to gate can be remarkably quick off peak. Look for the Frontiers of Flight Museum nearby if you arrive very early, and enjoy how compact everything feels after DFW.

PDX · Portland

Portland International Airport

The layout. One main terminal feeds Concourses B, C, D, and E, arranged as two wings linked airside by a connector walkway. Alaska Airlines, the hub carrier, is centered in Concourses B and C. A major rebuild created a dramatic new wood roofed main terminal opened in phases.

Getting to the city. TriMet MAX Red Line trains run from the terminal to downtown Portland, about 40 minutes. Taxis, rideshares, and buses are plentiful. Driving downtown takes about 20 to 30 minutes depending on traffic on Interstate 205 and Interstate 84.

Security and layovers. Checkpoints at each end of the main terminal feed the two concourse wings, and the airside connector lets you move between them after screening. Lines are usually manageable by big airport standards. The new terminal layout is still settling, so follow signs for your checkpoint.

Insider tip. PDX is famous for local food and shops at street pricing, a policy locals fiercely defend, so eating at the airport is genuinely good here. The MAX train is the calm default downtown, especially when the freeways back up in rain.

STL · St. Louis

St. Louis Lambert International Airport

The layout. Two terminals, Terminal 1 and Terminal 2, sit apart and are linked by free landside shuttles. Terminal 1 has Concourses A, C, and D, with American historically large, while Terminal 2 has Concourse E and serves Southwest, the largest carrier overall, plus international flights.

Getting to the city. MetroLink light rail serves stations at both terminals with trains to downtown St. Louis, about 30 minutes. Taxis and rideshares are plentiful. Driving downtown takes about 20 to 25 minutes in normal traffic on Interstate 70.

Security and layovers. Each terminal screens separately and there is no airside link between them, so start in the correct terminal. Checkpoints are generally straightforward outside morning banks. Within Terminal 1, some concourses are quieter than others depending on the day.

Insider tip. MetroLink is the easy local move downtown and drops you near the convention center and stadium district. Check whether you need Terminal 1 or Terminal 2 before parking, because they have separate garages and a shuttle ride between them.

RDU · Raleigh-Durham

Raleigh-Durham International Airport

The layout. Two terminals, Terminal 1 and Terminal 2, face each other across the parking decks. Terminal 1 serves Southwest with a single concourse, while Terminal 2, the larger terminal, serves most other carriers from Concourses C and D in one long building.

Getting to the city. GoTriangle buses connect the airport with Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill, but most travelers use cars, taxis, and rideshares, since there is no rail link. Downtown Raleigh and downtown Durham are each about 20 to 25 minutes by car in normal traffic.

Security and layovers. Each terminal screens separately, and Terminal 2 checkpoints can fill at morning banks. Walks in Terminal 2 are moderate and all its gates connect airside. There is no airside connection between terminals, so confirm yours before parking or drop off.

Insider tip. RDU sits almost exactly between Raleigh and Durham, so choose your rideshare destination carefully to avoid a cross Triangle detour. Terminal 2 has strong local shops and art, making it a pleasant place to arrive early rather than rush.

HOU · Houston

William P. Hobby Airport

The layout. One terminal with a central concourse and a newer west concourse, all connected airside from a single check in and screening area. Southwest Airlines, the dominant carrier, operates most flights. Hobby is Houston second airport and focuses on domestic flights plus a few international routes.

Getting to the city. METRO buses serve the airport, but most travelers use taxis, rideshares, and cars, since there is no rail link. Downtown Houston is about 20 to 30 minutes by car in normal traffic, and the airport is much closer in than Bush Intercontinental.

Security and layovers. One screening area serves all gates, which keeps the process simple and predictable. Southwest banks are the main pinch points. Walks to gates are short to moderate, making Hobby a forgiving airport for connections and late arrivals alike.

Insider tip. Houston locals pick Hobby over Bush Intercontinental whenever Southwest serves their route, purely for the shorter drive and simpler terminal. Give yourself a few minutes for the Texas themed art and the observation friendly windows near the central concourse.

OAK · Oakland

Oakland San Francisco Bay Airport

The layout. Two connected terminals, Terminal 1 and Terminal 2, share one airside area with gates in a single linked complex you can walk after screening. Southwest, the largest carrier, anchors Terminal 2. Terminal 1 serves most other carriers including international flights.

Getting to the city. BART is reached by the automated Oakland Airport Connector train to the Coliseum station, for trains to Oakland, San Francisco, and the wider Bay Area. Downtown Oakland is about 20 minutes by car, San Francisco about 35 to 50 minutes depending on bridge traffic.

