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# publisher's letter

The recent dispute at London Heathrow airport involving the caterers Gate Gourmet, which left tens of thousands of British Airways passengers hungry, highlighted once again the issue of in-flight catering. Airlines have traditionally prided themselves on the food they serve at 35,000ft, expending much time, effort and money in preparing in-flight culinary feasts, using top-name chefs to come up with mouth-watering treats for passengers. Those travelling in First class often enjoy Dom Perignon or Bollinger Champagne and the best vintages from some of the finest cellars, while foie gras and other delicacies are served to Business class customers by some carriers. Even the masses in Economy are these days offered expanded choices and healthy options.

While no one would question the need for catering on longer flights, the dispute that affected BA so badly once again raised the question of the necessity for meals or snacks on short-haul services. Low-cost carriers, needless to say, provide the bare minimum – a drink and a sandwich if you are lucky. Some conventional airlines have taken the same route, with Economy class passengers now being required to pay for any meals on board. In the US, a number of the financially beleaguered carriers cut catering on domestic flights of up to four hours in an effort to save money, although American Airlines subsequently decided to reinstate some sort of meal service.

Apart from the obvious necessity to feed people on longer flights, it is an enjoyable way of passing the time, lingering over a meal. But, as we report elsewhere in this issue, the choice of in-flight entertainment is now almost limitless, which means that for many passengers, airline meals are likely to become more like TV dinners – eaten on a tray while watching the small screen. How this will influence the carriers and their caterers in their future thinking in terms of what is served, how, when and to whom, remains to be seen. But there can be little doubt that on the cut-throat, short-haul routes, the days of meals included in the price of the ticket must surely be numbered.

In addition to our look at the technological advances that have transformed in-flight entertainment, this issue examines how Vienna International airport is poised to take advantage of its position as a strategic gateway to the emerging business destinations in Central Europe; at how Paris plays by its own rules and expects the business visitor to accept what might appear as quirky and outdated; and at the success of EVA Air, part of Taiwan's giant Evergreen container shipping group.



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# newsbriefing

## KLM joins the transatlantic business jet set



With 44 lie-flat sleeper seats, equipped with power points for laptops, the Boeing Business Jet offers a level of comfort comparable to that of KLM's long-haul World Business class

KLM is the latest carrier to offer a business-only service across the Atlantic, with six flights a week between Amsterdam and Houston, using a 44-seat Boeing Business Jet.

Aimed at the oil industry and, in particular, Shell executives, the new service supplements the existing three flights a week operated by a KLM 747 but replaces a Boeing 767 service which also operated three times a week. All flights are on a code-share basis with Northwest Airlines and it effectively increases the Business class capacity on the route by 45%.

The Boeing Business Jet is fitted with lie-flat sleeper seats, equipped with power points for laptops, and offers a level of comfort comparable to that of KLM's long-haul World Business class.

Two other carriers are reported to be planning all-Business class services across the Atlantic this autumn. Eos was due to start flights between New York JFK and London Stansted in September, while Atlantic Fly was hoping to operate a similar type of service between New York Newark and London Luton.

Earlier this year Lufthansa launched a Private Jet service for passengers travelling via its Munich and Frankfurt hubs.

### Virgin splashes out on lounge spa

What is claimed as the first spa pool, steam room and sauna in an airline lounge is the centrepiece of the first phase of Virgin Atlantic Airways' newly opened £11 million flagship Clubhouse at London Heathrow airport.

The new-look business class lounge in Terminal 3 is located next to the current Clubhouse, which will now be redeveloped as Phase 2, doubling the size of the previous facility.

Designed to resemble a member's private club, the lounge has a number of stunning features, including a ceiling-to-floor Japanese water wall, a 14-metre long cocktail bar, a professionally equipped kitchen for the preparation of brasserie-style lunches and dinners for passengers who choose to eat prior to their flight, laptop points and

wireless technology throughout, and a concierge team on hand to book hotel rooms or restaurants, or simply offer advice.

As well as taking a dip in the spa pool, enjoying a sauna or the use of the steam room before setting off on their travels, passengers can take advantage of a relaxing facial, shoulder massage, manicure, pedicure or wet shave for men. There is also a hairdressing salon.

### Mileage Plus bonus

Fly transatlantic round-trip from the UK with United Airlines in Economy class before November 15 and members of its Mileage Plus frequent flyer programme qualify for up to a 5,000-point bonus depending on the fare paid. Discounted tickets can earn 2,500 bonus mileage points. To take advantage of the offer, members must register their Mileage Plus number at [www.unitedairlines.co.uk](http://www.unitedairlines.co.uk)

### News in brief

→ **British Airways**, which has increased the fuel surcharge on its long-haul flights from £24 to £30 (€36 to €44) per sector as a result of further rises in the price of fuel, says it now costs almost 400% more to refuel an aircraft than it did in December 2001. The airline's surcharge of £8 (€12) per sector for short-haul flights remains unchanged.

