



The advertisement is split into three sections. The left section shows a blue United MileagePlus Explorer Visa card. The middle section has a dark blue background with white text: "The United MileagePlus® Explorer Card", "50,000 Bonus Miles", and "\$0 Intro annual fee." The right section has a yellow background with dark blue text: "• Free Checked Bag", "• Priority Boarding", "• 2 United Club™ Passes", "LAST DAY—DON'T DELAY!", a "Learn More" button, and "Terms apply".

LUXURY TRANSPORT

Air France Seeks To Gain “Top Three” Status

New York has always been a key route for Air France. During the '50s and '60s Air France trans-Atlantic from New York to Paris provided elite travelers of the day a faster way to get to Europe than the great liners. Jets replaced propeller planes and Air France did it in style with its 747 upper deck lounge, and again became the choice of elite travelers with Concorde. All its most significant airplanes were early dedicated to “the New York route,” including the gigantic Airbus A380 in 2009.

Alexandre de Juniac, Chairman and CEO of Air France/KLM (below) and Air France Chairman and CEO Frederic Gagey were in the Big Apple this morning for what they believe is another important step for France, its relationship with New York, and perhaps the start of regaining some of its star power.

After a decade of lagging financial performance and products that one attendee compared to a “stale croissant,” top company officials proclaimed their goal is to be considered one of the top three airline

world over the next several years.

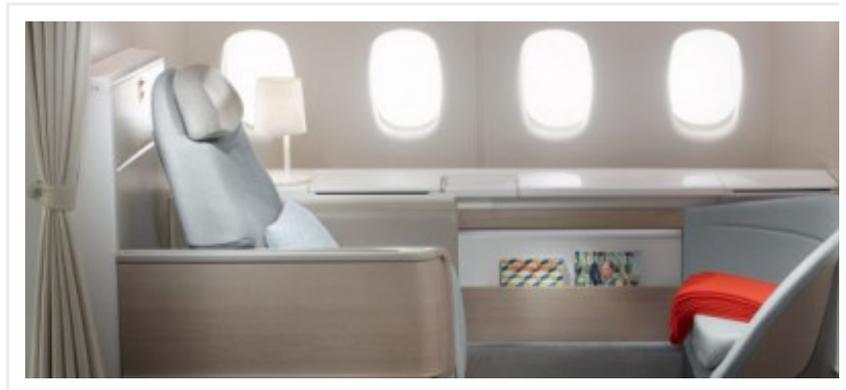
Officials candidly said Air France currently ranks in the top half of trans-Atlantic airlines by its own service measures, but against Middle East and Asian airlines it is currently in the second tier.

With over \$1.3 billion being invested in state-of-the-art seating, the carrier is looking to again be an ai choice.



Officials stressed that the investment will cover all four classes (there is free champagne in Economy) interest to elite travelers is a new first and business class. In the latter, seats now have the “three Fs, access to the aisle, full privacy and full flat beds.” Current seats have a slant when reclined into sleep and require passengers at a window or in a middle seat to climb over another passenger to get to the

The first Boeing 777 with the new seating arrived yesterday at JFK as Flight AF 008, and one leading journalist who flew over told this reporter that Air France’s new product is top league. The actual seat is similar to the new business class seats being used by Cathay Pacific, EVA



Airlines, American Airlines on its new 777s and Qatar Airways on its 787s. Air France executives said difference will be how they deliver it, pointing to the new advertising tag line “Air France. France is in

While First Class cabins (above) may be shrinking – the new Air France version will have only four seats – the amenities are increasing. The new La Premier seat stretches 94 inches in length, 79 inches in bed position and 30 inches wide for sleeping. Special curtains can be drawn to evoke a feeling of a King or Queen's palatial bed. Modern design and lighting with detailed fittings pay tribute to France's DNA of style and craftsmanship. Catering, always a strong point for the airline, is being further revved up with the return of caviar service.

The airline has had in place for several years an acclaimed VIP transfer service for La Premier customers at its CDG hub, including fast-track immigrations, private car transfers to planes and one of the top airline lounges in the world, with its Alain Ducasse restaurant and Biologique Recherche spa treatments. Next up will be a private jet charter service enabling elite travelers going beyond Paris to fly around Europe via private jets.

Commercial Director and Executive Vice President Patrick Alexandre told Elite Traveler TV during a post press conference interview with many private jets not having the range to fly across the ocean, Air France's new products and services will offer a preferred alternative.

And thinking aloud, he added that even those elite travelers whose jets can cross the Atlantic, they too might want to

consider flying with his airline. "It can be

very social (on Air France flights). If you want privacy, you can have privacy, but there are also other

On your own jet, you're not going to meet anyone new."



And in typical French fashion, the launch of the new seating has been turned into a pop-up art-museum display with history about the Air France New York-Paris connection, flight attendant uniforms from the past and interesting historical tidbits. The exhibition "Air France, France is in the air" runs June 26 to 28 at the Grand Palais in Paris. For elite travelers who are more interested in flying, the new cabins will be available by the end of 2014 from CDG to Singapore, Jakarta, Tokyo-Haneda, Houston and Shanghai. Douala, Dubai and Sao Paulo will follow early 2015.
