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INNOVATION & DESIGN

In Hamburg, Luxury Is in the Air

To learn about the latest developments in commercial airplane interiors, please fasten your seatbelt and give this slide show your full attention

The airline industry has had a long, bumpy flight in recent years. To labor woes, 9/11, and fare wars, add the recent costly (and embarrassing) design issues that have sent two new Airbus models back to the studio (see BW Online, 3/30/06, "[The Escalating Woes at Airbus](#)").

But look beyond the turbulent headlines and you'll find pockets of innovation, small and large. At the annual [Aircraft Interiors Expo](#), taking place in Hamburg this week, more than 400 exhibitors will be showing everything from intelligent screws that can be monitored by a remote computer to full-scale cross-section mock-ups of new wide-body aircraft. The good news for passengers is that much of the innovation today is focused on improving the flying experience, according to industry expert Jennifer Coutts Clay, author of *Jetliner Cabins*.

Coutts Clay landed her first aviation job with British Airways in 1974 and later, as Controller of Corporate Identity, she oversaw the privatization of the airline. In 1986 she joined Pan American World Airways, where she redesigned all aspects of the passenger service. Now a consultant, Coutts Clay follows the industry closely, keeping an eye on service innovations. In the following slide show, based on *Jetliner Cabins*, Coutts Clay gives a preview of the next generation of aircraft.

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Triple Wide

A380 Exterior

The triple-decker Airbus A380 will be the widest cabin plane ever flown by commercial airlines, replacing the Boeing 747 as king of the skies. (To be specific, the new plane boasts 35% more passenger capacity than the 747.) How airlines choose to use the space will vary, but to get them thinking creatively, Airbus developed a series of mock-ups that offer a wide range of design options.

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First in Class

A380 First Class Cabin

This first class cabin mock-up is the widest in flight today. In September, Singapore Air will become the first to unveil an actual interior design for the new plane.

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Flying Mall

A380 Retail Store

Rather than cramming more seats onto the plane or giving each passenger more leg room, Airlines could use the additional space to create new revenue opportunities. Airbus built this retail shop mock-up as an example. But as Jennifer Coutts Clay says, "it could be a fine restaurant, a coffee bar, a newsstand, a business center, or a casino." Because the A380s will be dedicated to flying regular routes between major hubs, airlines could easily tailor the space to meet specific passenger interests.

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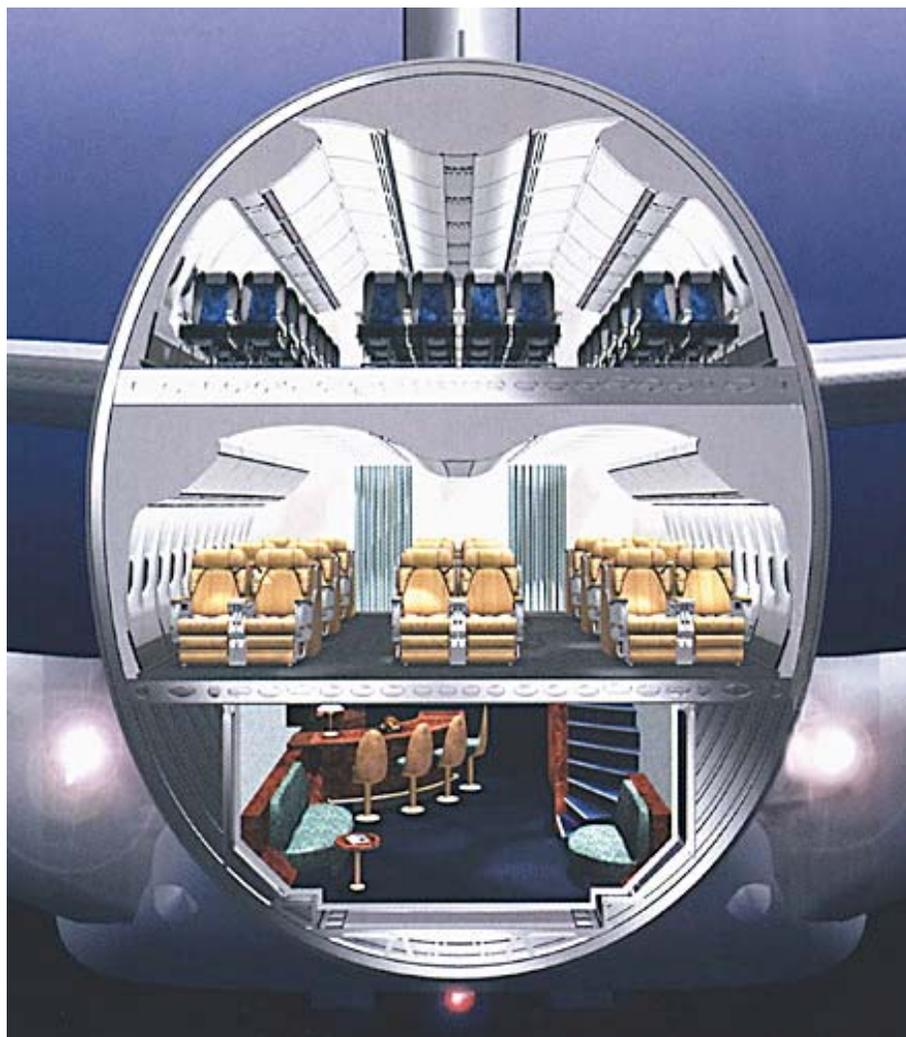
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In Steerage

A380 Cross-Section

Here you see all three levels of the plane, with coach class visible on the upper deck and business class on the mid-deck. There are no windows on the lower deck, making it unsuitable for passenger seating, but the space could easily be divided among baggage, showers, a gym, a children's play area, or even a cocktail lounge.

