

Flying Upper Class: Soar in Style on Virgin Atlantic

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Have you ever dreamed of flying in style and heading out either business or first class? I'm sure most of us have in our time and, if you're anything like me, that dream has lasted for as long it takes to work out that it'll take thousands more than you'd budgeted for! I could never justify paying the prices that airlines ask, that was, until a fateful day in spring of last year.

I went to book our Premium Economy seats on Virgin Atlantic, complaining vehemently at how much those seats were, compared to a year earlier. The website took me through to the payment page, at which point, they usually tell me how many thousands it would cost to upgrade even further. Only this time was very different. I looked at the screen, rubbed my eyes a couple of times, checked again and I was still seeing what I thought I could see. We were being offered an upgrade to Upper Class, Virgin Atlantic's version of business or first class for just £200 each (about \$350) more than the seats we had originally looked at. It didn't take us long, maybe a matter of seconds, to decide between us that this was too good a deal to pass up and we should go for it. We went ahead and booked it, exceptionally excited, and then my research began into exactly what we could expect of our flight.

Because we had booked the cheapest type of Upper Class ticket, we didn't qualify for the chauffeur driven car, but that is an option and obviously one that will appeal to business travelers, particularly as it allows them to quickly clear check-in and security, limiting the time you have to spend at the airport.

However, there were some bonuses to the ticket type we had chosen. Like many airlines, Virgin Atlantic offers an exclusive lounge to their Upper Class customers at many of the airports they serve and we were lucky enough to be able to enjoy one of their flagship Clubhouse lounges at London Gatwick, before we left the country. This literally has everything you can think of, with specific areas for children, including a children's play area, a section for teenagers, complete with Wii and computers with Internet access, along with areas for people to lounge in on comfy chairs or slightly more formal tables and chairs.

You're able to select from a menu of various breakfast foods and snacks, along with a selection of drinks, including alcoholic ones. The reason their menu contains mainly breakfast items is because all of the flights from this airport leave in the morning. At London Heathrow airport,

where we were lucky enough to be able to pay to sample their Clubhouse lounge, it runs pretty much all day, as the airport is much larger, with flights heading out at all times of the day and evening. Their options for dinner were something to be seen -- you could easily enjoy a three course meal of your choice there.

To help you pass the time, you can also enjoy a complimentary treatment at the Cowshed Spa and Internal Garden. As the name suggests, with subtle green tones, it's designed with very much a natural feel to it. What better way could there be to relax before your flight?

When it came to time to call our flight, they had the whole thing down to a fine art. By the time we walked down to our gate, they were boarding our flight and we walked straight on board, loving the fact that, this time, we could turn left and head into the Upper Class cabin. I'd already seen from the cabin layouts on their website that perhaps one of the downsides to flying Upper Class is that you're not really able to sit next to each other. On the way out, we were able to get seats right at the front of the plane opposite each other and, on the way home, we were behind each other.

The reason for this is simple. The very expansive and luxurious seats actually convert into a fully flat bed! It's all done at the touch of a button, with the flip side of the exceptionally comfortable seat turning into a foam bed. I must admit that when it was turned into a bed, I did look at it very suspiciously, thinking that it would probably be the least comfortable thing I'd ever slept on, but not a bit of it. Admittedly, an ordinary bed does provide more support, but it was certainly pleasant enough to get some shut eye during the flight.

Each seat does come with its own footstool, which can also double as a seat if you want to chat to your loved one, which we did a couple of times. And when it comes to food time, there's a table that folds down, ready for you to dine. Of course, there's also a table cloth and real cutlery and crockery and you can pick the meal that suits you best. Each meal comes with a choice of wine and, if you want any other drinks, either alcoholic or non-alcoholic, there's a bar in the cabin. The staff will happily bring your drinks to you or you can head up to the bar and chat to them up there, which we did on a couple of occasions.

It all helps to ensure that your flight is the smoothest, most enjoyable that it can be and, as a result, the time flew by a lot faster than it certainly seems to when you're in any other class. Even when you arrive, you notice some little touches, designed to make you feel super-special. Those traveling in Upper Class are the first allowed off the plane,

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meaning that you get to immigration and customs before anyone else and often you'll find you have your own luggage carousel, with your cases appearing before anyone else's, again helping to make the whole process as seamless and as fast as possible.

Would we fly Upper Class again? Absolutely. However, as with many things, it's all dependent on money, but now that we've tried it once, we'd certainly be prepared to put more few hundred pounds into the experience, so maybe if another good deal comes along, we'll get to enjoy again in the future.

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!](#)

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