Security and layovers. Linked terminals mean you can use either checkpoint and walk airside to your gate, a real advantage when one line is long. The airport is smaller and calmer than SFO in most hours. Still allow margin on holiday weekends when Southwest banks fill Terminal 2.

Insider tip. East Bay locals swear by OAK for easier parking, shorter lines, and the BART connector, especially when SFO is fog delayed. If one checkpoint is backed up, try the other terminal entrance, because the airside is shared once you are through.

SMF · Sacramento

Sacramento International Airport

The layout. Two terminals, Terminal A and Terminal B, sit apart and are linked landside by an automated people mover to Terminal B and by roads and shuttles. Terminal B, the newer and larger terminal, serves Southwest and many others, while Terminal A serves several major carriers.

Getting to the city. There is no rail to the airport yet. Yolobus and Sacramento Regional Transit buses serve downtown, while most travelers use cars, taxis, and rideshares. Downtown Sacramento is about 15 to 20 minutes by car in normal traffic on Interstate 5.

Security and layovers. Each terminal screens separately, so start in the right one. The airport is calm by California standards, with the main surges at early morning departures. Terminal B checkpoint flows well thanks to its central design and generous space.

Insider tip. The giant red rabbit sculpture in Terminal B is the beloved local landmark and a natural meeting point everyone understands. Arrive a little early to enjoy how unhurried SMF feels compared with the Bay Area airports down the road.

SJC · San Jose

Norman Y. Mineta San Jose International Airport

The layout. Two terminals, Terminal A and Terminal B, sit in a line along one roadway and are linked by walkways, with separate screening for each. Southwest, the largest carrier, is centered in Terminal B and also uses Terminal A. The airport now brands itself as San Jose Mineta International.

Getting to the city. VTA buses serve the airport, and light rail and Caltrain are reached by short bus or rideshare hops to nearby stations, since rail does not enter the airport. Downtown San Jose is about 10 minutes by car, making this the closest in major airport in the Bay Area.

Security and layovers. This is one of the easiest large California airports to screen at, with short walks and generally manageable lines. Terminals screen separately, so confirm yours first. Its compact size makes tight schedules less risky here than at SFO or Oakland on a busy day.

Insider tip. Silicon Valley regulars choose SJC for its simplicity, close in location, and reliable weather compared with fog prone SFO. Keep an eye out for the Mineta statue in Terminal B baggage claim, a tribute to the airport namesake.

SNA · Orange County

John Wayne Airport

The layout. One main terminal is divided into Terminals A, B, and C in a single building, with one continuous airside area after screening at several checkpoints. Southwest is the largest carrier, with American and Delta also significant. Strict noise rules and a short runway shape operations here.

Getting to the city. There is no rail to the airport. OCTA buses, taxis, rideshares, and hotel shuttles serve Orange County. Irvine and Costa Mesa are about 10 to 15 minutes by car, Disneyland about 25 minutes, and downtown Los Angeles is roughly an hour in traffic.

Security and layovers. Multiple checkpoints serve one linked airside, so you can often choose a quieter entrance. The airport enforces a nighttime departure curfew, which concentrates flights in daytime banks. Walks are short, and the whole experience is compact and orderly.

Insider tip. The takeoff here is famously steep and then quieter over Newport Beach because of noise abatement, so do not be startled by the climb. Locals love SNA for avoiding LAX entirely when their destination is Orange County.

SAT · San Antonio

San Antonio International Airport

The layout. Two terminals, Terminal A and Terminal B, sit side by side in one complex with separate checkpoints and airside areas. Southwest and American are among the largest carriers in Terminal A, while Terminal B serves several major carriers. A consolidated rental car facility sits across from the terminals.

Getting to the city. VIA Metropolitan Transit buses serve the airport, but most travelers use taxis, rideshares, and cars, since there is no rail link. Downtown San Antonio and the River Walk are about 15 to 20 minutes by car in normal traffic.

Security and layovers. Each terminal screens separately, so confirm yours before drop off, because you cannot move airside between them. Lines are generally manageable, with military travel creating steady demand. The compact layout keeps walks short once you are in the right terminal.

Insider tip. SAT is an easy in and out airport for a River Walk weekend, close enough that a rideshare beats renting a car for many visitors. Look for local food and art that give the terminals a real San Antonio feel.

RSW · Fort Myers

Southwest Florida International Airport

The layout. One main terminal with three concourses, B, C, and D, all reached from a central terminal after screening at concourse level checkpoints. The layout is spacious and single level friendly. Delta, Southwest, and seasonal carriers from the Midwest and Northeast are especially large here.