→ **The** future of air transport is to be discussed by the Institute of Economic Affairs at its 13th annual conference, which is being held at London's Waldorf Hilton hotel from October 28-30.

→ **France** says it will introduce a levy on airline tickets from next year to fund aid for Africa. Opposed by the airlines, the proposed tax of US\$1 per ticket could raise up to US\$10 billion a year to fund campaigns against disease.

→ **Lufthansa** has extended its special service concept for First class passengers to its Munich hub, having launched a similar facility in Frankfurt at the end of last year. It includes a chauffeur-driven transfer from the terminal to the aircraft.



# newsbriefing

## A foretaste of things to come – American serves up new menus and flatbed seats



Upgraded First and Business class menus on transatlantic flights are designed to reflect what is "quintessentially American cuisine"

American Airlines is introducing sleeper seats in Business class on transatlantic services from next year. And, in the meantime, to attract more premium fare passengers, has upgraded its First and Business class menus on transatlantic, introducing what it calls "quintessentially American cuisine". It is also planning to extend its Flagship First class cabin to a further 20 aircraft.

The new Recaro lie-flat beds will initially be available on its two-class Boeing 767-300 fleet which currently operates the carrier's services from Dublin, Manchester and Glasgow, as well as selected flights from London Gatwick. Larger and more spacious overhead bins are also planned. Boeing 777s, which maintain all American's services from Heathrow and most from Gatwick, will benefit from the new seats from early 2007.

The First class Flagship Suite, introduced in 2000, features a unique seat design that can be swivelled into different positions for working or watching in-flight entertainment. It also converts into a fully flat bed.

### SkyTeam courts corporates

A new corporate travel programme, which has been launched by the SkyTeam global alliance, promises multi-nationals more options and improved efficiency in the management of their international travel programmes.

Corporate customers who contract with SkyTeam receive discounts for increased business with the nine member carriers – Aeroméxico, Air France, Alitalia, Continental Airlines, CSA Czech Airlines, Delta Air Lines, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Korean Air and Northwest Airlines. Individual travellers with corporations earn frequent flyer miles on the member airline programme of their choice, redeemable on all other SkyTeam partners.

### Austrian adds sleepers

Austrian Airlines is introducing sleeper seats on its long-haul fleet from next spring. With a 60-inch (152.4cm) pitch and extending to a 2-metre bed angled at just 8 degrees, the upgraded business class cabin will also incorporate 10-inch (25.4cm) personal video monitors. Passengers throughout

the aircraft with wireless-enabled laptops will also have high-speed internet access, with payment accepted by credit card.

The Vienna-based airline's long-haul network includes Dubai, Tehran, Mumbai, Delhi, Yangon, Bangkok, Beijing, Shanghai, Tokyo, Osaka, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Sydney and Melbourne, plus New York, Washington, Montreal and Toronto.

### City airport rail link opening date

London City Airport's long awaited rail link, which will provide direct access to the capital's transport network, is scheduled to open on December 15. With trains every seven minutes, it will provide the UK's most frequent airport rail link, reducing the journey time to and from Bank station in the City to just 22 minutes, and providing a direct service to Canary Wharf (14 minutes). The next phase of the extension, running beneath the Thames to Woolwich and scheduled for completion in 2009, will open up much of South London to the docklands airport.

### The sound of silence

What could be the world's first silent aircraft might be flying within 20 years. Engineers at Cambridge University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are working on a wing-shaped fuselage that would be so quiet that no noise would be heard beyond an airport's perimeter.

Paul Collins, project manager, says it will be a "radical departure from the basic tube and wings design we have at the moment. The new plane will be a flying wing, with the engines on top, so the plane will be used as a shield to protect people on the ground from the noise of the engines." He adds that it would be a wide aircraft and the internal experience would be "like being in a cinema or theatre, so people will be familiar and comfortable with the design". The initial prototype is expected to be completed within 12 months.

### Dubai launch date

Virgin Atlantic launches its service between London Heathrow and Dubai on March 27 next year. Initially, there will be four flights a week, increasing to a daily frequency from June 1.



# hotelsbriefing

## Renaissance for London's luxury hotels

To be rebranded as a JW Marriott when the work is complete in 2007, the Grosvenor House is the largest project of its type ever undertaken by the international hotel group

London is undergoing a major renaissance in terms of its top hotels and expects to offer some of the best facilities in the world when most of the work is completed in 2007.

