

Aviation paradise at Changi

There aren't many international airports that are as agreeable as Changi Airport. I have been through a fair number of them over the years and can say, hand on heart, that it tops my list any day.

The airport experience that prevails elsewhere these days – and the one I had grown to expect – is not a particularly great one.

If you are unfortunate enough to travel though the likes of London's Heathrow, Paris' Charles de Gaulle, New York's JFK, Delhi, Manila, Doha and others, you will understand where I am coming from. In such places you quickly come to understand that, as a passenger, you count for very little in the overall scheme of things. Your experience, positive or otherwise, does not amount to much in the airport's march to funnel ever larger numbers of people and planes through creaking facilities.

Infrastructure is often dirty, staff unhelpful, security needlessly discourteous, routes to and from the terminal hopelessly inadequate, queues long, and so on. You get the picture.

Against this unappealing backdrop, Changi stands out. A blessed oasis in a sea of flotsam and jetsam.

Getting off your aeroplane and transiting through Terminal 3, you could be forgiven for thinking you had entered into some sort of dream state. A sort of aeronautical paradise on earth.

Making your progress through the terminal is about as good an airport experience as you can hope for this side of heaven.

Queues are short, staff (including security) polite, courteous and helpful, facilities immaculately clean, toilets sparkling, baggage control swift, passport queues short, parking easy and relatively cheap (by international airport standards)...everything is exactly as it should be. It easily rates a nine out of 10. And, although Terminals 1 and 2 are looking slightly tired in



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comparison, they are not far behind and can still hold their heads high.

Hell, even the Budget Terminal would put some international air-

ports to shame.

The lack of litter on Changi's gleaming marble surfaces is so pervasive it makes you feel slightly apprehensive if you have just emerged from somewhere with a takeout. Before you have taken your first slurp of coffee or bite of chocolate brownie, you are thinking to yourself: "Where am I going to dispose of the waste packaging that I'll end up with?"

You even feel slightly guilty walking around with what will eventually turn into a potential litter problem.

The experience of being there is so good that people go to Changi for recreation. They have no plane to catch or guests to meet at arrivals, they are there purely to take in the grandeur of the place.

There aren't many airports where you will see parties of school

children, notebooks in hand, obviously on a school outing.

My wife and I, together with our young son, have even succumbed to its allure and have taken trips out there, to enjoy the sights from the viewing deck at T3 where the A-380s come and go.

Once past passport control at T3, things get even better. Play areas for the kids, dozens of shops (if you like that sort of thing), exhibits, no queues (anywhere), nice restaurants...there is even a television lounge complete with comfortable chairs, where most times you have a TV screen all to yourself.

But perhaps the highest compliment that can be paid to Changi, and T3 in particular, is that you almost feel reluctant to leave it when you are called to your departure gate, where you know your none-too-comfortable seat in economy is waiting for you.

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