EMIRATES FIRST CLASS LOUNGE AT DUBAI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT: REVIEW

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Emirates airline's "A380 hub" at **Dubai Airport**'s Terminal 3 stretches for 645 metres, housing 20 individual gates through which up to 15 million passengers a year can board. For anyone worn out by international jet setting, this place is a welcome relief – it's vast, bright, airy and relatively hushed and, for those with tickets for the front seats, the experience is even more so.

The **First Class lounge** stretches the entire length and breadth of the concourse and, truth be told, isn't a single lounge at all. Rather, each gate has its own dedicated area complete with boarding facilities, so you need never stray from its confines.

It has its own duty free shopping areas (ultra high-end, naturally, with even a Vertu store in place) and seating of every possible combination for 1,491 passengers, although it's so big you often get the feeling that you're the only person there.

There are also dedicated quiet rooms with chaise longues and pillows. You can take a shower too, but best to leave that for when you're on the plane – just for sheer novelty value.

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It may be spread over a large area, but that doesn't mean service isn't the most attentive in the industry – wherever you walk, stand or sit, there's always a member of staff politely asking if there's anything they can do or get for you.

My flight was at 9.30am, just in time for breakfast at the full à la carte restaurant. I opted for the poached eggs with salmon and parsley fish cakes, freshly squeezed orange juice and a pot of English Breakfast tea. A large basket of toast and assorted pastries is served first, there's French butter on the table and fresh flowers for that added je ne sais quoi. The kitchen is visible through a large window and you can see that the chefs are unstressed _ as am I.

For those with business on their minds, rather than fine dining, the Wi-Fi connectivity throughout the lounge is patchy at best and practically useless for uploading files of any size – personally I would rather pay for better speeds. However, there is a business centre with its own bank of computers and recharging points for your laptop or mobile phone.

For complete unwinding after your emails are sorted, pay a visit to the Timeless Spa with its 15 treatment rooms. Those in First have a selection of complimentary treatments from the de-stress back massage (the best I've ever had) to reflex therapy, hairdresser services and a manicure.

Q&A

Where is the First Class lounge?

After checking in at Terminal 3 and exiting security, travellers need to bear left and take the train to the A concourse. The gargantuan hall you disembark into has lifts and escalators to the main gate areas and, once there, you need to take the lift or steps to the fourth floor, after which there's no need to go anywhere else until you board.

Who can access it?

Anyone with a First Class ticket, as well as Skywards (Emirates' frequent flyer programme) Platinum members, regardless of which cabin they are travelling in. Platinum members are also able to "sign in" one further guest each and those transiting via Dubai with Qantas First Class can also take advantage of the facilities.

Are there similar First Class areas in other Emirates lounges?

Apart from the facility in the B concourse within Dubai's Terminal 3, no. Overseas Emirates lounges are either for the use of both Business and First Class passengers, or they are shared with other carriers. Never say never, though.

Do the staff let you know when your flight is?

As each gate has its own lounge area, there is no need for announcements but a staff member does go around gently reminding people to get a move on.

Has Emirates won any awards for this First Class lounge?

Yes, the most recent being the Apex Passenger Choice Awards 2015 which include Best Overall Passenger Experience and Best Ground Services for its network of lounges.

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