

# Aircraft interiors

INTERNATIONAL

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Case Study



PANAM



## rhapsody in blue

Airline branding programmes can still learn from the past, especially from innovative, bold and comprehensive schemes such as the Pan Am Blue programme

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- 01. Economy flyers enjoyed pure wool seat covers with a motif echoing the Pan Am Globe
- 02. The industry was surprised when the business class product was of an almost first-class standard. Sound familiar?
- 03. Even Pan Am Stratocruiser passengers in the 1950s knew how to travel in style



When the Airbus A350 took to the skies for the first time at Toulouse, France, on 14 June 2013, airline-livery aficionados must have had some major memory flashbacks. Those billboard-style letters on the fuselage! The radiant blue identity against that bright white background! Where have we seen this combination before? Thank you, Pan Am, for your ever-inspiring legacy.

In 1986, Pan American World Airways started work on Pan Am Blue, a corporate-identity programme designed to build on the mega-brand status of the airline. The initial task was to create an aircraft-interior environment that would directly complement – and live up to – the dramatic aircraft-exterior livery that had been introduced earlier in the decade. For its new Airbus A300s, for which it was a launch customer, Pan Am had implemented an amazing new paint scheme: along the sides of the fuselage, in a powerful shade of radiant turquoise blue, the airline's name was displayed in oversize letters against a bright white background.

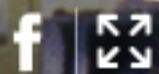
This new treatment was a first in the airline business: the huge letters, stretching almost to the top of the aircraft, made the identity of the airline unmistakable and clearly visible from a great distance. Effectively, every single take-off and landing suddenly became a flying billboard for Pan Am and, naturally, there were heated arguments between aviation design purists and other factions. But there was no turning back. The new livery was progressively applied

to the other aircraft types across the Pan Am fleet – not difficult on the huge Boeing 747s, for which Pan Am was famous as the first scheduled operator in 1970 (Juan T. Trippe, the formidable founder of the airline, had issued the original specifications and ordered the aircraft from Boeing in 1966). However, specially graded stencils had to be individually cut to compress the information details for the sides of the fuselage of smaller aircraft such as the de Havilland Dash 7, and the ATR 42 (for which Pan Am was a launch customer).

To the relief of traditionalists, the airline decided not to change the design treatment on the tailfins and continued to proudly display the Pan Am Globe, commonly referred to by Pan Am Family members as the Blue Ball.

The graphics pioneered by Pan Am sparked a new trend: airlines everywhere started to focus on the 'bigger is better' design philosophy by increasing the size of logo markings on their aircraft exteriors to provide clear corporate-identity statements and ensure instant recognition. In the competitive post-deregulation era it is now rare to see old-style small-size letters on the fuselages of aircraft that fly for scheduled airlines.

The Pan Am Blue programme was headed by US designers Philip and Gail George, whose acclaimed accomplishments extended across the hospitality sector, including restaurants, hotels, furnishings and other airlines. The big challenge in 1986 was how to make the



03



THE PAN AM BLUE FIRST-CLASS CABIN DECOR WAS DESIGNED TO CONVEY THE RICHNESS OF LUXURY TRAVEL



02

Pan Am aircraft interiors relate directly to the company's much-debated new livery. After detailed consultations with all stakeholder departments, the decision was taken to move ahead with three simultaneous upgrades: first class, Clipper (business) class and economy class would each have a distinctive cabin upholstery treatment.

This was a different approach from the design strategy implemented by British Airways during the privatisation branding headed by Landor Associates and launched with great success in 1984. To achieve speed of completion and economy-of-scale cost-savings for the aircraft interior, British Airways installed the same seat-cover fabric in all classes of service, on all aircraft, across the entire fleet, with the exception of Concorde.

**THE DEBUT** In June 1987, the three eagerly awaited Pan Am Blue cabin schemes first appeared in combination with the exterior paint scheme at the time of the roll-out and delivery of the first Airbus A310-300 aircraft. At the same time, in the Pan Am hangars cabin retrofit lines were already in progress, upgrading the other aircraft types in the fleet. It was a fast-track throughput because the airline was preparing to celebrate its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1988.

**THE COLOUR PALETTE** The original shade of bright blue used by Pan Am for major paint applications was a specially mixed formula. Over the years, however, because of the

airline's far-flung international network, it was inevitable that some variants of the shade (derived from other sources) had crept into use. In 1986, as a cost-saving measure and to achieve consistency, the decision was made to move to the closest possible colour available via the commercial Pantone Matching System (PMS). In this way, supplies for paint touch-ups could easily be purchased by any department of the airline at professional paint stores worldwide.

PMS Process Blue was selected as the closest option to serve in place of the airline's traditional formula, and the other selected colours were midnight navy blue (PMS 295), red (PMS 185), silver grey (PMS 877), light grey (PMS 421), plus white and black.

As with the similarly 'patriotic' livery schemes of Air France and British Airways, the linking of the shades of dark blue and bright red with white evoked a visual reference to the US flag.

