

Business Flyer

by Ken Donohue



JERRY ISAACSON

Security procedures at Ben Gurion International Airport are thorough, yet sometimes a little less conventional than at other airports around the world. After answering questions about my previous visits to countries with large Muslim populations and having both my checked and carry-on bags meticulously searched and their contents swabbed for explosives, a security officer escorted me to the Lufthansa check-in desk, where my boarding passes were waiting. I was then escorted by security upstairs to passport control, after which I availed myself of the Dan Lounge, which Lufthansa provides for business class customers. Because Ben Gurion operates 24 hours a day, all commercial services were open, including an extensive duty free shopping area.

I arrived at the gate well ahead of the scheduled departure time of 0500, but despite the gate monitor saying that the flight was on time, boarding did not begin until 0510. A selection of newspapers was available at the end of the airbridge, and once onboard I settled into one of the 60 business seats, in a 2-2-2 configuration, on the fully booked A340-600.

After a juice and water service, we pushed back 40 minutes behind schedule. The captain made a public address announcement, welcoming passengers and apologizing for the delay, the result of the aircraft arriving late into Tel Aviv.

At 0555, we took off to the west over the Mediterranean from Runway 26, before tracking north and passing the eastern edge of Cyprus. We crossed over

Airline:	Lufthansa
Flight:	LH 691, LH 492
Route:	Tel Aviv [Tall 'Abib], Israel (IATA: TLV/ ICAO: LLBG)—Frankfurt, Germany (FRA/EDDF)—Vancouver, Canada (YVR/CYVR)
Aircraft:	Airbus A340-600

Turkey, where some mild turbulence was experienced, and continued on over Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Austria, and southern Germany.

Unaware that the breakfast menus had been placed in the magazine rack at my feet, I wasn't prepared when the cabin attendant asked if I would like the omelet or French toast. I chose the herb omelet with asparagus and grilled mushroom and pepper, and a potato and vegetable rosti. This was accompanied by a dish of fresh fruit, and a slice of smoked turkey breast with Zfatit cheese with black onion seeds.

The meal was disappointingly mediocre. While the asparagus was crunchy and delicious, the omelet tasted very plain. It was then that I wished I had chosen the carrot cake French toast, with cheese blintzes and mango sauce. The meal was presented on a tray. Easier for the cabin attendants, yes, but given the significant premium paid for business class over economy, I feel this cheapens the experience.



PHOTOS: KEN DONOHUE

Boarding the A340-600 at FRA.

With its pre-programmed settings the seat was comfortable, though the massage function was a little intense. Maybe some people like it that way. Given my early start ahead of arriving at the airport, I opted to forgo the entertainment options available, and instead tried to sleep (never an easy option for this writer). While the airline boasts a lie-flat seat, in reality there is a small slope when in the fully reclined position (*Airways*, October 2010).

As we neared Frankfurt, the captain again apologized for the delay and explained that they had tried to fly as fast as they could, knowing that many onboard had onward connections. Judging from the two aircraft I could see out of the window, and the numerous contrails lacing the sky, I could tell that it was a busy morning. On approach to Runway 25R, those of us on the right side of the aircraft were afforded an excellent view of the modern skyscrapers rising above the Main River. After a flying time of just under four hours, we touched down at 0850lt, and were at the gate ten minutes later.

With a five-hour layover, I chose to spend the time in one of LH's lounges. Because of the number of flights operated at its busiest hub, the lounge was very crowded throughout the morning. The standard amenities were available, including showers.

Passengers for LH492 were bused to a remote stand near the north cargo terminal. From the ground it's hard not to marvel at the 75m (246ft) length of what was the longest commercial aircraft in the world (*Airways*, November 2002) before the appearance of Boeing's 747-8 (*Airways*, June 2010, April 2006 & April 2005).

No newspapers or magazines were available; however, juice and water was offered. We left the stand at 1355, five minutes after STD, and a short taxi brought



us to Runway 07L. Even sitting forward of the four Rolls-Royce Trent 500 turbofans, the 47-second takeoff roll was surprisingly quiet. Once airborne, we turned toward the northwest, passing over Düsseldorf and The Netherlands before crossing the North Sea. When cruising altitude was reached, the captain welcomed passengers aboard, and provided more detail on our routing, which took us over Britain's Shetland Islands, Iceland, northern Greenland, and Canada's Arctic.

While three entrées (main courses to non-US readers) were offered, I opted for a lighter lunch considering there would be two meals and a snack during the ten-hour flight. I chose a small plate of marinated duck breast, and pineapple relish. The duck was tender and delicious, and the relish had a pleasant and sweet taste. I also decided on the cheese plate, featuring Camembert, Emmental, and Blue, along with the Szechuan chocolate mousse and rhubarb with vanilla and fruit salad. All of this was supported comfortably by a Tuscan [Toscana] red wine from Villa Antinori. After the meal, a boxed chocolate was offered.

Lufthansa offers an extensive range of in-flight entertainment options, including a number of interesting television documentaries. While there was a large and eclectic selection of music, the system did not allow the



Main course and dessert.

creation of a play list. I also found the laptop power plug difficult to access, as it is located in an awkward position on the base between the two seats.

Halfway through the flight, a cake and drinks service was provided, and later dinner was served. I chose the filet of Nori salmon with wasabi mayonnaise, accompanied by Asian rice salad with prawns, Chinese noodle salad with chicken, and rump of beef terrine with marinated onions—a delicious meal topped off by a delectable chocolate brownie and spiced oranges.

We touched down on YVR's Runway 08L at 1440lt, five minutes ahead of schedule.

Overall impression

Lufthansa's business class is good, yet far from being a superior product. Given that there are 60 seats on the A340-600s, it may be difficult for flight attendants to provide a more personal service that some discerning travellers come to expect. Perhaps as a reflection of German culture, the cabin crewmembers lacked the warmth and attention to detail offered by airlines elsewhere in the world. With small improvements in service delivery, Lufthansa's product could be elevated. ➔

Airways

Visit our website
www.airwaysmag.com

- check out our extra and exclusive online features and browse previous issue content
- change your address
- renew or take out a new subscription
- buy back issues (including early numbers in very limited supply) or order from the **Airways Collection**

North American Fleet **Updates**
 & New Deliveries

Industry **News** Updated Hourly

Vote in our latest **Poll**:

Is the proposed Southwest-AirTran merger a positive step?

Sign up for our **Newsletter** and learn what's new on our website and take advantage of our **Special Offers!**

www.airwaysmag.com