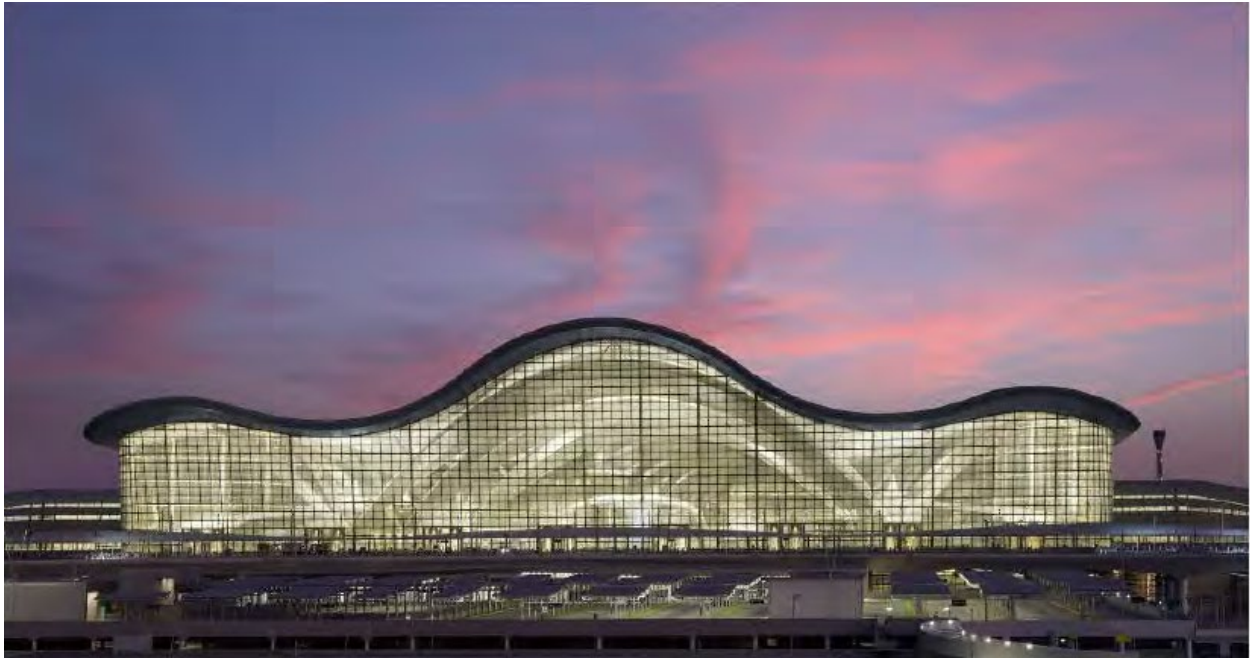




**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**KPF Celebrates the Official Re-Naming of Abu Dhabi International to Zayed International Airport,  
Terminal A**

*Entirely designed by Kohn Pedersen Fox – from airside to landside, building to furniture – the state-of-the-art complex will serve up to 45 million passengers annually, doubling the airport’s capacity, and provide an inspiring new gateway to an increasingly interconnected world.*



**Abu Dhabi – February 12, 2024** – Informed by the undulating sand dunes of the desert and rich geometric patterns of Islamic heritage, Zayed International Airport’s new Terminal A is a civic landmark for the emirate and a gateway for the world, connecting East and West on a global scale. Formally Abu Dhabi International Airport, it is now called Zayed International Airport, Terminal A - following directions of the President of the United Arab Emirates, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, at the end last year.

The airport’s design was conceived and executed entirely by Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF) to deliver an unrivalled travel experience. As one of the world’s largest airport terminals, it will process up to 45 million passengers per year—more than doubling the airport’s current capacity.

Recently featured in *Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning Part One*, it is already established as a point of local pride and a worldwide landmark.