Getting to the city. LeeTran buses serve the airport, but most visitors use rental cars, taxis, rideshares, and hotel shuttles, since there is no rail link. Downtown Fort Myers is about 25 minutes by car, while Naples and the Gulf beaches take roughly 30 to 45 minutes.

Security and layovers. Seasonal winter demand is the story here, with northern flights creating busy banks and slower lines in peak snowbird season. Each concourse has its own checkpoint focus. Summer is noticeably calmer, so your experience depends heavily on the month.

Insider tip. In winter, arrive earlier than you think, because half the Midwest seems to land at once on Saturdays. Outside peak season, RSW feels spacious and relaxed, with short drives to beaches compared with larger Florida gateways.

CLE · Cleveland

Cleveland Hopkins International Airport

The layout. One main terminal feeds three concourses, A, B, and C, all connected airside, plus a small Concourse D that has sat largely unused. United remains a significant carrier after its former hub years, and Concourse C is its main base, with other carriers in A and B.

Getting to the city. The RTA Red Line runs from inside the airport to downtown Cleveland, about 25 minutes to Tower City, one of the oldest airport rail links in the country. Taxis and rideshares are plentiful. Driving downtown takes about 20 to 25 minutes.

Security and layovers. One main checkpoint plus concourse checkpoints give options, and lines are usually manageable outside morning banks. All active concourses connect airside, so connections are simple. The single terminal design means no shuttles or terminal confusion for most travelers.

Insider tip. Take the Red Line downtown, because it is direct, cheap in spirit, and drops you in the heart of the city. The airport food court and local brands near Concourse C make CLE a better eating stop than many expect.

PIT · Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh International Airport

The layout. A new landside terminal opened in November 2025 connects by a covered skybridge directly to the existing X shaped airside terminal with four concourses, A through D. The old underground tram is retired. Southwest and American are among the largest carriers in the shared airside.

Getting to the city. Pittsburgh Regional Transit buses, including the airport flyer route toward downtown and Oakland, serve the airport, while most travelers use cars, taxis, and rideshares, since

there is no rail link. Downtown Pittsburgh is about 35 to 45 minutes by car depending on tunnel traffic.

Security and layovers. The new terminal consolidated screening into one large 12 lane checkpoint, replacing the old split system. After screening, the skybridge walk replaces the tram ride to the concourses. The X layout keeps gate walks moderate once you reach the center.

Insider tip. First time visitors since late 2025 should ignore old advice about the tram, because the new terminal walk is the whole experience now. The outdoor terraces in the new terminal are a rare treat, so step outside if your wait is long.

CMH · Columbus

John Glenn Columbus International Airport

The layout. One main terminal with three concourses, A, B, and C, each with its own checkpoint and airside area. Southwest is centered in Concourse A, while Concourse B is the largest and serves several major carriers, and Concourse C serves others including American in part.

Getting to the city. COTA buses serve the airport, including an airport focused route downtown, but most travelers use cars, taxis, and rideshares, since there is no rail link. Downtown Columbus is about 15 minutes by car in normal traffic on Interstate 670.

Security and layovers. Concourses screen separately and are not connected airside, so your checkpoint is set by your gate. Lines are generally short by big city standards. The compact terminal makes CMH a low stress origin airport, with parking close to the doors.

Insider tip. Named for astronaut and senator John Glenn, the airport leans into Ohio aviation pride with displays worth a look. Because concourses are separate, check your concourse letter before security, and you will breeze through this friendly midsize airport.

IND · Indianapolis

Indianapolis International Airport

The layout. One modern terminal, opened in 2008, has a large central civic plaza with two concourses, A and B, branching from it after a shared screening area. Delta and Southwest are among the largest carriers, with gates split between the two concourses. Everything sits under one roof.

Getting to the city. IndyGo buses serve the airport, but most travelers use cars, taxis, and rideshares, since there is no rail link. Downtown Indianapolis is about 20 minutes by car in normal traffic. A parking garage connects directly to the terminal by a covered walkway.

Security and layovers. Two checkpoints feed one shared airside, so you can use either and walk to any gate. Lines are usually efficient, and the plaza design keeps orientation simple. IND regularly earns praise for a calm, well run screening experience.

Insider tip. Arrive a little early and enjoy the civic plaza, which feels more like a museum and food hall than an airport checkpoint queue. Local art and Indiana food brands make IND one of the most pleasant midsize airports in the country.

MCI · Kansas City

Kansas City International Airport

The layout. One new single terminal, opened in February 2023, is shaped like an H with Concourses A and B linked by a central connector with moving walkways. One check in hall and one main screening area serve all airlines. Southwest is the largest carrier, mainly in Concourse B.

Getting to the city. RideKC buses serve the airport, but most travelers use cars, taxis, and rideshares, since there is no rail link and the airport sits well north of the city. Downtown Kansas City is about 25 to 30 minutes by car in normal traffic.

