

Helsinki Airport's three runways

There are currently three runways at Helsinki Airport. The construction process of runways has improved, and the runways of today make it possible to operate smoothly even in demanding conditions.

Helsinki Airport was completed in time for the Olympic traffic of 1952. The construction of the runways began in March 1950. Although the construction site was modern at the time, a lot of work was still done by hand, with shovel and sledgehammer, and by horses.

The first two aircraft, Lokki and Tiira, made an experimental landing on the newly completed 2,000-metre-long main runway on 26 June 1952. The feverish pace of work was interrupted for a moment, as both workers and members of the press got a chance to admire the new airport from above.

Local residents were offered the opportunity to cycle from one end of the runway to the other before the planes landed. Cycling on paved roads was still a relatively rare experience in the 1950s, as in the summer of 1952 the paved area at the airport corresponded to about half of the paved roads in the whole country.

The second runway was completed in 1956 with a length of 1,800 metres. Both runways have been later extended. Runway 1 is currently 3,440 metres, and runway 2 is 2,900 metres.

With the introduction of the third runway, taxiways and a centralised de-icing area in 2002, the size of the airport area almost doubled. Runway 3 became 3,000 metres long. Runway 3 runs parallel to runway 1, but they can be used simultaneously and completely independently.

Finavia in collaboration with Finnish Aviation Museum.
Photo: Pärttyli Virkki / Finnish Aviation Museum.