**FIRST CLASS** By the standards of the day, the Pan Am Blue first-class cabin décor was designed to convey the richness of luxury travel. As pioneered on the airline's twin-aisle aircraft, the then-state-of-the-art Sleeperette seats featured extendable footrests. The term Sleeperette Service had been used in the 1950s when the airline flew Stratocruiser aircraft with onboard sleeping accommodation.

The handsome new first-class seat covers featured a combination of Lackawanna genuine leather dyed





04

midnight navy blue, with matching one-piece Australian Merino sheepskins covering the centre-insert panels. In previous years designer Philip George had installed leather seat covers at Braniff, and he wanted to upgrade the overall comfort at Pan Am by adding layers of sheepskin, reminiscent of the early days of open-cockpit flying. There had been a prototype experiment using strands of sheepskin that could be brushed clean, but the seat-backs and seat-bottoms had moulted and gone bald rather rapidly, so the first trial was jettisoned in favour of the more resilient product. At the down-line cleaning stations the airline had to issue new vacuum cleaners with extra-strong suction to extract trapped debris from the thick pelts. In the end it was all worth the effort because Pan Am passengers really loved the plush, cosily insulated first-class seats.

On the B747 aircraft the credenza, or console, in the middle of the first-class cabin received special treatment to provide an impact when passengers entered the area. The gleaming silver-finish side-panels and top surfaces were surrounded by thickly padded, cocktail-bar-style bumper rails covered in midnight navy blue leather.

Following the success of the installation of seat-back telephones in the domestic Pan Am Shuttle fleet, and conscious of the international revenue-generating potential, the airline moved ahead with the supplemental-type certification process to offer an onboard telephone service on its B747 aircraft. This was an industry first, and took the form of a curtained kiosk-type installation near the front of the upper deck of the aircraft.

The elegance of the new cabin décor was enhanced by the introduction of upgraded menu choices, including a

#### Passenger comfort items

- Mandatory safety information holders
- Airsickness bags
- Inflight duty-free price list
- Writing portfolio including stationery, envelopes, mailgrams
- Playing cards
- Magazine covers
- Panorama children's magazines
- Newspaper labels
- Coat tags
- Baby bassinets
- Cockpit waste bag
- Blankets for first and business class
- Giveaway IFE headsets for first and business
- Amenity kits for first and business
- Eye shades and container package
- Slipper socks and container package
- Blankets for economy class
- Inflight sampling box for economy class, funded by joint marketing suppliers
- Headset provisioning box for economy
- Headset collection bag for economy
- Non-giveaway IFE headsets for economy



IT WAS ALL WORTH THE EFFORT BECAUSE PASSENGERS REALLY LOVED THE PLUSH, COSILY INSULATED FIRST-CLASS SEATS



luxurious caviar and iced vodka service. Pan Am also developed an ingenious, wraparound, leather amenity kit containing a zip-up compartment and separate pouches for fragrances, toiletries and cosmetic products. The remnants from the cutting process of the navy blue hides already purchased by the airline provided the small pieces for the fabrication of these accessory items. This fashionable and practical design was copied in a glossy-black finish by Northwest and subsequently imitated by other airlines, including Air Canada and British Airways.

**CLIPPER CLASS** This was the first dedicated and branded business-class cabin in the history of aviation. On the airline's B747 fleet, the generously comfortable seats of the first-class cabins were taken out and reused in the Clipper cabins. The layout was 2-2-2 – pioneering at that time because it was similar to the configuration of first class.

The new Pan Am Blue dress seat covers were fabricated using herringbone-weave tweed purchased from Aabe. The stitched-in headrest covers and seat-back literature pockets were made of leather, again using the remnants of hides left over from the first-class seat covers.

04. The uniforms are by Lacroix, darling
05. Why waste leather cuttings when you can make a wraparound amenity kit instead?



## comfort figures for the A310-300

	First Class (Sleeperette seat)	Clipper (business)	Economy (Slimline seat)
Seat pitch	55in	38in	32in (31in for some rows)
Seat recline	60°	33°	30°
Configuration	2+2+2	2+2+2	2+4+2
Seat width (double)	53in	53in	40½in
Lavatory ratio per pax	1:6	1:30	1:38½



06



07



At a communications seminar for Pan Am People, Philip George explained that he had derived inspiration from the sight of surface-stitched leather elbow patches, buttons and pocket trims on the traditional tweed jackets worn by members of the English gentry during their hunting, shooting and fishing weekends at their country estates. There had been an earlier experiment with a similar upholstery scheme using a combination of shades of tan, but after assessing the maintenance implications the airline decided to concentrate purely on the scheme that used shades of blue. This was subsequently specified for all the twin-aisle aircraft in the fleet and the premium cabins of the airline's single-aisle aircraft.

**ECONOMY** Traditionally the décor schemes in economy had been designed to provide a family-style environment for pleasure and leisure flyers. Combinations of heavy-duty upholstery and holiday-brochure colours were the norm. But Pan Am was well aware of an emerging trend: by the late 1980s more budget-conscious corporate travellers were flying in economy, so the designers decided to create an atmosphere of calm, businesslike efficiency.

