

# First class is an experience you owe yourself



It's wicked, it's decadent and it's costly, but just once in your lifetime you owe it to yourself to fly first class.

'Places' sent two of its staff members on a round-trip class flight from Toronto to Vancouver a couple of months ago and despite being seasoned travellers, they're still raving about how pampered they were.

From the moment you board the aircraft - and in some cases even before since there are some airports with first class lounges - your every whim is catered to.

Even before takeoff, as you settle down into your extra-wide seats, a flight attendant is at your side asking you if you'd like a cocktail or glass of

Mumm's Champagne, free of charge of course.

And, with the pun intended, everything is up from there until the pilot begins his descent into the airport at your destination.

Movie and stereo headsets, which cost you \$2 when you travel economy, are complimentary. As are the pair of sock-slippers that are passed around before takeoff and which make a nice gift for the children when you get back home and face the inevitable question: "What did you bring me?"

To determine whether CP Air or Air Canada offered the better first class service, 'Places' booked its staff members on CPAir's

morning flight on the Toronto to Vancouver leg of the journey and Air Canada's mid-afternoon flight from Vancouver on the return.

We found that each airline knows how to treat its first class travellers, although there were a couple of areas in each case where improvements could be made.

Paradoxically, although CP Air's first class compartment was only about one-third full and Air Canada's was filled to capacity, the service on this particular trip was better on Air Canada with the flight attendants working as hard as stevedores from takeoff to touchdown.

The CP Air attendants,

while gracious and ready to serve you whenever you asked, tended to sit at the rear of the compartment a great deal and chat with each other.

At one point, one of our thirsty 'Places' staff, after repeatedly pushing his seat call button in vain, had to go back and ask a stewardess for a Champagne refill. She claimed the call button was out of service and quickly attended to his request.

We were disappointed to learn that the movie "Islands in the Stream" would not be shown to CP Air's first class passengers because, according to one of the attendants, it took too long to serve the meal.

On the Air Canada flight, however, we had a leisurely dinner and still had time to see "The Other Side of the Mountain."

The CP Air hostesses, on the other hand, seemed to have more personality than their Air Canada counterparts (although the latter, as mentioned earlier, were extremely busy), making small talk while serving the meal and recommending the wine with each course.

An amusing and homey touch was added by one CP Air attendant who, when dishing out the Caesar Salad at lunch, served the anchovies on the side rather than putting them in the salad because she "couldn't stand them herself".

And speaking of meals, this is where both airlines truly shone, with CP Air perhaps having the edge as far as the actual menu was concerned.

Each meal began with the pleasant ritual of the passengers being handed a steaming hot hand towel, slightly perfumed, to refresh themselves before dining. Then the meal was served individually, course by course, with each passenger's tray covered in white linen and real china and tableware being used instead of the usual styrofoam, paper and plastic.

The CP Air lunch began with "Consomme Celestine", a broth with garniture of thinly-sliced pancakes and a dollop of sherry if you wished. Delicious!

Next the anchovyless Caesar Salad and then a seafood casserole of shrimp, scallops, oysters and salmon mixed in a wine sauce and covered in puff pastry.

While this was as good as it sounds, it wasn't quite hot enough, even though we were the first to be served.

The attendant suggested a chilled bottle of Macon Villages with the casserole and this set it off perfectly.

The next course consisted of a broiled New York steak served with herb butter and an assortment of vegetables and, with the assistance of a bottle of Les

Chatelains, it was as fine a meal as we've had in most Toronto restaurants.

The cheese tray was also excellent, topped off with small individual bottles of port, and a fruit meringue couldn't be resisted.

Finishing off the meal with a coffee and Courvoisier, our intrepid 'Places' staffers waddled off the flight in Vancouver with belts loosened, surrounded by a happy glow that good food and good booze create.

The ceremony on the Air Canada flight was similar, although our appetite was perhaps not as keen since we had gone out for Sunday brunch in Vancouver before catching the 2:30 p.m. flight.

The first course consisted of an assortment of smoked salmon, lobster medallions, prosciutto ham and melon and mushrooms in olive oil.

This was followed by a less-than-memorable salad and a choice of roast rib eye of beef or shrimp casserole, both of which were very good if rather standard fare.

Another fine cheese tray was offered, then a dessert-lover's choice of Black Forest cake, mocha parfait or lime sherbet and a fruit basket.

If there was any criticism to be made of the flight attendants, it was that they tended to expect you to be a wine connoisseur, not offering any suggestions as to what was the best of the selections they had. But then, other passengers with more wine experience would probably have been offended if they had, so either way the overworked hostesses couldn't win.

The one real disappointment on the Air Canada flight was that one of our staffers had managed to secure a collector's item in Vancouver - a fireman's helmet with the now-defunct Vancouver Blazers' crest on it - and intended to give it to his young son.

One of the hostesses took it away for safe keeping during the flight and forgot to bring it back when we reached Toronto. Our staffer also forgot to ask for it and when he called Air Canada's Baggage Enquiries office the following day and several days thereafter, there was no sign of it.

All in all, both first class flights were worth the additional \$100 or so extra it costs over the economy fare.

Pragmatists will point out that the meal and the free drinks wouldn't come anywhere near \$100 in even the fanciest of Toronto restaurants and members of the Canadian proletariat will fume that it's the economy passengers who subsidize first class, but all logical arguments aside, it's still a terrific way to go.

## An island in the mainstream.

Make time for a visit to the historic 17th century Fort St. Catherine, one of the more than 20 old fortifications on Bermuda.

Visitors may rent motor assisted cycles or use the friendly & efficient Bermuda taxi and public transportation system.



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Stores and boutiques feature local crafts and merchandise from around the world, with special emphasis on goods from the British Isles.



Bermuda's clear, clean waters boast a balmy 80°F average in July. And a moderate temperature of 62°F average in January.

Like a jewel glistening against a soft setting of blue-green water lies Bermuda.

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Just over 2 hours by air from the major centres of Toronto, Montreal and Halifax, there is an abundance of pleasures awaiting you here among this group of islands that once inspired Mark Twain to proclaim them "paradise".

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Beautiful, relaxed, friendly and a touch of elegance - that's the Bermuda experience.

For further information on a Bermuda Holiday Experience write to the Bermuda Department of Tourism, Ref: PL-1-78 2 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M4W 3W2 or call your travel agent.

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