

ELITE
CLUB

FLYING

The



Picture courtesy: Singapore Airlines

FIRST FLIER *way*

From private bars and award-winning gourmet creations by world-famous chefs to plush leather seats designed with mahogany wood trimmings, airlines are going all out to claim the top spot in providing unprecedented levels of comfort and luxury to their guests. From the moment you step on that plane, to the moment you alight, these airlines will stop at nothing to woo you and to ensure that your travel is not just travel but an experience. We scoured the skies to bring you the finest First Class airline cabins that will leave you spellbound with their impeccable services and features and make you wish you could fly more often.

Lufthansa

A Lofty Ride

The eight seats in the first class on Lufthansa Airlines are ergonomically designed for maximum possible comfort. Each seat turns into a fully flat, two-metre-long bed. If you want to sleep, just request the crew for a special mattress, which we must add, has been designed by sleep researchers. They will also provide you with fine sheets, pillowcases and a temperature-regulating comforter. The first class cabins are equipped with automatic humidifiers to maintain comfort in the air, and there are sound insulated curtains and footfall sound insulation beneath the carpeting so your flight is as quiet and peaceful as it should be. An interesting feature is the personal wardrobe at your disposal in place of luggage compartments. You can stow your luggage or clothing in case you don't want them creased. Quite innovative, we think.

To entertain yourself, make use of the Lufthansa Media World which contains over 100 video options which include feature films in over eight different languages, international radio channels and games. You can also choose from a varied selection of newspapers and magazines on different subjects and areas of interest. Lufthansa is also the airline with the world's largest Internet-enabled intercontinental fleet and offers wifi service which it calls Lufthansa FlyNet.

But it is the dining experience that will truly impress you. Lufthansa caters to the little details that can make a dining experience from 'ho-hum' to 'wow'. There is exquisite table ware, elements such as individual salt and pepper mills for each passenger, an extra little bowl with olive oil, elegant glass carafes at the First Class bar with three different kinds of water, a porcelain cheese platter – everything to make your meals truly a first class experience. To take that experience to a whole new level, the airline has a signature caviar service which you can enjoy as a separate course. The meals are created by Michelin restaurant chefs in a variety of cuisines, right from Korean to Indian. And thanks to Lufthansa's award-winning wine programme, Vinothek Discoveries, you can enjoy outstanding wines that have been specially selected by Sommelier World Champion and Master of Wine Markus Del Monego, to go with your preferred choice of dish.

Minutes after boarding, guests are presented with Lufthansa's Rimowa amenity kit, which contains all the basics you may need during the flight.





Picture courtesy: Lufthansa

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Picture courtesy: British Airways



British Airways Premium Simplicity

The first class cabin of British Airways comes with a 100 million pound price tag. Bet that got your attention. When a first class cabin comes with that kind of a number, you know they take luxury seriously. But it is rather interesting to note that the 14 first class cabins were designed keeping in mind the principle ‘premium simplicity’, no ostentatious gadgets and gimmicks but instead a focus on simplicity and quality. Drawing on the colours and fabrics of senior ranking British naval officers’ uniforms, known as Naval Barathean, the suite maintains a herring-bone layout so that each guest gets ample privacy and can move around without bumping into other passengers. The deep blue of the seat is mixed with whites and silvers and accentuated with hues of reds, giving it a modern, understated twist on the Union Flag’s red, white and blue. Each cabin has a fully flat bed with a luxurious quilted mattress, crisp white cotton duvet and pillow made from Egyptian cotton, and also uses the latest technology with a sprung diaphragm, which is much more comfortable than the traditional layer of foam on a metal base. A concept of buddy seats in each cabin allows guests to discuss business matters or dine with a fellow passenger in privacy.

