

[Home](#) » [Reviews](#) » [Airlines](#) » **Finnair, Business Class**

Finnair, Business Class

Helsinki (HEL) to New York (JFK)
by [Debra Bokur](#) on Oct. 17, 2013



Photo: © Finnair

On the Ground: Check-in at Helsinki's Vantaa Airport Terminal 2 was easy-breezy. I was ticketed through to my connecting flight from New York to Washington, D.C. The gracious and efficient counter agent, who had information that my onward flight to D.C. on a separate airline was canceled due to a winter storm, was already prepared to help me make alternate arrangements and secured a train ticket for me. I was then whisked through the priority security line. From there, the lounge was a short stroll away between Gates 36 and 37. I had only a carry-on bag; had I checked luggage, it would have been tagged priority.

Pre-Flight: [Finnair's](#) Helsinki lounge is a study in minimalist design and comfort. The generous space is arranged into intimate groupings and private corners, with a narrow upper deck with deep chairs and ottomans overlooking the runway. The area was flooded with natural light, with plenty of electrical outlets within easy access. Felted walls buffered airport sound, and the buffet had a nice selection of hot and cold dishes served on beautiful Marimekko dinnerware.

I had no trouble connecting to the complimentary WiFi and spent a pleasant two hours catching up on emails and reading. I found the earthy colors, soothing creams and light-colored woods

throughout the space extremely soothing and was very relaxed by boarding time. Once my flight was announced, I was ushered on board with no waiting and quickly offered a refreshing drink. The boarding process in all cabins went quickly and smoothly, and we left the gate on time.

In-Flight: My window seat was spacious and comfortable with ample storage space. My seat converted into a bed but wasn't completely flat. Though there was a slight angle and my feet were lower than my head, I still found it easy to fall asleep for the middle part of the flight following lunch service. Sleeping was made easier thanks to soft sheets, a fluffy quilted comforter and an excellent pillow. Amenity kits were serviceable but packaged in an eco-friendly paper covering. The entertainment selection was quite broad, with first-run international movies, games and music from around the world. I occupied myself by intermittently watching our progress on the flight map while finally finishing a novel I'd begun months before the flight.

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As this was a day flight, lunch was served. After an amuse bouche of organic root vegetable chips, I was offered a salad and creamy chanterelle soup served with a small platter of Baltic herring roe, smoked elk and Lappish baked cheese. For the main course, I chose salmon with a pepper crust served with a potato-leek ragout, one of three dishes offered. To accompany the salmon, I had the Schlumberger Riesling, an Alsace Grand Cru. Though I skipped it, dessert was either fresh fruit, cheeses or a slice of a beautiful strawberry cake. Nearly as impressive as the food was the dinnerware: The glassware was specially designed for Finnair in 1969 by Tapio Wirkkala of the famed Finnish glassware firm Iittala. The design, called Ultima Thule, has remained in continuous service and is recognized as a Finnish design classic. It was a lovely touch to cabin service.

The snack bar in the galley had light fare available throughout the flight, and when I later requested a cup of tea, it was served promptly — hot and freshly brewed. About an hour and a half before landing, the crew offered a light meal consisting of a Scandinavian shrimp sandwich with fresh fruit on the side.

The Experience: The flight was a positive experience from start to finish, accentuated by an airport staff and onboard service team that actually appeared to enjoy the delivery of friendly customer service.

GT Checklist

- ✓ Less than 10 minutes for check-in
- ✓ Friendly and helpful agents
- ✓ Priority-tagged bags
- ✓ Airport lounge
- ✓ Complimentary in-lounge food and beverages
- ✓ Priority boarding
- ✓ Helpful and courteous in-flight staff
- ✓ Pre-flight beverage service
- ✓ Pre-flight newspapers and magazines
- ✓ Amenity kits
- ✗ Slippers
- ✗ Lie-flat seat/bed
- ✗ Mattress pad and comforter
- ✓ In-flight menu offering choice of three entrées
- ✓ Top-shelf wines and liquors

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