

## Air France B777-300ER first class Paris-Washington DC



**BACKGROUND** Air France launched its new first class La Première product in 2014. It is only available on specific B777-300ERs serving cities such as Washington DC, LA, Sao Paulo, Tokyo, Singapore, Dubai and Shanghai. A380s have the older version.

**CHECK-IN** I checked in via the Air France app and arrived at London Heathrow T4 by taxi at 0450 for my connecting flight to Paris departing at 0620 (Air France does not include a chauffeur service). My case was priority-tagged and through-checked to DC.

**TRANSFER** We landed at Paris CDG Terminal 2E at 0820 local time. My onward flight was scheduled for 1320. An Air France employee was waiting on the airbridge to escort me to the lounge. We took a private lift down to the ground and stepped into an awaiting BMW, which drove to the entrance of the La Première lounge. There was an ID check by a security officer.

**THE LOUNGE** I was advised that I would be met at 1240 to be taken to the plane. Highlights of the lounge are the Biologique Recherche spa (book a free

30-minute massage in advance), the sleep zone, the Alain Ducasse restaurant, which has an extensive à la carte menu of Michelin-quality cuisine, and the bar, which serves cocktails and three types of champagne. For a full review visit [businessstraveller.com](http://businessstraveller.com).

**BOARDING** The gate was close by so you could walk there or be driven – I chose the latter. I was taken upstairs to the airbridge, where there was a separate entrance to the first class cabin at the very front of the plane. I was welcomed and given the option of sitting anywhere I liked, as the other three seats were empty. I stuck with 1A but, later on, 1E was made into a bed so I had the choice of both. My coat was hung in a closet and I was offered a glass of Laurent-Perrier 2004 Alexandra Grande Cuvée Rosé champagne. A leather amenity box contained Carita Paris products. Loungewear, socks and slippers were also provided, and Bose headphones were stored in a side cupboard. I had almost no awareness of boarding going on behind me in business class. With the giant TV screens and four windows per seat, it was like being in my own apartment.



**THE SEAT** The cabin had only one row configured 1-2-1. It felt peaceful, light and spacious. Each seat had a curtain that could be drawn to create a completely private suite. The product was incredibly comfy – it's basically an armchair (23 inches wide) that converts into a 30-inch-wide, six-foot five-inch-long, fully-flat bed. Crew can make them up with a mattress, sheet, pillow, duvet and blanket. A pull-out table was large enough for two – a companion can join you for a meal when seated on the ottoman opposite. Underneath was a drawer for shoes. There was also a 24-inch TV screen, universal/USB charging points and a handheld touchscreen IFE controller.

**WHICH SEAT TO CHOOSE?** They are all amazing, but I liked being by the window best. The middle two are ideal for a couple as the curtains either side enclose you, but it's not a problem if you're alone, as a dividing wall can be summoned between you.

**THE FLIGHT** We pushed back on time at 1320. Once airborne, my dedicated crew member, Pasquale, asked when I wanted to dine. As I had eaten in the

lounge, I said later would be better. At 1345 Pasquale brought me a bowl of fruit salad on a silver tray, and kept my glass of sparkling Badoit water topped up. At 1515 I decided to eat. There were no vegetarian options on the menu but because I had forewarned them they had prepared a delicious celeriac risotto.

Michelin-starred chef Joel Robuchon oversaw the design of the first class menu, while Guy Martin of Le Grand Véfour in Paris designed the summer offerings. If you desire, you can have up to seven courses: there was an amuse bouche of salmon and caviar tartare, creamed corn soup with cachaça, a terrine of foie gras poached in red wine, and roast lobster. The mains were pan-seared veal, fillet of pan-seared sea bass in a creamy lemongrass sauce, roasted guinea fowl supreme, and forest fricassee. You could follow this with a salad of your own design, a choice of five types of cheese, chocolate nougatine tartlet, apple tatin, and three flavours of sorbet.

There were two red wines – 2012 Chateauf-neuf-du-Pape Domaine du Grand Veneur, Alain Jaume et Fils, Rhône Valley, and 2010 or 2011 Margaux Château Cantenac Brown, Grand Cru Classé, Bordeaux. The two whites were 2013 Meursault les Clous, Bouchard Pere and Fils, Burgundy, and 2010 Grand Cru Riesling, Altenberg de Bergheim, Gustave Lorentz, Alsace.

After doing a bit of work, I went to the washroom to get changed while Pasquale made the seat next to me into a bed. I settled down for a couple of hours' sleep – the mattress was supremely comfortable and the curtains made it really dark. I got up and dressed when the window blinds were opened and was brought a cold glass of juice.

**ARRIVAL** We landed at Washington Dulles International at 1630 local time. This time there wasn't a separate airbridge for first class passengers so Pasquale walked me through the business class cabin to ensure I was first off the plane. Another member of staff greeted me and escorted me on to my own personal shuttle bus, through immigration to baggage reclaim, past customs and to my driver waiting in arrivals. *Jenny Southan*

**VERDICT** The defining features of La Première were the spacious, private suites with proper beds, the incredible lounge, highly personalised service and plentiful gourmet food and drink. Air France achieves a true distinction between business and first class experiences. A very memorable flight.

**DEPARTURE TIME**  
1320

**FLIGHT TIME**  
9hrs 10mins

**AIRCRAFT TYPE**  
B777-300ER

**CONFIGURATION**  
1-2-1

**SEAT WIDTH**  
23-30in/  
58.4cm-76.2cm

**SEAT RECLINE**  
180 degrees

**BED LENGTH**  
6ft 5in/1.98m

**PRICE**  
Internet rates for a return first class flight from Paris to Washington DC in May cost £8,966.

**CONTACT**  
[airfrance.co.uk](http://airfrance.co.uk)

