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Finnair Reveals Its Cabins for Its New Long-Haul Airbus Fleet

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SKIFT TAKE

Finnair respected the best features of the A350XWB by choosing to keep it simple, and roomy. We can only hope other airlines which will fly the A350 will be inspired by this approach.

— Marisa Garcia



Just after the A350XWB aircraft touched down at Helsinki Airport for a quick hello, national carrier Finnair announced its interiors cabins for this new aircraft. Finnair is the European launch customer for this new Airbus aircraft model.

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Finnair plans to begin service on its first A350s in the second half of 2015, initially serving Shanghai, Bangkok, and Beijing, with Hong Kong and Singapore A350 service to be added in 2016. The airline has placed 11 firm orders and 8 options for A350 aircraft with Airbus, which will form the backbone of the company's long-haul fleet and drive its expansion plans.


Room, Room, Room & Mood Lighting

Skift toured the [A350XWB](#) earlier this year during its Hamburg debut. We noted that it had plenty of room and we hoped airlines would use it well. It's clear that Finnair felt the same. The airline went out of its way to respect the space and comfort features of the A350's original design concept, resulting in optimized cabins, which provide passengers the comforts they care about most, and a little something extra to make the travel experience more pleasurable.

Finnair's new cabin design for its new flagship longhaul product is the brain-child of top Helsinki firm [dSign Vertti Kivi & Co](#), also the designer of Finnair's new [Premium Lounge at Helsinki Airport](#). The design firm made the most of A350's bright and spacious cabin features, including large panoramic view windows and comfortable seating arrangements in both classes, Economy (with an Economy Plus section) and Business. We admired the mood-lighting options on the A350 during our walk-through in Hamburg, and Finnair has chosen to make the most of this feature.

"We have worked hard to create a special customer experience onboard the new A350XWB aircraft and are proud to bring Finnish design to Finnair's passengers," says designer Vertti Kivi. "Our Space Alive concept means dynamic lighting, colours and moods to suit the time of day, destination or season. For example, when descending in the East the aircraft can be awash in warm orange tones, or surface interiors may glow in fresh blue hues when arriving in Helsinki."



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Welcome to Helsinki, A350! The start of a beautiful friendship, we're sure. #A350XWBTour

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As the airline states: "Gradual changes in dynamic ambient LED lighting ease customers into a relaxing flight experience and help create a calming and fresh atmosphere."

For the rest of the new Finnair cabin reveal, we'll start at the back. The airline gave due consideration to its Economy passengers on this aircraft. Finnair provides a 31-inch seat pitch in Economy, and a 9-abreast configuration: meaning the seats are wider and easier to get in and out of, with a 3+3+3 configuration.

Finnair selected [Zodiac Z300](#) slim-line seats its 208 Economy Class and 43 Economy Comfort seats—which will get comfy headrests, high-quality headphones and four extra inches of leg room. All Economy and Economy Plus seats get an 11-inch touch screen In-Flight Entertainment (IFE) system and USB power outlets to keep their devices charged during those long flights.

The aircraft, carrying 297 passengers in all, also includes 46 seats in Business Class in a 1+2+1 layout, giving all Business Class passengers direct aisle access. The airline selected [Zodiac Cirrus III](#) seats, which convert to fully flat beds, and gave Business Class passengers a 16-inch touch-screen Inflight Entertainment System loaded with films, TV shows, music and other digital content on demand in numerous languages. Seats in Business Class also come equipped with AC and USB power outlets.

Finnair tells Skift that it is still deliberating on the final selection of IFE and in-flight Wi-Fi suppliers, and will let us know when it's ready to make that announcement.

"Since Finnair's founding in 1923, we have had a long history of operations using the most advanced aircraft available," says Finnair CEO Pekka Vauramo. "As the first European operator of the A350 we are proud to carry forward this tradition on behalf of our passengers, whose safety and comfort remain our first priority."

Beauty of Simplicity

What we love best, is what Finnair didn't do to these cabins. It didn't clog up the visual space of what is an otherwise cavernous aircraft with broken lines and colour pollution. Instead, the airline reflected its Nordic nature choosing a light grey colour scheme, which can be cool or warm according to how it plays off the changing lighting effects in the cabin, or the never repeated light selection—straight from mother nature through those nice large windows.

Far from drab, we've seen cabins designed in this neutral shade glow like pearls in the sunlight. It is an exquisitely light-friendly color, though it does require special care in cleaning. We have no doubt Finnair's cabins will have all that shimmer, while keeping the passenger's eyes at rest with slim lines and hidden minimalist elements. The old design adage, less is more, has been around a while because it is so very true.

Just the right amount "less" is also feature of the A350. The aircraft has an eco-smart design, delivering more than 25 per cent improvement in fuel efficiency and operating cost over the previous generation of aircraft in its class, reducing the carbon footprint of Finnair and its passengers.

And the Upgrades Continue

Finnair has also announced that Economy Comfort will become a feature of all its long-haul flights, not just the A350, with those extra four inches of legroom. Economy Class meals are updated with an additional complimentary mid-flight snack on day-time flights, a new wine selection and—wait for it—Free Bubbly in Economy! Definitely a way to win passengers hearts. Business Class will receive a new amenity kit with "high-quality brand products," the airline states.

"During the past year we have carried out detailed surveys of nearly 8,000 customers from our key markets in both Europe and Asia," says Jarkko Kontinen, Finnair's VP Marketing and Product Development. "With these product updates in tune with customer expectations and desires, we can support our core goal of growing Asian revenue and becoming a preferred airline in travel between Asia and Europe."

Finnair will also introduce Sky Bistro, offering a wide mix-and-match selection of foods and beverages which combine flavors of Europe and Asia. Meals can be picked out in advance on line, at Finnair.com, or bought onboard in flight. Sky Bistro will be available on nearly all European flights and meals for Business Class are included in the price of the ticket. The coffee, tea and Finnair's signature blueberry juice will continue to flow freely into your cup, no matter what class you're flying.

Business Class will convert to fully flat beds on almost all long-haul aircraft. To complete the unique Finnair passenger experience, there is [the sauna and new shower suites we wrote about earlier this year](#) at the Finnair Lounge at Helsinki Airport, where passengers can relax prior to take off. Finnair Plus Gold and Platinum members, and other oneworld top tier customers, can enjoy the exclusive new Premium Lounge annex.

Finnair didn't forget the importance of tech to the travel experience. The airline will roll out a new mobile travel companion application (for iOS in the fall, later for other mobile platforms). The app will give up-to-the-minute flight information, store boarding passes, and can be used to check in, select seats, buy upgrades, and check Finnair Plus point status. Finnair will also be sending special offers to its customers via the app.

Helsinki Steps Up Its Game

The close relationship between Finnair and its home airport, Helsinki, continued today; with Helsinki revealing its ambitious plans for a new future-proofed terminal for 2020:



We already enjoy saunas at the Finnair lounge and yoga classes at the terminal, but the future terminal will have state-of-the-art technology integrated throughout, restaurants and shopping, all to make the travel experience care-free and fun. Which is exactly as it should be.

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