The biggest project by far is the 5-star Grosvenor House, on Park Lane, where Marriott International is spending £100 million on a total makeover. The programme, which began earlier this year, will see all 494 rooms and suites completely refurbished – including plumbing, electrics and air-conditioning – as well as all its public areas, lounges, bars and function rooms. The first 100 of the new rooms are scheduled to come on line in April next year, with completion scheduled for spring 2007, when the hotel will be rebranded as the JW Marriott Grosvenor House. The project is the largest of its type ever undertaken by the international hotel group.

Further down Park Lane, the InterContinental on Hyde Park Corner is closing from this month until next summer for a multi million pound makeover that will see the entire hotel re-invented, including all guest rooms, contemporary suites, fitness centre-spa and spa suites, all-day dining, a lobby bar and a new destination restaurant. All of the public areas, meetings and events facilities will also be fully refurbished. While no cost has been mentioned so far, the company is making provision for a £24 million impact on its operating profit during 2005/06.

The Savoy, the management of which the Canadian-based Fairmont group took over at the beginning of the year, is also about to undergo a £30 million upgrade, starting in January. The two-phase programme will see the renovation of 170 bedrooms and 27 suites, as well as corridors and the hotel's famous River Restaurant. Each phase is scheduled to take five months, with the second starting in January 2007.

Hyatt, which took over the management of the Churchill last year, has embarked on a multi million pound improvement programme, which has already seen the launch of a new restaurant and a complete redesign of its main Chartwell

banqueting suite. Over the next 18 months, each of the hotel's 445 rooms and suites will also undergo total renovation. Completion is scheduled for the spring of 2007.

Last year, the Cumberland, at Marble Arch, reopened after a major refurbishment, acquiring a chic new image in the process, which makes it one of the coolest properties in town. And the Carlton Tower has recently spent well over a £1 million on stylish new meeting facilities.

### Westin's French foothold

Westin Hotels is to manage the former Paris InterContinental – the US group's first property in the centre of the French capital. The newly converted building, originally opened as a hotel in 1878, is located just off the Place de la Concorde and the Rue du Faubourg St-Honoré.

It has 438 rooms, including 76 suites, and offers some of Paris' largest and most exclusive meeting facilities, with a 4,300ft<sup>2</sup> ballroom and 11 other function suites. The hotel underwent a €46 million refurbishment in 1998 and the owners are investing an additional €12 million to convert it into a Westin with standard features such as the Heavenly Bed and Bath, and the recently launched Westin Work Out programme.

### Check-in convenience

Automated, airport-style check-in is being offered to customers at Westminster's City Inn, which claims to be the first hotel in the UK to adopt the new technology. A booth alongside the conventional check-in enables guests simply to type in their reservation reference number or insert a credit card to check all the information relating to the stay, after which a key is automatically issued by the machine.

When guests leave, the key is inserted and the customer is able to inspect the bill before making payment, either by credit card immediately or to request an invoice by post. The technology is quick and simple to use, with customers taking on average under two minutes to complete the transaction.



# travelpostings

Your letters to the Editor

## Qatar kudos

Full marks to Qatar Airways, who managed to get us on a flight from the UK to Bangkok following news that our gap-year son had sustained serious injuries in an accident on Koh Samui – every parent's worst nightmare. Not only did they respond immediately – we were on the first flight out after making the call – but went to the trouble to provide us with valuable extra legroom for him on the flight home. I am relieved to say that he is expected to make a full recovery.

**John Songer**  
Compton, near Exeter, UK

## Food for thought

I can't help feeling that some of the 'emergency rations' that were being handed out to British Airways' passengers during the Gate Gourmet in-flight catering dispute at London Heathrow were rather better than the usual fare served on board. A lesson learned, perhaps?

**Lyndsay Burgess,**  
Northampton, UK

This stylish leather card wallet to be won by the writer of the best letter of the month



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Having recently dropped my passport on an aircraft (it was subsequently recovered and returned a week later), it made me aware of just how useful it is to carry separately a photocopy of the pages containing the relevant details – document number, issue and expiry dates and, perhaps, most importantly, your photograph. As a result, I had no difficulty in getting back into the country, despite the temporary loss of the original. Useful, too, should you have the misfortune to have your passport stolen while travelling, as it reduces much of the hassle in getting a replacement. It is important to carry the photocopy with you as a precautionary measure, although you should always have another copy back at the hotel, just in case.

Submitted by Roger Edwards, of Guernsey, who wins this month's prize for his suggestion.

