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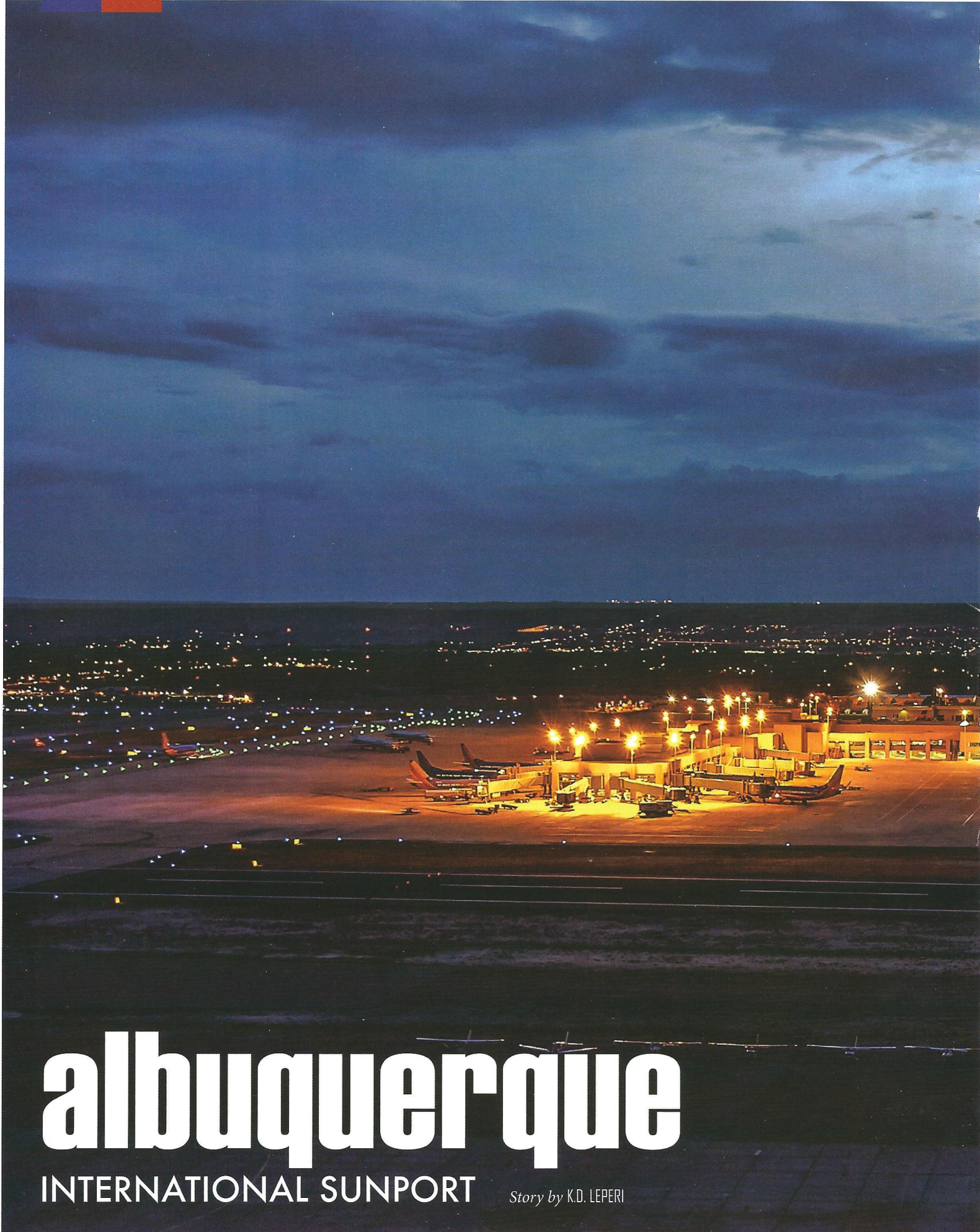
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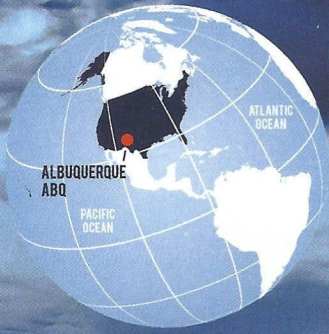


albuquerque

INTERNATIONAL SUNPORT

Story by K.D. LEPERI

/ airport review / ALBUQUERQUE



THE AMERICAN Southwest has few major commercial airports that offer direct flights to both the East and West Coasts. Other than Las Vegas's McCarran International Airport (LAS) and Phoenix's Sky Harbor Airport (PHX), only the Land of Enchantment's Albuquerque International Sunport (ABQ) is a leading contender, especially for New Mexico's more than 2 million

residents. It is owned by the City of Albuquerque and operated by its Aviation Department.

