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The Ultimate in Cabin Comforts

by Dan Smith

Aircraft are practical things. Like cars, they are designed to get us from point A to point B in the least amount of time and with the least amount of fuss. Simple really. If you've taken any North American commercial flight recently, you will see how the scheduled airlines are distilling this philosophy down to a fine art.



However, travel on a private aircraft and you will notice an immediate difference. Someone, somewhere has spent a lot of time thinking about how you will use the space on your journey and how, through appropriate and intelligent design, they can make that journey more comfortable for you.

Choice of Fit-out

For the uninitiated, most new aircraft are delivered “green” (the expression is inspired by the colour of the fuselage before it is painted and not the environmental credentials of the jet.) The interior is empty except for the wiring and basic equipment needed to get the aircraft into the air and to the completion centre where the final fit-out takes place.

The first owner of an aircraft usually gets to choose its interior. However, some manufacturers offer clients a choice of fit-outs that have been pre-designed by an expert aviation-design consultancy. Embraer’s new Legacy 450 and 500 jets come complete with interiors designed by BMW Group DesignworksUSA. “The task for our design partner was to provide the best possible comfort for the pilot, fulfill all the requirements of a modern business passenger, combine premium aesthetics with superior design quality and, by doing so, set a new benchmark in this business jet segment,” said Colin Steven, Embraer’s Vice President Marketing & Sales EMEA, Executive Jets.

Dassault and DesignworksUSA also worked together on designs for the 7X which was recognised with a 2009 Good Design Award from the European Centre for Architecture Art Design and the Chicago Athenaeum.

Something Special

If your new aircraft is delivered green, or you have bought a pre-owned aircraft that needs an update, you are free to choose any design agency or completions centre. Be warned though, waiting times are still long at some centres despite the great recession!

M&R Associates works with clients on the design for the interior before commissioning a completions centre to do the actual fitting out. While owners are free to go wild with the interior design if they choose to, Vincent Rey, Director of M&R says that clients typically fall into one of two categories: “There are those that use the aircraft regularly and plan to keep it for 10 to 15 years. They often choose something very personal. Clients who plan to charter the aircraft or sell it after three to five years usually opt for a more traditional interior.”

M&R recently designed a new interior for the Airbus A350 aircraft, even though the first VIP edition of the aircraft will not be available until 2015. The aim is to show prospective buyers what is possible, and naturally, the creativity of M&R Associates. “Airbus really liked the designs and their sales people are now using the images as a marketing tool,” says Rey. “We’ve had good feedback.” >>