Win this fun **bubble clock** for the best published monthly tip from a reader



**wingtip**

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# Entertaining ideas at 35,000ft



Passengers in all classes are now spoilt for choice as more in-flight entertainment systems move into the digital age. Leon Barber looks at the latest developments

Remember the days when we watched badly projected movies on a central cabin screen, listening to inferior, unsynchronised sound through stethoscope-type earphones? It seems like something from the Dark Ages, but, believe it or not, it was barely 20 years ago.

Such have been the technological advances in the last two decades that we now enjoy not only pictures and sound of the quality provided by the latest home entertainment systems, but, similarly, the choice is almost limitless. Emirates, for example, whose latest award is for the best in-flight entertainment for 2005, has in excess of 500 channels. These include the latest Hollywood releases and 28 all-time classic movies, 25 choices from Arabia, Asia and the Far East and a similar number of Disney movies for younger flyers, plus more than 50 TV channels. The audio section offers over 6,000 tracks of almost every genre imaginable, with categories including recent CD releases, essential albums and even audio books.

Singapore Airlines has an equally impressive selection, with around 60 movies and 90-odd TV choices. And that's before we get to the interactive

section, which includes 80 video games as well flight path mapping, destination information and now live news and sport (*ET*, September). This latest development recently became available on the London route, initially enabling passengers with wireless laptops to tune into four channels via SIA's broadband internet facility. The service should be available to all passengers next year on their personal in-flight video monitors.

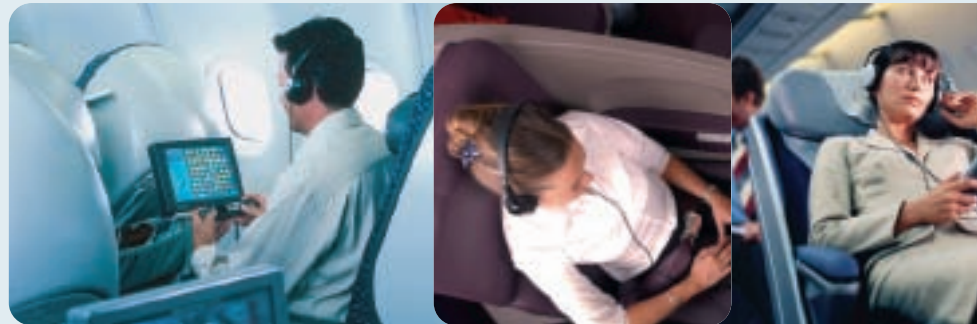
According to Yap Kim Wah, SIA's senior vice president product and services, customers will never have to miss important breaking news or a major sporting event when flying with the airline.

In-flight phones have been around for almost two decades but perhaps the biggest development in the past couple of years, certainly from the business traveller's viewpoint, is the ability to access the internet and company intranets, and to send and receive e-mails, effectively turning the aircraft into an in-flight office.

SAS Scandinavian Airlines earlier this year claimed to be the first to offer passengers wireless broadband access on all its long-haul aircraft. "The customer

must have the possibility to use the time on board for such activities as working, staying in contact with friends and family, or simply relaxing," says chief executive officer Lars Lindgren. "When new technology enables it, it is our aim to be one of the first to meet those needs."

British Airways' research shows that 75% of business travellers take laptops on board as part of their hand baggage, and most of those who travel with them are interested in having internet access during a flight. Yet despite trials with Connexion by Boeing two years ago, the airline has still not committed itself to providing the facility for passengers, largely on the grounds that the technology is changing so rapidly, and it wants to be sure it makes the right decision. Martin George, BA's director of marketing, readily acknowledges that it signifies "a genuine innovation and a real benefit for our travellers" and says it is only a matter of time before the airline commits itself but with a long-haul fleet of 100 aircraft, it represents a major investment.



Meanwhile, the emphasis is very much on the adoption of the latest digital technology, which includes the new audio/visual on demand (AVOD) systems, enabling passengers to choose programmes and when they want to view them. Not only can they use the pause button, should they want interrupt their viewing, but can also rewind – useful when you have nodded off and missed half the film – or fast forward if just want to see the end. The quality, too, is now as good as it gets. Plasma screens – 10.4 inches is now

becoming standard in Business class, although Korean Air is introducing 15-inch monitors in its new First class cabin – and Dolby enhanced and sound-reducing headsets are becoming increasingly common for premium passengers.

And it doesn't stop there. Passengers flying on Cathay Pacific's newest Airbus A330-300 are currently being treated to a preview of the carrier's latest generation in-flight entertainment system, which features a number of enhancements, to be rolled out across the fleet from this month.

Improvements, available mainly to First and Business class passengers with access to the carrier's audio/visual-on-demand facility, include easier navigation through the range of options for movies, music, information and short feature programmes.

