

# British Airways investing millions of pounds in enhancing customer experience

British Airways recently launched its investment plans for customers. Alex Cruz, British Airways' chairman and CEO, said: "We will invest and innovate where our customers value it most and differentiate ourselves with a unique onboard experience and service. We're investing in Club World, focusing now on improved catering and sleep and, in the future, on a new seat.

## The investments include:

- £400m in Club World (long-haul business class)
- Introducing Club Europe on UK domestic services
- New lounges
- First Wing direct security and lounge access at Heathrow
- Latest generation Wi-Fi fitted on long-haul and short-haul fleets over the next two years
- Self-service check-in and biometric boarding gates to speed up the airport journey

"We're investing in the best Wi-Fi in the sky, new lounges and direct access to security and our lounges for our First customers, via our new First Wing at Heathrow. We're also aligning our business cabin and service across all our flights by introducing Club Europe on domestic flights."

## Enhancing Club World

The airline will be investing £400m in Club World (long-haul business class) which will enhance the experience of dining at 38,000 feet and deliver an excellent night's sleep when flying with British Airways. From June new catering will be introduced to the Heathrow business lounges to improve food quality and extend the breakfast service to 11am. In the air from July fresh new linen, bigger pillows designed for sleep comfort, a soft mattress topper, and duvet to give customers all they need for a great night's sleep will be supplied.

From September a new restaurant-style premium dining service will begin in Club World, with display trolleys allowing customers to select dishes from a choice of freshly prepared starters and desserts served on beautiful new table settings. A revamped service approach will be delivered to customers with a new culinary boutique experience.

These changes will launch on flights between London Heathrow and New York JFK, before being rolled out across the rest of the long-haul network during 2018.

The airline is also developing options for a new seat in Club World with direct aisle access in 2019. Details will be released in due course.

## **Changes in service style to reflect in Club Europe cabin**

And the changes in service style will also be reflected in the Club Europe cabin on short-haul, including new crockery, cabin crew pouring wine and champagne for customers and improved menus on board, which focus more closely on the length and time of day of the flight. In other Club Europe news, the short-haul business cabin is being introduced on UK domestic flights this week with prices starting from £199 return.

Cruz said: "Club World and Club Europe are vital elements of what we offer and play a big part in customer satisfaction levels. We are the only UK airline to have both short-haul and long-haul networks and we want to ensure that customers connecting across our network receive a consistent and distinctive British Airways experience."

## **Expanding lounges, enhancing customer experience**

Business and First customers will notice changes in lounges too, starting with the new complex at Gatwick Airport's South Terminal. With sweeping views of the runway, the new First and Club lounges have 40 percent more floor space than the airline's former lounge in North Terminal.

An investment of \$110m (£88m) is planned on lounge facilities in the US. New York's JFK Terminal 7 will receive over \$65m (£52m) worth of investment over the next two years: a refurbishment of the First and Club World lounges as well as improvements to the customer experience at check-in, security and the boarding gates.

Boston's new lounge has just opened, coinciding with the A380 starting on the Heathrow-Boston route. The facility is 30 percent larger than the previous lounge, has direct gate access and stunning views of the Boston skyline. Next year Aberdeen and Rome's lounges will be revamped, and Geneva will be expanded. Further investment is planned in San Francisco, Johannesburg, Manchester and Chicago. Heathrow's Terminal 5 lounges will be revamped over the next few years, starting this month with the flagship Concorde Room for First customers, which will have new furniture and a refreshed look and feel.



First Wing - direct access to lounges

In other premium news, British Airways launched its exclusive new 'First Wing' check-in area for First customers at Heathrow Terminal 5. It includes a dedicated two-lane security channel and direct access to the Galleries First Lounge and Concorde Room for the first time. The two new security lanes also reduce the number of travellers passing through the current South security lanes, helping to speed up the journey for Club World customers too. A relaxed seating area is located after security for customers to gather their possessions in an unhurried atmosphere.

The First Wing gives First and Gold Executive Club customers far greater privacy and exclusivity with a dedicated combined check-in and Fast Track space.

## **Rollout of latest generation Wi-Fi**

From April, customers in all cabins will start to enjoy the latest generation of Wi-Fi as it's rolled out across British Airways' long-haul network. Short-haul Wi-Fi will commence later in the year when British Airways becomes the first airline to offer connectivity using Europe's first ever 4G high-speed in-flight network with the aim of having 90 percent of its total fleet connected by 2019.

Customers will be able to use their own devices to browse the internet, access email and check social media. In addition, they will have the ability to stream video content from popular sites such as Netflix and YouTube.

There will be a choice of two options: Simply Connect or Connect Plus. Customers can choose whether they connect for one hour, four hours or the full flight. Simply Connect supports basic web browsing, email and instant messaging with prices from £4.99 while Connect Plus provides a faster connection speed supporting video streaming services from £7.99.

## **Self-service technology**

Technology is also helping customers to simplify and speed up their journeys through the airport, with the opening of the airline's first three automated self-boarding gates for UK domestic flights at Heathrow Terminal 5. The automated gates use facial recognition technology to allow customers to simply scan their boarding pass, before walking straight onto the aircraft. British Airways colleagues will still be on hand to help customers who need a little extra assistance.



Self-service boarding gates

Additionally, customers are now able to self-service bag drop at Heathrow and Gatwick, enabling them to label and drop off their bags before proceeding through security.

## **A step-change in the British Airways travel experience**

Alex Cruz adds: “It’s simple really – we need to deliver what our customers value most, where they value it most. We need to focus on enhancing premium - offering contemporary service, improved catering and lounges and a consistent experience. In economy, where we know that price is the driver, we need to focus our efforts on delivering more seats at the lowest fares and giving customers choices.”

“We have an exciting time ahead. Alongside these initiatives, we’re also making changes behind the scenes to increase operational efficiency and reliability through new technologies including automatic boarding gates and a re-designed baggage arrivals process. And we’re making a commitment to achieve the highest standards of cleanliness and equipment reliability in all our cabins. Our customers will really notice a step-change in their travel experience with us.”

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