A 15-inch screen tv and a selection of films, documentaries, music and audio books makes for a simple yet entertaining flight. You can also connect your laptop, Apple device or digital camera to a bigger screen. While flying British Airways, we would obviously suggest going for their traditional Brit fare. Morning fliers can opt for a traditional English breakfast and regular fliers can start off lunch with amuse bouche and move on to a British fillet of beef with herb crust with dill and chive sauce or Premium British beef burger with Monterey Jack cheese, gherkin, tomato and chunky chips. End your meal with a summer pudding or fresh fruits, whichever you please. The options are many, so choosing is the hard part. And if we are talking about the English, we can’t miss out on the tea, can we? As does Virgin, British Airways, too, has an afternoon tea service where you can treat yourself to finely cut sandwiches, sumptuous cakes and teas from around the world.

But the best part, and we are not ashamed to say it, would be the amenities British Airways offers. Sticking to their motto of attention to detail, the airline conducted a survey to find out what it is that their guests really wanted. Not undermining the importance of small things, the airline developed a first in-flight amenity kit based on research, in partnership with Aromatherapy Associates. The amenity kit is created keeping in mind problems such as jetlag and dehydration and contains a firming eye serum, moisturizer, hand lotion, cleanser, eye gel and other basic necessities like deo, toothpaste and a toothbrush. A little goes a long way, indeed.



Cathay Pacific

A pacific experience

Walking into a first class cabin inside the Hong Kong based airline is akin to walking into an art gallery. Specially designed by world-renowned Foster + Partners, the cabins welcome you with a plush burgundy carpet and are decorated in hand-crafted sculptural artworks created by Maria Lobo and Linda Leviton. The exterior of the suite is a dark, glossy material exclusive to Cathay Pacific's first class cabin and the seats are wrapped in natural leather with subtle linings and stitching for a refined, sophisticated look. Warm-toned natural leather is used extensively on the interiors for a soft, luxurious feel. The armrests are covered in padded leather, and the seats feature custom-made, soft and smooth fabric. Refresh yourself with Ermenegildo Zegna amenity kits for men and Trussardi amenity bags for women plus Aesop brand skincare and toiletries and for added comfort when you sleep, slip into the PYE sleep suit of 100 percent organic cotton.

Just as in Singapore Air, Cathay Pacific also entertains you with hundreds of audio and video options on demand that you can enjoy with BOSE QuietComfort 15 acoustic noise cancelling headphones or if you wish to stream music from your Apple device, use a multi-port connector and keep it charged throughout the flight's duration with a USB port.

If you are a lover of Chinese cuisine, you are in luck. The airline's first class is the first one to have rice cookers, toasters and skillets on board so that whatever you want to eat is freshly cooked, whether it is steamed rice, toasted bread or eggs. The cuisine is truly a taste of Hong Kong and China and the main course is served with a bowl of steaming hot jasmine rice. You can also choose to add Jasmine tea to your meal. And if it is Chinese food all the way, how can there not be noodles? The airline boasts of regional noodle soups that are the perfect light meal on select routes to and from Honk Kong. If you need anything special, such as beef-free dishes or gluten intolerant dishes, the staff will cater to those requests too. The wines on the menu deserve a special mention; Cathay Pacific's wine list includes six specially selected wines from Saint-Émilion, some of which include Château Figeac, Saint-Émilion Premier Grand Cru Classé 2007, Château Dassault, Saint-Émilion Grand Cru Classé 2004 and Château Haut Brisson La Réserve, Saint-Émilion Grand Cru 2009.





Picture courtesy: Cathay Pacific

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Picture courtesy: Qantas



Qantas

A Quantum leap



The airline was granted the best domestic flier last year and with good reason. There are 14 private suites in the first class cabin, each with bedding down service that includes luxurious pillows and duvets and a mattress fitted with sheepskin overlay and cotton sateen sheeting. Each suite also comes with fully adjustable multi-zone massage function. What makes the first class in Qantas special is that each suite is large enough and designed to accommodate comfortably two by way of a leather guest seat. There is also a personal storage option in case you are carrying any valuables along and a gorgeous dresser unit designed with Edelman leather and real wood.

