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## Mexico's Airports Showcase Upgrades, With One Exception

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Jalisco is one of the many regions of Mexico undergoing upgrades to its airport.

*Credit: 2020 Jalisco Tourism Board*

Few people relish the airport experience, regardless of the destination. Whether it's long security lines, overcrowding, outdated facilities or meager food options, travelers can find plenty to complain about as they trot the globe. In Mexico, at least, several airports in key vacation and business travel destinations have recently upgraded their facilities, making air travel a bit more bearable throughout the nation (except for one major city that lags behind the others).

Cancun is among the cities with good news to report, as the Cancun International Airport's Master Development Plan 2019-2023 continues to bring benefits to travelers and airlines alike. The program includes new taxiways that allow aircraft to leave active runways more quickly. In addition, the building and platform at Terminal 4 is being expanded, in a second-phase construction that's increasing the passenger capacity from 10 million to 14 million per year.

The latest expansion includes six new gates, increased aircraft parking space, 720 new seats in the terminal and additional baggage claim space for international arrivals. Terminal 3 is also slated for expansion — and, elsewhere in the state of Quintana Roo, the Chetumal airport is starting multimillion-dollar remodeling and modernization.

In Los Cabos, terminal facilities received a makeover in 2019, with updates to their baggage claims, bathrooms and immigration processing area, as well as new roads, parking lots and loading platforms. The destination is prepared to welcome an estimated 15% increase in arrivals this year.

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The state of Jalisco, meanwhile, is benefitting from an ongoing investment of some \$736 million by the Pacific Airport Group, which operates multiple airports in the state. About 72% of that investment is slated for Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla Guadalajara International Airport in the state capital, and 28% for Licenciado Gustavo Diaz Ordaz International Airport in Puerto Vallarta.

A new runway is in the works for the airport in Guadalajara, which reported a 3.5% jump in arrivals in 2019 and is expecting an increase of 5 to 6% in 2020. A new terminal area with more gates, new restaurants and new retail space aims to make it easier for the larger number of travelers in Jalisco's capital.

In addition, a total of 14 new gates, as well as a revamped customs and immigration area, are to debut at Puerto Vallarta's airport. And Jalisco's third international airport is in the works in Chalacatepec, to foster continued growth in the coastal Costalegre region; an opening date has not been announced.

Other destinations around the nation are receiving makeovers, as well. In 2018, Acapulco debuted a brand-new terminal that provides 75,347 square feet of additional space compared to the old terminal, allowing the facility to process about 1.3 million passengers annually. The new facility features a wider array of restaurants and shops, as well as more up-to-date technology for baggage processing and passport scanning.

Near the border, Tijuana International Airport recently wrapped up a \$93.5 million renovation. This is good news for travelers who make use of Cross Border Express, the "cross-border terminal" concept that allows people living in the U.S. to take advantage of lower airfares from Tijuana to other Mexican destinations.

For all the positive changes and upgrades at a variety of airports around Mexico, one major metropolis remains a holdout in need of the nation's biggest overhaul: Mexico City. It's not like there weren't plans underway.

Some \$5 billion was spent on the initial construction of a brand-new airport in Texcoco, to replace the worn and overcrowded Benito Juarez International Airport.

All it took was the election of a new president — Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador — to end that work in progress. Instead, Lopez Obrador has proposed converting an air force base in Santa Lucia, in the State of Mexico, for commercial use, and a judge ruled that construction could begin, in spite of various lawsuits against the new project. The president has promised an opening date of 2022 for the new airport, but many observers consider the actual completion date to be, well, up in the air.