**Elena Sorlini, Managing Director and Interim CEO at Abu Dhabi Airports:**

*“Terminal A at Zayed International Airport is a breathtaking fusion of modern materials, light, and open spaces. Our main focus is always on our customers and passengers as we make them the centre of*

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*everything we do. The terminal is an iconic addition to Abu Dhabi's skyline, but also uses its X-shape design for significant operational efficiency and passenger flow. The architecture has a strong connection with the natural environment of this emirate, where each of the four piers points to and is inspired by Abu Dhabi's desert, sea, city, and oasis, making it a truly timeless piece of architecture for generations to enjoy."*

**James von Klemperer, President, Kohn Pedersen Fox:**

*"We are delighted to see the opening of Terminal A, our largest and most complex airport to date. It's particularly exciting because the building represents so much of the mission of our practice. The changing scales and variety of spaces within the terminal are themes we believe are key to the design of airports, allowing them to become civic landmarks and representatives of the cities they serve. Terminal A is a showcase for Abu Dhabi, and its attention to detail, functionality, and to an inclusive and inspiring design, elevates the experience of travelling for all."*

**Jochen Tombers, Managing Principal, Kohn Pedersen Fox:**

*"It's been a transformational decade for the aviation industry. Tectonic shifts in environmental, technological, and societal demands are forcing operators and designers to radically rethink how airports work – and will work – in the future. As architectural designers and planners, at KPF we believe the future of air travel will be shaped by the integration of technology into every aspect of the airport experience; by the focus on environmental performance and on creating a seamless and vibrant passenger experience. Zayed International Airport, Terminal A is truly a masterpiece that will usher in a new era of airport terminals."*

**Architectural Design – Creating an Inspiring Gateway**

**Mustafa Chehabeddine, Design Principal, Kohn Pedersen Fox:**

*"From the outset, our goal was for the airport to serve the emirate and represent the city of Abu Dhabi, with a design that referenced its cultural and natural environment. We established a design language for continuity and flow throughout the project, developing a set of guidelines that ensured each element of the terminal, from the check-in desks to the lighting chandeliers, felt as though it belonged in the building."*

The terminal is raised above the road level, as if on its own plateau, with its illuminated interior providing a striking presence on the horizon. The building is instantly recognisable to drivers on the Dubai-Abu Dhabi highway, which links the UAE's two largest cities.

On the approach to the terminal, the integrated system of roads and landscape leads passengers to the imposing, 50-metre-tall, free-standing glazed façade and monumental space inside.

The scale of the Departure Hall—a 50-metre-high, largely column-free space—endows the building with an open, outdoor quality, further enhanced by atmospheric lighting. The supporting arches are visually separated from the roof, making the ceiling feel almost weightless. Two four-storey buildings are contained under the central roof and house a 138-room hotel and offices.

A key challenge in the envelope design was to provide ample daylight whilst protecting passengers against glare and overheating. This balance was achieved without the use of external shading devices, which could be affected by sand accumulation. Rather, by purposefully undulating the form of the roof and draping it

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over the façade, the amount of glazing along the piers was cut in half, while inclining the façade further reduces the impact of the desert sun. High-performance glass, with fritting in a graduated pattern, was used where glazing was required to control glare.

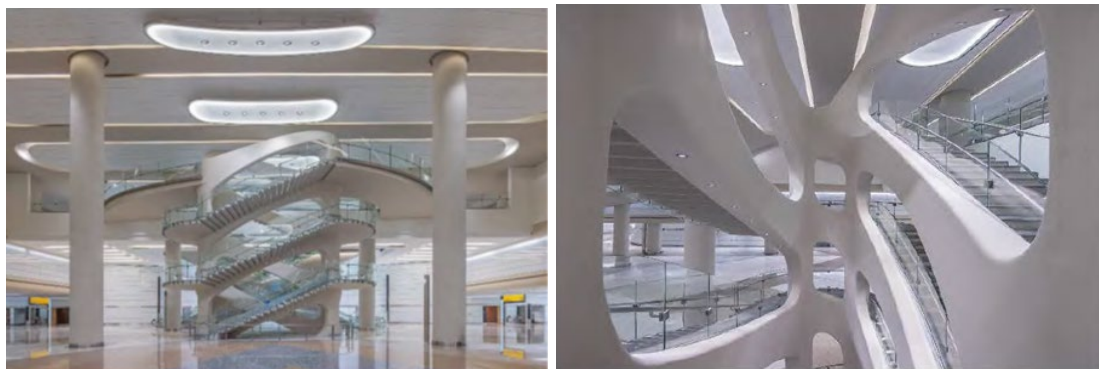
To balance the terminal's monumental scale, KPF created a series of landmarks, including the Sana Al Nour, the Feature Staircase, and the sculptural Shell, to orient passengers and provide moments of interest along their journey.

