

# Aircraft Interiors Expo in Hamburg, April 4th 2008



Aerlines editor Neil Gouw recently visited the Aircraft Interiors Expo in Hamburg. This is his report of his visit.

By Neil Gouw

Just a couple of months ago, I saw an advertisement for the annual Aircraft Interiors Expo in Hamburg and I immediately decided I wanted to visit this exhibition. I thought it would be very interesting to see what kind of world there is behind all those exquisitely upholstered seats in first class, those brightly-lit cabins, and the soft and plush carpeting on aircraft floors. The things we see, feel and hear on an aircraft are just one part of the flying experience, but the things that we don't see, feel or hear are just as much part of that experience. The galleys, the survival kits, the wiring of the in-flight entertainment systems are just a small selection of the various things that airlines need to select from in order to assemble their own product, which is quite a daunting task indeed.

The Aircraft Interiors Expo in Hamburg offers airlines the opportunity to sample the latest in aircraft interior design and technology. I visited the Expo on its last day, April 4th. As I entered the modern and sleek exhibition halls of the Hamburg Messe, I already sensed a certain atmosphere of excitement – maybe not necessarily from the other visitors, but I certainly felt something. I knew there had to be plenty of options to choose from when you are an airline manager. What I did not know was that the sheer breadth of options would be so overwhelming. As I entered the first hall, I was overwhelmed by the enormous amount of stands, all lined up along several aisles. Hundreds of manufacturers had their products on display, spread out over four gigantic halls. Everything, from cockpit doors to carpeting, from the cutlery to the survival kits, was there for everyone to see, touch, feel and hear.

As a frequent flyer in economy class, I was immediately drawn to various seat manufacturers. I wanted to take the opportunity and experience to sit in a truly premium seat. But which one should I sample first? There were just too many! Every style, color or design was available to test. And as I tried to get the seat I sat in

from an upright position to a flat position, I kind of listened in to the sales pitches that the manufacturer representatives fired away at the various airline delegations – why this particular seat would please their passengers, how the seats can be aligned or placed within the cabin to maximize revenue, and what other great features can be added to the seat. Manufacturer representatives certainly know how to speak the airlines' language: I overheard conversations in German, English, French, Italian and Spanish – and even some Chinese, Dutch and Japanese.

An aircraft interiors expo is not complete without the two biggest aircraft manufacturers, Boeing and Airbus. Naturally, I had to visit their stands in different halls – heavens forbid they were given floor space in the same hall! Airbus introduced a new interior of their upcoming A350, as well as a new galley concept, which supposedly makes more efficient use of galley space, and which is also lighter than previous galleys. Unfortunately, these new products were for airlines' eyes only, and not for Aerlines' eyes. And there was even a bouncer to enforce this restriction. Other manufacturers also had public and private viewing areas, including Boeing, which had mock-ups of their future B747-8 and their 787. Too bad I couldn't get in, so I had to do with a gigantic poster of the Dreamliner's interior.





What I also saw, and liked very much as well, was a premium design mock-up of a men's lavatory. Forget about those cramped and tiny closets in which only infants can stand up straight and move around. This lavatory, although just for number ones, makes good use of the limited space on an aircraft, while at the same time taking away that claustrophobic feeling. I had yet to see their solution for number twos – but I bet it would be as stylish as their products on display at the exhibition. For a moment, the pure elegance of the design mock-up made me want to stay in the lavatory a bit longer than I normally would.

Other products on display that came to my attention were the (real) china and silverware, the in-flight entertainment systems, the trolleys, and even the survival kits. Who knew that airlines could even opt for instant soup packages in so-called 'polar survival kits'? I also never really realized that even the carpeting, the upholstery and the finishing of the floor cabin and of the seats can

be as luxurious or simple as airlines want them to be. Having felt several samples, I now have become an acclaimed critic in seat upholstery – pity though that I will rarely have the opportunity to actually review one of those seats in business class or first class.

I really enjoyed visiting the expo and I could definitely recommend it to professionals as well as to 'regular' aviation aficionados. The Aircraft Interiors Expo will be back next year in Hamburg, and this editor might be there again as well.

**About the Author**

Neil is a member of the Aerlines editorial team. Neil studied at the Universiteit van Amsterdam, and received his M.A. degree in Business Economics. He is also certified translator English - Dutch.

[www.aircraftinteriorexpo.com](http://www.aircraftinteriorexpo.com)

[www.hamburg-messe.de](http://www.hamburg-messe.de)

All photos by Neil Gouw

