

Air New Zealand has just unveiled its transformation of international air travel to an audience of more than 20 journalists from around the world in Auckland.

With the introduction of revolutionary, Kiwi designed lie-flat economy and ground breaking premium economy seats, together with enhanced comforts for those wanting the ultimate in luxurious Business Premier travel we are redefining air travel.

We have revealed the prototype designs in a full-scale Boeing 777-300 cabin inside our design innovation centre known as Hangar 9 in Auckland's CBD, just a few hundred meters from our head office. Quite simply we have set a benchmark for our competitors to follow. We are putting the magic and romance back into flying, and I am sure we will reignite the passion of today's travelers.

For those who choose, the days of sitting in economy and yearning to lie down and sleep are gone. The dream is now a reality, one that can even be shared with a traveling companion!

The 'Skycouch', a specially designed row of three seats, has been engineered to create a lie-flat, flexible space all the way to the seat-back in front, providing a place for the kids to play, or the holy grail of economy travel – a flat surface for adults to relax and sleep.

Twenty-two sets of Skycouch seats will be available, being the first 11 window rows in the Economy Class cabin.

For two adults traveling, purchasing the Skycouch will be based on buying two seats at standard prices with the third seat at approximately half price. Full airfare details will be announced when it goes on sale from late April.

Air New Zealand's Premium Economy cabin has also had a dramatic makeover.

Most airlines' Premium Economy offering leaves travelers with economy-style food and service. By complete contrast, our new Premium Economy cabin with uniquely Kiwi designed Spacesets will offer unparalleled comfort and legroom with new shared-meal experiences more familiar in tapas restaurants or bistros than at 35,000 feet.

Air New Zealand's new 'Spaceset' is a totally new concept for Premium Economy in the airline industry, providing flexibility and privacy through the angle of the seats. They will be configured in a 2-2-2 layout, compared to the industry standard 3-3-3 in 777-200s.

There was no Premium Economy seat available in the market that delivered the exclusive style of customer experience we were looking for. The only answer was to design our own.

This is a game changing product for Premium Economy which will have our competitors playing catch up for several years. Already Boeing has indicated they're interested in the seats as a Business Class option for their 737 range.

Air New Zealand's award winning Business Premier cabin has also been enhanced with complete on-demand food and beverage service more akin to premium dining and an enhanced sleep experience to ensure travelers really do feel they've snuggled into their own bed.

The new interior design scheme includes a move away from traditional blues and greens to a more luxurious blend of chalk and deep ink colors.

Each of the three zones in Air New Zealand's long haul aircraft of the future will be a step ahead of competitors from a comfort perspective and the experience will be further underpinned by the world's most innovative food and beverage service and state-of-the-art entertainment system.

Being able to order a steak, medium rare in Business Premier, a pizza for two in Premium Economy or a late night snack in Economy, whenever you want, will be a very cool experience. New oven technology that will cook food from scratch rather than simply reheating and a new digital in-seat ordering service will make this truly the first time real food has been served at 35,000 feet.

Coupled with some of the world's best wines like gold-medal winning sauvignon blancs from Marlborough, pinot noirs from Central Otago and cabernet merlots and syrahs from Hawke's Bay, we will be serving an incredible dining experience!

The 340 seat 777-300 aircraft will be configured with 246 in Economy (including 66 seats creating 22 Skycouch combinations), 50 in Premium Economy and 44 in Business Premier.

The first routes to offer travelers the next generation of long haul travel will be on selected NZ5 and NZ6 services between Auckland and Los Angeles from December followed by dedicated return services on NZ1 and NZ2 between Auckland and Los Angeles and through to London from April 2011.

We expect to also refit our fleet of eight Boeing 777-200 aircraft from mid next year, with all Asian, North American and UK services to have the new product by around 2012.

It's going to be great delivering the world a truly unique product that our nation can be proud of!

Rob Fyfe
Chief Executive Officer
Air New Zealand