At the airport- Classes and Low Cost Airlines

*Overview*

Usually there are 3 classes available to passengers on the plane: first, business and economy class.

**The first class** is different from the others because it offers the highest level of privacy and comfortThe benefits include large reclining seats, lots of legroom, excellent meals, more privacy than usual, a lavatory reserved only for first class passengers and a greater choice of movies and games for clients` entertainment. First class passengers can use an especially luxurious lounge at the airport before and after their flight. The lounge can offer private rooms, meals, spa treatments, gym etc.

**Business class** is a class above the economy class, however less luxurious than the first class. The benefits include better seats, more **legroom** and good meals. Business class seats are in the front part of the plane but they are not completely separated from the economy class.

**Economy class** is the lowest class in a plane. Passengers in economy class are served only soft drinks and snacks (sandwiches or peanuts), and usually not regular meals.

According to the duration of the flight and the distance covered the flights are categorized as **long-haul flights** (long distance flights) and **short-haul flight** (short distance flights). If the flights are part of the regular timetable they are called **scheduled/regular flights**, but if the plane is hired for a special purpose by a tour operator or an individual it is called a **chartered flight.**

Today, **low-cost airlines** made the cost of flying reasonable and available to many. There are differences between flying with a low-cost company and a traditional company. Some characteristics of the low cost companies are as follows:

* **minimum equipment** on the aircraft: no reclining seats, **no** **headrest covers**, **no** **window blinds**, no in-flight entertainment
* **no free meals**: passengers can buy snacks, sandwiches and drinks on board
* only **one passenger class**
* **unreserved seating** (encouraging passengers to board early and quickly)
* **limited baggage** (usually one piece of handluggage, having more baggage is very expensive)
* flying to cheaper, **less congested**, secondary airports
* flying early in the morning or late in the evening **to avoid air traffic delays** and to take advantage of lower **landing fees**
* **direct flights** (less chance to mislay the luggage)
* **employees do more than one job**, for instance flight attendants also clean the aircraft (this practice limits personnel costs)
* **direct sales of tickets**, especially over the Internet (avoiding commissions paid to travel agents)
* **a simple fare scheme**, such as charging one-way tickets half that of round-trips

Some examples of European low cost companies are RyanAir, EasyJet, AirOne, WizzAir, while the examples of American low cost companies are Southwest Airlines, West Jet, Jazz, Jet Blue.

*Reading 1*

Read the text about first-class lounges and answer the questions:

**BEST FIRST CLASS LOUNGES IN THE WORLD**

Airports and airlines are competing to make their airport lounges as relaxing and luxurious as possible. We have created a list of the most luxurious first-class airport lounges around the world.

**British Airways Concorde Room, London**

The London Heathrow lounge has recently undergone a complete transformation and is inspired by contemporary British design. The lounge’s standout feature is its private cabins which include day beds and en-suite bathrooms. Free 15 minute relaxation and detox treatments are provided by the Elemis SPA. The lounge offers private dining booths with full waiter service, wine, champagne pairings and an à la carte menu. There is also a business centre with desktop computers and free-to-use smartphone chargers for business travellers.

**Lufthansa First Class Terminal**

Among frequent flyers visiting the Lufthansa First Class Terminal is like coming home and knowing your family will take very good care of you. And no, it’s not a typo, it is indeed a complete terminal that was built in Frankfurt with the sole purpose of making sure its guests would have everything they need before boarding the plane. There is a massive selection of both food and drinks, they even have over 130 different kinds of whisky which you can taste. Of course, there are also offices, nap rooms, relax areas and the cigar lounge, where those who like to indulge on the nicely rolled tobacco can enjoy their little treat without disturbing anyone else. Also, there are several bathrooms. Your Personal Assistent will be checking in with you on a regular basis to see if there is anything they can do for you, but also to come and collect you when the time has come to board the airplane. So no need for clock watching here. And being driven to the plane in a luxury German car like a Porsche or Mercedes S class will make sure you want to visit the first class terminal again.

[**Etihad Airways First Class Lounge, Abu Dhabi**](http://www.etihad.com/en-au/experience-etihad/lounges/first-class-lounge-and-spa/)

Inspired by the world’s most prestigious hotels, private members’ clubs and fine dining establishments, Etihad’s First Class lounge at Abu Dhabi is an ultra-exclusive lifestyle environment, featuring 16 unique zones designed to ensure that passengers can relax, re-energise and be entertained in total luxury before boarding their flight. An à la carte restaurant, showcase bar, fitness room, cigar lounge, Six Senses Spa, Style & Shave barbers, nail bar, TV room, secluded relaxation room, prayer room and children’s play room ensure that all guests receive a highly personalized experience and intuitive service. Guests of Etihad’s The Residence enjoy the exclusivity of their own private space discreetly located adjacent to the main lounge entrance.

I Answer the questions:

1. Where can passengers sleep in these first class lounges?
2. What are special services offered by the lounges?
3. Which lounge provides a personal assistent?
4. Which lounge provides a hairdresser?

*Reading 2*

## Things to consider when choosing a full service airline versus a low cost/budget airline

One of the biggest changes seeing a lot of growth, within the travel industry, and in particular the airline/aviation industry, is the rise and popularity of low-cost/budget/low-frill airlines or carriers.  Whether you are planning to fly domestically or internationally, flying has never been cheaper – you are literally spoilt for choice!

Low cost, low frill and budget airlines are characterised by offering lower airfares and less inclusions than their ‘full service’ competitors, such as no frequent flyer points, no complimentary meals, no airport lounge access, no pre-assigned seating requests, no inflight entertainment, no checked-in luggage allowances, etc.  You will also be charged extra for payment using a credit card, and for booking extra leg room or exit rows (if they are offered at all).

