

New St. Petersburg Air Terminal Starts Operations

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December 17, 2013

The  Moscow Times

The long-awaited new terminal of St. Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport has entered into service.

The first flights were transferred to the new Terminal 1 from the Pulkovo 2 terminal on Dec. 4 and were Rossia Airline flights heading to Dusseldorf, Munich and Frankfurt.

From Dec. 7, all flights to and from Moscow's Vnukovo and Domodedovo airports operated by Transaero Airlines were also transferred to the new terminal, according to the press service of Northern Capital Gateway, the company that runs the airport.

Meanwhile, Rossia's flights to Hamburg and Berlin will also operate out of the new terminal.

Due to the gradual transfer of flights to Terminal 1, Northern Capital Gateway is asking passengers to check the terminal of their departure, or the arrival of flights on Pulkovo's website, by calling the airport's directory services or by contacting airlines directly.

To make the changeover smoother, Pulkovo Airport has introduced a new service in which the airport's employees dress in uniforms bearing the words "*Sprosite menya!*" (Ask me!) in all the terminals. The personnel will answer passengers' questions about their flight's departure or arrival, as well as about pre-flight security, the departure area and other details. Passengers can also get such information at stands located in the terminals of Pulkovo airport.

"The introduction of Pulkovo's new terminal will help to improve the image of Russian transport infrastructure and increase the attractiveness of St. Petersburg and its neighboring territories among tourists," said Ilarion Kopaleishvili, marketing manager of Skyscanner online ticket search service.

"Skyscanner's research confirms the popularity of St. Petersburg among Russian and foreign travelers, coming in second after Moscow. Taking into account the expected increase of passenger numbers to Russia's northern capital, it is not surprising that the city needs a new modern terminal that is able to compete with the leading European airports," Kopaleishvili said.

The new terminal took three years to construct and unites the newly constructed building and its northern passenger waiting area with the current Pulkovo 1 terminal, which will undergo renovations starting in January 2014.

The new building consists of three levels connected by escalators, staircases and elevators. The ground floor will house the arrivals and baggage claim areas.

While all passengers traveling through Pulkovo will use the new terminal for check-in, international passengers will wait for their flights on the third floor of the new terminal. Domestic passengers will continue to depart from Pulkovo 1 once renovation has been completed.

The new terminal features an unusual gold domed ceiling, chosen to remind travelers of the domes on the city's Church on Spilled Blood cathedral. Glass skylights and geometric panels contribute to the visual impact of the terminal, a vast improvement from the bleak interiors of Pulkovo's current facilities.

Operators are particularly proud of the airport's new 5-kilometer-long automatic baggage system that can process up to 4,800 pieces of luggage an hour. The new system nearly eliminates the need for ground personnel in the transportation of baggage.

The new facility will initially be equipped with eight telescoping bridges for connecting aircraft with the terminal, which will be expanded to 14 after the renovation of Pulkovo I. However, about one-third of passengers will continue to be shuttled to their planes via bus.

There are 110 passport control desks and 88 check-in desks at the new terminal.

In 2012, Pulkovo served 11 million passengers. According to traffic forecasts, it is likely to process more than 17.3 million passengers by 2025 and has the potential to reach 40 million passengers by 2039.

As the only international airport in northwest Russia, Pulkovo is vying to position itself as

an international hub by 2025, capable of competing with the Moscow airports.

The strategy for hub status involves attracting new airlines that would operate regular long-haul flights directly to St. Petersburg from Japan, the U.S., Asia Pacific and the Middle East.

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Original url:

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