

Flying Premium Economy: Soaring in Style

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

When it comes to booking flights anywhere in the world, cost is usually one of the most important considerations for many of us, but comfort can also be another major factor. If you're going to be cramped up for hours on end, especially on international, long-haul flights, you want to know that it's going to be as pleasant as possible.

However, for many of us, the option of flying business class is simply out of our reach, as this is one privilege that can cost many thousands to enjoy. For a long time, growing up, I thought that there should be some form of compromise class, between business and coach. In recent years, airlines have begun to think that way as well and have introduced what is known by many as a premium economy class.

It's a relatively new concept and many airlines still have yet to introduce it, but amongst those who have are British Airways, three of Virgin's brands - Virgin Atlantic, America and Blue; Air France, Qantas, Japan Airlines, and Air New Zealand.

Of course, it costs more money than traveling by coach, but it's much cheaper than a business class seat. How much more are we talking? Well, if an economy class flight costs in the region of \$900 between the US and the UK, then you might expect to find a premium economy seat in the region of \$1600. These costs can, of course, vary dramatically and we've seen some premium economy seats for only a couple of hundred dollars more than coach class. As with all airfares, it's worth watching for the dates you want to see if there's any variation in the prices. If you can be flexible on the dates, then you may have even more luck.

The prices you're looking at with flying premium economy are still much better than the \$2700 you could pay for the delights of business class, but let's be honest, it's still a lot of extra money, especially if you've got a big party traveling with you. So what do you get for your money?

The first, and for many, the most important, thing that you get is extra legroom. That's a particularly important consideration when you're going to be cooped up in a seat for many hours, as every extra inch will make a huge difference to you! I must admit that the first time we booked a premium economy seat, I was a bit skeptical about a few extra inches, but I was stunned at how much luxurious it made the flight feel. I've found that I can even get out of my seat across my husband without

having to make him get up, and I can even bring my knees up in front of me, which is a very pleasant change from coach class.

Most airlines offer between five and seven inches of extra legroom, but it's definitely worth checking with the airline you plan on flying with, as legroom can vary dramatically. For example, with both British Airways and Virgin Atlantic you get 38", but Virgin America and Blue only offer 35" and 34" respectively and, with Air France, it's only 34"--36". Of the major airlines offering a premium economy class, Qantas is the most generous with legroom, offering up to 42".

You'll also find that the width of your seat is, on average about an inch or two wider, with an extra couple of inches in the recline of the seat. Other extras related to your seat usually include a combination of adjustable headrest, leg rest and lumbar support for your back, all of which does make for a more comfortable journey.

Away from your seat, there are other on-board benefits, including an improved food service, larger personal TV screens for you to watch movies or TV shows, and, in some cases, power ports for laptops, if there's anything urgent you need to catch up on in-flight. You may also be offered free alcohol during your flight and perhaps a drink to enjoy before you even take off.

Before you get on the aircraft, the chances are that you'll also notice the difference. Obviously, all airlines do differ, but the general trend is to offer a dedicated check-in facility, which should mean a much shorter wait. When you get to your gate at the airport, you'll probably find that you have priority boarding as well, heading on to the aircraft as soon as business class passengers have boarded. It allows you a little more time to get relaxed for the long flight ahead of you.

Baggage allowances are changing all the time, sadly usually meaning you can take less with you, but flying premium economy should give you some extra allowances. It may be another case or it may be an increased weight of your cases, but either way, it's especially helpful when you fly home with a few souvenirs from your trip! You may even get priority baggage reclaim when you arrive at your destination, which helps to get you on your way and enjoying your vacation even quicker.

Perhaps the most important question is still unanswered. Is it worth the additional cost to fly in a premium economy class? If you'd asked me that before I'd tried it, the chances were that I'd probably have said no, nothing can be worth that much extra money, but now I'm a convert. Providing we're financially able to, we always fly in premium economy these days, as it's a much more relaxing way to travel and is so much

.....

more affordable than business class travel. Having said that, we did get an excellent deal to fly business class on our next trip to the States, so maybe after that, we'll be flying business class in the future, who knows?!

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

Article last updated: 12/10/2009

View the latest version online at:

<http://www.passporter.com/articles/flying-premium-economy.html>

Copyright by Cheryl Pendry. All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this publication may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act. Resale of this guide is strictly prohibited without the copyright holder's permission. If you purchased this publication from someone other than PassPorter Travel Press, please call 877-929-3273.

View more PassPorter Articles online at <http://www.passporter.com/articles/>