Albuquerque is located in a high-altitude desert at the base of the Sandia-Manzano Mountains, a range that partially defines the Albuquerque Basin's eastern edge. It has a rich history; older than most cities in America, it was home to the inhabitants of the Rio Grande Valley for many centuries. Hispanic culture prevailed for hundreds of years and has a Wild West feeling, laced with lore about the notorious Billy the Kid. Nowadays, it is home of the largest international hot air balloon fiesta in the world.

As the state's largest commercial airport, ABQ Sunport is only three miles southeast of downtown Albuquerque,

in Bernalillo County. Welcoming nearly five million travelers annually, the city of Albuquerque is considered to be the gateway to the rich diversity of cultures, history, traditions, and panoramic landscapes for which the Southwest is noted.

When you land in Sunport, you instantly know you are somewhere different because of its high ceilings and exposed vigas (rough-hewn roof timbers or rafters, often associated with adobe buildings). The spacious terminal is filled with sunlight and the entire airport bedecked with Southwestern art.

Then, there is the New Mexican cuisine; unique dishes that favor the flavors of green chili: *pozole* (a traditional stew made with hominy), blue corn, stacked enchilada, and *sopapillas* (fried



Albuquerque International Sunport is the largest airport in New Mexico. The airport handled over 4.7 million passengers in 2015.

dough with honey). They can be tasted at eateries such as Tia Juanita's New Mexican Food, Black Mesa Coffee Company, and the Rio Grande Brew Pub & Grill.

If you time it right, you might even get the chance to pet a Labrador dog wearing a yellow covering that says, rather appropriately, "Pet me"; many people in the Great Hall do. It's just part of the warm and inviting New Mexico welcome. Most of all, the place is immaculately clean.

It is no wonder that Sunport carries the reputation of being one of the easiest airports to travel in and out of. Though it is my hometown, it is definitely my favorite mid-sized airport.

SUNPORT TODAY

Today, the Sunport Terminal Building has about 600,000sq ft of total surface and is considered a medium-sized hub with three levels. As an origination and destination airport, it currently

2 This view of the terminal from the curbside reflect the history of Albuquerque, showing the blend of native and Spanish design elements.

3 Lincoln Fox's *Dream of Flight* is a bronze sculpture of a shaman, or medicine man, being pulled through the air by an eagle while a man and his son watch from below.

4 The Original 1914 Curtiss Pusher Design Biplane on display in the Great Hall of the airport.

5 A view of the Great Hall shows a simple yet massive building, with plenty of space for travelers.

has one passenger terminal with 22 gates divided between its A and B Concourses. Nonstop service is provided to 23 destinations across the country by means of three active runways.

Currently, the top three destinations are PHX, with 332,000 passengers (Southwest • WN); DFW, with 281,000 passengers (American • AA); and DEN, with both Southwest and United (UA) transporting about 204,000 passengers in total.

Nevertheless, the 1965 airport, designed by architect William Burk in the Pueblo Revival style, is in need of a facelift. From spring of 2016, Sunport started construction of upgrades as part of an overall \$16.6 million project designed to improve the ticket counter, baggage claim, arrivals, and departure areas experience. Construction is expected to last about 18 months.

According to Aviation Director Jim Hinde, "The Albuquerque

International Sunport gives visitors a sense of place unlike any other airport in the world. It has been nearly 30 years since any major renovation work, and we aim to update the technology and comfort of the facility while keeping the culture and charm that makes us unique."

Officials hope that the infusion of capital improvement money into the airport will help stem the steady decline in passengers that has occurred since 2008. The last few months of 2015 were encouraging. And, with the recent upswing in Albuquerque's economy and the addition of new flights, many expect the passenger count to further increase in 2016 and beyond.

"We feel well positioned for future growth," says Hinde, "given Albuquerque's improving economy, the wonderful destination that is New Mexico, and the Sunport's ability to attract new carriers and increase competition."



