



Flying Business Class with Finnair

by Robert Schrader on August 25, 2017 0

I've wanted to try Finnair Business Class for a long time, less because of the airline itself (*no offense, y'all!*) and more because I love everything about Finland, from its penchant for minimalism, to its stellar education system, to its boundlessly tolerant society.

I also own land there; and my favorite guest character on my favorite TV show is a Finn (the character, not the actress, although you would never know watching Sally Phillips do her thing).



But I digress—I've wanted to try Finnair for a long time, and my recent trip to Ireland gave me the opportunity to do just that. Below I'll provide impressions of my journey from Bangkok to Dublin via Helsinki, in Finnair's fabulously Finnish business class.

Finnair Business Class Seat Comfort, Cabin Ambiance and Entertainment

In addition to the fact that Finnair flies the A350 (which, I think, is now my favorite plane) between Bangkok and Helsinki, they also fly it with what is probably my favorite seat: the reverse-herringbone Zodiac Cirrus in 1-2-1 configuration. This is the same seat from my fabulous LAX-HND flights on American earlier this year, and I was eager to spend another half-day melting into one.

I also happen to love Finnair's strikingly minimalistic livery, which most aviation geeks hate—apparently, preferring clean color schemes over the busy ones of yesteryear means I have no taste. I must say, however, that I was surprised by how tacky the interior of Finnair's A350 is, given how beautiful its exterior is. Both the colors and patterns of its Marimekko furnishings evoke IKEA more than a powerfully feminist Scandinavian designer. I hope these design choices get an update before the next time I fly business class on Finnair.

Entertainment in Finnair's business class was just as mixed a bag as its design sensibility. Options were lacking both quantitatively (by the end of the flight, the only programs I had left to watch were obscure Japanese-language travel videos from the early 2000's) and qualitatively, with one extremely Finnish exception: The 2017 biographical drama *Tom of Finland*, which is far and away the most homoerotic thing I've ever watched on a plane.

(By the way, *kiitos* to you Finnair for including this in your online entertainment library at all. Not only because it tells the story of an important Finn and an important chapter in your country's LGBT history, but because it makes me feel personally welcome as a gay traveler.)







Finnair Business Class Food & Beverage, Service and Hospitality

It's as poorly-kept a secret that Scandinavian seafood is awesome as it is that fish is almost impossible to do well on a plane. So I have to give credit where credit is due: The filet of salmon I enjoyed on my Finnair business class flight was the most delicious piece of fish I've ever eaten on a plane. Even better than my many Japanese seafood meals on ANA, which is saying something given how effusively I've praised that airline's culinary prowess.

The rest of the main meal was rather excellent too, from the pea soup starter to the apricot tart dessert. Beverage-wise, the flight attendants kept my champagne full the entire flight, interrupting it only to offer me a "blue sky" cocktail (which is made with champagne, anyway) shortly after take-off. They likewise offered coffee at exactly the right time, although there was a snafu in this regard that I feel needs to be mentioned.

Specifically, the flight hit hard turbulence at the precise moment a flight attendant was bringing my *americano* out. She handled herself perfectly, which is to say that the coffee spilled, but only on the distant reaches of the Finnair business class seat, and not on the fancy clothes I donned for the flight. To me, this—knowing that you can't prevent a fall, and instead falling in the best way possible—is a mark of excellent service and priceless experience.

To be sure, I have no criticisms about Finnair's business class service (*although I must say I'm surprised how many times the flight attendant apologized, knowing what I do about the Finnish disposition*), and only one about their food: You shouldn't offer a mid-flight "fresh noodle" meal if you can't disguise the fact that you're using instant noodles!

Transit at Helsinki Airport and Finnair Regional Business Class

I've flown through Helsinki airport many times before, and although it was made slightly more ugly by construction on this occasion, it was still one of the easier transfers I've ever done.

I especially appreciate the sense of humor of the officer who took a second look through my bag: I accidentally used the word "explode" while explaining why I separated by sunscreen, and he laughed it off. Security personnel in my country are far too unintelligent to discern an honest mistake from an existential threat.

As far as Finnair's regional business class, what can I say? It's the same one you find on LOT Polish (or any other European airline, like KLM): The economy cabin with the seat next to you blocked out, and average food and beverage (as opposed to no food and beverage). I would never fly Finnair business class regionally unless it was as part of a long haul itinerary.

The Bottom Line

I experienced Finnair business class on its best plane and with its best seats, but some questionable interior design, entertainment and auxiliary food choices prevented this from being among my top premium class flying experiences. On the other hand, Finnair's flight attendants are exceedingly professional, I appreciate that the airline echoes Finland's world-leading social tolerance and I've literally never had better fish on a plane. I'd fly Finnair's business class again if the opportunity presented itself, although I probably wouldn't seek the opportunity.

How to Book Business Class on Finnair Using Miles & Points

I booked my Finnair business class flight using American AAdvantage miles, at the rate of 75,000 miles for a one-way flight from Southeast Asia to Europe. Rates are similar to and from North America, which I imagine most of the people reading this will have somewhere in their itineraries. You should note that American's website often displays phantom award availability for Finnair, so booking can be a tedious process. On the other hand, taxes and fees on Finnair awards are minimal, so that's a plus.

Beyond AAdvantage miles, which you can earn both by flying American and its oneworld partners as well as with co-branded American credit cards, there are a few ways to book Finnair flights using transferrable points. Most flexibly, you can transfer American Express Membership Rewards, Chase Ultimate Rewards or Starwood Preferred Guest points to a British Airways Avios account.

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