



The World at Their Fingertips

Classic "Travel"

Books for Kids

Scuffy the Tugboat

by Gertrude Crampton
(preschool to age 8)

Oh, the Places You'll

Go by Dr. Seuss
(preschool to age 8)

Swiss Family Robinson

(original, unabridged
version) by Johann
Wyss (ages 9-12)

Around the World in 80

Days by Jules Verne
(ages 9-12)

Everest (the three-book
series) by Gordon
Korman (ages 9-12)

Just Plane Fun

Some airports offer little more for young travelers than a slice of pizza and a view of the runway. Fine, perhaps, if the stay is short. But what if you've got time to fill? These "super seven" airports have the ticket. / By Joe Yogerst / Photography by Mark Wagoner

ANYONE WHO TRAVELS WITH CHILDREN knows that airport layovers can be the bane of an otherwise awesome vacation. The longer the wait, the worse it gets, until it becomes a fiasco of cranky kids and stressed parents that ends in tears and—that most dreaded of events—the full-blown tantrum.

What can you do to keep this from happening? At most terminals, not much. Airport architects create lots of cool features for grownups—restaurants, bars, duty-free shops, day spas, and workout rooms. But few consider younger travelers, who have a greater need for diversion and who may make up more than half the passenger load during summer vacation, spring break, and winter holidays.

Some airports do go the distance for youngsters, though, offering a range of activities to keep them occupied. The following seven airports were selected as the most kid-friendly from an original list of 100 on six continents, as determined by the Airports Council International. Lingering at these is time well-spent.

Changi International (Singapore) / Often voted the world's best all-around airport in passenger surveys, ultramodern Changi scores high with kids. One favorite activity is a nature trail that winds through indoor and outdoor gardens (bamboo, orchid, palm, cactus) to the ever-popular koi pond, stocked with huge white and orange fish. An entertainment center has high-tech arcade games, and Mobile Entertainment

Corners at four locations provide free interactive computer games and mobile phone ring-tone downloads. A 100-foot screen in the Movie Lounge of Terminal Two shows free Hollywood films around the clock, and the Explorer's Lounge in Terminal One features documentaries from Disney and the Discovery Channel.

For about US\$10 a person, anyone can use the rooftop swimming pool, sun deck, and showers at the airport transit hotel. There's also a family napping area, where beds and pillows are available at \$20 for three hours.

Changi organizes events that appeal especially to youngsters, including an annual Buskers' Festival with dancing, music, mimes, jugglers, and circus acts. The airport's well-organized Web site breaks family activities into five time categories ranging from 30 minutes to five hours. Those with a layover that's longer than five

hours can sign up for a free tour of Singapore.

Orlando

International / More than a quarter of the passengers who pass through Orlando International each year are ►

Scoring high with youngsters, Changi airport has charms that include winding nature trails leading to a pond full of big white and orange fish.

younger than 18, many headed to theme parks in the area. Orlando is almost universally hailed as the best airport in America for kids. Little ones perk up in the parking lot, where oversize cartoon animals double as car-location reminders. They also enjoy the monorail-like service that whisks passengers to the terminal.

The airport's beach-themed play area for younger children (airside on the wing housing gates 60-99) has a boat-shaped slide and soft-sculpture sea creatures to climb on. Older kids like Funway Runway, with its three-dozen arcade games.

Airport shopping reflects the city's reputation as the theme-park capital of the world. Included are shops for Universal Studios, Warner Brothers, Discovery Channel, and Disney. Sea World of Florida stocks two airport aquariums, including a 2,000-gallon tank with more than 100 creatures. Kennedy Space Center maintains rotating exhibits on space exploration and the planets.

Munich International / Munich's airport pays tribute to Bavaria's long

aviation heritage in an amusement area called Visitor's Park. Near long-term parking, the area includes MovieRide, which simulates time travel and daredevil flying, and a shop stocked with model planes and other aviation-related toys and games. Kids can clamber through historical aircraft, such as a 1955 Lockheed Super Constellation and a 1932 Junkers JU-52, as well as a vintage Mercedes-Benz fire truck. The admission fee is US\$8.50 for adults and US\$3.50 for children.