The USP of Qantas's first class cabin, according to us, would have to be their unique restaurant style dining experience. Instead of designing a cabin in a way that only one guest can have his/her meal alone, the airline provides a dining table that is large enough to entertain a fellow passenger. As for the actual dining bit, passengers are served in premium Noritake crockery with Alessi cutlery and have a choice between an extensive eight course tasting menu or 12 main courses, all created by Qantas consulting chef Neil Perry, an acclaimed Australian chef. You can also enjoy the Neil Perry Rockpool Market Inspirations plate which is inspired by seasonal produce and changes every four to six weeks in flight. Qantas also introduced programs such as Sommeliers in the Sky so it should come as no surprise that their wine selection is inspiring and it showcases the diversity of the Australian wine industry. The selection includes two of Champagne's most celebrated, prestige cuvees from the celebrated 2000 vintage, the Taittinger Comtes De Champagne Blanc De Blancs 2000 and Pol Roger Sir Winston Churchill 2000. That Qantas won four awards at the Cellars in the Sky Awards 2012 for their laudable wine selection is a cherry on top of the cake.



There is an inflight entertainment system with touch screens, noise-cancelling headsets and on-demand control. The selection includes a wide range of movies, TV programs, CD albums, interactive games and a selection of radio channels. Passengers travelling in the first class cabins are also handed luxurious SK-II refreshment kits which contain SK-II skincare products, toiletries and an eye mask. The products have been selected for their unique hydrating and nourishing properties so that, when you step off that plane, you don't feel tired but refreshed. There is also a special sleep set which consists of a 100 percent cotton jersey, two piece charcoal grey coloured sleeper suit, branded 'First' with black trims and black, embroidered kangaroo. Each sleeper suit is tied with a black satin ribbon with a pair of slippers branded 'First' and a pair of black socks. All in all, there is no end to being pampered all through your flight.

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Picture courtesy: Singapore Airlines

Singapore Airlines

Luxe Redefined

The eight suites in the first class cabin of Singapore Airlines, with fixed-back shell design and curved side panels for added privacy, are cocoons of luxury. Each suite is 35 inches wide and is upholstered in light tan and acorn leather with mahogany wood trimming and leather stitch lines, giving it a rich and luxurious feel. The suite also comes with specially designed ambient mood lighting, crisp linen and a plush duvet. Sit back and enjoy their advanced entertainment system, which is equipped with surround sound delivered from award-winning Bose QuietComfort 15 noise-cancellation headphones and a 24-inch LCD screen with 1080p full HD resolution. You can also plug in using the USB and HDMI ports, which are built into the seat, to turn your suite into a personal home theatre system.

A luxurious vanity corner within the suite is complete with a mirror, quality skincare products, perfumes by Salvatore Ferragamo, a sleeper suit and suede slippers – exclusively designed by French fashion house Givenchy – an impressive personal touch. And while we are definitely wowed by the uber-stylish features, Singapore Airlines has one more card up its sleeve and that is their onboard meal service. The airline has in place, a special International Culinary Panel that boasts of nine world-renowned chefs, like Matthew Moran (of Masterchef Australia fame), Indian masterchef Sanjeev Kapoor and Chinese culinary giants Sam Leong and Zhu Jun, to name a few. Through the airline's 'Book the Cook,' you are free to select the main course you like. Pair your favourite wine from their extensive wine collection specially curated by Jeannie Cho Lee, the first Asian to be awarded the title Master of Wine, Michael Hill-Smith, Australia's first Master of Wine and Steven Spurrier, from London, who started the first Paris wine school, L'Academie du Vin.

All meals are served on exquisitely patterned fine bone china and crystal ware specially designed by Givenchy. And sip on Dom Perignon Vintage 2004 as soon as you step on board. And if you just feel like having a cuppa joe, you are in luck, for the airline has a fine coffee collection that includes Brazil Santos Bourbon, Colombian Supremo, Kenyan AA Kilimanjaro and Jamaican Blue Mountain. Doesn't get better than that, does it?