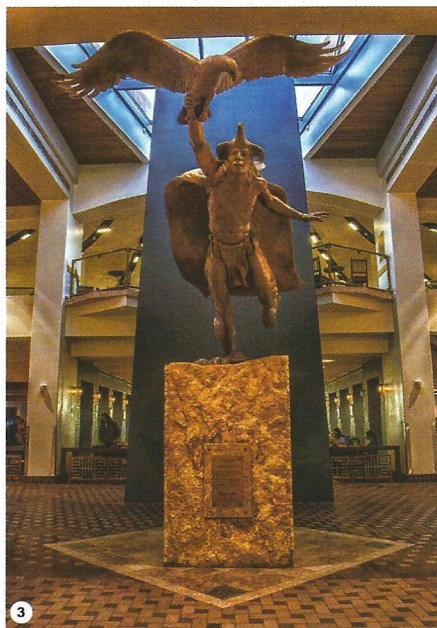
AIRPORT ART & AVIATION

When passengers come to Sunport, they enter an airport unlike any other in the United States. Although a mid-size regional airport, it fervently embraces the arts and supports local artisans in a large way—by showcasing a 120-piece permanent art collection throughout the premises. Valued at \$1.5 million, the collection is one of the country's most culturally unique, reflecting New Mexico's Native American and Hispanic culture and traditions.

Look for the iconic *Dream of Flight* by Lincoln Fox, an especially treasured sculpture depicting a Native American connection with flight. Prominently located between the A and B Concourses, it's easy to find.

Other artwork can be found at various gates, the Great Hall (2nd Level Ticketing), Baggage Claim, outside the Ticketing Level main entrance, along Sunport Boulevard, the offsite Rental Car Center, and the public spaces of the Old Terminal Building.

For aviation buffs, an original 1914 Curtiss Pusher Design Biplane



An original 1914 Curtiss Pusher Design Biplane is on display in the Great Hall."

is on display in the Great Hall. The operative word here is 'pusher'—the propeller, which is in the back of the craft, effectively pushed the plane through the atmosphere. The biplane is considered the finest surviving example of the Pusher Design, with most of it, including the wing fabric, being in original condition.

The aircraft was modeled after the first biplanes flown in New Mexico back in 1911 and 1912. To commemorate the state's early aviation history, The Albuquerque Museum and Albuquerque International Sunport jointly purchased the historic plane, dedicating it to the people of Albuquerque and making it available for all passengers to enjoy as they pass through the Sunport airport.

The *Cavalcade of Wings* exhibit captures New Mexico's aviation history. It contains 900 model planes of every aircraft ever flown into ABQ. Display cases also include pictures, patches, and military badges associated with the various models.

Close to the airplane models is a wall commemorating retired Sunport working dogs along with their photos.



TRAVELER AMENITIES

For those travelers who have a little time on their hands, Sunport comes with some bonus amenities not found at most airports. One of these is the Observation Deck, located after security, between the two concourses and up a flight of stairs. This area is outfitted with bench seating, leather couches, and chairs. So, sit back and enjoy the magic of flight in comfort. Be sure to soak in the magnificent views of the Manzano Mountains and the mighty Rio Grande, sometimes a trickle but always identified by the green ribbon threading north-to-south through the city. The Observation Deck is wheelchair-accessible, with both an elevator and a ramp available.

In a recent renovation, the Albuquerque Aviation Department installed upholstered benches on the First Level across from Baggage Claim Area 8. The quiet space, known as the Meditation Room, is available for guests, travelers, and employees who seek time for reflection and

solitude (in my opinion, this is one amenity you need to use before going through security).

Other amenities include free Wi-Fi Internet access throughout the airport, mobile charging, and convenient workstations outfitted with New Mexican-style rustic furniture.

Those travelers who are new to town should be sure to stop by the Visitor's Information booth hosted by Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau. Located in the Baggage Claim area opposite Baggage Claim 4, the booth is staffed by volunteers with a wide-ranging inventory of informational brochures and local insights. They are happy to provide further personalized assistance to passengers as required.

Not known to many is the Sandia Vista, an on-airport conference center with all the supporting accoutrements necessary for business meetings. Casually decorated in a Southwest style, the center includes a kitchen, conference table, and television, as well as a separate lounge with a kiva (fireplace).

Need to mail some letters? A United States Postal Service mailbox and a FedEx envelope and package box are located on the east end of the Ticketing Level, just outside the building.

