

## Finnair: flying to a stylish country

by Jeff Greif

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It was June and we were celebrating Midnight Sun, so spirits were high as we boarded the Helsinki flight. I'd already been won over by the boarding passes with all over background images of nature scenes and the Finns in their natural environment, a key element in a trip to Finland. I noticed Finnair's logo as I trudged down the jet ramp – a plane with a stylized "F" on the tail wing - and stepping into the cabin I was calmed by the serene interior bathed in pale blue with a feeling of lightness throughout. Subtle visual connections to Finland's blue and white flag and the flight staff's stylish sky blue uniforms reminded us that nearly endless daylight was something worth anticipating on Finnair. We were given a small bottle of spring water, a nice touch, even though we were traveling in coach, and settled in our seats. Lime green blankets and pillows completed the soothing color scheme and I was automatically grabbing for my copy of Blue Wings, Finnair's in-flight magazine.

The service was nothing short of spectacular with a lunch that included a selection of Finnish midsummer delicacies like smoked vendace and Baltic herring roe. These Nordic specialties prepare you for a moving cultural experience and since Finnair was awarded Best Airline in Northern Europe in 2011, they've proven they can do this better than any other carrier. Flying since 1969, their world class service with amenities and services other airlines have lost along the way overlooks no small detail in assuring passengers' comfort. In-flight shopping included a classic rocks glass from Iitala, Finland's iconic glassmaker, an Italian espresso machine, a humorous rubber vase and an audio ipal from Tivoli (an MP3 player with a whole new listening experience). Whether it's to Helsinki's Vaata airport or connecting to the Far East, it's an experience.

If you're fortunate to be spending a few hours on your layover, Helsinki airport's Finnair Lounge is an introduction to all things design-centric here in the locus of 20<sup>th</sup> century style. Sheathed in white lacquer and blond wood, it could easily morph into a dance club afterhours. Furnished with silver and gunmetal banquettes and brilliantly lit by lunar like pendants, it's quite a design statement. Swanlike table lamps and a massive chandelier on the upper level, designed by Finnish firm, Isku Interior Oy, aggressively articulates the look. Sofas in the lounge are designed by Antti Olin for Isku, who took his inspiration "from nature and urban life." They allow weary travellers to bask in comfort after a long journey or just relax before the next leg of their trip.



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A flash of purple fluorescent lighting above the warehouse sized pantry shelving soothes eyes tired from lack of sleep and the whole environment evokes a sense of wonderment. No one would expect less from Finland, the land of Alvar Aalto and Saarinen. Having observed in the last few years how one small stool and a tiny marble topped table (the tulip table, 1960) possessed mid-century furniture lovers all over the world, it's no surprise that the aesthetic is set to good example here.

Beyond the decor, the lounge offers some unexpected amenities that a business or leisure traveller will be thrilled to discover. Work desks are equipped with a new Finnish innovation by Maija Itkonen which allows for wireless charging of small mobile devices. A healthy buffet has plenty of options for snacking during your wait and a fully stocked bar is on hand. The biggest advantage of laying over here enroute to Europe or Asia is the Finnair Spa and Sauna, open daily from 10am to 11pm. The Spa features four different kinds of saunas: spruce, stone bath, steam bath and Finnish sauna with a view from the mineral water pool to the aircraft taxi-way. Add a high tech sub-water sound system and relaxation area and you may opt to miss your flight and reschedule. You can also book treatments before you arrive in Helsinki such as massages, facials, hand and feet treatments, salt sea rubs or body wraps, all to rejuvenate you before your next flight.



World Village Festival Hearing the words "world" and "festival" together, I immediately think of people joining hands around a massive...

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If you are going to spring for Business Class, you won't be disappointed. Seats are super-sized and services are top notch from high speed check in and security check to fully reclining horizontal beds and excessive storage. The food is gourmet with top wines and European menus with Asian flavor and the service by Iitalla is decidedly Finnish. An amenities bag with sea buckthorn seed oil moisturizer and lip balm rivals other airlines. There are also special seasonal offerings like Koskenkorva, the local vodka, perfect for sipping in celebration of the midnight sun.

"Finnair's aim is to offer high quality service and peace of mind to its customers at every stage of the journey," says Anssi Komulainen, responsible for customer service. They've thought of everything to make a flight memorable and a long journey relaxing and comforting. And the Helsinki design capital's favorite airline knows how to do it with flair.

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*\*Finnair is a member of One World Alliance and offers a comprehensive route network via Helsinki to over 50 destinations in Europe and 10 cities in Asia. The long-haul route flights to Asia fly the straightest geographical route via Helsinki, providing the shortest and fastest connecting time in Europe from the U.S.*

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