

CONTINENTAL

BY LOCKWOOD TALLMAN

Consistent and reliable, Continental is the airline that most business travelers want

The airline industry continues to get hammered by rising fuel costs. Several of the major carriers are flying under the dark cloud of bankruptcy. While some airlines are charging for meals, blankets, pillows, water, and even exit row seats, Continental Airlines continues to provide exceptional customer service for the business traveler and has even managed to win a couple of awards along the way. Houston-based Continental, with its hubs in Houston, Cleveland, New York, and Guam continues to go above and beyond in terms of customer service for the business traveler.



INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION IN KEY BUSINESS MARKETS

Continental's growing route network is making it easy for business travelers to select the airline. This year Continental is starting key new business routes from its New York/Newark hub, including nonstop flights to Cologne, Germany, Copenhagen, Denmark, and Barcelona, Spain. The Houston hub is continuing to expand with more domestic and international flights, and now Continental flies to 30 destinations in Mexico nonstop from Houston. Continental also began direct, nonstop service from Houston to Buenos Aires in December.

Continental has aggressively restored service to New Orleans following last year's devastation by Hurricane Katrina. Continental returned to its pre-Katrina departure frequency of 111 flights per week at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport by May 2006—sooner than any other carrier.

Knowing that sometimes the little things count for a lot, Continental is one of the few airlines that serves free meals and snacks in the economy cabin at mealtimes. It is also one of the few airlines that offer free soft drinks and water as well as free blankets and pillows. BusinessFirst service on Continental 757 aircraft is being taken up a notch with video on demand entertainment and laptop powerports.

Business travelers can check-in for their flight on continental.com. Travelers who aren't hooked up to a printer can have their boarding pass faxed to their location. Continental implemented interline eTicket capabilities with 42 carriers worldwide and expects to add 25 more interline eTicket partner airlines by the end of 2006. Continental airlines will also install its 100th self check-in kiosk in 2006.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION FOR PREMIUM FLYERS

Continental is continuing to gain recognition for EliteAccess—a package of service amenities that smoothes the way for frequent flyers and people traveling on business fares.

EliteAccess helps customers by reducing the time they spend waiting in the airport. When checking-in—at continental.com or an airport kiosk, for instance—qualifying customers receive a boarding pass printed with the EliteAccess trademark to remind them of their status throughout their trip.

Following expedited security screening (where permitted), EliteAccess travelers receive special treatment in the aircraft boarding area. Continental boarding gates have separately identified entrances for EliteAccess and general boarding. At any time during the boarding process, EliteAccess customers may use their special entrance to the jetway to present their boarding pass and receive immediate access to the aircraft. EliteAccess customers are always invited aboard prior to general boarding, but the new gate process ensures that they can board quickly regardless of when they arrive at the gate by receiving “head of the line” treatment.

Baggage claim is faster, too. EliteAccess

bag tags affixed by Continental agents at time of check-in indicate first-to-the-carousel treatment for these bags at the destination airport.

EliteAccess privileges are offered only to OnePass members who hold Elite status in the frequent flyer program, first class and BusinessFirst ticketholders, and travelers who qualify as “Elite for the Day.” About 20 percent of Continental's customers fall into one of these categories.

“Customers who pay higher fares account for an important part of our revenues, and we want to show appreciation for their business by giving them more for their money,” said Dave Hilfman, senior vice president-sales. “Our excellent inflight service and access to our First Class and BusinessFirst cabins have always been key reasons for our best customers to choose Continental. EliteAccess gives travelers yet another reason to pick us for their trip.”

ELITE FOR THE DAY

An economy-class traveler qualifies as “Elite for the Day” by purchasing a ticket in certain fare categories, even without membership in the OnePass frequent flyer program. Travelers who are “Elite for the Day” are even eligible for space-available first class upgrades on domestic flights, with priority after OnePass Elites. “We take special care of our Elite frequent flyers, and we want to extend that level of courtesy and service to other travelers who buy business-type fares,” Hilfman said.

NO MIDDLE SEAT ASSIGNMENT GUARANTEE

To further differentiate the value of a full-fare, unrestricted ticket, Continental introduced the No Middle Seat Assignment Guarantee. This offer assures business travelers in economy class that they will receive a window or aisle seating location. The guarantee is backed up by 2,500 OnePass miles payable by Continental in any instance when a Y-fare traveler is assigned a middle seat. Normally Y-fare customers will be eligible for a First Class upgrade with their “Elite for the Day” status and they will receive economy seating only when First Class is full.



