

The Daily Traveler

Finnair's New Lounge at Helsinki Airport 'Is Alive'

By CHANEY KWAK

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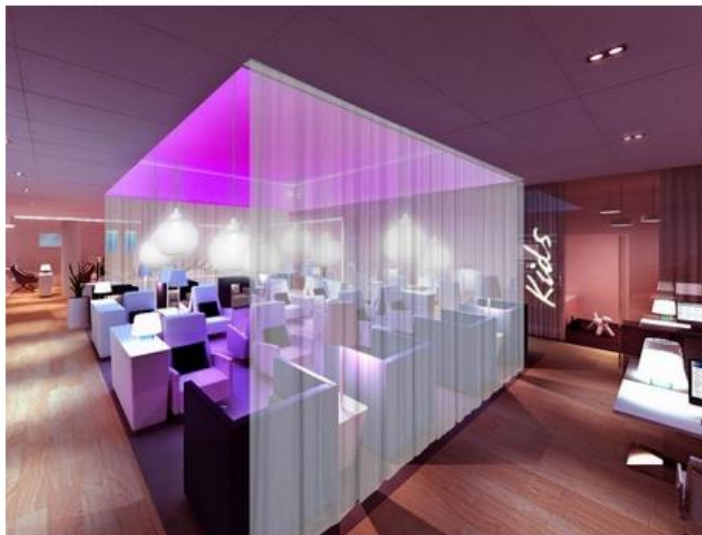
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Finnair opens its new Premium Lounge at Helsinki Airport today, boasting flexible spaces, innovative furniture, Nordic design goodies (think Marimekko's tableware and Eero Saarinen's womb chairs), and even a Finnish sauna. To mark the occasion, we got the inside scoop from the lounge's designer, Vertti Kivi of dSign Vertti Kivi & Co.

What inspired the design of the Finnair lounge?

I proposed creating the most Finnish-looking, yet also globally appealing, space. Instead of thinking of the lounge as a static place, I imagined how it would respond to the customers' work and emotional needs as they journey through the space.

What makes the new lounge unique?

There's a Finnish sauna, in addition to private shower suites. But [what's] more interesting is that the space is alive. It transforms throughout the day, with different moods and configurations, created by curtains, three-dimensional walls, and suspended lights that disappear into the ceiling during the day.

How did you prepare for the project?

A designer's job is to support the clients' needs by making spaces that can adapt. Based on research, we divided the lounge users into three general groups: road warriors, young travelers, and tourists. Road warriors seek function and ergonomic comfort. Thanks to mobile technology, younger travelers are always multitasking, so it was important to support them in working and relaxing at the same time. And I also proposed a boutique inside the lounge for the visitors, but we ended up leaving it outside.

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Finnair wanted to create an ambiance that feels like the experience of flying. Using the airline's white and blue palette, the new lounge evokes skies and clouds.

How will airport lounges change in the future?

I'd like to go deeper into making spaces flexible. How can you arrange a place to become cozy or open, depending on who is using it, and when? There are a lot of possibilities.

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