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Not for Pilots

A380 Cocktail Bar

Airbus created this mock-up of a cocktail bar, though a similar space could be a café or an old-fashioned ice cream soda fountain.

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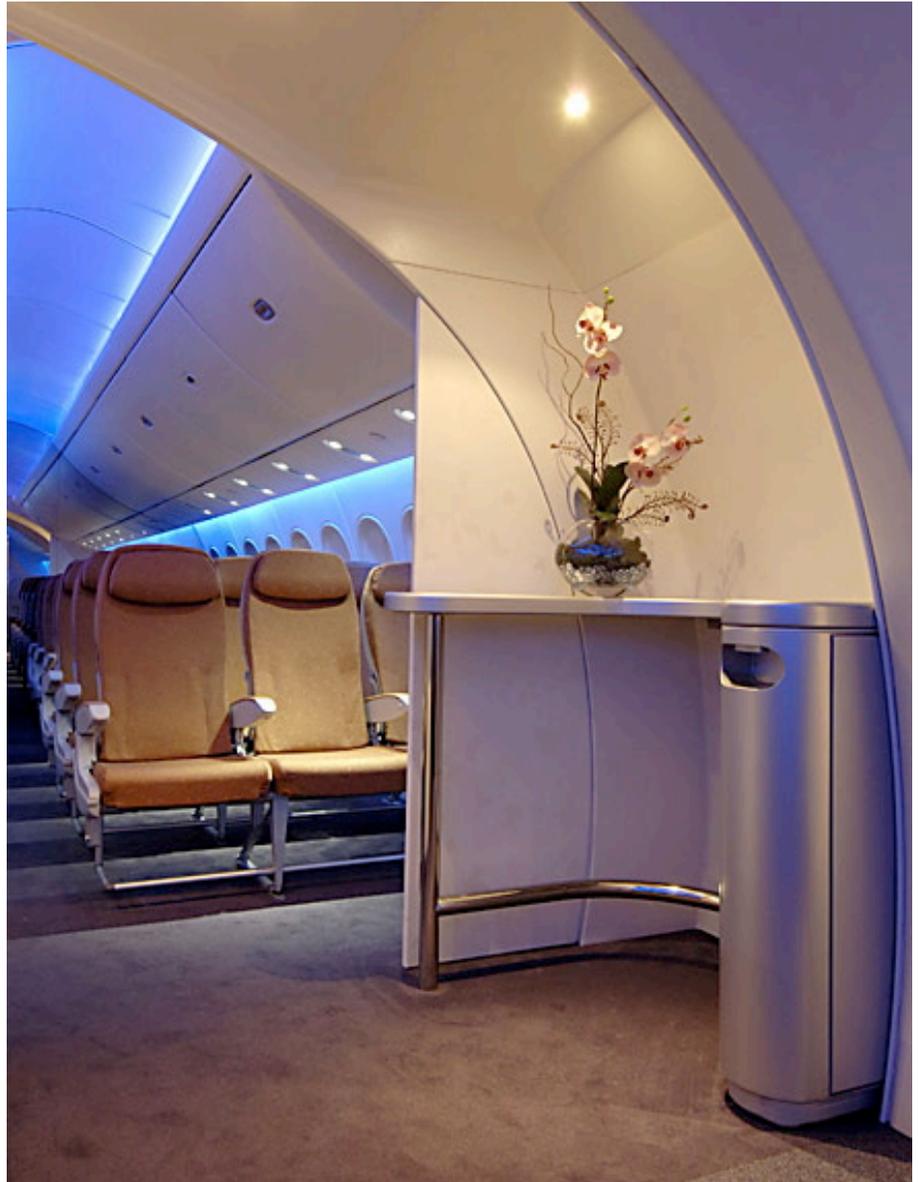
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Sweet Dreams

Boeing 787

Because it will be used for long-haul flights, the Dreamliner, as it's called, introduces a range of subtle design elements intended to make the cabin feel more spacious and to improve the flying experience. Passengers boarding the aircraft will find themselves in a welcoming environment with vaulted ceilings, recessed lighting, and wider aisles. The interior shapes take soft, organic forms that make the cabin feel more comfortable than the hard right angles typical on older aircraft types.

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Fly by Light

Boeing 787 seating area

The recessed lights can be changed to produce morning light, bright sunshine, or dusk. The plane also has more natural light than any other thanks to the large windows, which are bigger than any Boeing has manufactured to date. Traditionally, airplane makers were limited in how many windows they could have or how big they could be, because they amounted to holes in the fuselage that weakened the structure. The high-strength carbon fiber body of the Dreamliner eliminates this problem.

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Tree Huggers

Embraer Legacy Jet

The Legacy Jet, a business jet that has been flying since 2001, incorporated features such as a bar area and generous tables. It also incorporated the use of plastic laminates such as this paneling with a wood look. Wood is associated with the elegance of Pullman railway cars and luxury vehicles, but it is too heavy a material for use in airplanes. Now any surface that can be photographed can be used to make a durable, plastic laminate surface.

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Featherweight

Embraer Very Light Jet

These concept designs for the Very Light Jet, scheduled to enter service in mid-2008, were inspired by the interiors of the Legacy Jet.

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