

Soaring Aerial Walkway Welcomes International Passengers to Seattle-Tacoma Airport's Newest Facility

The most complex building project in SEA's 70+ year history, the new facility expands capacity and speeds up the international arrivals process.



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The new, expanded International Arrivals Facility (IAF) at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) is now open. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) led the design team, replacing a 50-year-old arrivals facility with a dynamic structure nearly five times bigger, dramatically improving the passenger experience. The IAF comprises an aerial walkway—the longest of its kind in the world—a Grand Hall, and a secure corridor to increase the number of international-capable gates.

"This is an all-new welcome to our region and airport for an international traveler, and it's a dramatic improvement," says Lance Lyttle, Managing Director of SEA Airport. "Everything from the views out the windows, the iconic walkway, and the intuitiveness of the facility make this an exceptional customer experience."



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Arriving international passengers are immersed in the landscape of the Pacific Northwest as they cross the soaring aerial walkway with 360-degree views of Mount Rainier, and the Olympic and Cascade mountain ranges. The walkway spans 780 feet across an active taxilane, creating a rare moment for passengers to watch planes pass underneath. "It is magnificent from an architectural perspective," said Washington Governor Jay Inslee at the project reveal. "That walkway is a working piece of art."

The walkway connects to IAF's Grand Hall - an expansive, light-filled space with floor to ceiling windows. The building's sweeping roofline tilts and arcs reflecting the motion of a landing airplane. Site-specific artworks include "Magnetic Anomaly," a set of three kinetic artworks created by Ned Kahn, suspended overhead and a colorful five-piece sculpture by Marela Zacarías, "Chalchiutlicue," that floats above baggage claim carousels.



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"An airport creates your first impression of a new place, and the Puget Sound region offers an incredible palette to draw from," said [Michael Duncan](#), design partner at SOM. "The design significantly improves efficiency and elevates the passenger experience. Most importantly, it creates an uplifting, light-filled experience - with its dramatic roof and bridge, and is a welcoming sequence of spaces."

The interior design references elements of the Pacific Northwest—its plant life, terrain, and topography. The Grand Hall features a terrazzo floor with local stones, and entry portals lined with Douglas fir. Passengers depart the Passport Control area, alongside a small forest of evergreen trees, which culminates at ground level in a landscaped creek with native ferns and plantings nested between granite slabs.

A new secure international corridor along the face of the existing A Concourse allows eight international wide-body aircraft gates direct access to the IAF, with dual use for domestic flights, bolstering the building's future flexibility. SEA is the nation's first major hub airport to roll out 'Bags First,' a streamlined Customs and Border Protection entrance process.



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Working with the Port of Seattle, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) and Clark Construction Group led the design-build team for the 450,000-square-foot project which included: The Miller Hull Partnership, EHDD (Formerly Patano Studio), KPFF Consulting Engineers, Schlaich Bergermann Partner, Integrated Design Engineers (IDE), PAE Engineering, Magnusson Klemencic Associates, Stantec, Arup and Murase.



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