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SOMMELIERS AT ALTITUDE

On board Singapore Airlines flights, professional wine experts push the boundaries of good service into that of luxury.

Since 1998, a team of qualified Air Sommeliers has enhanced the service on Singapore Airlines flights with their learned recommendations on wines, assisting passengers in choosing those that best suit their taste.

Ninety-three Air Sommeliers rotate across the fleet to service all classes of travel on SIA flights. These highly trained professionals must first attain a Level 3 Award in Wines and Spirits from the London-based Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) which alone would be sufficient for most five-star establishments. Going one step further, SIA Air Sommeliers also have to be graduates of SIA's stringent nine-month in-house sommelier programme.

Wines on all SIA flights are professionally selected by

international consultants. The panel comprises wine gurus like Michael Hill Smith MW, Jeannie Cho Lee MW and Oz Clarke. With wines pre-chosen by this distinguished panel, why would one need a sommelier on board?

One pioneer Air Sommelier, Inflight Supervisor Vinod Achuthan shares, "Palates are very personal, with each having different tolerances to the nuances of fruity, tannic or oaky flavours. With a few well-placed questions and taking into account the passenger's choice of meal, Air Sommeliers are in an excellent position to fine tune their recommendations for the choice of wines."

According to IFS Achuthan, passengers are "simply appreciative to be served in such a special way".

This scheme has lifted the overall

level of inflight wine service as the enthusiasm for wines has trickled down to the other cabin crew in the fleet. While Air Sommeliers may not currently be present on all SIA flights, they are well backed up by a growing pool of highly knowledgeable cabin crew qualified to Level 2 of the WSET. Coupled with a comprehensive beverage training programme that all cabin crew go through, don't be surprised if your inflight wine service goes beyond the usual, "Red wine or white wine, sir?"

By the very nature of their profession, Air Sommeliers are fortunate to be able to frequently visit vineyards across the globe, says IFS Achuthan. They also get to meet famous wine personalities – wine makers, critics or Chateau owners – to hear juicy insider secrets. "Also being physically present to touch, feel and smell the source of wines, is an invaluable opportunity as you do not get such personal insights from books or courses."

Air Sommeliers can be identified by their distinctive round SIA Air Sommelier badges which sport the symbolic bunch of grapes. Stewards proudly wear them on the top left lapel and stewardesses on the top left of their kebayas.

NEW CHAMPAGNE IN BUSINESS CLASS

Champagne Taittinger Prelude Grands Crus (right), one of the most prestigious Grandes Marques of Champagne, will be served on all Singapore Airlines Business Class flights from October as a welcome drink. From the vineyards of Champagne, it is made with equal portions of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. This refined cuvee – which comes only from the first pressings of the grapes – gives the Prelude its great finesse with fine, persistent bubbles. The Prelude Grands Crus offer great flexibility to be enjoyed either as an aperitif or as an accompaniment to classic seafood dishes.




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SINGAPORE AIRLINES' MANILA MOVE TO NAIA TERMINAL 3

Passengers flying to Manila (below) via Singapore Airlines can look forward to enjoying greater convenience. The airline has shifted its operations from Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 1 to Terminal 3, which is close to the Makati Central Business District and major thoroughfares such as EDSA and Skyway. The spacious terminal boasts newer infrastructure and varied dining options. This move does not result in any changes to the scheduled arrival and departure times of Singapore Airlines flights. In addition, passengers at Terminal 3 can look forward to an enhanced lounge experience by early next year.



A380 FLIGHTS TO AUCKLAND

From October 27, 2014, Singapore Airlines customers will be able to fly to Auckland (above), New Zealand's largest city, on the 471-seat Airbus A380. Daily flights to and from Auckland will be operated using the aircraft, which is the largest in the world. Currently, Singapore Airlines operates 12 weekly flights to Auckland on Boeing 777-300ERs and 777-200ERs. Other destinations served by the A380 include Beijing, Frankfurt, Hong Kong, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne (until October 25, 2014), Mumbai, New Delhi, New York, Paris, Shanghai, Sydney, Tokyo Narita and Zurich.