## Sana Al Nour



Inspired by traditional Islamic architecture, Sana Al Nour was designed by Carpenter | Lowings in collaboration with KPF and the wider design team to direct light and air from the Departures to the Arrivals Hall. One of the largest indoor public art features in the Middle East, it is 22 metres tall by 30 metres wide and features 1,632 individual curved leaves of translucent glass.

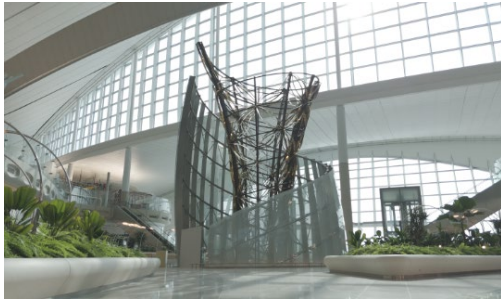
## Feature Staircase



Often airports prioritise the departure experience. At Terminal A, the arrival sequence is elevated in the building to provide dramatic views over the central space. Linking the arrival corridor with the Arrivals Hall, the feature staircase is an exciting first step in one's journey to Abu Dhabi.

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## The Shell



Located at the end of the passengers' journey, the Shell's exterior is composed of glass with a fading frit pattern that becomes more transparent as it rises and picks up colours from the lighting. Inside the glass, a three-dimensional sculpture references the wayfinding patterns that occur throughout the terminal. This element combines polished brass with Cor-Ten steel, generating visual interest through an interplay of smooth and rough surfaces. From here, a spiral stair with concrete treads, suspended within a curved glass enclosure, leads to the floor below.

## Passenger Experience – Setting a New Standard

### **Jens Hardvendel, Director, Kohn Pedersen Fox:**

*"We were driven by focussing on customer experience and comfort while creating the most efficient building form. The X-shaped plan provides the greatest programmatic efficiencies, reducing the average walking distance between points for those leaving, arriving, or transferring from Terminal A."*

Creatively and meticulously planned, Terminal A boasts an average kerb-to-gate walking time of only 12 minutes. Terminals with pier-based layouts offer simpler organization and higher aircraft capacity, but often result in longer walking distances for passengers. At Terminal A, the distance from front door to last gate, and between any two points, was carefully calibrated to encourage walking and avoid the need for an APM (automated people mover) system for the first phase. Parametric geometry modelling was used extensively in the design process to optimise the X-shaped plan for operational efficiency and passenger flow.

To aid wayfinding, each pier of the X is themed, inspired by a different element of Abu Dhabi's character: desert, sea, city, and oasis. As a major airport for international connections, an efficient transfer process was required. The centralised baggage handling system has enabled the fastest transfer connection time of just 45 minutes, which is best in class.

Terminal A will be the first terminal in the world to include all nine biometric airport touchpoints (see infographic in images). In the first phase, biometric solutions will be installed in key areas, such as self-service bag drops, immigration eGates, and boarding gates. These and other cutting-edge technologies, including an advanced baggage handling system capable of processing up to 19,200 bags per hour, will make the Terminal A passenger journey one of the world's most seamless and efficient.

## Anticipating the Future of Air Travel

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## **Mustafa Chehabeddine, Design Principal, Kohn Pedersen Fox**

*“Airport requirements are in a constant state of flux, as technology and security change. As designers we must address the need to adapt within the physical constraints of a terminal. At Terminal A, unprecedented flexibility is created by replacing columns with mega arches. The ideal form was researched using the latest technologies in modelling and structural engineering, to discover the optimum plan, spans, and layout. This solution produces some of the largest spans ever built in interior environments.”*

Appreciating that the nature and operation of air travel is everchanging, the terminal was designed to accommodate varied interior layouts by using large-span, structural arches as an alternative to the fixed column grid found in most modern terminals. The one-roof terminal is 319 metres wide at its widest point, with the central roof, supported by a series of paired leaning arches, spanning up to 180 metres. Elements below can be adjusted on an as-needed basis to accommodate changes in check-in, emigration, security, or otherwise.

