



Only Blue Skies through Fresh Eyes: London International Airport

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's... yes in fact it is a plane, taking flight from the London International Airport (LIA).

SWOTC summer intern, Loes Borgijink, had the exciting opportunity to see firsthand the new improvements of London's only international airport and was pleased to share her experience with us.

First Impressions

This was not Borgijink's first visit to the airport, and certainly not her last. She mentioned she had flown out several times, though years ago, with her family on route to Calgary. Like catching up with an old acquaintance, Borgijink was pleasantly surprised to see the many new developments made to the customer service experience and overall surrounding atmosphere.

Upon arrival, she noted several apparent changes: increase of check-in counters and self-check-in units, a fresh and modern restaurant & bar, colourful murals decorating the previously white-washed walls, and a general sense of welcome and friendliness.

Behind the Scenes

Guided by Business Development Manager, Brad Rice, Borgijink was taken to entirely new heights—her first time behind the scenes—viewing some of the daily operations of the airport.

Steered through the security and baggage process, she noticed one of the prime advantages of a smaller airport; shorter wait times. Although the security process was similar to any other she has seen, the wait time to go through is much shorter, as is collecting luggage after a flight. The reasoning behind it, Rice explained, is that because of the size of the building, security is much closer to the planes; meaning a quicker process to send passengers on their way.

Rice had also presented Borgijink with a new revenue stream for the airport; a newly added restaurant and bar; On The Fly Restaurant; replacing the singular option of vending machine snacks for passengers to purchase after going through security.

One of Borgijink's most uplifting experiences was driving the passenger boarding ramp up to the plane. She explained it was quite easy to operate, just a joystick moving the ramp up & down and literally directing it to where the plane was parked.

inSights and Services

With a large emphasis on enhancing the customer experience, it is clear to see the significant changes LIA has made and how they have all come together to achieve greater customer satisfaction; attentive staff, greater convenience, and extended services are all prime examples.

After meeting with Gerry Vanderhoek, Manager of Commercial Service and Passenger Experience, only one thought resonated in Borgijink's mind—this man has found his calling. She said he is undoubtedly a

“people person” and has a great passion for making the customer service experience better. He explained a few of the major efforts LIA has brought about; airport staff are noticeably more friendly, helpful and engaging to guests. They soothe passengers before their flight with confidence and comfort. This relaxed and inviting atmosphere allows passengers to feel at ease, as we all know travelling can be stressful at times—and LIA aims to amend exactly that.

As a local airport, LIA already offers an impressive list of services including seven reputable airlines, five modes of ground transportation services, free WiFi access, and two existing food services. Now with the newly added restaurant and bar, guests are able to relax and unwind before their flight with a good meal and a stiff drink.

LIA is also proud to announce an expansion of flight services. Specifically, United Airlines will be offering two daily, return flights to Newark Liberty International Airport from London International Airport, non-stop, beginning October 26, 2014. This new addition will present passengers with greater travelling preferences; both for business and leisure; with connecting flight opportunities throughout the US and European destinations, as well as quick access to the ever popular, downtown New York City.

Tourism Opportunities and Closing Thoughts

Still after many changes, Rice agrees there is always room for growth. He mentioned the next project is working on signage for directing visitors to and from the airport. Frequent fliers have it figured out, but new passengers to the airport may need more guidance.

There is also ample tourism opportunity for newly arriving passengers to the area. Travel information and tourism booths are just some ideas to provide exciting experiences to new visitors. LIA has recognized this and made an effort in displaying Fanshawe Pioneer Village on one of their many wall murals.

Borgjink still prefers flying from this local airport, as there are many advantages over flying from a larger, busier location. The proximity offers convenience and less travel stress driving to the airport in an unfamiliar city. Check-in times are generally 45 minutes before departing flight, rather than the typical two hour wait time. Less traffic through the airport allows an appealing atmosphere for the unseasoned or uneasy fliers and more one-on-one service from airline staff. LIA understands the rising costs of the airline industry, and is making significant efforts to deliver the best value to their customers at a lower cost than competitors.

Ride the tailwinds to your next destination when you fly out of London International Airport for an elevated customer service experience. Be sure to look for the new and exciting changes to come.

For more information, please visit www.londonairport.on.ca

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