8 INNOVATIONS THAT COULD ACTUALLY MAKE AIRPLANES MORE COMFORTABLE

News / Manufacturer



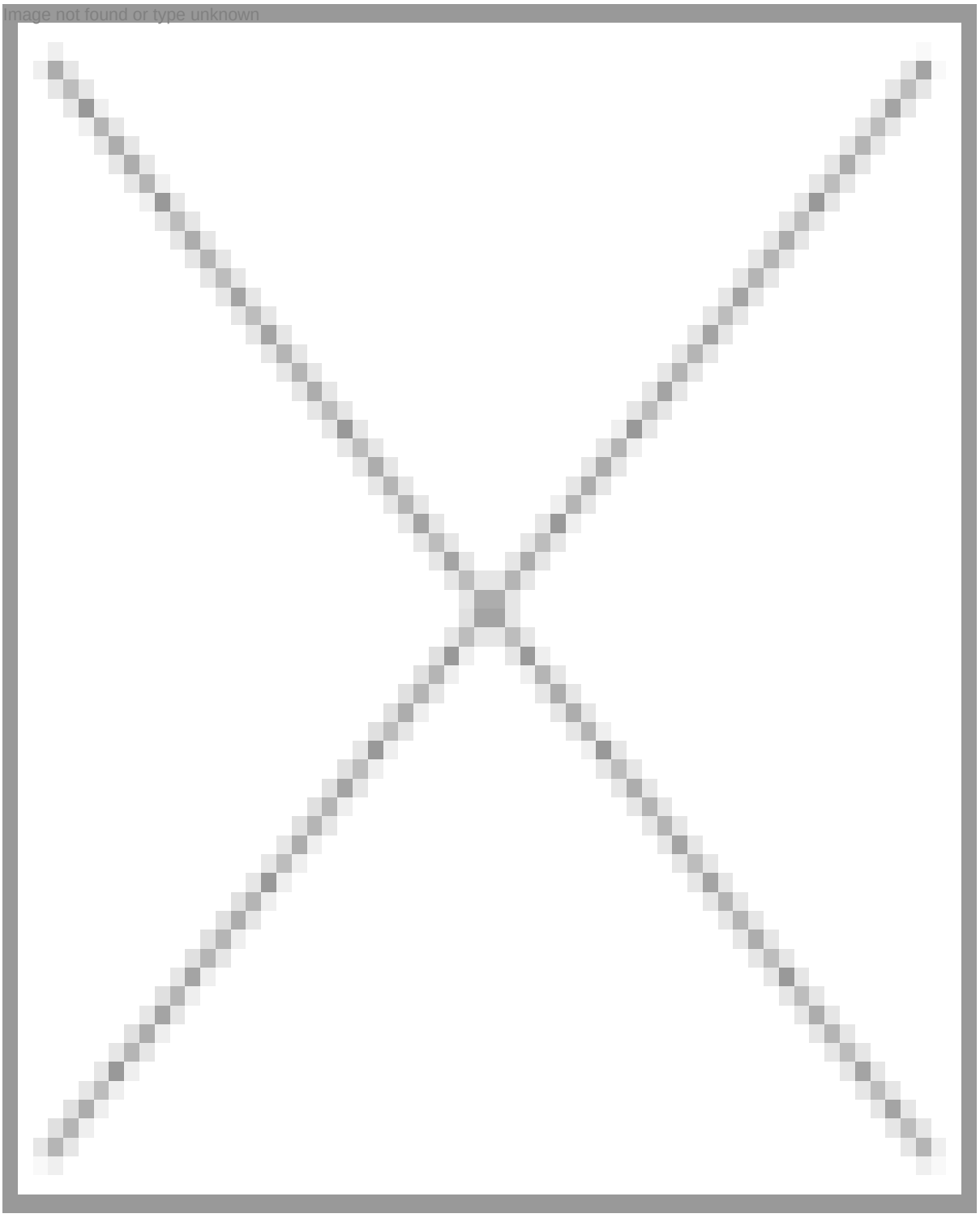
The Oscars of the plane cabin, the Crystal Cabin Awards, were held in Hamburg on Tuesday night. This is as gala a gala event as you get in aviation. It’s not the Oscars, but then airlines and their suppliers don't have the box office earnings to match even Batman v Superman.

Each year, awards are handed out in seven key cabin experience categories. But this year — on the 10th anniversary of the CCAs — an eighth category was added for cabin innovations.

So who won? And what does this all mean for you, as the person paying for of all this relative luxury with your ticket to fly?