They can also compile their own in-flight music selection from a choice of 100 CDs, and have the

ability to display the remaining flight time – apparently the information most often sought by passengers – discreetly in the corner of the screen while viewing other shows. Handset functionality has also been enhanced with various shortcut buttons. Other airlines are expected to follow Cathay's lead.

All of this is a far cry from the flickering screens and badly synchronised sound we were lucky to have just 20 years ago.



# Vienna International

## Waltzing to Central Europe

Destination  
(VIE)

For frequent travellers exploring the new markets of an expanded European Union, geography has given the Austrian capital a competitive edge. April Tod reports

Vienna International Airport is the most easterly of Western airports, giving it a clear and lucrative advantage over other European gateways in terms of passengers travelling to emerging business destinations in Central Europe.

It scores, too, as a transit point for its eastern neighbours, providing connecting flights to Asia-Pacific and western Europe; while the surrounding road network means fast surface links to the Slovakian capital of Bratislava, a mere 60 minutes' drive away, and to Budapest in Hungary, reached in less than three hours.

Well placed economically as well as strategically to serve these markets, the airport is attracting an increasing number of passengers from the east. According to recent reports, the number is growing at around 15% annually, which helped the airport to process over 7 million travellers in the first six months of 2005, a year-on-year rise of 7.3%.

This has signalled a need for expansion, and plans to build a new, multi-million euro terminal are well in hand, with completion scheduled for 2015. While the number of passengers handled by the airport

continues on an upward spiral, the range of carriers serving it is also on the up and up, among them several from Central and Eastern Europe. Daily services out of Vienna to all parts of the former USSR are now provided by Aeroflot, CSA, LOT Polish Airlines, Air Ukraine, Donbasse Aero, Tarom, Air Baltic, Air Moldova, Air Pulkovo, Airzena, Georgian Airlines, Balaviam Bulgaria Air, Croatia Airlines, JAT and Adria Airways.

Vienna's arrivals terminal is deceptively small by comparison with those at the airports of other European capitals. Landside, there are several shops selling everything from clothes to books, a number of banks, and the usual fistful of car hire companies, as well as a couple of pleasant bars opposite the arrival gates to keep meeters and greeters refreshed while they wait.

Airport directions and information are all well positioned and easy to read, and taxi ranks, bus stops and the train station are within a few minutes walk of the main terminal building. The airport recently installed a wi-fi system for laptop users to connect instantly with the internet in specified areas of both arrivals and departure

terminals, and all the Business class lounges provide wireless connections.

The airport's new VIP and Business centre is due to open on January 1. Meanwhile, facilities are temporarily housed in the VIP & Business Centre annex, where services on offer range from VIP assistance to help with organising presentations. There are also meetings and conference rooms for hire with full back up services.

What is appealing about Vienna Airport for both business and leisure travellers is its proximity to the city centre, with trains running regularly and taking just 16 minutes, buses up to 20 minutes, and taxis half that time. Ideal for those with time to kill between flights to go downtown for

sightseeing, shopping or coffee and a slice of Vienna's renowned Sachertorte, the ultimate indulgence for the chocoholic.

The gateway is particularly noted for its mecca of shops in the departure areas. These offer most brands and designer labels, just right for browsing or buying a last-minute gift. Also worth a mention is the large newsagent, selling most local and international newspapers and magazines, while throughout the shopping area is a variety of restaurants, bars and cafés, some fast self service, others with waiting staff. And signs for all the First and Business class lounges, located close to the core of the shopping complex, are easy to spot. shopping complex, are easy to spot.



### at-at-glance guide

**Location:** 10 miles (16 km) from the city centre

**Transport links:** journey time on the City Airport Train (CAT) is 16 minutes, with a single fare of €9; local train 20-25 minutes/€3; OBB bus 20 minutes/ €6; taxi 10-15 minutes/€40

**Annual passenger throughput:** approximately 14 million

**Minimum connecting time:** 25 minutes with Star Alliance-member airlines, 30 minutes with all other carriers

**Executive lounges:** Grand Danube, Visa Gold Austria, Diners Club, Austrian Airlines Business and Senator lounges, British Airways

**Facilities:** Wi-fi access areas in arrivals and departures lounges; VIP and Business Centre, offering assistance, meeting planning advice, plus a selection of meeting and conference rooms; variety of big-name shopping outlets in

departures area; newsagent; self-service and table service restaurants, bars and cafés; medical centre