But are flying with lower cost, cheaper airlines, really good value for money?  And are you really saving a lot of money overall?

Typical characteristics of booking with cheaper, low frills and low budget airlines include:

* Booking ***airfares*** cheaper than those offered by full service airlines, therefore no further discounts are available
* These airfares are usually ***instant purchase*** – ie. book & pay on the spot
* These airfares are usually non-refundable and non-changeable, or are highly inflexible when it comes to ***amending*** dates and times, and with those that do allow changes, you will be penalised to do so financially
* Added extras – you have to pay to have any of these included: checked-in luggage; pre-selected seats; inflight meals, snacks and drinks; inflight entertainment, extra leg room (if any) etc.
* Less comfortable and less quality seating, usually with very little leg room, ***reduced recline pitch***, and small width of seats
* Distant airport terminals – budget airlines usually have their airport terminals and check-in desks furthest away from the main areas, and a lot of aircraft stop on the ***tarmac***, and often not at a gate. You may have to catch a bus back from the tarmac to the terminal, or walk.
* Not earning any frequent flyer points towards any loyalty programs
* No airport lounge access
* Mostly single economy class cabins – very few offer business class seats
* Online bookings, via their own websites or apps, to save on costs of hiring their own reservations staff
* Very long phone wait times – good luck if you ever need to speak to a staff member of a low cost, budget airline – most responses are robotic and you rarely can speak to a human being
* Limited interline agreements between other airlines, making your travel arrangements less streamlined and less convenient. For example, you will have to collect your luggage at each airport, and re-check your bags in to the next destination – rarely are they checked all the way through to your final destination
* No transfers are offered between domestic to international terminals or ***vice versa***
* Poorer flight schedules and timetables, often with longer flight connections and flights at less desirable times of day and night.
* And low cost airlines may be unreliable to book with – they regularly cancel flights, delay flights, reschedule flights, have mechanical issues, and don’t have the fleet available to replace a faulty aircraft at short notice – you could be ***stranded*** for days somewhere!

Compare this to booking through ‘full service’ airlines, which include:

* Generally higher fares, but if you get in early enough, or during a sale period, you can usually grab yourself ***a bargain***
* These airfares can be discounted if you travel as a group, or have some special promotional code or corporate rates
* These airfares can often be more flexible with changing dates & times
* These airfares often don’t have to be booked and paid for instantly, if you book them through a travel agent, as opposed to booking online, which are instant purchase
* More inclusions are provided, such as inflight meals, snacks & drinks; inflight entertainment; inflight amenities, such as a blanket, pillow, headphones and sometimes, toiletries; checked-in luggage allowance; pre-assigned seating
* A range of cabin classes inflight, such as economy, premium economy, business class and first class
* More comfortable, wider and better quality seating, usually offering more leg room and recline pitch than cheaper airlines
* More extensive flight routes and schedules, due to better interline and codeshare agreements with other full-service airline partners, with more suitable timetables and fewer wait times between connecting flights
* Checked-in luggage can usually be checked all the way to your final destination, when booking with partnered airlines or the same airline – more streamlined, convenient and efficient
* Access to airport lounges when purchasing higher priced airfares, and also with higher frequent flyer loyalty program status
* Earning frequent flyer points on most airfares purchased
* More central and convenient locations at airport terminals and gate lounges
* More reliability with fewer delays, fewer cancellations, fewer schedule changes and more ***aircraft fleet*** to replace a faulty aircraft at short notice – less interruptions to your travel plans
* More personalised touches & less robotic – more reservations staff to speak to on the phone, if you need to, and shorter wait times on hold
* They support travel agents, by allowing us to book them for you.

So choose wisely.  Both options have their own benefits and pitfalls.  My advice?  For shorter duration trips, by all means, choose the lower cost options.  But for longer trips, if you can afford it, upgrade to a full service carrier.  You will feel more special, more spoilt, the time will go faster and you won’t be as bored onboard!

*I Vocabulary*

Connect the words from the text with the explanations:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. airfare | 1. very cheap |
| 1. instant purchase | 1. the price of airline ticket |
| 1. amend | 1. left somewhere without opportunity to leave, stuck |
| 1. reduced recline pitch | 1. runway |
| 1. tarmac | 1. reduced angle at which a seat can lie back |
| 1. vice versa | 1. change |
| 1. stranded | 1. buying something at once |
| 1. bargain | 1. all the airplanes belonging to a company |
| 1. aircraft fleet | 1. the other way round |

*Listening 1*

Watch a video about a special kids` class. Answer the questions:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB5p-G3aIOo

1. What are kids provided in kids` class?
2. Do you have any idea what else can be provided to kids in this class?

*Listening 2*

Watch a video about why low cost airlines are so cheap: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=069y1MpOkQY>

Answer the questions:

1. How much are low cost airlines in the USA cheaper than standard US airlines? How much cheaper are European low cost airlines compared to European traditional airlines?
2. Do low cost airlines have new or old planes? How does it influence the price?
3. How many types of planes do low cost airlines have? Why is that important?
4. What are landing fees and (time) slots mentioned in part of the video talking about major airports like London Heathrow or Paris Charles De Gaulle? Look it up online to find the answer.
5. Do budget airlines use jet ways at the airport or do passengers use steps? Why is that important for the price?
6. What is the profit margin of budget airlines compared to traditional airlines? What does the expression profit margin mean? Look it up online.

*Writing task*

Watch a video about flying first class from Frankfurt First Class Terminal to Johannesburg, South Africa. Write a short description of the experience.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzI1dSnLKxg>