1. Cleaner toilets

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Boeing won the top award in the cabin Health category for a fancy self-cleaning toilet. Boeing will be installing this toilet soon, and Airbus announced its own anti-cooties lavatory on the A330neo Airspace by Airbus.

Cleaner lavs are here to stay — assuming fellow passengers don't leave paper everywhere. They may or may not be larger, but plane toilets will be more hygienic.

2. Adjustable seats

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Rebel Aero won an award for its new Economy seat which is a departure from the norm: two seats in one. The Rebel Aero seat lets you sit as you normally would, comfortably (well, *plane* comfortably), or sit/standing with the seat bottom folded up.

Before you say, *I don't want to fly standing up*, this isn't about that. It gives passengers the option to stretch their legs, and shift position.

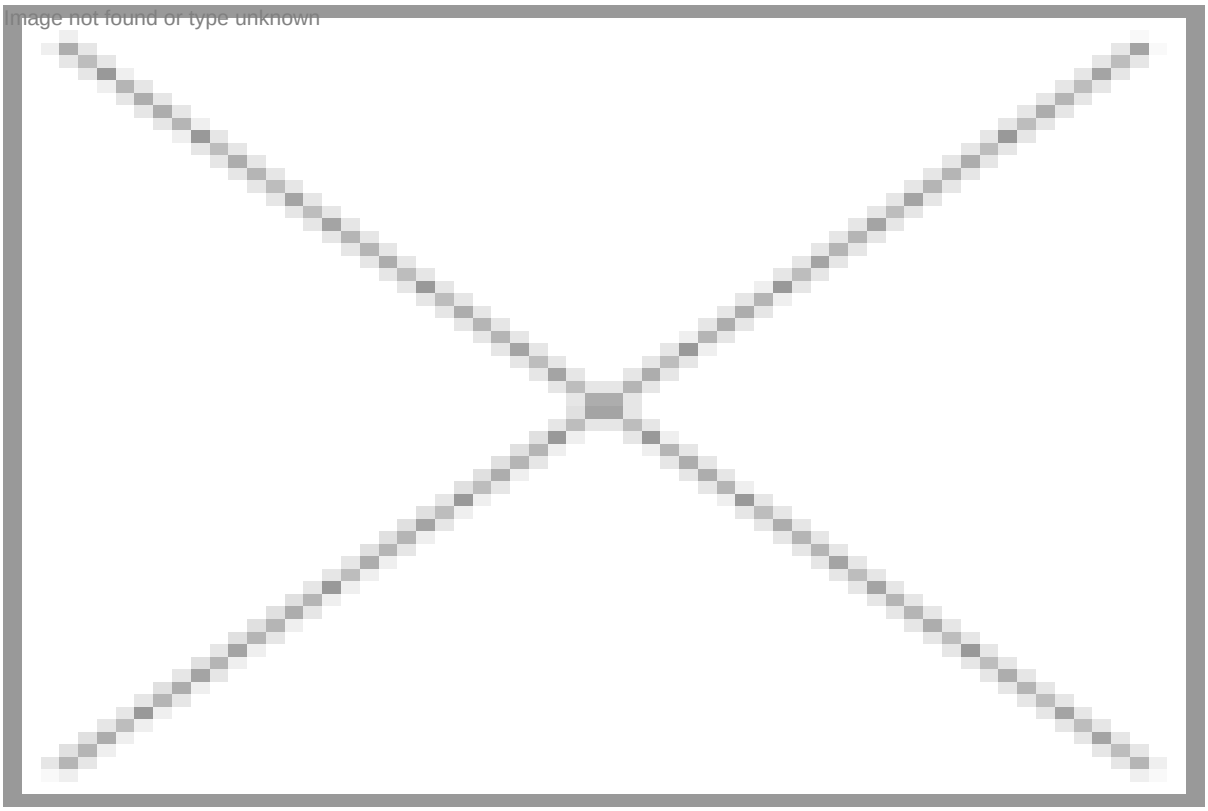
You can also get in and out easier when you have to go use that new fancy self-cleaning toilet.

It's still a hard sell for airlines — they have to get used to the idea, but those Rebels are arguing the win-win. Give it a year or two. Maybe five, but not too much longer.