THE FUTURE IS ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

Albuquerque Sunport has embarked on many sustainable projects that often translate into bottom-line savings. From water conservation, electric vehicles, and photovoltaic panels, to airfield LED lighting and fluorescent lamp replacement, police bike patrols, and green cleaning, the airport is actively involved in technological improvements coupled with environmental efficiencies.

One example is provided by the Aviation Department having changed the ballast and fluorescent lamps out in the airfield maintenance facility as part of the City of Albuquerque's Green Initiative Program. The new fixtures are low-energy electronic ballast and T8 lamps. And taxiway lighting has become more energy efficient by replacing the old lamps with LEDs. It is estimated that LED technology will provide an approximately 70% energy reduction from conventional technologies and have an expected usable life of over 100,000 hours.

6 An external view of the Control tower, with the Sandia Mountain Range dominating the horizon.



Then there is the newly installed water line originating from the waste treatment plant through Sunport. The pipeline supplies non-potable treated re-use water for irrigating the drought-tolerant and low-water landscaping areas of the airport. The low-irrigation landscaping, or xeriscaping, is consistent and harmonious with the local flora and environment.


GETTING AROUND

Transportation at Sunport is both efficient and easy, with taxi and rental car shuttles on the outside curb just beyond baggage claim.

A free shuttle to the offsite Rental Car Center departs every

five minutes for Advantage, Alamo, Avis, Budget, Dollar, Enterprise, Hertz, National, Payless, and Thrifty.

Sunport Shuttle, Sandia Shuttle Express, and RoadRunner Shuttle and Charter offer shared-ride, door-to-door shuttle service between the airport and all Albuquerque area hotels, motels, homes, businesses, and other destinations. The check-in counter is located on Baggage Claim Level near Carousel 3.

Free Hotel Shuttles to local airport hotels are available for most of the leading brands such as Best Western, Hilton, Holiday Inn, Hyatt, and Sheraton. 

SUNPORT AT A GLANCE

BUILT IN 1965, Sunport was designed in the Pueblo Revival style, a predominantly New Mexico interpretation characterized by vigas, rounded corners, irregular parapets, simulated adobe, and earth tones.

ABQ is used by six major commercial airlines **SERVING 23 DOMESTIC DESTINATIONS**, some of them seasonal. The commercial carriers that service ABQ include Alaska Airlines (AS), American Airlines, Delta Airlines (DL), JetBlue Airways (B6), Southwest Airlines, and United Airlines (UA).

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES IS the largest carrier at Sunport, accounting for 55% of passengers in 2015.

Taxis are available on a **24-HOUR BASIS IN THE GROUND** transportation area of the terminal.

ABQ SHARES its long runways with Kirtland Air Force Base.

The airport **IS OPEN 24 HOURS**. Hours for TSA security checkpoint are 04:30 to 23:30.

THE SHORTEST DIRECT FLIGHT from ABQ is 289 miles. The longest one is 1,858 miles.

Albuquerque International Sunport **WAS AWARDED** the 2015 'Most Female Pilot Friendly Airport Worldwide.'

Fast Facts

ALBUQUERQUE

ABQ / KABQ

NAME: Albuquerque International Sunport

ADDRESS: 2200 Sunport Blvd, Albuquerque, NM 87106

TELEPHONE: +1 (505) 244-7700

WEB: www.abqsunport.com

PASSENGERS: 4,745,256 (2015)

CARGO: +60,000 tons (2015)

OWNER: City of Albuquerque

MOVEMENTS: 124,174 (2015)

ELEVATION: 5,335ft (1,635m)

COORDINATES:

35°02'21.6"N / 106°36'38.8"W

COMMUNICATIONS:

Tower: 120.30

Ground: 121.90

Approach: 123.90

RUNWAY:

03/21 • 10,000ft (3,048m) • Concrete

08/26 • 13,793ft (4,204m) • Concrete

12/30 • 6,000ft (1,829m) • Concrete

DESTINATIONS:

DOMESTIC: Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Carlsbad, Chicago (MDW, ORD), Dallas (DAL, DFW), Denver, Houston (HOU, IAH), Kansas City, Las Vegas, Los Alamos, Los Angeles, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Oakland, Orlando, Phoenix, Portland, Salt Lake City, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Silver City.

AIRLINES: Alaska Airlines, Allegiant Airlines, American Airlines, American Eagle, Boutique Air, Delta Airlines, Delta Connection, JetBlue Airways, Southwest Airlines, United Airlines, United Express.