AIRBUS PATENTS ADJUSTABLE SEATS FOR PEOPLE OF EVERY SIZE

News / Manufacturer

Airbus — the company that patented the concept of stacking passengers on top of each other in a crowded tube flying at hundreds of miles per hour thousands of feet above the ground — has recently applied for a pair of airplane seat patents that simultaneously look to increase customer comfort while stripping away what little room remains.

Let's deal with the more passenger-friendly patent first: an airplane seat that could accommodate humans of just about any size.

The Airbus patent for a "Re-Configurable Passenger Bench Seat" is just what it sounds like. Rather than airplane seating being determined by individual bucket seats bolted together to form rows, this patent imagines a bench seat with a variety of option of for seatbelts.

So, per Airbus's always slightly disconcerting patent application drawings, you could fit two larger adults with an armrest between:

fig2airbus
Image not found or type unknown

Or you could seat three lanky adults in matching unitards:

fig4airbus
Image not found or type unknown

Or a pair of unitard-clad adults bookending a pair of what we believe are supposed to be children, but may just be those "child angel" dolls that passengers in Thailand are trying to put in their own seats:

fig6airbus
Image not found or type unknown

Airbus says the idea is to provide a seat that can be quickly adjusted, allowing for multiple permutations. However, we don't expect to see flight attendants going around making tweaks at customers' demands. Instead, this is likely being seen as something that airlines could use as an upsell: Want to fly in a row with your two young kids and your spouse? Fine, but that will be $X for

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seat customization.

Speaking of squeezing into a row, the second Airbus patents involves gaining more storage space for your carry-ons, but at the expense of legroom.

As things stand now, travelers throw their big carry-on bag (usually those awful, inflexible, too-large rolling suitcases that you don't really need and take up too much room) in the overhead bins, and then stow things like purses and laptop bags under the seat in front of them.

Long-legged passengers often choose to forgo that second form of storage in favor of having somewhere, anywhere, to put their feet. But Airbus apparently doesn't care about you and your limbs.

This second Airbus patent [via USA Today] takes secondary storage out from under the seat in front of you and puts it under your seat cushion:
fig3aairbus
Your first thought might be "Oh, cool… now I don't have to choose between legroom and storing my laptop bag," until you realize that you don't have to choose, because you can't choose.

As you can see from this second diagram, that under-seat storage space means the person behind you has even less room for their legs than they did before:
Screen Shot 2016-02-17 at 12.48.58 PM
What's more, while the idea of a fixed, under-butt storage area gives passengers a place to stow their carry-on that doesn't involve leaving it on the floor where it can be kicked, spilled on, or spill out its contents, it also means that accessing that storage space mid-flight would require the passenger to get out of their seat, turn around and rummage through the space.

Airplanes are already tightly packed enough. I don't know if I need my neighbor's rear-end in my face while he's hunched over looking through his bag for the pretzels he bought at the airport.

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