3. More privacy

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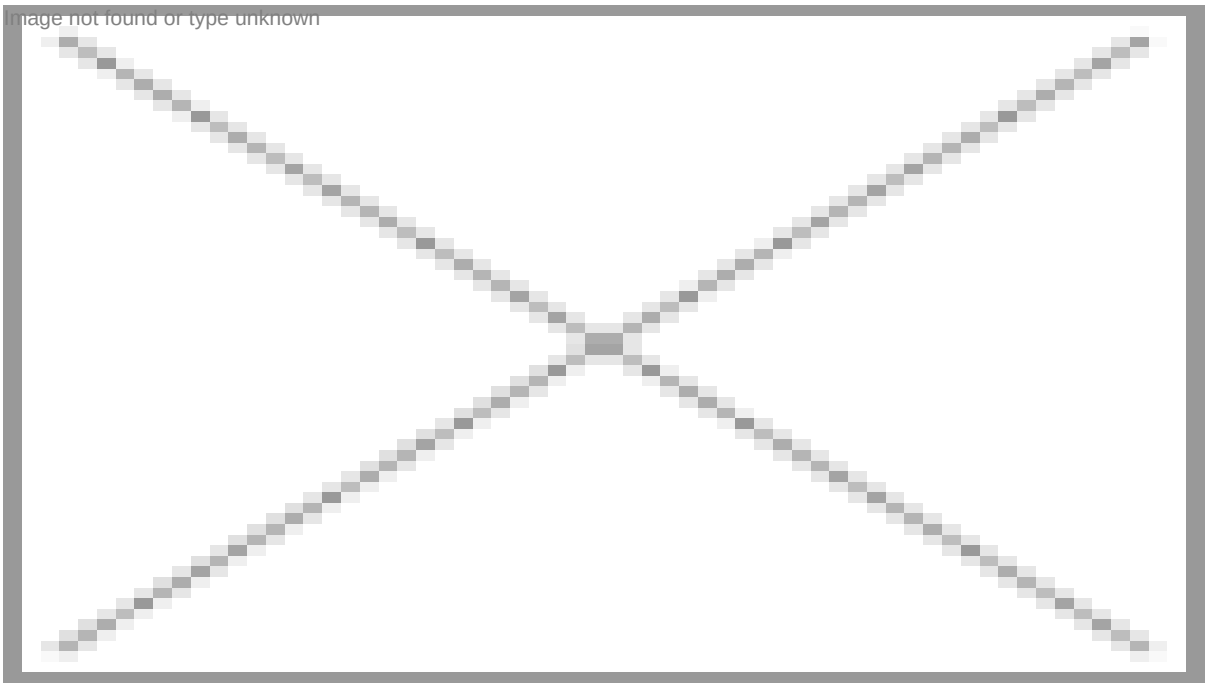
One of the great things about the CCA is that it was designed to encourage change and inspire the future of travel. For that purpose there is always a University student winner proposing something practical and new.

This year's winner from TU Delft university in Holland proposed a simple yet brilliant folding "hammock" headrest. Top selling feature: It's a great cue for Chatty Chuck next to you that you don't want to hear his Jon Snow dead or alive theory for the duration. It's also a great place to rest your head when you sleep.

University proposals take a little longer for adoption, but very good things have come out of this category. Take James Lee's Paperclip Design which came up with really handy solutions for plane problems A-Z. Those earned earned Lee a place at Airbus' BizLab incubator. So yes, this clever GoT rumor squasher might take off soon enough.

4. Groovier cabins

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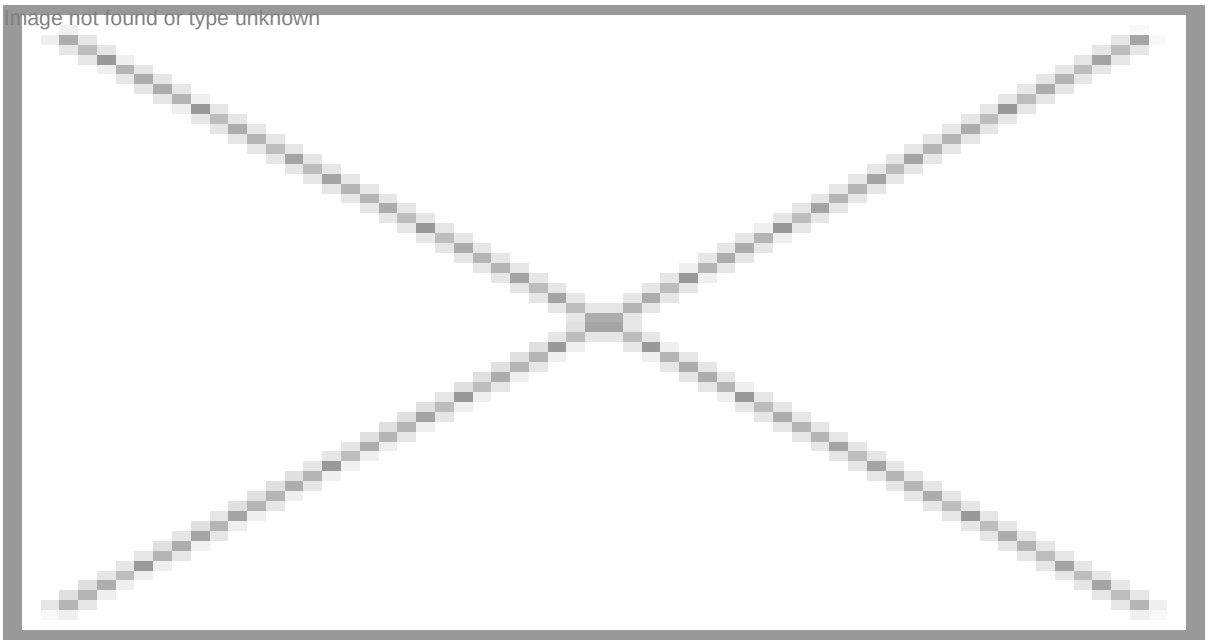


