

# Las Vegas airport preps for tech-savvy travelers

January 4 2015, by Kimberly Pierceall

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In this Dec. 29, 2014, photo, a man uses a charging station at McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas. By the end of the annual International CES show a couple thousand outlets and USB ports will be available for those looking for a power charge in Terminal 1 before heading home. (AP Photo/John Locher)

While the gadgets of the future are only just arriving in Las Vegas for the annual International CES show, officials at the city's main airport are updating a decades-old terminal to cater to legions of tech-savvy travelers.

By Friday at McCarran International Airport, a couple thousand outlets and USB ports under seats and inside bars and restaurants will be available for those looking for a power charge in Terminal 1 before heading home after the gadget convention.

The airport had already installed free airport-wide Wi-Fi ahead of the electronics show 10 years ago at a time when travelers had either a laptop or personal digital assistant, if that, and were at most checking e-mail or finishing up a PowerPoint presentation.

Now, there are movies to stream, virtual meetings to conduct, Internet games to play and books to download. More than 160,000 people attended the 2014 show, which takes over the Las Vegas Convention Center, the Sands Expo and several nearby hotels with more than 2 million square feet of exhibit space—or about 35 football fields.

Hot trends this year include Internet connectivity in everyday products such as cars and appliances and the growth of online video as an alternative to traditional television channels. New TVs with sharper images and better colors are also expected. The four-day show begins Tuesday, though pre-show events take place Sunday and Monday.

Karen Chupka, senior vice president with CES and the Consumer Electronics Association, said her group is likely the biggest electricity and Internet user when it comes to town.

"We tend to push the limits of everything," she said adding that year after year, the city has beefed up its capabilities in response, such as relatively recent Internet upgrades to the convention center that show organizers are particularly excited about. The airport's addition of a couple thousand more outlets and USB ports is, "great, that's absolutely wonderful," she said.

Travelers with gadgets often face a dilemma to grab a bite to eat in a restaurant or bar lacking outlets or slump against a wall, plug into a wall outlet near a boarding gate and watch as the battery is recharged.



In this Dec. 29, 2014, photo, people use a charging station at McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas. By the end of the annual International CES show a couple thousand outlets and USB ports will be available for those looking for a power charge in Terminal 1 before heading home. (AP Photo/John Locher)

"You don't have to make that choice," said Samuel Ingalls, assistant director of aviation information services at the airport.

The 500 under-seat power supplies with two outlets and two USB ports each and more power outlet upgrades to come are expected to cost the airport \$400,000.

A group of travelers on their way to Portland, Oregon, had little luck finding an outlet at a bar past security. They ended up hovering with their devices—smartphone and a tablet—at a bank of outlets in the wall where payphones had long ago rested.

The new Layover Bar in the airport's pre-security area, though, features outlets under the counter at each seat. Each table at the new neighboring Wendy's has them, too.

Susan Anderson, from Iowa, sat on the floor with her Samsung Galaxy Mega recently and said she tried to find an outlet near a seat but to no avail. She hadn't noticed newly installed seat outlets a few feet away.

"This is OK, but it does make your fanny hurt a little," she said. "They need more (outlets) or I need a better phone."



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Walls of unused payphones in a terminal that got its start in 1963 and was expanded in the 1980s were replaced years ago with counters, stools and outlets for recharging zones but it hasn't gotten a true outlet boost until now.

Terminal 3 debuted in 2012 with integrated under-seat outlets and charging ports in restaurants and bars.

Travelers having a problem signing onto the Wi-Fi can also call the airport directly and, if necessary, officials will dispatch a staffer to offer some tech advice, an in-house "geek squad" of sorts.





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Ingalls said the airport also doesn't block or censor any sites even if it might otherwise be a drain on the bandwidth supply.

More outlets for charging comes as airport officials have also boosted the bandwidth giving travelers—and there are more than 3 million arriving and departing passengers a month—twice the download speed.

And by the next CES, show-goers should expect a little more lounging to go with their charging. The airport has an order in for lounge chairs with outlets to fill in some spaces of the waiting areas that might otherwise be power poor.

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