

Athens International Airport

This article focuses on the fast development of the newly built Athens International Airport (AIA) 'Eleftherios Venizelos'. The new airport has radically changed the image of the Greek capital, and it has quickly developed into the most important air hub in Southeast Europe. The largest airport in Greece, which began operating in 2001, was put to the test during the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, and it has proved to be one of the best airports in Europe.

by: Michail A. Passos

Facts and History

Athens International Airport (AIA) occupies a total land area of 17.5 km² and has 2 separate parallel runways, each with a length of approximately 4 km. The main terminal and satellite buildings cover an area of 7,000 m² and are spread out over an area of 180,000 m². It has 89 aircraft parking stands, 24 passenger boarding bridges, 48 gates, and 144 check-in counters.

Athens Airport had a capacity of up to 16 million passengers, 220,000 tons of cargo per annum, 600 aircraft movements a day, and 63 landings-takeoffs per hour during the first phase of operation. The possible expansion of the airport would increase capacity to 50 million passengers when the final stage of development has been completed.

In July 1995, the Government of the Hellenic Republic (Greece) and the private consortium led by HOCHTIEF Aktiengesellschaft (Germany) signed the Airport Development Agreement (ADA) with the joint aim to develop the International Airport at Spata by means of a public-private partnership. The ADA establishes a 30-year concession, ratified by Greek law, which grants the airport company the exclusive right to occupy and use the site for purposes of the "design, financing, construction, completion, commissioning, maintenance, operation, management and development of the airport". The Greek State holds 55 per cent of AIA's shares, while the private sector partner, comprising of three private shareholders, holds 45 per cent of the Airport Company's shares.

Construction of the new airport, a €2.2 billion investment, took just 4 years. The airport has replaced its congested predecessor, and it offers a spacious and modern environment to all airlines and passengers.

Distinctions

Since its inception in 2001, AIA has already managed to earn international recognition, holding top positions in the world, and has been distinguished as one of the best airports in its size class. It placed 2nd in the world in the 5-15 million pax cat-



Photo 1: The gates and Terminal building. Courtesy of www.greece-athens.com

egory, according to an IATA survey. Below is a list of the most important distinctions:

- ✦ AETRA (IATA/ICI) Award for "Overall Passenger Satisfaction" in 2004;
 - ✦ GreenLight Award in 2004;
 - ✦ EFQM "Committed to Excellence" Award in 2004;
 - ✦ AETRA (IATA/ICI) Award for "Overall Passenger Satisfaction" in 2003;
 - ✦ IATA Eagle Award in 2003;
 - ✦ EFQM "Recognized for Excellence" Award in 2003
- European Airport of the Year 2004 (ITM);
and so on.

Development

Committed to operation and service excellence, safety and user-friendliness, the state-of-the-art Athens International Airport 'Eleftherios Venizelos' has been serving Greece's capital since its opening on March 28th 2001.

Approximately 63 airlines operate from AIA, and nine new destinations will be served starting this spring (Philadelphia, Beijing, Jenda, Riga, Timisoara, etc), and ten new airlines (Air China, Donbassaero, MyAir, Continental, Carpatair, USA Airways, Saudi Arabian Airlines, KDavia, Air Baltic and Finnair) will start flying to AIA. The airline with the biggest flight volume is Aegean Airlines, which has been awarded by AIA, and it also controls 52 per cent of domestic flights and 13 per cent of international flights from AIA.

It should be noted that the recent decrease of taxes and of other airport charges has attracted new low-cost airlines (Aer Lingus, Tarom, ClickAir, KrasAir, Sterling, etc), and they have opened up new tourist gateways.



ATHENS
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
ELEFTHERIOS VENIZELOS

Athens' strategic position at the crossroads of three continents offers quality access to numerous short-haul and medium-haul national and international markets, thus promoting 'Eleftherios Venizelos' as the natural connection point of the region. The new airport is developing into the Southeastern gateway of Europe, providing connecting or feeder traffic from the Eastern Mediterranean region, the Middle East, the Balkans, Africa and Greece to European and international long-haul destinations.

unrestricted access to 24-hour operations from two separate runways, efficient transfers, advanced cargo facilities, and the highest standards in safety and security. Moreover, there are more than 35 top-quality shops and 13 restaurants/bars, many of them operating 24 hours. A fully equipped Business Centre, eight dedicated lounges for Business and First Class passengers, executive valet parking, six car rental agencies, travel agencies, currency exchange, banks and post services, the 5-star Sofitel Hotel, located just opposite the main Terminal, and, last but not least, the Airport Museum, with its permanent exhibition of archaeological findings from the airport area offer passengers and visitors a total experience in traveling.

Finally, it is important to note that AIA's management plans to list 35 per cent of shares on the Athens Stock Exchange this summer.



Photo 2: The "landside". Courtesy Athens International Airport "Eleftherios Venizelos" S.A.

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Biography

Michail A. Passos holds a BSc in Banking & Financial Management, University of Piraeus, Greece, and is currently completing his MBA, University of Leicester, UK, and a Diploma in Aviation Studies, IATA. He works at the Financial Department of the Municipality of Kifissia, Greece. To contact Michail A. Passos: Passos.a.m@hotmail.com

Statistics

In 2002, 11,827,448 passengers were served from AIA. This number has increased to 16,538,390 in 2007 and is a 9.7 per cent increase compared to 2006.

Likewise, the number of aircraft movements has grown from 159,467 movements in 2002 to 205,294 in 2007. It should be noted that domestic flights in 2007 increased 4.8 per cent, while international flights increased 10.1 per cent.

A Business & Employment Engine

Based on the Airport's Company management approach, the new airport acted as a catalyst for long-term business development, by creating a business platform for over 300 enterprises directly related to the airport's operations. More than 14,000 people work at the airport, making AIA one of the biggest employment engines in Greece, which already generated around 3,300 new jobs at its opening. However, the airport site can be further developed as well, mainly through retail around the airport area.

AIA maintains one of the best terminals in Europe, equipped with state-of-the-art systems, featuring a very user-friendly orientation, comfortable waiting areas, and adhering to the highest cleaning standards. Furthermore, according to surveys conducted at the airport, passengers value the courtesy of the staff, the warm ambience, as well as the attractive offers from more than 65 quality shops and restaurants.

AIA will further develop into a modern and luxurious location for business development. Among the airport's competitive advantages is the state-of-the-art technology and equipment, the

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