**Banks/cashpoints:** several banks, bureaux de change and ATMs available 24 hours

**Airport hotels:** NH Hotel (opposite arrivals hall); Hotel Hein, 3km from airport

**Car rental:** ARAC, Avis, Budget, Denseldrive, Hertz, Sixt, Thrifty

**Website:** [www.viennaairport.com](http://www.viennaairport.com)



# Paris

## Pride and prejudice

Destination  
(PAR)



The French capital plays by its own rules and with a Gallic shrug expects the business visitor to accept what might appear as quirky and outdated. Jonathan Hart reports

**Currency:** Euro (1=GBP0.68)

**Tipping:** restaurants include service, but it is customary to leave a further 5%; taxi drivers generally expect 10% on top of the metered fare

**Time:** GMT+1

**Electricity:** 220 volts (round two-pin plugs)

**Public holidays 2005:**

November 1, 11; December 26;  
**2006:** January 1; April 14, 16, 17; May 1, 8, 25; June 4, 5, 14; July 14; August 15; November 1, 11; December 25

**Climate:** generally moderate, with winter temperatures occasionally dropping below freezing, although snow is rare; summer can be hot (26°C - 32°C), often leading to showers in the afternoons; August tends to be the wettest month, but it is wise to carry an umbrella at

almost any time of the year

**Airport:** Paris Charles de Gaulle 26km (16 miles) north east of the city centre; RER trains operate to Gare du Nord (35 minutes/€ 7.75); Air France buses every 10 minutes to Place Charles de Gaulle via Port Maillot (40 minutes/€ 10), and Roissybus maintains a service to rue Scribe in the Opera district (about 45 minutes/€ 8.20)

**Business hours:** 08.30/09.00-18.00/ 19.00 Monday to Friday, but often with a two-hour lunch break; some banks close on Mondays and at 12.00 the day before a public holiday

**International dialling code:** 00 33

**In emergency:** Ambulance 15, police 17, fire 18; or 112 for all services

### business dos and don'ts

**Do** dress smartly – the French are style aware

**Do** make appointments

**Do** be on time, although the French are not obsessive about punctuality

**Do** be prepared for some fairly long lunches – but don't talk business until the subject is raised

**Do** take the trouble to learn a few phrases – a little French goes a long way

**Don't** plan meetings in August, as most Parisians leave town, and don't be surprised to find much of the city closes down over the Christmas and Easter holidays

**Don't** snap your fingers – it is regarded as offensive

So what if unemployment is at a near record high; that immigration is reputedly out of control; and that business in general takes some time – in usually baleful mood and manner – to recover from its six weeks' annual holiday? This is Paris and Paris simply doesn't do what other cities – or businesses – do or might want it to do.

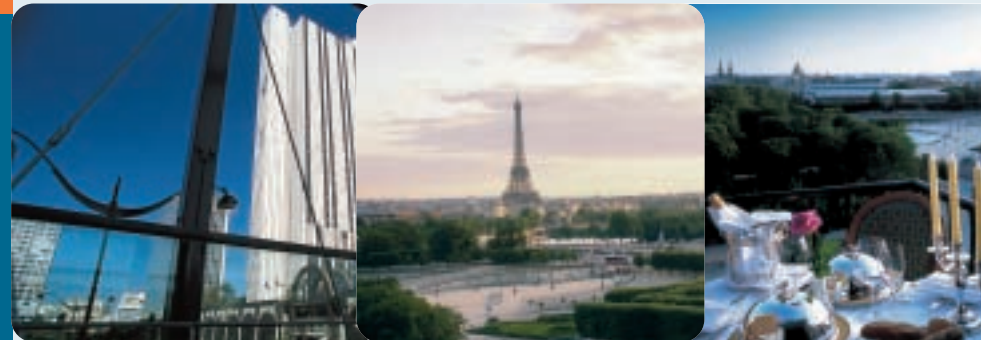
Don't expect an overly effusive welcome. First rule is that you must accept the capital of France and Parisians as they see themselves – which, in a nutshell, is subjective and superior to everywhere and everyone else, and those who care to differ be damned. Let them eat cake.

Legions of multinational interlopers have tried to alter a largely unilateral and disdainful status quo, but Paris simply doesn't comply with the likes of power breakfasts or any other of the supposedly cost effective or standardised corporate

you to balance seemingly anachronistic traditions or accommodations with contemporary customs, curiosities or contraptions that, at first glance, can appear to have little relevance beyond the city boundaries – let alone the remainder of France or across the globe.

No matter. For all its quirkiness, late starts, long lunches, endless holidays and ceaseless internecine strife, Paris somehow still manages to be prodigious in output and income as a centre for banking, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, manufacturing and tourism.

