

Soothing Science



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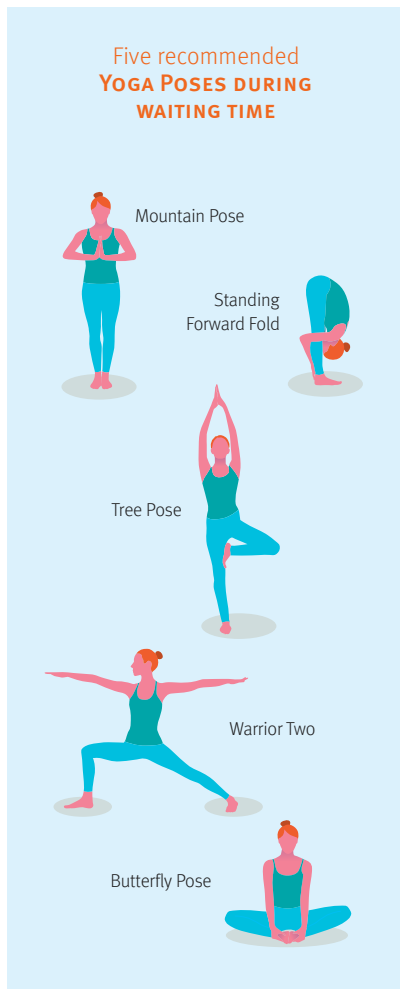
TravelLab aims to improve the air travel experience worldwide by testing activity prototypes designed to enhance passenger relaxation.

BY NICK VIVION

Helsinki could soon be the most relaxing and passenger-forward airport in the world since Finavia, the airport’s management company, rolled out an initiative dubbed TravelLab. The idea is to focus on true improvements to the travel experience not by simply asking travelers what they want, but by trying out new projects or activities and evaluating them according to passengers’ immediate reactions.

In a press release announcing the initiative, Ville Haapasaari, Helsinki Airport director at Finavia Corporation explains: “We do something with them, and then ask how it made them feel. Our goal is to create genuine experiences and evaluate real effect.”

The first round of ideas came from a global group of travelers gathered by the Helsinki airport and Finnair, who were asked how the air travel experience could be improved, and from crowdsourcing through the Quality Hunters online community of international travelers. A multi-disciplinary group was then hired to follow through on the real-world rollout of ideas, and follow up with a ranking system that accounts for traveler feedback to



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FINAVIA

analyze specific ideas for consideration of ongoing implementation.

TravelLab’s initial tests include an ongoing yoga and pilates series, a scenic Finnish photo backdrop for social media posts, “Taste of Finland” pop-up food and beverage outlets and educational classes with topics that include ‘the coffee of Finland.’ Each of the initiatives are tested for a short time frame, and then evaluated based on their impact on passenger experience. The most successful prototypes will be implemented permanently by the airport management company.



The ultimate goal of the passenger-focused tests is to prepare the airport for 20-million passenger arrivals by 2020, a Finavia spokesperson explained: “Helsinki Airport is Northern Europe’s leading transit airport, and through TravelLab, the particular goal is to serve international transit passengers. Helsinki Airport’s goal is to be the most popular transit airport between Asia and Europe.”

The underlying drive is to provide a wholly individual airport experience that offers another reason to visit Finland – and quite possibly elevate the worldwide conversation about how airports can best exceed the evolving expectations of the air-going public. ■

ILLUSTRATION: MARCELO CÁCERES PHOTOS: FINAVIA