

Airport treats that are worth the wait

Hanging around's fun if you know where to go

By Gary Stoller
USA TODAY

For many fliers, waiting in an airport is as exciting as waiting in the dentist's office.

Some airports, though, have hidden treasures — a special shop, restaurant or service — that make it easier to while away the minutes or hours.

USA TODAY surveyed its panel of Road Warriors — nearly 1,500 frequent fliers who voluntarily provide travel information — to identify their favorites.

The survey found that some fliers are so fond of a shop, restaurant or service that they look forward to visiting certain airports or make flight connections through them.

"In years past, an airport was just a place to travel through," says George Geary of Corona, Calif., who was in airports more than 125 days last year. "But the past five years, they've become more of a destination, a place you do not mind spending time in."

Geary, a culinary teacher and cookbook writer, says he looks forward to visiting Denver International and sometimes leaves time to get a massage there before a connecting flight.

"There is nothing like a quick chair massage and oxygen before or after a flight," says Lauren Fix, an automotive analyst in Clarence, N.Y., who's a fan of OraOxygen at Detroit's airport. "Sometimes things get stressful on the road, and this is a great way to de-stress and clear your brain."

Food and drink a draw

Many Road Warriors say they love airport bookstores, particularly independent ones such as the one at Milwaukee's airport, Renaissance Bookshop, which specializes in used and rare books.

Linda Curran, a food and beverage industry consultant, says she's bought many used books there and likes the consignment section where paperbacks can be bought or exchanged.

"What a concept for business travelers," says Curran, of Las Vegas.

A few frequent business fliers appreciate an airport for something simple, such as a shoeshine.

"I love a good shoeshine," says Marc Belsher, an information technology consultant in Newberg, Ore., "and nobody is better than old Joe" on Concourse B of the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport.

Good food or drink is another reason many Road Warriors treasure a particular airport.

Some say they're satisfied with restaurant chains such as Wolfgang Puck's or food courts such as those at Pittsburgh International and the United Airlines terminal at San Francisco International. Others seek local flavor and cuisine.

Emil Amato, a corporate real estate manager in Glendora, Calif., says he tries to be at Houston's George Bush Intercontinental Airport at dinner-time, so he can go to Pappadeaux Seafood Kitchen.

The restaurant serves such entrées as blackened catfish with blackened oysters, shrimp and crabmeat in lemon-garlic butter.

'A nice, relaxing pit stop'

Frequent-flier Jean Scott is not a fan of airports — calling them "noisy, bustling, frantic and sometimes dirty" — but she's been won over by the Yadkin Valley Wine Bar in Charlotte Douglas International.

"For \$5, I can sample four North Carolina wines," says the education policy analyst from Montgomery, Ala. "It's a nice, relaxing pit stop between flights."

Avi Rosenthal's appreciation of food is far more than a pit stop — it's more like pursuit of the Holy Grail.

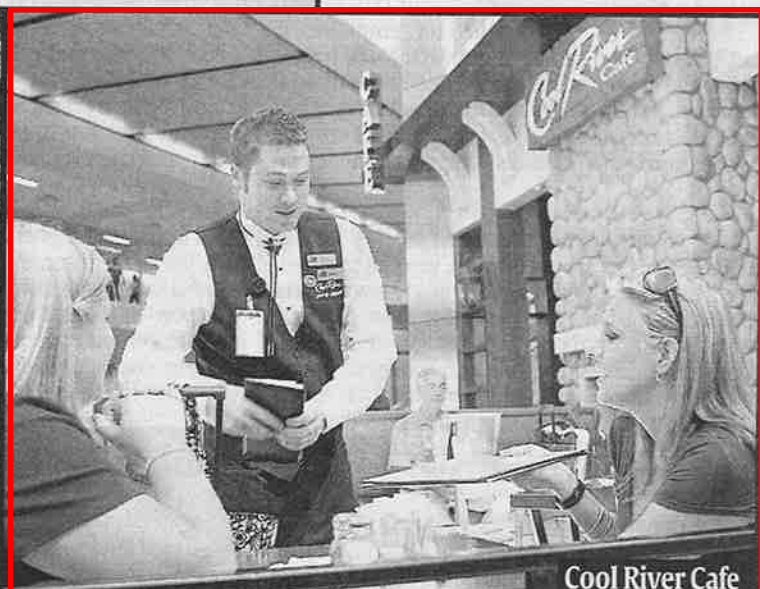
Rosenthal, of Harrisburg, Pa., says he will be in Los Angeles for business next month and will fly home via San Francisco's airport solely to pick up five loaves of sourdough bread at Boudin.

"It is the best in the world," says Rosenthal, who works for an energy management company. "I have routed myself through San Francisco airport many times to pick up Boudin's bread."

Unlike Rosenthal, many travelers are unaware of airports' unique shops, restaurants and services.

They need to be better advertised, says Kathie Nunley, an educational psychologist in Amherst, N.H., who spent about 70 days in airports last year.

