

# ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES – FLYING ON CLOUD 9

By Caroline Phillips

Cloud 9. That's the business class cabin of Ethiopian Airlines. The one in the A350. This is where you want to be when you leave the tarmac to head for Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It's the first Airbus A350 to fly long-haul out of Heathrow. And the first to fly in African skies.



Let's start at the beginning. The airline shares a lounge with United at Heathrow. But if you're flying from Addis Ababa, they have their own own dedicated space – with bar, children's area, business centre and even an Ethiopian coffee corner.

The aircraft itself boasts spacious seats – which turn into 78" fully lie-flat beds – plus enough headroom for a stooping gentle giant, panoramic windows for watching the angels fly past, and low twin engine noise level...ahh. (Although I didn't notice the purring engines as much as the irritating ping-pinging noise in the galley behind; the sound of economy fliers pressing their call buttons).



There's also advanced air conditioning technology and full LED mood lighting designed to enhance comfort and reduce jet-lag. Can't argue with that: certainly I arrived feeling amazingly refreshed.

There's also slick, gracious and charming service on offer from its habesha (traditional white muslin dress)-clad flight attendants who serve everything with a smile. Really tip-top service. And decent meals – such as short rib of beef with pickled cabbage and fish pie with mash, fennel seed and parmesan topping.

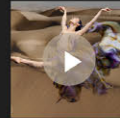
Then, when you're done with all that eating, you've got a high definition touchscreen personal monitor (although the selection of films didn't grab me at all). When you want to sleep, the quilted blankets are great. And what of the canary-coloured in-flight goodie bag? Think yellow plastic biro, yellow socks, yellow earplugs....not quite an Anya Hindmarch flight bag, but still.

## VIDEOS



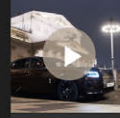
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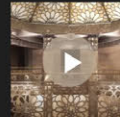
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Overall the plane is ultra modern and environmentally friendly – or at least, friendlier. If you want to get techie, the fuselage and frame are made primarily of reinforced plastic (53% to be exact), so the A350's frame supports a lower fuel burn. Plus its state-of-the-art Rolls Royce Trent XWB engines outperform competitors' in terms of fuel economy, emissions and overall efficiency. Indeed, it has the lowest CO2 emissions of any wide body aircraft. As for the wings, phew, they cover an area of 442 sq metres – equivalent to more than two tennis courts – representing the largest single-deck wide body aircraft in production. Like a bird's, the wing structures adapt during flight, morphing and changing while airborne to reduce fuel burn.

The airline is also big on girl power – having made aviation history with the first all-female functioned flight (on its Bangkok/Addis route). Yay!



So, ladies and gentlemen, this is Ethiopian Airlines – the surprising pioneer of African aviation and an aircraft technology leader. It's a great plane, super modern, and with excellent staff; definitely worth flying business-class.

Oh, and one last thing. On the way home from Addis, you can ask someone to drop your baggage at the international airport after 1pm for your evening departure – and just get to the airport an hour before your flight.

Cloud 9? Yep, that sums it up.

## MORE INFORMATION

Ethiopian Airlines fly daily from Heathrow to Addis Ababa with a modern fleet. Lead in return fares start at £505 economy and £2,065 business class, inclusive of all taxes; bookable online at [www.ethiopianairlines.com](http://www.ethiopianairlines.com), via telephone on 0800 016 3449 or via travel agencies. Ethiopian Airlines additionally has 19 domestic routes within Ethiopia.

*Caroline Phillips is an award-winning freelance journalist who contributes to publications from Sunday and daily newspapers to glossy magazines and various luxury websites. To see more of her work, go to [www.carolinephillips.net](http://www.carolinephillips.net).*

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