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Check Out This Airline If You're Going to France: Cameron on Transportation

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I hate to fly. It's crowded, uncomfortable, stressful and inhuman. But my perspective has changed since a recent round-trip flight on La Compagnie — an all business-class “boutique” airline — for a vacation in France.

Founded as “Dreamjet” in 2013, this French-owned airline has only two planes and flies twice a day to Paris from Newark, N.J. But its 757s are unlike any you've ever flown, carrying only 74 passengers on planes usually crammed with 200-plus coach seats.

As an all business-class operation, each seat on La Compagnie is 26 inches wide with 60 inches — five feet —

of leg room. That compares to a typical coach seat's 17-inch width and 31 inches of "pitch." Even seats in BusinessFirst on [United Airlines](#) are only 21 inches wide with 55 inches of leg room.

Since the planes are not crowded, check-in is a breeze and you can enjoy food and drink in a real lounge before going through priority TSA security lines and onto the plane. Checked bags are free and there is plenty of overhead space for your carry-ons.

In-flight service is amazing and the food is great: multi-course meals catered by a French chef with plenty of wine to wash it down. In-flight entertainment (movies, books, music) is provided on flat-tablets, one per seat. There's no in-flight Wi-Fi, but power plugs can keep your personal device well charged.

Flying time is the same as other airlines, but the limited number of passengers allows for a stress-free arrival to go through customs and gather your bags.

This is what flying should be. And most amazing of all, it's affordable.

See also these articles on air transportation by Jim Cameron:

- [Cramming Passengers on Planes Is Not Just Uncomfortable, It's Also Unsafe: Cameron on Transportation](#) (May 19)
- [Predictions for Planes, Trains & Automobile Traffic in 2017: Cameron on Transportation](#) (Jan. 14)

Booking a typical one-way flight to Paris in August one month in advance on [Air France](#), Delta or United is more than \$7,000. On the same date, La Compagnie is \$1,657. On slower dates, booked in advance, La Compagnie offers roundtrips as low as \$1,300.

Those fares are certainly higher than flying coach. Newcomer Norwegian Airlines offers a one-way to Paris in coach for \$265, while U.S. carriers will get you there starting at \$2,600. But you don't get your money's worth.

I find overnight flights in coach unbearable. You can't sleep and you're a zombie for the first day in Europe because of the time change. But on my "Dreamjet," I actually got some shut-eye on my almost-flat sleeper seat.

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La Compagnie has succeeded where other all-business competitors like MaxJet, Eos and Silverjet have failed. La Compagnie is cautious to not over expand. In fact, the company canceled its London flight after the Brexit vote last year. But the company's management may be looking at other European destinations as it modernizes its fleet with new Airbus 321neo jets coming in 2019.

The airline said 55 percent of its passengers are from the U.S., and 45 percent are from France. The company has even added a frequent flyer program after testing an unlimited-flights-for-a-year pass for \$35,000 — a deal that got fewer than 10 takers.

I don't go to Europe often. But next time I will only fly La Compagnie. I hope some of our domestic airlines follow its lead and make flying comfortable again. People will pay for comfort if the product is offered.

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