Haughty it may be, as well as intractable, infuriating and given to making U-turns on purely individual whim. Yet you cannot help but note the acute social awareness that exists alongside the pomposity; the contradiction that is the derision of wealth while pursuing it, or the city's ability blithely



absurdities thrust upon it by an inferior outside world. Or at least it doesn't adapt very well, despite an influx of international brands, facilities or notions.

Most trips to Paris will likely find you staying and playing to a locally orchestrated tune, stemming from a city and people that prefer to conduct international business and leisure in their own distinct style. And can or will be belligerent, awkward or intransigent unless you resign yourself to their way of doing things.

This, in turn, can mean playing humble second fiddle while crossing a cultural divide that requires

to ignore the draconian laws it sets itself under the watchful gaze of the EU.

The airports and stations are generally unkempt and in need of updating. The food is generally overrated and the prices inflated. Yet you can only admire the matchless arts and architecture, the choice of hotels, restaurants and entertainment, the passion for parks and people watching.

Pride looms large in Paris. Pride in a city that, warts and all, goes its own way and does its own thing. It is pride that's visibly and vocally been dented by the loss of its 2012 Olympics bid – best not mentioned in anything but sympathetic tones.

# Eva Air

## Uncontained success



The privately-owned Taiwanese carrier, which evolved from the world's largest container shipping company, has gone from strength to strength, says Mike Toynbee

With the introduction in September of the first of 14 Boeing 777s on order, EVA Air's second generation Premium Laurel business class cabin sets new standards in terms of passenger comfort and in-flight communications.

The extended range 777-300ER version, which has been deployed on the Taipei-London route, also offers updated interiors throughout the aircraft, plus the latest audio/video-on-demand in-flight entertainment system for all passengers.

Those in business class now have individual seat pods with a 61-inch pitch and 22 inches between armrests, converting into lie-flat beds. Other refinements include large 10.4-inch personal video monitors and 110v in-seat power outlets.

Additionally, the Evergreen Deluxe premium economy cabin, introduced in 1992 as an industry first, has been upgraded and renamed Elite class, with new seating and larger (8.5-inch) seatback screens. With a 38-inch pitch and a width of 18.5 inches, and featuring adjustable headrests and coat hooks, the latest seats account for just 20% of the total and offer passengers more space and

increased privacy. Those travelling in economy, where the pitch is 33 inches, also benefit from the larger screens and the new AVOD in-flight entertainment system.

Passengers in all three classes can send and receive e-mails as well as text messages to mobile phones. In addition, crew members can use the in-flight SMS service to communicate quickly with ground personnel about important flight or passenger-related information or urgent requests. The existing English-language version will be followed by a Chinese variant shortly, and the system will be installed progressively across the entire fleet over the next few years.

EVA Air, Taiwan's first privately-owned international airline, has been flying since 1991 from its Chiang Kai-Shek (CKS) International Airport base and currently serves 45 destinations on four continents, with carryings last year of around 5.4 million. European destinations include London Heathrow (with a sixth weekly flight starting next month), Amsterdam and Vienna, all via Bangkok, and direct flights between Taipei and Paris. It has code-share agreements with 16 other airlines.

With delivery of its first 777 and a new Airbus A330-200, the airline now has a fleet of 51 aircraft, which include 18 747s. Of the 17 aircraft on order, two more 777s are due to come on line in May and June next year.

In view of its shipping container roots, not surprisingly EVA Air has an extensive freight

network, with efficient and technologically advanced handling systems at CKS International Airport and a newly established European cargo centre in Brussels.

The airline's recently relaunched and upgraded website ([www.evaair.com](http://www.evaair.com)) offers improved navigation and functionality.



### What you get in Premium Laurel (Business) class

**Seat:** 42 fixed-shell, lie-flat seats in a 2x2x2 configuration; 61-inch pitch and 22-inch width; adjustable headrest; electronically adjustable lumbar support; convenient footlight; personal LED reading light; 110V/60Hz power outlet; retractable privacy divider; seat can be pre-assigned up to 100 days prior to departure

**Cabin amenities:** wardrobes; pre-flight Champagne or juice; newspapers; quilts and pillows; Sisley amenity kits containing a deep cleanser, moisturising facemask and a selection of skincare products

**In-flight service:** choice of Western and Asian dishes,

including delicacies such as foie gras, served on bone china; fully stocked beverage 'island' with drinks and snacks available throughout the flight; espresso coffee; meals can be pre-ordered online from two weeks up to 24 hours prior to departure

**In-flight entertainment:** Panasonic audio/visual-on-demand system, including fast-forward, rewind and pause functions; 10.4-inch LCD personal monitors; Sennheiser noise-cancelling headsets; armrest digital air-to-ground satellite communications, including SMS