The new soft-furnishing treatment featured silky-smooth pure wool seat covers, woven to incorporate an abstract version of the Pan Am Globe. Initial trials with fabrics from Testori in two shades of blue were assessed for maintenance implications, and eventually the deeper shade was selected for fleet-wide implementation. This high-quality fabric replaced more than a dozen predecessors – in colours ranging from scarlet to cherry and cerise – that had been in service in economy for many years.

**COORDINATING ELEMENTS** To achieve a level of consistency, a number of common elements were developed for use in all three classes of service, including:

- Carpet – known as Clipper Sail
- Drapery – heavyweight blue multistripe wool fabric
- Sidewall panels – silver-blue, grey pearl Tedlar coverings
- Aisle corridor walls and monuments – grey horizontal stripe Tedlar coverings
- Blue bin strips
- Black seatbelts and silver-style finish seatbelt buckles displaying the Pan Am Globe
- Onboard signage in the Helvetica typeface
- Galley treatments – silver-style finish
- Lavatory treatments – silver-style finish with highly polished stainless steel washbasins.

**BULKHEAD COVERS** A fleet-wide audit of the twin-aisle aircraft showed that, prior to the implementation of the Pan Am Blue programme, the airline had been using 40 decorative bulkhead treatments. Imagine the upkeep ramifications! The decision was made to move to just one key design element, which became known as the Polar Projection. As explained by the designers, this piece of creative artwork showed the outline of the Pan Am Globe superimposed over the shape of the landmass of the continents of the world, as might possibly be viewed – with, it needs to be stated, some geographical and artistic licence – from outer space somewhere above the North Pole.

The designers also pointed out some reassuring visual links between the futuristic Polar Projection and a key antecedent identity emblem that Pan Am had displayed on the fuselage of its aircraft since its earliest days. For

06. The blue and silver theme continues in the lavatories, with an attractive polished steel washbasin
07. The Clipper class dress covers were made of a herringbone tweed fabric from Aabe
08. This 1986 schedule suggests fun times, while keeping strong branding



09. The meal trays demonstrate the depth of the branding work. If only there were a blue salad leaf...

#### Food and beverage equipment

- Menu cards
- First and business class meal service china
- Economy class meal-tray setup
- Cocktail napkins
- Stir sticks
- Styrofoam cups
- Plastic beverage glasses
- Tray mats
- Meal service napkins
- Linen bag
- Condiments and condiment holders
- Clear cutlery bag
- Snack box
- Small food items: butter wrapper, butter container, sugar packet, creamer, almond packet, peanut packet
- Light fare container and lid
- Light fare bag
- Country lime pitcher
- Match books [permitted in the 1980s]



09



## PAN AM CONTINUES TO LIVE ON AS ONE OF THE GREAT LEGENDS IN AVIATION HISTORY



example during the 1930s, on the celebrated Clipper seaplanes, underneath the heritage PAA 'flying wing' there was a depiction of the planetary globe combined with outlines of continental-landmass areas.

As a major element of the Pan Am Blue scheme, the Polar Projection was displayed inside aircraft on the rear-facing front bulkheads in blended shades of matte silver-grey. The design was set into a raised silver frame, in the style of a painting hanging in a gallery, and passengers described the creation as "mesmerising". Decorative menu covers provided a souvenir for passengers in all classes.

The first-class menu displayed the Polar Projection on the cover in beautiful shades of midnight navy blue and silver. The Clipper class menu, half the size of the first-class menu, displayed the Polar Projection in blended matte tones of silver-grey surrounded by a red border. The economy menu displayed the Polar Projection in bright Pan Am Blue against a shiny white background. Inside the multipage notebook format, the meal choices were displayed in several languages. And a wide range of destination- and travel-related advertising covered the entire cost of the print and production order!

The Polar Projection was immediately seized on for use on company documentation, TV footage, principal sightline points at corporate premises, and the back walls of airport check-in desks.

**INFLIGHT ACCESSORIES** While old-style existing stocks were being depleted, the airline moved ahead with the

design and development of a new range of accessory items, all specified to link directly with the new Pan Am Blue interior décor. The action-plan list is detailed on page 109.

**THE EXTENSION** In parallel with the cabin upgrades, the Pan Am Blue programme was extended to cover new uniform trials (led by the haute couturier Christian Lacroix), passenger documentation, ticket offices, airport check-in desks and lounges, corporate premises and ground vehicles.

**THE MEMORY LINGERS ON** In 1991 the airline ceased operations. However, Pan American World Airways is still today classed as one of the most-recognised corporate identities in the world, along with iconic brands such as Coca-Cola, IBM, McDonald's and Sony. Merchandising lines are available at airports and from sales catalogues offering memorabilia items, including vintage Pan Am cabin bags, travel accessories, network-destination posters and model aircraft. Detailed source information about the pioneering triumphs of the airline may be obtained from the Pan Am Historical Foundation ([www.panam.org](http://www.panam.org)).

Thanks to the sustained loyalty of the airline's former customers and professional business associates, plus the deep and constant devotion displayed by groups of alumni employees, the inspiring legacy of Pan Am continues to live on as one of the great legends in the history of aviation. ☒

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