Virgin America was just sold, but the groove is here to stay when it comes to cabin mood lighting.

B/E Aerospace won tonight for its new Viu lighting system which also allows image projections. We can expect that to roll out soon, along with other lighting solutions already flying.

Light is moving at light speed, so expect more colorful cabins. Not a lot of chartreuse, we hope, but whatever works.

5. Earthier cabins



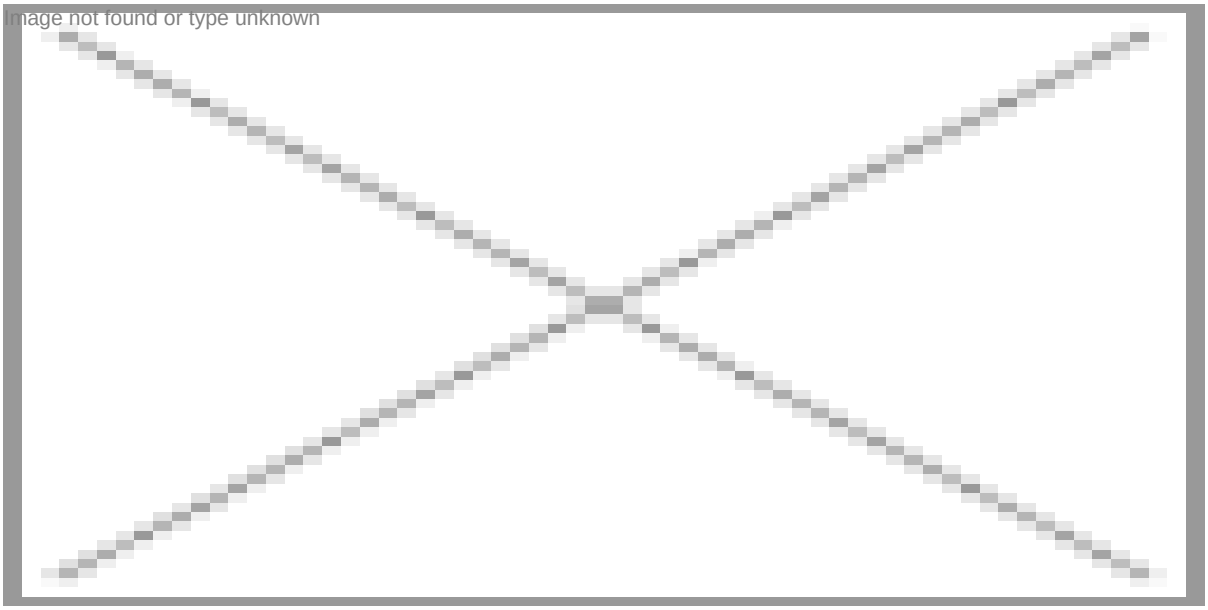
Austrian manufacturer F.LIST won for its wood panel flooring which is ready to fly.

This is a VIP market product, in concept. If you want some for your private jet, they're the ones to call. But you could find them on commercial cabins, too. Some airlines are raising the VIP bar, beyond bars, at the front of the plane.

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It wouldn't surprise us to see these applied in First class or the next "private apartment" to take off.

