

LUXURY AIR TRAVEL EXPANDING FROM FIRST CLASS SEATS TO PRIVATE SUITES



First class travel is a luxury that many tourists would like to spoil themselves with if the opportunity arose but, in many of these cases, all they would most likely ask for is the better food, entertainment options and leg room that has become associated with this small step up. Now, the boundaries of the highest class of air travel are being pushed far beyond the benefits of just extra privacy and reclining seats and airlines like Etihad Airways and Air France KLM are suggesting that the potential is perhaps limitless. These airlines have come to appreciate that high-paying air travellers bring in a disproportionate amount of revenue and are therefore a key target market. As a result, they are prepared to go extremely far in re-imagining luxury travel to capture the interest of the wealthiest flyers and have come up with some of the most extraordinary prospects in air travel that have so far been conceived.

Introducing the new class in luxury air travel for the wealthiest passenger - the private suite.

In a step up from a single seat with a few extra luxuries and the benefit of more personal space, Air France KLM are getting ready to unveil their high-end private suite, aptly named "La Premiere". This 32 square foot unit offers a fully reclining seat and hotel linen for comfort, a curtain and a 24-inch touchscreen and there is no need to worry about getting a window seat or aisle seat because it has four windows to enjoy the view from. This option is impressive but Etihad Airways are going even further with a suite that makes standard class look like the cargo hold. Their three-room option is substantially bigger at 125 square feet, has its own private bathroom and, at \$43,000 dollars, is essentially like flying across the world in the most expensive hotel room imaginable. These giant suites will only be available on Airbus's Superjumbo, the A380, as it can offer two decks and therefore is the only model that has adequate space.

Exploring the practicalities of this style of air travel and the potential for more widespread use.

Naturally, these types of large suites and luxury private spaces are only really practical on the larger airlines that have the space for conversions - like the Airbus A380 - and on flights where space and comfort are truly desirable, which is why these options are only currently being considered for certain long haul and trans-Atlantic flights. However, depending on the success of these initial ventures and the concept's popularity with wealthier clientele, they could eventually be used on shorter routes should they see a profit in it. It is easy to question why the super rich would pay thousands of dollars for a suite across the Atlantic when that means they are probably rich enough for a private plane but this idea is all about latching onto the wealthiest of travellers, getting them to spend as much money as possible with and giving them extreme privileges in return. By snaring the wealthiest travellers as well as those wanting budget flights, airlines really can cater for everyone and reap the profits.

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