"They need better signage explaining where there's free Wi-Fi and the options for restaurants, shopping and services," Nunley says. "Unless you frequent the airport, you don't have an easy way to know what's there."



Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory

That's nice: Fliers' favorites, clockwise from left: seafood in Houston; chocolates in Aspen, Colo.; a cozy cafe in Dallas; and books in Milwaukee.

Favorite airport recommendations

Some places to eat, drink, shop or stay at airports as recommended by frequent fliers who are volunteer members of USA TODAY's Road Warriors panel. Some recommendations, such as Brookstone at Atlanta airport, are located at other airports, too.

Airport	Restaurants	Shops	Hotels
Atlanta	Paschal's Southern Cuisine, Chick-fil-A, Charley's Steakery	Brookstone, BlackBerry Store from Wireless Giant	Renaissance Concourse
Boston	Legal Sea Foods, Bonfire, Boston Beer Works	Metropolitan Museum of Art	Hyatt Harborside, Hilton
Buffalo	Anchor Bar		Hilton Garden Inn
Charlotte	Salsarita's, Phillips Famous Seafood, Yadkin Valley Wine Bar	Erwin Pearl, The NASCAR Shop	
Chicago Midway	Harry Caray's Seventh Inning Stretch, PotBelly Sandwich Works	Nuts on Clark	
Chicago O'Hare	Berghoff Cafe, Stefani's Tuscany Cafe, Billy Goat Tavern and Grill	Field Museum Store, Garrett Popcorn	Hilton, Hyatt Regency, Aloft, Sofitel
Cleveland	Max & Erma's		Sheraton
Dallas/Fort Worth	Cool River Cafe, Dickey's Barbecue Pit		Hyatt Regency, Grand Hyatt, Sheraton Grand
Denver	Paradise Bakery and Cafe, Chef Jimmy's Bistro & Spirits, Pour La France Cafe & Bar	Images of Nature, Colorado Collection, Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory	
Detroit	Sora Japanese Cuisine & Sushi Bar, National Coney Island	Gadgets to Go, Michigania	Westin
Houston George Bush	Pappadeaux Seafood Kitchen, Pappasito's Cantina	Brooks Bros., Bass Pro Shop	Marriott
Los Angeles	Daily Grill		Renaissance, Hilton Garden Inn, Four Points
Miami	La Carreta		Embassy Suites
Minneapolis-St. Paul	Axel's Bonfire, Ike's Food & Cocktails, French Meadow Bakery Cafe, Rock Bottom Brewery & Restaurant	Talie, Zozo, Gadgets To Go, Hugo Boss	
Newark	Gallagher's Steak House		Marriott
Orlando		Kennedy Space Center, Disney's EarPort	Hyatt Regency, Renaissance
Philadelphia	Cibo Bistro and Wine Bar		Marriott
Phoenix	Paradise Bakery & Cafe, Blue Burrito, Roadhouse 66 Bar		Marriott
Pittsburgh		Ultra Diamonds, Radio Road, The Body Shop, Victoria's Secret, Brighton Collectibles	Hyatt
San Francisco	Boudin's Bakery and Cafe, Yankee Pier, The Buena Vista Cafe, Andalé Mexican Restaurant, Just Desserts	Sephora, The Body Shop, PGA Tour Shop, Pacific Outfitters	Marriott, Crowne Plaza
Seattle-Tacoma	Anthony's Restaurant, Seattle Tap Room, Dish D'Lish	Discover Puget Sound, Made in Washington, ExOfficio, Butter London nails	Courtyard by Marriott
Washington Reagan	Legal Sea Foods, Matsutake Sushi	The Smithsonian Museum Store	

Note: If information is missing above, no recommendations were made by the Road Warriors surveyed. There are many other establishments besides those listed. Source: USA TODAY Road Warrior panel



Grand Hyatt at Dallas/Fort Worth

Some airport hotels sparkle

Frequent fliers prefer downtown hotels, but they say there are some standouts at airports.

In a survey of nearly 1,500 frequent travelers who are members of USA TODAY's Road Warrior panel, some airport hotels frequently recommended were the Westin at Detroit Metropolitan Airport, the Grand Hyatt at Dallas/Fort Worth, the Renaissance Montura at Los Angeles International and the Hyatt Regency and the Hilton at Chicago's O'Hare.

Guests of the \$85.1 million, 400-room Westin in Detroit are given access — under a Transportation Security Administration pilot program — to nearly 90 shops and restaurants at the adjacent McNamara Terminal.

software industry, says the hotel is luxurious and an excellent value, and provides top amenities.

"I've stayed in the hotel watching sporting events to completion and run to the gate with minimal time to spare," says Molski, of Seattle.

David Kelly of Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., says the 298-room Grand Hyatt at Dallas/Fort Worth is convenient and has modern facilities, spacious rooms, and a restaurant with "surprisingly good" food quality and atmosphere.

The hotel has "a knowledgeable staff that understands the flying business traveler," says Kelly, a vice president at a California winery.

Dale Molski, a vice president in the By Gary Stoller