6. Stiff competition for better Business and First



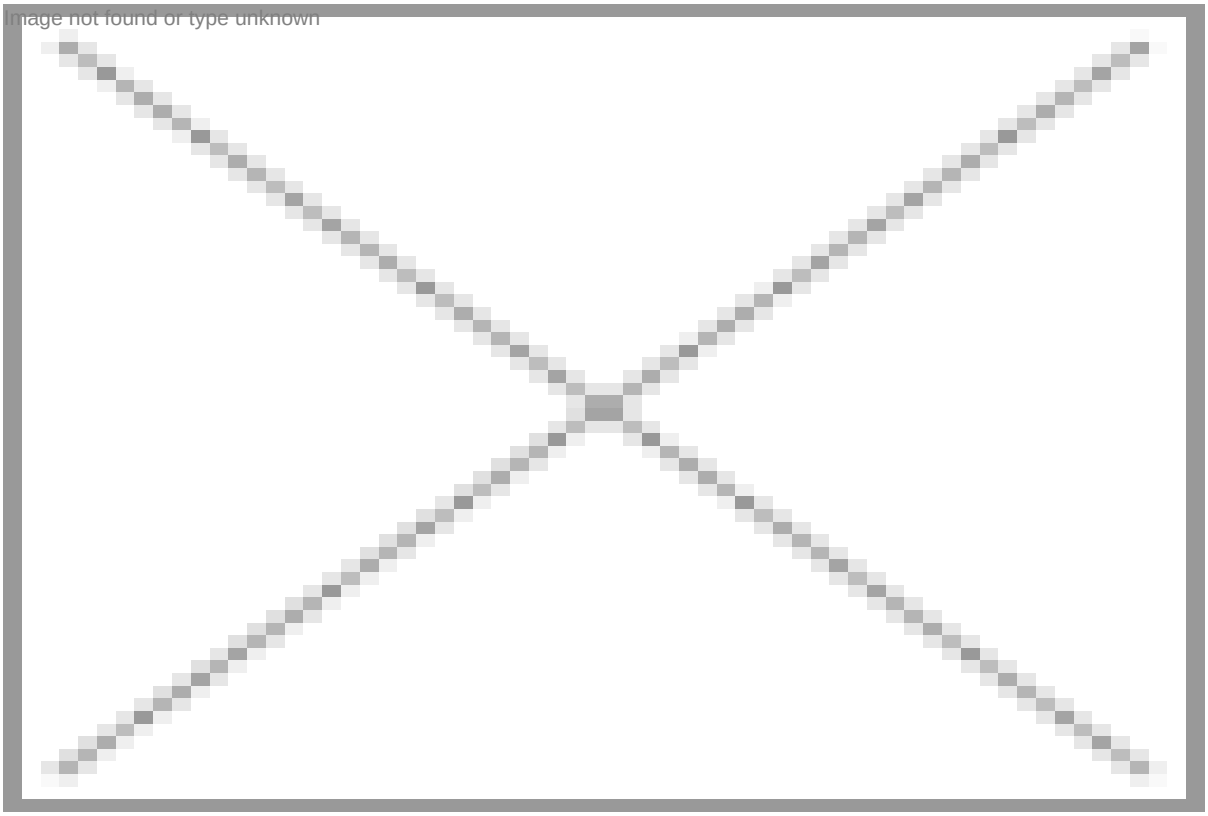
No matter what you read or what it says on your ticket, if you're flying at the front of the plane you're flying First. Today's Business class is now a hundred times better than First class a decade ago, and Mad Men would have gone crazy over today’s premium standards.

But that’s making some airlines push the limits on First to greater heights. Etihad takes the cake on this, which is why they've also taken home a CCA for their First Suites. And that's just the beginning.

7. Cord cutting continues

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Today, it's all about wireless BYOD — that's bring-your-own-device — entertainment.

There’s growing competition in this area, but Lufthansa Systems won for Board Connect which first gave this trend a boost.

8. A creative overhaul

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Lastly, the new cabin innovations visionary winner is a plane cabin like none you've ever flown before.

The Lifestyle cabin by Zodiac Aerospace — the same Zodiac that designed dystopian hexagonal seats — will make you forget any vestiges of patent-induced angst. The miles more passenger-friendly Lifestyle is built around each passenger's preferences.

It includes family seating separate from singles, couples seating, seats designed for those who want to work and be left alone, beds which economy passengers can book to sleep horizontally, walkways to stretch your legs, lounges, private apartments — you name it.

The good news: Everyone loves it enough to give it a top prize. The bad news: This one's a hard sell. It will take a while, and may not be recognizable by the time it comes to an airplane near you. But still, it is a more realistic notion of all that's coming than any rough-shot patent sketches you've looked at lately.

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