## **Constructing a Mega Terminal**

### **Shiju Balakrishnan, Director, Kohn Pedersen Fox:**

*“One of the world’s most-striking buildings, Terminal A required unprecedented construction solutions to deliver some of the largest arches ever built; a 260,000-square-metre stone mosaic floor; and a major artwork, the Sana Al Nour, integrated into the building systems. The dedication and creativity of the team has resulted in a state-of-the-art terminal that inspires wonder.”*

## **Building on KPF’s Aviation Experience**

Zayed International Airport, Terminal A is a significant addition to KPF’s world-class aviation portfolio, which includes, most recently, [Nanning International Airport Terminal 2](#) and [Changi Airport Terminal 5](#) (with Heatherwick Studio).

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## **IMAGES:**

Download images [here](#).

## **NOTES:**

### **Terminal A - Facts and Figures:**

- Up to 45 million passengers a year, more than doubling the airport’s current capacity—10 times the number of annual visitors to New York City’s Statue of Liberty
- 11,000 passengers per hour
- 12 minutes average walking time from kerb to gate, distance optimised to remove the need for APM system
- 45 minutes fastest transfer connection time
- The world’s first airport to feature all nine passenger biometric touchpoints
- Featured in Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part One
- Arrival point of the UAE’s Astronaut, Sultan Al Neyadi, upon his return home
- 28 Airlines

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- 117 global destinations
- 163 retail and food & beverage concessions and two health & beauty spas
- One-roof terminal—maximum arch spans 180 metres (30 St. Mary Axe, better known as The Gherkin, in London, is 180 metres tall)
- Maximum roof width of 319 metres (Heathrow Terminal 5 is 156 metres)
- 50-metre-tall, free-standing glazed façade (taller than a 15-storey building)
- 50-metre-high departure hall (the internal height of the dome of Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, is 55.6 metres)
- Estidama 3 Pearls (Comparable to LEED and BREEAM certifications the Estidama Pearl Building Rating System emphasises energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste reduction)
- More than 7,500 solar panels, powering a 3MW plant
- The Airport was formerly named Abu Dhabi International Airport

## Design Team:

- Project Management – Kohn Pedersen Fox
- Architecture – Kohn Pedersen Fox
- Interior Design – Kohn Pedersen Fox
- Industrial Design & Furniture – Kohn Pedersen Fox
- Structural Engineering (Terminal Building) – Arup
- Blast Engineering – Arup
- Mechanical Engineering – Arup
- Electrical Engineering – Arup
- Fire Engineering – Arup
- Acoustics – Arup
- Terminal Facility Planning – Arup
- Passenger Flow Modelling – Arup
- Structural Engineering (Parking) – Naco
- Airside & Landside Master Planning – Naco
- Terminal Facility Planning – Arup
- Airside and Landside Civil Engineering – Naco
- Airside Services (Gates and Apron) – Naco
- Airport ICT Systems & Security – Naco
- Utilities (Airside and Landside) – Naco
- Baggage Handling Systems – BNP
- Passenger Conveyance – Van Duesen
- Architectural Specifications – Heller & Metzger
- Facade Consultants – Arup
- Sustainability – Trans Solar
- Landscape Design – Cracknell
- Parking – Arup
- Quantity Surveyors – Aecom
- Wayfinding & Signage – Mersons and Evibes
- Space Branding – Evibes

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- Architectural Speciality Lighting Design – Arup
- Code Analysis – CCI
- Retail – The Design Solution

## **About Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF)**

Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF) is one of the world's preeminent architecture firms, providing architecture, interior, programming, and master planning services for clients that include some of the most forward-thinking developers, corporations, entrepreneurs, and institutions in the United States and around the world. The firm's extensive portfolio spans more than 40 countries and includes a wide range of projects from office and residential buildings to civic and cultural spaces to educational facilities. Driven by individual design solutions, rather than a predetermined style, KPF's mission is to create buildings and places of the utmost quality and contextual sensitivity, providing a valuable impact on the cities they inhabit.

As a global practice with a far-reaching impact, KPF endeavors to design lasting architectural solutions that mitigate their lifecycle impact on environmental resources and that protect and enhance the well-being of the communities they serve. The firm has joined AIA, RIBA, and many of its peers in a joint effort to develop the capabilities to design and deliver carbon-neutral buildings by 2030. KPF has also committed to pursuing science-based greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets across its offices and operations worldwide.

**Website:**  
[www.kpf.com](http://www.kpf.com)

**Instagram:**  
[@kohnpedersenfox](https://www.instagram.com/kohnpedersenfox)

**Twitter:**  
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