

A Royal Welcome



GETTING HIS FIRST TASTE OF OMAN AIR'S AWARD-WINNING BUSINESS CLASS SENT NICK ATKINSON INTO RAPTURES, AND ENSURED HIS TRIP TO LONDON BECAME A RIGHT ROYAL JOURNEY.



Once upon a time, not so long ago, in a land not too far from home, a young king mounted his trusty steed to travel far across the continents to visit his family in a distant land...

Please excuse the frivolity of a fairy tale beginning, but that was how I felt when I settled into the business class armchair – sorry, I mean seat – on the Oman Air flight from Kuala Lumpur to London. Indulge me with the “young” reference, but as for the “king,” allow me to elaborate.

When it comes to flying business class, I am a relative novice. When I was welcomed into Oman Air's award-winning environment with a glass of Champagne, a smile, and a “Let me take your coat, sir,” a flustered “thank you” was the only suitable response I could manage. Though I was expecting to be well looked after, I was nevertheless, in some ways, a bit taken aback for a moment, but then I sat back in my seat, glass in hand, and the smile was my own.

Whenever I fly, one of my first pre-take off activities is to flick through the in-flight literature. The part that caught my attention on my Oman Air flight was the reference to being “connected” while

up in the air. I was surprised to learn that the “On-Air” service, which was actually pioneered by Oman Air, allowed me to open up my laptop, check my emails, and even turn on the mobile to make a call or send a text while we cruised over the world. There is a small cost attached to using the internet and, unsurprisingly, the mobile phone reacts as if you are abroad



and charges you accordingly. Costs aside, it was a nice touch, allowing me to contact the people picking me up at Heathrow to let them know my arrival time. Beyond that, though... Well, don't get me started on the toiletries bag that was handed out as soon as we boarded: this amazing selection of Amouage goodies offers everything that travellers could want on a long flight.

After topping up my Champagne, the cabin crew took my order for the first meal. The menu that was provided before take-off was quite special to say the least. A wonderful selection of starters, entrées, main courses and desserts, both Western and Arabic, was available, and each dish was prepared to order. Accompanying the meal was an exceptional selection of fine wines, and rounding it off with a brandy

and coffee left me nothing else to do but put my feet up and have a snooze. “Putting my feet up” is something of an understatement: at the touch of a button, my seat fully reclined to a horizontal position and I was asleep.

All Oman flights to Europe connect in their hub in Muscat, and upon arrival I was guided through to the Business Class lounge and, as I handed over my boarding pass, was greeted by name and asked if I would like a massage. There could not have been a better way to break the trip, especially as the masseurs are all from the Chedi in Muscat, an amazing luxury resort.

With head and shoulders both suitably relaxed, I settled in the lounge area to enjoy a delightful selection of food and drink. Wifi was available, allowing me a quick look online to check emails and such like, and then I sat back to enjoy the previous day's UK newspaper and catch up on the Olympic fervour that was awaiting my arrival in London. I must have nodded off, as a gentle tap on my shoulder reminded me that we were boarding for the trip to London in a short while. Oh well, I thought, back to my armchair.

The onward flight to London did not lessen the luxury, and this king was very impressed. A great choice of movies and short programmes on a 17-inch screen kept me occupied, and at one point I had to remove the headphones to check we were still flying, so good was their noise-cancelling capability.

While every aspect of the flight was a pleasure, what I truly appreciated during this wonderful experience was the attention to detail. From the care



and patience of the in-flight crew to the thoughtful touches at every turn, Oman Air made the journey a breeze. The Arabic coffee served before take-off with fresh dates; the delicate piece of chocolate cake served with my afternoon tea; dinner arriving on a plate perfectly warmed; the ability to send an on-board SMS to my family; the list of extras goes on. Combined, these little pleasures made for a very special and truly comfortable journey. To cap it all, my trusty steed, the Airbus A330, touched down in Heathrow right on time.

I arrived satisfied but not yet satiated: there were still things on the menu that I wanted to try. Despite being glad to be in the UK, this king-for-a-day was already looking forward to the return flight. *And the “young” king lived happily ever after...*



TRAVEL FACTS

Oman Air flies from KL to Muscat seven times per week. Connections from Muscat to London are available daily; Frankfurt six times per week; and Milan, Paris, Zurich, and Munich four times per week.

Oman Air's Business Class has, for the previous two years, been awarded the prize for the “Best Business Class Airline Seat” at the prestigious World Airline Awards organised by SkyTrax.

For more details on Oman Air or to book flights, visit www.omanair.com.