TERMINALS, LOUNGES AND AIRCRAFT ARE SHIP-SHAPE

Continental prides itself on being “clean, safe, and reliable,” and its ongoing investment in its product demonstrates that commitment. The airline opened its 23-gate terminal in Houston in 2003 and is winning rave reviews for its efficiency and amenities. Designed with a strong similarity to Continental’s new facilities at Newark Liberty International Airport, Terminal E at IAH is attached to a brand new customs and immigrations facility—the largest in the U.S.

Terminal E also includes the world’s largest Presidents Club—a membership lounge where business travelers can reach maximum productivity as they travel. Like other Presidents Club lounges, this new facility features free Wi-Fi internet access so executives can easily connect to email and other internet tools on their PC.

Continental is part of the SkyTeam Alliance. Made up of nine airlines, the SkyTeam Alliance allows business travelers access to 15,000 daily flights to more than 680 destinations with OnePass frequent flyer benefits on every flight. In December, Continental announced expanded access to airport lounges of SkyTeam members Delta and Northwest Airlines. Members of the airport lounge program—Continental’s Presidents Club, Delta’s Crown Room Club and Northwest WorldClubs—will be able to enter any of the three airlines’ global facilities. Travelers will have access to more than 90 lounges worldwide.

Meanwhile, Continental’s fleet remains one of the youngest in the industry. This means the cabin is clean and flight schedules are reliable. Intercontinental flights on 777, 767, and 757 aircraft feature the comfort-laden BusinessFirst cabin, which has won the “Best Executive/Business Class” award in the OAG Airline of the Year Awards three years in a row (2003-2005).

CONTINENTAL'S EFFORTS ARE RECOGNIZED BY CORPORATE TRAVELERS

Considering the emphasis it places on serving business travelers, its no surprise that Continental was named the “World’s

Business Class Airline” and “North America’s Leading Business Class Airline” at the 2005 World Travel Awards in London in November. Other accolades include being named the Top U.S. Carrier in 2005 in Zagat’s 2005 U.S. Airline Survey and 2005 International Airline Survey and for the eighth year in a row, Continental out-ranked all of its U.S. competition in international Business Class service according to results of a survey of Conde Nast Traveler readers in October. “These survey results validate Continental’s continued focus on our product and the hardworking efforts of our sales force, corporate programs group and operations team to deliver superior service to our customers,” said Hilfman.

CONTINENTAL DEPLOYS AIRPLUS TO HELP CORPORATE TRAVEL MANAGERS

Continental, in partnership with AirPlus International, has the Continental Airlines AirPlus Company Account. This air travel payment and billing system for corporate travel managers that enables companies to analyze and manage travel budgets with a high level of sophistication and flexibility.

“When we re-launched our UATP program more than five years ago, we enjoyed immediate growth among companies with small to mid-sized travel budgets,” said Hilfman. “We’ve expanded the program to meet the needs of large corporate customers by incorporating improved technology and additional features. We selected AirPlus as our partner, since they are the leader in technology for payment and data solutions, as well as the largest issuer of UATP cards in the world with over 20,000 corporate customers worldwide.”

This “neutral” solution allows corporate clients to purchase tickets on more than two hundred airlines worldwide, and access the aggregated travel data via an internet-based system. Travel managers are able to use the AirPlus Information Manager to analyze data and create reports to establish and control travel budgets and policies.

The Continental Airlines AirPlus Company Account connects directly to travel agencies, through a merchant agreement,

to provide agencies with a simple, cost-efficient method of processing airline tickets and incidental charges. Some key features include:

- Exceptional coupon data quality
- Complete customized descriptive billing information, such as automated transmission of reference or job number information
- Variable billing cycles
- Invoice control and customization
- Reporting and invoicing transactions for international operations in local currencies
- Electronic invoicing in any standard format

ONLINE TOOLS FOR BUSY TRAVEL DEPARTMENTS

Travel managers need tools that help them be efficient and give them control over their travel buying. Continental steps in to help with Business Travel Manager, an online booking tool for your business travel needs.

Travelers or travel agents can: book all Continental Airlines fares, including web fares and negotiated corporate discounts; compare fares and purchase eTickets on other airlines; reserve hotels and rental cars with seamless access to negotiated corporate rates; securely store profile information like credit cards and frequent flyer numbers; set personal preferences such as meals and seating; and select multiple receipt options for Continental itineraries.

In addition, travel agents or corporate travel managers can track employee travel with real-time, online reports. For companies with Continental corporate contracts, ticketing data is automatically tracked and counted toward program market share requirements. Toll-free, 24-hour telephone support ensures that travelers get the service and support they need. Business Travel Manager users also enjoy special offers not available to the general public.

Business Travel Manager from Continental Airlines is a one-stop shop for your corporate travel needs. If your company would like to enjoy the benefits of Business Travel Manager, contact your Continental Sales Representative or e-mail btm@coair.com.