Inside Munich Airport Center you'll find another attraction: Kinderland, a free activity area for youths ages 3-10. Trained staff members help out with arts and crafts and Lego building. Youngsters also can play computer games, watch movies, and explore a climbing tower with a ball pit. For parents who need a break or time to shop, Kinderland offers childcare at US\$1 an hour. The airport also has Children's Corner playgrounds at three locations.

San Francisco International / Reflecting the erudite Bay Area, SFO boasts a greater variety of museum exhibits

than any other airport on the planet. The Aviation Gallery in the International Terminal has permanent and rotating displays, including a recent show on flying boats. There's also the Goosedale Collection of model airplanes made from 1915 to 1950 and an aviation library with books on flight and outer space. Forty other exhibits explore topics such as Halloween costumes, Indonesian shadow puppetry, and historical American flags.

For hands-on play, Kids Spot is an interactive area created by the renowned San Francisco Exploratorium, one of the best science museums in the U.S. It includes the Plasma Wall, a crawling apparatus, and a kids' weather station. An aquarium in Terminal One showcases underwater habitats. And the AirTrain, a people-moving system, provides interterminal transport and an awesome way to view the workings of a major airport.

Chicago O'Hare / Kids on the Fly at Chicago O'Hare is probably the only playground in the U.S. that has won accolades from the American Institute of Architects

Young travelers have a heyday at Orlando International, where Sea World stocks aquariums and the Kennedy Space Center maintains space exhibits. A play area has a boat-shaped slide and soft sea creatures to climb on.

and Nickelodeon children's channel. On the departure level of Terminal Two, Kids on the Fly is no ordinary fun zone. This satellite of the Chicago Children's Museum is a supercool hands-on space that celebrates the fun of air travel.

Fronted by large picture windows that overlook the tarmac, Kids on the Fly includes a bicycle-powered helicopter, a purple, two-story cargo plane with movable Styrofoam "cargo," a mini control tower

where children can hear simulated tower communications, and a soaring model of the Sears Tower made of Lego blocks.

In Concourse B of UA Terminal One, youngsters can ogle the world's largest mounted dinosaur model—a four-story brachiosaurus skeleton erected by Chicago's famed Field Museum. Also on display are a World War II Wildcat fighter plane recovered from Lake Michigan, in Terminal Two, and the colorful Chicago Sister City Murals, in Terminal Five.

Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson / Atlanta's airport believes in art as education. Reflecting that philosophy, it features youth art and museum-quality exhibits that include Southern folk art and stone sculptures from Zimbabwe. In conjunction with the Fernbank Museum of Natural History, the airport also rotates exhibits on local flora and fauna, Asian dinosaurs, and other subjects. Located around the airport are three Dusty's Den play areas with video and board games, family television shows, and snacks and drinks. The USO runs a playroom for the

children of military personnel that has games, toys, videos, and books.

Boston Logan / Logan's strength lies in an incredible amount of family-oriented retail, especially in its Boston Landing mini-mall. Classique Salon offers hairstyling and manicures for youngsters, and Da Juli Sparkles has all sorts of hair accessories. Hot World stocks NBA, NFL, and Major League Baseball clothing. Children can sink their teeth into gourmet sweets at the Fudge Bar kiosk or browse the latest toys at Kids World. The Children's Museum of Boston has created an interactive playground called Kidport in Terminal C, which includes a baggage claim slide, an airplane climbing structure, and a magnetic poetry wall. ■

Joe Yogerst of San Diego has spent years tramping the globe for the likes of National Geographic and a number of travel magazines. He can spot a user-friendly airport at first glance. Which airports rock for your young travelers? Visit hemispheresmagazine.com, click on "Write to us," and let us know.