

PASSENGERS BEMOAN SPACE-FLEX CRUNCH ON LUFTHANSA'S NEW A320NEO

News / Airlines



Reaction to the new Lufthansa A320neo layout, including two more rows of seats and the Space-Flex v2 galley/lav combo, has been impressively loud and negative. While the forward half of the plane offers a smidgen more space for business class passengers, the back of the fuselage – where the SpaceFlex kit makes its mark – sees the opposite effect. Reduced pitch, limited overhead bin space and no windows in the last row create a confluence of #PaxEx pain.

Comparing the Lufthansa A320neo layout to the prior layout shows the crunch passengers can expect at the rear of the plane.

Indeed, some of the grief the Lufthansa A320neo layout is getting stems from the personal space being more cramped than the ultra-low-cost carriers (ULCCs) it is competing against. But what is there to be done? The saving grace is that it is being operated on truly short-haul routes.

In the US, New York City-based JetBlue is so far the only carrier – to our knowledge – to commit to the SpaceFlex v2 layout, starting in July when the first 200-seat A321 joins its fleet. The rest of the all-economy 'Core' A321s in JetBlue's fleet are set to be retrofitted by the end of the year (Mint business class-fitted aircraft are not changing) and the A320s will commence alterations in early 2017.

JetBlue's VP Marketing Jamie Perry acknowledged that the company "is aware" of the negative feedback about Lufthansa's new cabin but he remains optimistic that the JetBlue version will not

receive a similarly challenged reception.

“We have been very inclusive with our inflight crew members in particular in terms of what we want things to look like. We believe we have a good solution set up for customers and crew, but the reality is you’re not going to know until the rubber meets the road,” he tells RGN.

And for JetBlue the stakes are somewhat higher. The average stage length it will be flying the configuration on is notably longer than what Lufthansa is running, though JetBlue still has 10% fewer seats on board its A320s than Lufthansa. JetBlue backed off its initial plans to add 15 seats to each A320, drawing the number down to 12 and bringing back a bit more space and flexibility for passengers and crew.

Sources suggest that the shift was also necessary to help meet FAA certification requirements for the new layout with respect to jump seat locations. But the company knows that all the planning matters far less than what happens when passengers and crew step on board.

16 MARCH 2016

SOURCE: RUNWAYGIRLNETWORK

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