

Beat jet lag on these high flyers

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For long-haul flights, the type of aircraft does make a difference

JANE MUNDY

I never payed attention to which aircraft took me overseas, until discovering it does make a difference when it comes to alleviating the cursed jet lag and other pesky problems. Turns out that the higher you fly, the better you'll feel at your destination. Not all aircraft can reach such heights.

Economy passengers are canaries in the cabin at the end of a long-haul flight because it's easier to notice how you feel rather than business class passengers who are pampered and drinking champers. So, I know firsthand that sitting for more than nine hours on a Dreamliner or Airbus A350 really is key to wellness.

These aircraft use the newest technology to fly higher than other planes. Dry air and changes in air pressure attributes to tiredness and dehydration, but those symptoms decrease the higher a plane flies because cabin pressure is lower. This even translates to food tasting better, and it's easier to sleep—even in economy.

LUFTHANSA

I was recently in seat 32B on Lufthansa's A350 to Munich direct from Vancouver. Amazingly, I wasn't my usual grouchy and achy self after the nine-hour flight. An



Lufthansa's A350 can fly higher, which means a lower cabin pressure that reduces the possibility of jet lag.

airline spokesperson said that cabin pressure can be set lower, which translates to less of the headaches, ear pops, lessened taste and dry mouth that accompany travelling at lower altitude.

As well, the economy class cabin is more spacious, so a long flight feels less claustrophobic. There's more room to stretch your legs and more space to store your carry-on. And rather than taking an Ambien, the use of energy-efficient LED (light-emitting diode) enables the cabin ambience. Lighting is tailored to mimic day and night time

illumination, and LED lighting strips when crossing a bunch of time zones apparently recalibrate circadian rhythm. I'm a borderline insomniac but right after dinner and a movie I slept for the rest of the trip. I wasn't my usual stunned self when we landed. (By the way, if you have a connecting flight and have a choice, Munich airport offers lots of amenities to help you relax, including great dining options.)

As of May 2018, Lufthansa flies non-stop from Vancouver to Munich. For more information, visit lufthansa.com

CATHAY PACIFIC

Cathay Pacific's Airbus A350-900 is my choice to Hong Kong. It's the quietest aircraft in Cathay's fleet and it's the most environmentally-friendly long-haul aircraft. A Cathay spokesperson said the A350-900 uses 25 per cent less fuel and produces 25 per cent fewer emissions. "The cabin carpets and passengers' blankets are made from recycled plastic and nylon, including plastic bottles and salvaged fishing nets that are otherwise a hazard for marine life." Hey, every little bit helps.

Cathay Pacific offers 14

flights weekly non-stop from Vancouver to Hong Kong. Cathaypacific.com/ca

AIR NEW ZEALAND

Thirteen hours literally flew by on Air New Zealand's Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner from Vancouver to Auckland. I hit the ground wide-eyed and refreshed, for a few reasons. As well as an altitude of 6,000 ft (jet lag kicks in at 6,500 ft), cabin humidity is higher, and an air purification system delivers cleaner and healthier air throughout the flight.

The Dreamliner's windows are larger than most other air-

craft, which means — besides incredible views — more natural light to help with our circadian rhythm. Bonus: Leaving YVR in the evening and arriving early morning helps adjust to New Zealand's time zone. And armed with this knowledge of circadian rhythm, one study (U.S. National Library of Medicine) says you can trick Mother Nature into letting you fly around the world without jet lag.

Air New Zealand offers 4 non-stop flights per week from Vancouver, departing at 8:15 p.m. and arriving in Auckland at 5 a.m. airnewzealand.ca

AIR CANADA

My friend pilots Air Canada's Dreamliner and he told me there is a noticeable difference. Having an aircraft with lower cabin pressure means that food tastes better, you're going to have less headaches because you aren't dehydrated, and people who can't sleep at high altitude will find it easier to get some shut-eye because the internal cabin pressure is of a lower altitude.

"Flying at 35,000 feet, we can get the internal pressure down to 6,000 feet (it used to be 7,000 - 9,000 feet), which is closer to sea level, so this is a big leap," he said. "And this aircraft is built with material that helps reduce engine noise, so you'll sleep better."

He suggests I pack a hygrometer to prove there is more humidity in the cabin. I'll take his word for it.

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