

TRAVEL

Easing the pain of an 18-hour flight

Airlines add amenities as they bet on the success of ultra-long-haul routes

BY ELAINE GLUSAC

Last month, the first run of the world's longest nonstop flight — a 9,534-mile, 18½-hour journey from Singapore to Newark on Singapore Airlines' new Airbus A350-900 Ultra Long Range aircraft — touched down, raising the bar for super-long-haul travel, which most industry experts define as any flight over 8,000 miles one way.

New, lighter and more fuel-efficient dual-engine aircraft — the Airbus model and Boeing's Dreamliner — make flying for nearly a day economically viable, and the number of ultra-long-haul flights is increasing.

Singapore's new route, which takes 18 hours 45 minutes in the opposite direction, isn't the only rear-numbing new itinerary. In March, Qantas Airways began a London-to-Perth route, the third-longest flight at about 9,000 miles, according to the aviation industry consultancy OAG, after Qatar Airways' Doha-Auckland route. In September, Cathay Pacific Airways began flying 8,153 miles, its longest route, between its base in Hong Kong and Washington. In late November, Air New Zealand plans to add Auckland-Chicago service, its longest flight at about 8,200 miles.

As flight times grow, carriers are experimenting with a range of things, like healthy menus and onboard gyms, to make almost 20 hours in the air more bearable. Business class passengers are the beneficiaries of most of the investment. Some airplanes, like Singapore Airlines' new craft, contain only business (a recent round-trip fare was \$5,000) and premium economy seats (\$1,498 round trip in December) that are more spacious than standard coach. But across the industry, even regular economy passengers will find perks.

HEALTHIER AND BETTER-TIMED FOOD Business-class fliers on Singapore Airlines from Newark can still get dishes by its partner chef, Alfred Portale, of Gotham Bar and Grill, but with its new Newark-Singapore route, the airline is introducing meal options created by the Canyon Ranch spa. Available in both



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classes of service, the dishes might include prawn ceviche (170 calories), seared organic chicken and zucchini noodles (370 calories) and lemon angel food cake (140 calories).

Working with researchers from the University of Sydney's Charles Perkins Center, Qantas offers lemon and ginger kombucha, wake-up shots of probiotic-infused juice and sleep-inducing tea in its top two classes. In addition, dining is delayed to align closer to meal times at the destination to help with time-zone changes.

And then there's food on demand. Rather than requiring passengers to climb over sleeping neighbors to reach the galley for a Coke midflight (not necessarily bad, from a movement perspective), Air New Zealand will allow passengers on its newest super long-haul flight to order snacks via the touchscreen entertainment system.

RELAXATION, HYDRATION AND YOGA Well-being exercises on some of the new

long-haul flights go beyond the extend-and-flex directions of older exercise programs. In some cases, they are beginning before passengers even get on the plane.

When it began its Perth-London route earlier this year, Qantas created a transit lounge at the Perth airport for business

Dining is delayed to align more closely with meal times at the destination to help with time-zone changes.

ness-class travelers that features stretching and breathing classes every 15 minutes, light therapy in the shower suites designed to help travelers adjust to time changes, and a hydration station with fruit-infused water and herbal tea. An open-air terrace is open to fliers in all classes of travel.

Earlier this year, Cathay Pacific joined with the Pure Yoga studio to start

an in-flight wellness program called Travel Well with Yoga. Six videos feature yoga and meditation exercises to improve circulation, mobility and relaxation.

Singapore Airlines' partnership with Canyon Ranch extends to stretching exercises demonstrated by the spa's exercise physiologists in videos on the seat-back entertainment systems. The flight's video library also includes sleep strategies.

GYMS, BARS AND NURSERIES

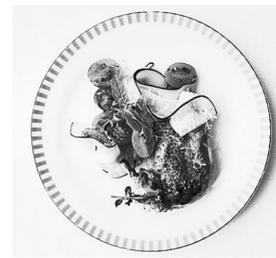
In 2005, according to a report in The Guardian, Richard Branson promoted having onboard casinos, gyms and beauty salons during flights, though his plans never fully materialized.

More recently, Middle Eastern carriers, like Etihad Airways, which offers an apartmentlike suite on some flights, and Emirates, which offers showers, have offered deluxe amenities in their highest service classes.

Now Qantas aims to reimagine how



Clockwise from left: Singapore Airlines now flies direct from Singapore to Newark; Qantas's new lounge in Perth, Australia; a lighter meal for long Singapore flights.



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aircraft cabins are designed to possibly include bars, children's nurseries and exercise areas. Its new exploratory program, called Project Sunrise, has challenged aircraft makers to design planes that could fly more than 20 hours between Sydney and London or New York by 2022. The airline is exploring how it can convert space not suited to seats into bars, stretching zones and work and study areas.

The efforts, in part, are motivated by Australia's remoteness. "We're not a hub carrier, we're an end-of-line carrier," said Phil Capps, the head of customer experience at Qantas. "We have to take the customer more seriously than other carriers might in global hubs."

SITTING AND SLEEPING IN COACH

The most exciting onboard amenities that have been proposed, such as gyms, tend to be restricted to business and first class, and analysts think such offerings, if they can't be monetized, won't happen. But Qantas is also considering converting part of its cargo holds on long-haul aircraft to economy sleeping bunks and areas for passengers to walk around and stretch their legs.

When Air New Zealand begins its service between Chicago and Auckland with the Dreamliner 787-9 V2, the 15- and 16-hour flights, depending on the direction of travel, will include two coach classes. In Premium Economy, 33 seats will offer 41- to 42-inch seat pitch, leg and foot rests. In the 215-seat economy cabin, the Economy Skycouch combines three seats sold together with leg rests that extend 90 degrees up to create a five-foot, one-inch couch for a more comfortable place to sleep.

