VIRGIN AUSTRALIA'S NEW PERTH TERMINAL A SEAMLESS PASSENGER EXPERIENCE

News / Airlines, Airports / Routes

Thanks largely to a revitalised and business-focused Virgin Australia, Perth Airport is now home to what is possibly the best domestic terminal in Australia; Virgin's T1 Domestic Pier.

Over 4,200 people were involved in the construction of T1 Domestic. The project took 1.8 million man-hours, resulting in a concourse that stretches 250 metres; longer than the height of WA's largest skyscraper.

So how does the new terminal stack up from a customer perspective?

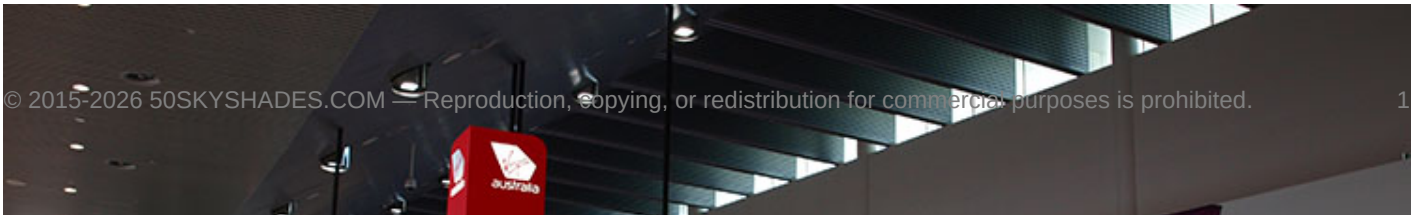
Entry

OLYMPUS DIGITAL CAMERA

The first thing that you'll notice at T1 Domestic is its size and space. Compared to the existing domestic facilities at Perth, the new terminal feels huge!

The check-in area is situated next to the T1 International check-in desks. It has the same high ceilings, bright lighting and large windows as the international airport; as well as easy to read, Virgin Australia signage.

The back wall is lit in purple while large Virgin Australia logos dominate the surrounding walls.



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Check-in

Virgin's new self check-in and bag drop system has been installed at Perth. It is simple to use and very efficient. Twenty-eight self-check kiosks are supplemented by six dedicated premium kiosks for Gold and Platinum frequent flyers, as well as business class passengers.

Virgin has also included a dedicated group check-in area, with four individual kiosks and plenty of space for large groups to mingle during the check-in process. The layout of the check-in area greatly reduces queues and almost eliminates any waiting.

Virgin's self-check kiosks are easy to use, with extra wide touch screens and simple, intuitive instructions. If you've checked in online and have bags for the hold, simply scan your electronic boarding pass at the kiosk; select the number of bags you're checking and the system prints your bag tags for you. If you haven't checked in already, your Velocity card or booking reference number is all you'll need.

The whole process is very simple, especially for the tech savvy. It took around 1 ½ minutes from entering the terminal to seeing the bag disappear onto the conveyor belt. However, there were plenty of staff on hand to assist passengers unfamiliar with the touch screen kiosks.

Some of the 14 bag drop desks were manned for face-to-face check-in, while seven manned desks at the self-check area ensure staff are always on hand.

Security and lounges

After check-in, customers make their way upstairs to a spacious security screening area. It includes a dedicated premium screening queue as well as a separate screening area for Virgin Australia employees. The design makes screening a breeze, reducing queues and waiting.

Just after security you'll find a stunning new Virgin Australia lounge. The first thing that stands out here is the space. It is significantly bigger than Virgin's former T3 lounge. It includes all of the design features from Virgin's other flagship lounges in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, such as a stylised ceiling and purple lighting.

A coffee bar is situated in the centre of the lounge, facing large windows with views over the apron. Hungry lounge members will enjoy a selection of hot and cold food in the form of a buffet, while the bar has a great selection of beer and wine.

As expected, the lounge has free Wi-Fi access and a business centre. There are also two large meeting rooms, equipped with video and teleconferencing facilities as well as views of the aircraft!

The concourse

If the terminal hadn't impressed up to this point, the main concourse is sure to wow even the most frequent traveller. It is the biggest departure from Perth's existing airport design. Stretching over 200 metres in length, the building is crowned by a high, arched ceiling set atop floor to ceiling windows.

Twelve aerobridges are available accessed from eight separate departure gates. Each sports a dedicated priority lane; dressed in Virgin's premium colours of purple and dark grey, while the standard boarding lane has a red carpet.

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Four of the gates offer dual boarding (two aerobridges) and are used by the ‘coast to coast’ Airbus A330s. These gates can also operate as separate aerobridges for smaller aircraft, effectively handling two 737s in the space that a single A330 can occupy.

One of the gates is operated as a ‘swing gate’ – allowing it to be shared with the T1 International terminal. An Air New Zealand 767-300 occupied the bay during my visit, while later it was open for Virgin domestic operations.

The concourse has retail offerings including the first WH Smith in WA, Relay, and Hub Convenience, plus a variety of eateries ranging from Hungry Jacks to a pub.

Arrival

Arriving into T1 Domestic was as pleasant an experience as departing. The terminal sports Perth Airport’s first moving walkway, as well as a link to T2; Virgin’s regional terminal. This is a great improvement for travellers transiting to Virgin Australia Regional Airlines-operated services, as it eliminates the time-c0nsuming and frustrating bus ride between T2 and T3.

T1 Domestic’s arrivals area houses two baggage carousels. Each one is big enough to efficiently handle the luggage from several aircraft at a time. The carousels are very long, offering lots of space for passengers to wait for their bags, while providing easy access to the carousel. Nearby, car hire desks make the transition from aircraft to vehicle easy.

The only criticism I could find for this terminal design relates to the parking. While T3 and T4 have a covered ‘premium’ car park right near the terminal, T1 Domestic shares an expansive open-air car park with T1 International. This means travellers short of time, as well as those wishing to protect their cars from the elements, have less convenient choices at T1 Domestic than at T3 or T4.

T1 – The Edge

T1 Domestic gives Virgin Australia a definite edge in Perth over its main rival, and for many travellers, it is the terminal Perth has been waiting for.

Bold, spacious and customer-friendly, the ease of transition through the building, excellent retail offering and simple connection to T2 Regional are tangible plusses.

Another great feature of the new terminal is its proximity to T1 International. This gives Virgin Australia an extra bonus when compared to rival Qantas, as passengers transferring to and from international flights, either on Virgin aircraft or partners such as SAA, Air New Zealand and Singapore Airlines, don’t have to endure bus rides between terminals.

T1 Domestic has elevated the Virgin customer experience to a new level. It offers space for growth, seamless connectivity to onward flights and a design and décor reminiscent of the best airports around the world.

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