



AIR NEW ZEALAND WORKS DELUXE COULD DO WITH SOFT PRODUCT WORK

News / Airlines



Works Deluxe sits as the top offering on Air New Zealand's Australian and Pacific islands Airbus A320 fleet. It's a middle-seat-free economy hard product, in the extra legroom section of the aircraft and with on-demand inflight entertainment, food and beverages included. The airline's unbundled Seats to Suit fares on these routes include the self-explanatory Seat Only and Seat + Bag fares (which have to pay for movies but not TV on the IFE), plus The Works and Works Deluxe, which are essentially the same except Works Deluxe keeps the middle seat free.

Air New Zealand invited me to experience their Works Deluxe product on a recent jaunt from Wellington to Sydney, and I jumped at the chance to see what the latest was with the product, especially in the context of new aircraft (and potentially real business class) on the way.

Notably, none of the four unbundled products offer lounge access, which was removed from the Works Deluxe offering earlier this year. At the time, Air New Zealand suggested the move was to bring Works Deluxe into line with Premium Economy, which the airline was starting to offer on its Auckland widebody flights from Australia. Lack of lounge access is a big minus, although Air NZ does offer a lounge membership as part of its Koru Club buy-your-way-in program.

Every other airline on these routes (with the exception of Qantas' low-cost carrier Jetstar) offers proper business class seating, as Air New Zealand does on the widebody aircraft it operates between Australia and Auckland.

The seats were very comfortable for economy: a pleasing black fabric with 34" of legroom, decent

padding, a 1A USB socket, and touchscreen AVOD entertainment. For flights that are timetabled at 3h15 on the eastbound and 3h45 on the westbound legs, I can't find fault with the hard product.

There's no divider between Works Deluxe and the rest of economy

Yet food and beverage was below par on both flights. The “doggy dish” food that constitutes the “light meal” (as we were reminded on both legs) was vaguely edible, but was below standard for any other carrier's premium economy, and below economy on an airline like Emirates — which competes with tag flights on routes from Australia to New Zealand.

There's nothing deluxe about the meal presentation

The new Air NZ Dulcét sparkling is very drinkable, but the crew didn't keep it chilled, they weren't proactive with refills, and only one bottle was loaded for my return flight. The rest of the wine selection was very humdrum indeed — and the white was also not chilled.

The process for handing out the free meals whereby passengers who have purchased the Works or Works Deluxe packages are checked against a list in the galley (and anyone who has moved seats needs to show their boarding pass) is still awkward.

Frankly, I prefer the model that Virgin Australia used to offer on these routes before it installed a full business class, and the model that Icelandair's Economy Comfort still offers today: your choice of anything off the buy-on-board list rather than handing out a middling economy meal. When the highlight of the meal is the two small pieces of cheese handed out on mini-plates after the main course, it's time to take a look at soft product.

The only premium-feeling part of the service was a small plate of cheese and crackers

But the thing is, Works Deluxe is pretty cheap for a bit of extra comfort — just NZD100 (USD67) more than The Works fares, and add another NZD20 (USD13) from the Seat + Bag fare. At that price, it's hard to come down too hard on Air NZ, but the soft product could really do with some work to feel truly deluxe.

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