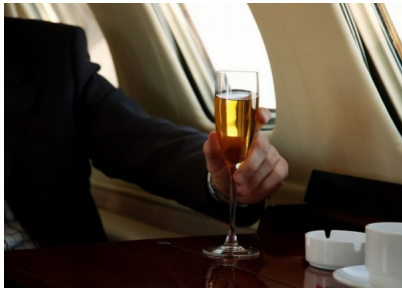


Business Travelers Fly in Style



Business class has changed considerably during the last fifteen years. Whilst fifteen years ago business class meant just a wider seat and a free cocktail nowadays the facilities include personal entertainment, gourmet dining and Internet connection.

According to Mike Boyd, president of the Boyd Group, an aviation consulting firm in Evergreen, Colo: "What used to be first class is now just being called business". He also said that they have lowered the number of seats in business class from twenty to ten.

British Airways is planning to invest L100 million (\$190 million) in Club World, its business class facilities. It is going to provide wider flat-beds and on-demand entertainment, consisting of 100 movie and TV channels and 70 audio programs for passengers. The growth of business class popularity is also caused by physiological reason: a company won't pay its employee a trip in first class but second (business) class seems to be all right. That is one of reasons why business class became the main battleground for trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific revenue.

Flying first class is very expensive but brings luxury. Malaysia Airlines, for example, transport its passengers in the UK and France to the airport via helicopter or a limo. British Airways has its first class cabin based on the interior of a Rolls Royce.

A round-trip first class ticket from London to Hong Kong on Cathay Pacific costs \$12,373, and New York to Hong Kong rings in at almost \$16,000. On Malaysia Airlines, an Los Angeles to Kuala Lumpur round-trip first class ticket is \$8,800; Bangkok can be almost \$10,000.

"The carriers make a lot of money on people who pay premium fares," says Bob Harrell, president of New York City-based consulting firm Harrell Associates. But not all the passengers in first class did actually pay \$10,000 to be there. There could be an employee of the airlines. Another possibility is a passenger who got a reward. Most airline rewards programs offer upgrades for their top flyers, those in their Platinum, Diamond or Gold categories, says Harrell Associates, an aviation industry consulting firm based in New York City. "These people get upgrades routinely, or free tickets or rewards miles if they can't get an upgrade."

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