

exceptional

Selection', but we found the Vinha da Defesa white wine from the Alentejo to be outstanding. You could finish your meal with coffee and a Churchill's 10 year old Tawny, but there was also a

full selection of other spirits if Port was not to your taste, however TAP is a Portuguese airline, so why miss the Port?

The whole experience was of a very high standard throughout

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The Recaro (the people who make the famous sports car seating) seats are the best we have ever experienced, and superbly designed with several considerations in mind.

with each dish decorated and presented to 'fine dining' standards. All the cuisine has been designed and created by one of Portugal's leading Chefs, Vitor Sobral, who has won Chef of the Year in Portugal, awarded by the Portuguese Academy of Gastronomy, and the title of Commander of the Order of Prince Henry the Navigator, which certainly sounds impressive, though I'm unsure of the exact details of the award. What is sure is that he has had a very positive influence on the standards of the food served in Executive Class. Before landing in New York a light meal is served.

The cabin staff are extremely attentive and friendly, and nothing is too much trouble.

The best news is that if you get a TAP Victoria Amex or VISA card from Millennium Bank you can collect miles with almost everything you buy, and upgrades from economy to Executive Class can cost as little as 20,000 miles on a TAP Lisbon to New York flight. You can find out more from

any Millennium bank branch or at <http://www.tapvictoria.com/en>. You can also find out more details regarding the entire programme of offers on our travel reviews website at <http://travel.theportugalnews.com/reviewsother.htm>.

It's clear that TAP are concentrating on passenger service and improving quality, especially on long distance flights. It's difficult to compete with the low cost airlines on short haul, but TAP prices are getting a lot more competitive, so check out what's on offer (especially from Lisbon), as there are virtually no 'extras' and very reasonable weight restrictions for your luggage (and no extra charge for checked in baggage). One of our staff travelling last week to Denmark found that TAP had the lowest fare on offer after the 'extras' the low cost airlines charge had been taken into consideration. But don't expect those wonderful Recaro seats in European Executive Class, they're just for long distance

flights. European Executive Class is another matter altogether, though it's interesting to see that Continental, a TAP Partner, is still offering a First/Business Class on even short haul flights using 2 x 2 seating, so there is a demand for a more comfortable class even on flights of a couple of hours duration, but that is in the USA which is a different market with its own requirements.

TAP Personal Assistance

It's interesting that when most airlines are reducing every possible aspect of personal service, (even airport check in is disappearing unless you want to pay extra) TAP have introduced a new service, 'Personal Assistance'. It's a paid service, but reasonably priced, with several options. Even at its lowest cost you are met by a TAP Representative on arrival at Lisbon or Porto who will accompany you through check in, security, and accompany you to the aircraft. At its top level you can also be driven out to the air-

craft, your baggage specially marked and personally handled and even help with your hand baggage into the aircraft. If you are arriving, you can be met at the plane on arrival and accompanied to a flight transfer or to the baggage carousel where your baggage will arrive at a separate belt. It clearly has great potential at a time when air travel is becoming so de-personalised. You can find details and prices on the TAP website. P.L.

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