Security and layovers. A single centralized checkpoint with many lanes replaced the old per gate screening of the former terminals. All gates connect airside in one building. Walks are longer than old MCI regulars remember, so allow more time than the famously short old layout needed.

Insider tip. The new terminal is packed with Kansas City food, including barbecue, so eat local after security instead of defaulting to chains. Note that locals still call it KCI, while your ticket and signs use the code MCI.

PHL · Philadelphia

Philadelphia International Airport

The layout. Six terminals, A West, A East, B, C, D, and E, form one long connected complex, plus Terminal F for regional flights, all linked airside by walkways. American Airlines, the hub carrier, dominates Terminals A, B, C, and F. Other carriers use D and E.

Getting to the city. SEPTA Regional Rail Airport Line trains run from the terminals to Center City, about 25 minutes. SEPTA buses, taxis, and rideshares are plentiful. Driving to Center City takes about 20 to 30 minutes depending on Interstate 95 traffic and stadium events.

Security and layovers. Checkpoints sit between terminal pairs and can pinch badly at American banks and international departure times. Most terminals connect airside, so you can walk long distances without rescreening. Terminal F requires a shuttle bus airside from the main complex.

Insider tip. Take SEPTA Regional Rail to Center City, because it stops right at the terminals and skips Interstate 95 entirely. For a long layover, walk to Terminal A for the best food and the international departures buzz, all without leaving security.

MSY · New Orleans

Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport

The layout. One new terminal, opened in 2019, sits north of the runways with Concourses A, B, and C branching from a central check in and screening hall. Southwest is a leading carrier, with all airlines under one roof. The old south terminal is no longer used for scheduled flights.

Getting to the city. Jefferson Transit and RTA buses serve the airport, including an airport express toward downtown, but most visitors use taxis and rideshares from a large nearby facility. Downtown and the French Quarter are about 25 to 35 minutes by car depending on Interstate 10 traffic.

Security and layovers. One central checkpoint area serves all concourses, which keeps screening simple and modern. All gates connect airside, so food and music in the central areas are open to everyone. Rental cars and rideshares involve a shuttle or walk, so factor that into arrivals.

Insider tip. The new MSY is a food destination in its own right, with famous New Orleans restaurant branches inside, so arrive hungry and early. Live music performances in the terminal are a real welcome, not a gimmick, and set the tone for the city.

ABQ · Albuquerque

Albuquerque International Sunport

The layout. One distinctive adobe style terminal has two concourses, A and B, plus a small commuter area, all reached from a central ticketing and screening area. Southwest is the largest carrier, mainly in Concourse A, with other major carriers in Concourse B. The Sunport is compact and sunny.

Getting to the city. ABQ Ride buses serve the airport, and the New Mexico Rail Runner station is a short shuttle or bus ride away in downtown connections, since trains do not enter the airport. Downtown Albuquerque is about 15 minutes by car, Old Town a little longer.

Security and layovers. One main checkpoint serves both concourses, and the process is usually calm and quick by big airport standards. All main gates connect airside after screening. The compact size and abundant natural light make ABQ a low stress place to connect or originate.

Insider tip. The Sunport observation and local art, plus New Mexican food inside, make arriving early genuinely pleasant here. If you are heading to Santa Fe, ask about airport shuttles and the Rail Runner connection downtown rather than defaulting to a long drive.

MEM · Memphis

Memphis International Airport

The layout. One main terminal feeds a modernized Concourse B, which now handles most passenger flights after a major rebuild, with Concourses A and C largely quiet for passengers. FedEx operates its giant global hub on the cargo side. Delta and other carriers share the bright, widened B concourse.

Getting to the city. MATA buses serve the airport, but most travelers use cars, taxis, and rideshares, since there is no rail link. Downtown Memphis and Beale Street are about 20 minutes by car in normal traffic, and Graceland is closer, roughly 10 to 15 minutes away.

Security and layovers. With most flights consolidated in Concourse B, screening is centralized and the rebuilt concourse feels spacious and calm. Passenger volumes are modest compared with hub years, so lines are rarely the problem here. One checkpoint area now serves the active gates.

Insider tip. Look for Memphis music and barbecue inside the terminal, because MEM leans proudly into its hometown culture. Plane spotters love watching the FedEx operation, which turns the airport into a cargo spectacle late at night.

One last thing

An airport you understand stops being stressful. Pick your next connection on purpose, give yourself the layover the guide suggests, and let the trip start at the gate instead of after it. For the full plan around the flight, hotels, cars, and what to do when you land, that is what TakeOff AI is for.

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