DELTA LAUNCHES COMFORT+ FARES

News / Airlines

Saturday **Delta** Air Lines officially **launched a "Comfort+"** airfare in its reservation system which makes it the first legacy U.S. airline to sell extra legroom seats under their own fare.

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For future travel starting May 16, 2016, customers will have the option to book the Comfort+ fare; customers who purchase this will be able to select Comfort+ seats which offer:

- Customers can take advantage of Sky Priority Boarding instead of boarding in Zone 1
- There is dedicated overhead bin space for Comfort + customers
- Extra leg room
- Free wine, spirits, and regional craft beers for customers 21 and over
- Snacks on all flights with a premium snack basket being offered on flights over 900 miles
- Complimentary access to everything on Delta Studio

Plus, Delta has begun installing curtains between main cabin and Comfort+ seats on some of its MD-88 aircraft; eventually, all of the fleet will have this.

Initial Comfort+ Upgrades

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The new airfare comes just 11 months after Delta announced many new upgrades to its existing product, including re-branding Economy Comfort to Comfort+. The airline also made upgrades to its First Class and Delta One products as well as expanded a bit more on its Basic Economy and Main Cabin products.

When the announcement was made last December, there was mixed reaction. Many people were happy to hear that Delta would begin enforcing dedicated overhead bin space for those seated in Comfort+ as long as flight attendants actually enforced it, and many were happy with the addition of the free wine, spirits, and regional craft beers for customers 21 and over, complimentary Delta Studio Access, and snack basket on flights over 900 miles. Plus, Delta re-branded the seats with new seat covers that closely matched the new first class seat covers.

But, there were some negative reactions.

Gold Medallion members lost complimentary access to select Comfort+ seats at the time of booking as they now had-and still do-to wait until 72 hours before departure to select seats. Additionally, Delta began to advertise even more to up-sell more of the seats to customers which disappointed some elites as it would become a bit harder to select them at time of booking or just a few days before departure.

The Changes With the New Fare Class

With the debut of the new airfare, there are not really any new changes to the product.

Diamond and Platinum Medallions will be able to continue to select Comfort+ seats at the time of booking for free, unless they book a Basic Economy (E fare) ticket. Gold Medallions will still have access to select Comfort+ seats for free at three days before departure, and Silver Medallions will still be able to select them for free starting at the time of check-in.

737_ComfortPlus

Although, many have reported that Delta's elite services phone line agents are saying that Gold Medallions will receive four certificates each year that would allow them to select Comfort+ seats at the time of booking while Silver Medallions will receive two per year for each year they re-qualify for status. In a way, this is much like how Diamond and Platinum Medallions receive a certain number of global and/or regional upgrade certificates each year.

Over the course of the week, Delta has made some changes to their website, especially how it displays Medallion Upgrade Requests to allow the ability for Gold and Silver Medallions to automatically request an upgrade to Comfort+ and be upgraded as long as seats are available; now if there are only middle seats available and you have selected to be auto-upgraded, you will be upgraded to the seat. This part has given some Medallions mixed feelings about the opportunity to upgrade–especially when just middle seats are available–as some say an aisle in the main cabin is much better than a middle in Comfort+.

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Another change Delta has made that will be effective May 16, 2016 is that Medallions will only allow one companion to sit with you in Comfort+.

Premium Economy Product?

Now, is Comfort+ a premium economy product? Not necessarily; they still charge for checked-bags and does not offer complimentary meals domestically. There are definitely some benefits that come along with Comfort+, however.

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Could this be just another step in Delta becoming the first U.S. airline to offer a premium economy product? Only time will tell; it has been rumored that more changes will come coinciding with the debut of the A350 in 2017, but for now, we will just have to stay tuned.

15 NOVEMBER 2015

SOURCE: AIRWAYSNEW
ARTICLE LINK:
https://ids.50skyshades.com/news/airlines/delta-launches-comfort-fares

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