**On the ground:** automatic access, along with Evergreen Club silver, gold and diamond cardholders, to lounges at all destinations, including the Premium Laurel Garden facility and new commercial centre at

Chang Kai-Shek airport; priority boarding and baggage reclaim; 30kg baggage allowance

**Frequent flyer programme:** Evergreen Club, with four membership tiers (green, silver, gold and diamond) offering a range of benefits from a dedicated reservations hotline to Award Cheques which can be redeemed for free or upgraded travel; also access to lounges (upper tier members only); advanced seat selection; additional baggage allowance and priority handling; discounts on car rentals, selected hotels and shops and on Evergreen Holidays

**Website:** [www.evaair.com](http://www.evaair.com)



# what's on

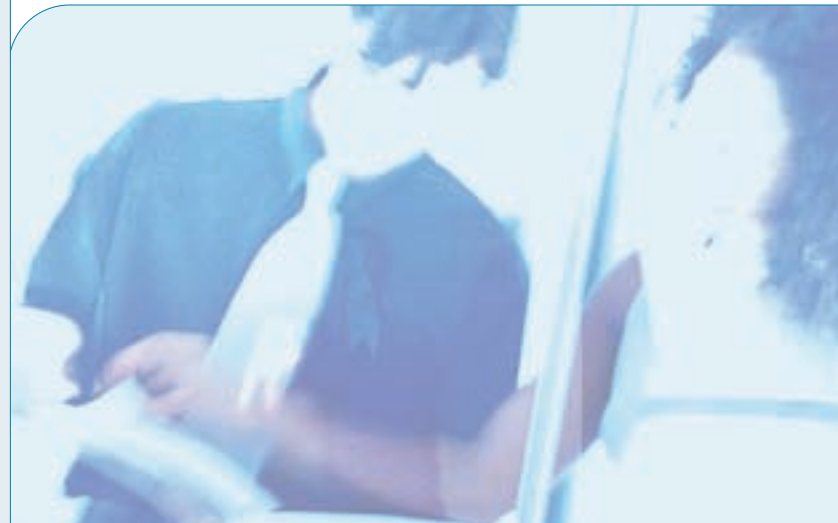
A selection of major conferences, exhibitions, sporting, cultural and other events around the globe during October and November

## October

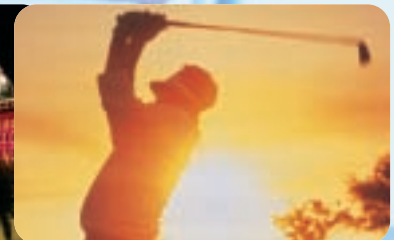
- 2 Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe (horse-racing), Longchamp, France
- 2-5 3rd Global Summit on Peace through Tourism, Pattaya, Thailand
- 3-9 Tokyo Open (tennis), Japan
- 4-12 Paris Fashion Week, France
- 4-2/11 Ramadan
- 9 Japanese Grand Prix (F1 motor-racing), Suzuka
- 10-12 Aida at Giza (open-air opera), Cairo, Egypt
- 10-16 Thailand WTA Open (tennis), Bangkok
- 13-14 Business Travel Show, Birmingham, UK
- 15 Tote Cesarewitch & Dubai Champion Stakes (horse-racing), Newmarket, UK
- 16 Chinese Grand Prix (F1 motor-racing), Shanghai
- 24-27 ICCA Congress and Exhibition, Cape Town, South Africa
- 27-30 Volvo Masters (golf), Valderrama, Spain
- 29 Breeders' Cup World Thoroughbred Championships (horse-racing), New York, USA

## November

- 1 Melbourne Cup (horse-racing), Australia
- 1 Diwali (Hindu festival), worldwide
- 2 End of Ramadan
- 6 London to Brighton (veteran car run)
- 6-13 World Rugby Classic, Bermuda
- 12-23/12 Tivoli Christmas season, Copenhagen
- 12 Lord Mayor's Show, London
- 15-19 3G World Congress, Hong Kong
- 16 Beaujolais Nouveau , Beaujeu en Ligne
- 17-20 WGC-Algarve World Cup (golf), Vilamoura, Portugal
- 20-21 Surin Elephant Round-up, Thailand
- 23-26 Pushkar Camel Fair, India
- 26 Hennessy Gold Cup (horse-racing), Newbury
- 27 Japan Cup (horse-racing), Tokyo
- 27 Thanksgiving, US
- 28-4/12 Davis Cup Final (tennis)
- 29-1/12 EIBTM (global meetings and incentive exhibition), Barcelona



Tivoli Christmas season, Copenhagen



Volvo Masters (golf), Valderrama, Spain