

In a class of its own

If you want to see the Branson 'style' in its purist form, you need to experience Virgin Atlantic's Upper Class. We have tried various Virgin products and services, but this is where you get to see what Virgin can offer when they pull out all the stops. It's as good as many First Class flight services, and vastly superior to any other Business Class service we have flown in the last couple of years. To say you are treated like royalty from the moment you arrive at London's Heathrow Airport is no exaggeration.

Upper Class check in has its own area within Virgin's vicinity of Terminal 3. The staff were bright, cheerful and attentive. We were quickly (with a wide smile) distinguished as Virgin virgins,

having not flown with them before.

From check-in we were directed to a discreet lift and whisked up to Virgin's private security screening, quick isn't the word!

Thence to the new 'Virgin Atlantic Clubhouse', a quite extraordinary, vast lounge with every conceivable service, outdoing any other First Class lounges we have seen. You can have a shoe shine, haircut, a spa treatment, visit the restaurant area or the 'Deli'. There are several bars, discreet, or with panoramic views, you name it. It was faultless, and you can't say that about many products these days.

Once on board, we were quickly shown to our Upper Class seats, or should I say beds? Simply press a button, and everything converts, not just reclining your seat, but opening out new sections that turn your seat into the longest bed of any airline's business class and many first class products, and not just longer, but 2 inches wider as well. A crisp white duvet and fluffy pillows make it a home from home.

Each seat 'area' is completely separate, an individual 'cabin' of your own if you will, not overlooked, and nobody to step over if you want to leave your seat. If you are travelling with someone else, a very clever touch is that your 'cabin' can be set up for 'dinner for two' by using the footstool as the second seat and the large table has more than enough



Socialising at the onboard bar.

space for two settings. Upper Class is a very sociable area, where people move about, sit and eat or enjoy a drink with friends or colleagues, or visit the bar for a cocktail. If you want privacy, the layout gives you that, if you want to be sociable you can.

As you relax in your private 'cabin', you can access many features. A large TV screen swings out, along with a remote control which gives access to the state-of-the-art in-flight video entertainment system which offers 300 hours of video on demand where passengers can watch or listen to what they want and can start, pause or rewind their chosen movie, TV show or CD. Alternatively, there is a choice of between 14-20 video channels plus 9 - 14 audio channels and 10 - 15 games on selected aircraft. You can even send text messages.

On board service is as near perfect as is humanly possible, everything you may have seen and read about Virgin Atlantic staff is true, they are outstanding, and have a friendly and helpful attitude which really puts them streets ahead of many of their competitors.

Meals onboard were of a good standard, nicely presented and served, with a choice of dishes, but on a par with what you would expect on a long haul Business Class service. The choice of wines was very good.

If you are planning to fly long distance, we would certainly

recommend trying Virgin Atlantic's Upper Class, and despite their name, their routes are not limited to just the Atlantic.

For information and reservations: www.virginatlantic.com

P.L.

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