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Picture courtesy: Virgin Atlantic

Virgin Atlantic - Pure Bliss

The brand Virgin, just like its owner Richard Branson, has a penchant for doing everything with a strong dose of flamboyance. It is this flamboyance that is reflected in the airline's Upper Class suites, as well. Each suite, 33 feet wide and 6.6 feet long, is made from espresso leather and has direct aisle access. But here is the interesting part – instead of a seat that extends to a bed, passengers are provided with a luxury leather armchair that flips over into a separate bed at the touch of a button. Each suite comes with a handy flip down cocktail table and push panel armrest, plus a new fully adjustable

reading light and a conveniently located headphone jack. And did we mention that the cabin is designed in the trademark red with Swarovski crystal accents?

The first British airline to offer SMS texting and email facilities onboard and the first European airline to offer live news updates onboard, the First Class suite comes equipped with an Aeromobile system that lets you make and receive phone calls from your own mobile phone. And if you are bored, hook up to their entertainment system called JAM, which is connected to a 12.1 inch touch screen monitor and a touch screen

handset. Virgin offers up to 300 hours of entertainment on demand and what's more, you get served ice creams during movies. If you fancy a drink, head to their futuristic on board bar which happens to be the longest in the sky. It is separate from your cabin and is spacious enough to socialise with other fliers as well. Fine dining is granted but Virgin goes one step further to customize your meals according to your flight time. If you are on a day flight, take your pick from a selection of cheese, biscuits, fruit and chutneys, and follow them up with a glass of port. And if you are not feeling too hungry, go for



their 'Graze Menu', which offers a range of substantial hot and cold snacks you can order to your seat whenever you like. Night time fliers can dine in the Virgin Clubhouse so that they can catch up on sleep once they board or opt for a short and sweet express supper menu in the flight. But the most delightful touch, and we think you would agree, would have to be the Afternoon Tea Trolley, which is served to guests travelling on afternoon flights. The trolley is complete with a fancy cake stand, finger sandwiches, scones and much more. Full points to Virgin for pampering their guests to the hilt.



SWISS

Flying Finesse

SWISS boasts of eight tastefully designed First class cabins that come equipped with adjustable privacy panels and other technical features that let you convert your suite into your own private office. The cabin also has a large table and extra ottoman designed so you and another SWISS First passenger can conveniently hold meetings together. When you are done, all you have to do is tuck it discreetly away in the side wall. At the touch of a button, the seat extends to a two-metre, fully horizontal bed.

Every SWISS First seat has its own built-in individual screen and the inflight entertainment programme which provides current movies, TV shows, music channels, numerous CDs and games. The film and music selection is updated every month. Every seat also features a telephone and a laptop connection so that your work never gets interrupted. SWISS presents a range of inflight food that showcases the best of Switzerland's cuisine. So when you are on board, don't miss out on some of their signature brand offerings, such as Balik salmon, Sprüngli chocolate and Swiss cheese. If you are flying overnight, you can opt for a speedy service of SWISS's à la carte menus and use your time on-board better. With its award-winning 'SWISS Taste of Switzerland' inflight culinary programme and the 'SWISS Traditions' concept that was launched in February 2012 for its European services, SWISS offers regional specialities from all over the country aboard its flights. And to finish off, you can go for a hot cup of freshly brewed Swiss NESPRESSO coffee.

If you are in the mood for a drink, choose from their broad range of Swiss and foreign wines, beer, champagne, sparkling wine and digestifs. The airline is also assisted by Chandra Kurt, one of Switzerland's best-known wine writers, an international wine consultant and the recipient of the 2006 'Goldene Rebschere' from the Swiss wine world.

Each SWISS First customer is offered comfort items such as pyjamas by Zimmerli of Switzerland, slippers, pillows and blankets for their use on board. Guests also receive a Bally amenity kit containing socks, a sleeping mask, a toothbrush, toothpaste, paper tissues, earplugs and top-quality products of Swiss luxury brand La Prairie. All First restrooms are also stocked with La Prairie hand cream, moisturizing lotion and facial sprays.





Picture courtesy: Swiss