

SENT TO LSU AGCENTER/LOUISIANA FOREST PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT CENTER - FOREST SECTOR / FORESTY PRODUCTS INTEREST GROUP



‘Just in awe’: PDX main airport terminal reopens with trees and 9-acre wood-beamed ceiling

[Lizzy Acker | The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

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For its next trick, Portland International Airport has turned its main terminal into a forest glade.

Sure, visitors may technically be on Northeast Airport Way on the industrial edge of the city of Portland, but the feeling when walking into the new main terminal, which was unveiled to the public on Wednesday, is that of being transported somewhere else entirely.

Now, the curtains that blocked most of the terminal from view for the last three years have been removed. Visitors are greeted by a vast 392,000-square-foot wood-beamed ceiling with 49 skylights, tossing down dappled sunlight, two massive screens showing changing nature scenes and what will ultimately be over 5,000 plants, including actual, living trees.

“It doesn’t feel like the Portland Airport anymore,” said Mike Burling on Wednesday morning. Burling is a Portlander, on his way to France with his wife and daughter. “We were just standing here, just in awe,” said his wife, Dana Burling, as the three stood at the edge of the new, wide-open before-security common area. “It has a different vibe,” said their daughter, Sarah Burling.



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Other visitors Wednesday noticed the vibe shift, too. Maryori Delgado and Hannah Contreras had just gotten off a flight from Las Vegas, where they spent 10 hours during a layover. "I love it," Contreras said. "Compared to Las Vegas. It was really depressing over there."
"It's very calm and relaxing," Delgado added. Both women will start college in the fall. Contreras is interested in studying architecture and found the new terminal's design inspiring. "I love it, especially since they added trees and the top of the ceiling," Contreras said. "Everything is so well combined. It's truly amazing." One of the major changes to the new terminal is the openness, and the availability of different places to take a seat, something visitors to PDX for the last several years have struggled to find.

Beatriz Gaspar and Cecelia Jacobo of Salem sat on the new wooden stadium seating, waiting to pick up Gaspar's friend and Jacobo's daughter. In Spanish, Jacobo called the new terminal beautiful and different. She noted that she especially loved the ceiling.
Gaspar was impressed by the new terminal and enjoyed the fact that there was more space before security. "This is kind of cool that they thought about making some seating for people that are waiting for arrivals," Gaspar said. Many people took advantage of the new seating, lounging on the new stadium seats and taking in the huge video screens.

That calming architecture is intentional, said Curtis Robinhold, executive director of Port of Portland, standing on a landing adorned with a newly-created version of the classic airport carpet. Take the two 120 feet wide by 20 feet high screens, which have rotating scenes created using video game software, that change with the time, the weather and even the number of people in the terminal. A final video piece in the sequence is created by a visual artist, which will change. Currently on display is the dramatic work of Ivan McClellan, who photographs Black cowboys. The idea, Robinhold said, is that when visitors enter the most stressful part of their trip, the design should calm them down. "We put carpet down there to make the floor softer," he said. The lighting is more subdued than the normal, interrogation-style lighting of the security line. "And the video screen," Robinhold said. "If you're in line, you can sort of chillax a little bit and look at something that gets your mind off of, 'Oh god, I gotta, take off my shoes or whatever.'"

This is the first stage of a \$2.15 billion project, which is being paid for by the airlines that fly out of PDX. North and south areas of the terminal are now closed for the next phase of the project, which is expected to finish in early 2026. Initially, the new terminal was set to open in May. The timeline was pushed back to protect worker safety, Robinhold said. "The reason we slowed down is because we were rushing to finish on time and we had three incidents in 10 days where no one was hurt, but they were scary," he said. "Someone could have been hurt." So they stopped work for three days and came back at a safer pace. "And we're now at 5.4 million craft hours without a serious incident," Robinhold said.
The project is a local affair.

It has employed 30,000 people and used wood from the Willamette Valley and Yakama Nation. It has brought new local businesses to the airport, including a bright pink stationery store called PiPH by Paper Epiphanies and leather goods store Orox. "The idea is that really when you walk in here, you know that you're in the Pacific Northwest," Robinhold said. "And it gives me goosebumps to say that because I hate walking into an airport and doing this sterile, white and chrome, some glass. I could be in Shanghai. I could be in Austin. I have no idea."



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Anyone walking into PDX Wednesday should know exactly where they are – no, not a meadow in the woods – Portland’s airport, which is once again unlike any other.

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