The growth of long-haul routes has even revived dreams of supersonic travel 15 years after the Concorde was canceled.

In Denver, a company called Boom is building a supersonic 55-seat plane that it hopes to begin testing next year that would eventually fly from New York to London in 3 hours 15 minutes, rather than seven hours.

Advice for the introverted traveler

TRAVEL TIPS

BY JUSTIN SABLICH

One person's idea of a great vacation might include days jam-packed with sightseeing and nights soaking up a destination's party scene. But if you're an introvert, not so much.

Perhaps, like Susan Cain, the author of "Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking," you'd rather spend a vacation on the beach reading a book than partying on a cruise ship.

"Introverts feel 'just right' with less stimulation, as when they sip wine with a close friend, solve a crossword puzzle or read a book," Ms. Cain, a self-proclaimed introvert, writes. "Extroverts enjoy the extra bang that comes from activities like meeting new people, skiing slippery slopes and cranking up the stereo."

Keeping your personality type in mind when planning a trip can make for a more enjoyable experience for everyone involved, whether you're traveling solo or with your extroverted friends or partner. Here are a few tips to consider.

SPLIT UP (FOR AT LEAST A LITTLE BIT) Being on a trip with others doesn't mean you have to do everything together. Communicating your personal preferences with your traveling party is an important first step.

"Make an agreement in advance about how you're going to travel together," Ms. Cain said. For introvert-extro-

vert couples, it's O.K. to split up (temporarily) to focus on things you both enjoy doing.

There are also activities that both introverts and extroverts can enjoy, for at least part of the day.

"When we travel to cities, my husband and I very much like spending long hours sitting at a cafe and people watching," said Sophia Dembling, the author of several books on introversion, including "The Introvert's Way: Living a Quiet Life in a Noisy World."

SOLO TRAVEL? IT DEPENDS While introverts can share many of the same traits, like wanting lots of "me time," there is no set of rules that apply to them all.

One may assume that solo travel would appeal to most introverts, but there are aspects of it that align better with extroverts.

"I have never been drawn to solo travel, and some of the people I know who



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like it best are extroverts, who are very happy to make a new pack of friends in every city they visit," Ms. Cain said.

But solo travel can be a perfect fit for those who crave the personal freedom that it allows. "I really love the untethered, own-my-time feeling of traveling alone," Ms. Dembling said. "You learn little tricks to feel more comfortable, like eating early before restaurants fill with couples and groups, or eating at the bar, which can be convivial."

If you are traveling solo, there are types of activities that can keep you feeling connected but not drained.

"Small group tours can work well; so can programs, such as places where you go to learn a language or a skill, such as cooking a new cuisine. These experiences usually give you the company of others, but plenty of time to yourself, too," Ms. Cain said.

LOCATION CAN MATTER One kind of destination may appeal to one introvert and not another. "I don't think there is an ideal type of destination. Introverts are all kinds of people with all kinds of interests," Ms. Dembling said.

But most introverts are likely to enjoy a place that can offer opportunities to recharge after being around people, or activities that allow for quiet contemplation even in crowds.

"I absolutely love San Miguel de Allende, in Mexico," Ms. Cain said. "It has gorgeous architecture, it's filled with artists and galleries and it's quite friendly but an ideal place for dreaming and whiling away the afternoon in a plaza or cafe."

Single parents need vacations, too

BY SHIVANI VORA

When Tanya McNally of Tampa, Fla., was planning a vacation a few years ago for herself and her two teenage sons, she worried about traveling with them alone.

"I was very aware that we would be going on a family trip in what was not a traditional family setup of two parents," Ms. McNally said.

Amanda Norcross, the features editor of the online travel magazine Family Vacation Critic, said that the travel industry is paying more attention to single-parent family vacations because the number of solo-parent households has increased in the United States. (According to 2016 statistics from the United States Census Bureau, the percentage of children living in families with two parents fell from 88 percent in 1960 to 69 percent in 2016.)

Ms. McNally and her sons went to the Caribbean on Disney Cruise Line because she had heard how it accommo-

dates single-parent families. All four of Disney's ships have planned activities for solo parents, and every cruise offers children and teenagers clubs with activities all day that are included in the cost of the trip.

The cruise line CroisiEurope normally charges single adult travelers a supplement fee that's 30 percent of the total cruise fare (a weeklong all-inclu-

All four of Disney's cruise ships have planned activities for solo parents.

sive trip costs around \$2,500). In July and August, however, this fee is waived for single parents on select European cruises when they're traveling with children who are 16 or younger; children on these itineraries also sail free. In addition, the supplement is waived on the company's Christmas market cruises on the Danube and Rhine Rivers.

Dyan McKie, who lives in Melbourne, Australia, where she is the brand manager for family adventures at Intrepid Travel, said she and her 5-year-old daughter, Beatrice, feel out of place when they're around other families on their travels together. "Sometimes we want company for dinner or when we're doing an activity, but I don't want to force ourselves on anyone," Ms. McKie said.

Ms. McKie created six tours for single-parent families to Costa Rica, Thailand, India, Egypt, Vietnam and Morocco. The trips can last eight to 15 days, with prices of \$555 to \$3,185, airfare not included.

In Britain, Virgin Holidays offers trips, including airfare, to 10 Caribbean resorts where parents don't pay a singles supplement and children get a discount. "Single parents were telling us that they needed affordable vacation options for their kids, and that's what we're trying to give them," said Joe Thompson, the company's managing director.

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