

CENTRAL COUNTY

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

Thursday, August 7, 2008

ContraCostaTimes.com

200 Volume 97, Number 68

50 cents plus tax



A FIRST-CLASS CABIN is prepared for sleeping on the Emirates Airlines A380 jet at San Francisco International Airport.



AN EMIRATES AIRLINE AIRBUS A380 jet lands at JFK International Airport in New York.

A380

FROM PAGE 1

the stars of the airborne show were the two shower "spas" — showers available to those with the biggest of travel budgets.

Though the huge aircraft lumbers on the ground, in the air it is something else. Its massive engines — made by General Electric and Pratt & Whitney — are significantly quieter than the engines on other commercial jets.

"It's beautiful to fly. It's like driving a Ferrari," Abbas Shaben, Emirates' chief pilot of the A380, said with a sigh.

The super-jumbo, while an impressive eyeful, is not the revolutionary aircraft Boeing's 747 was nearly four decades ago when it first took to the skies, said Alan Bender, professor of airline economics at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Fla.

"Even though it's a double-decker and it looks like a whale, it's only modestly bigger than what's already out there," the professor said.

It's not a sure thing that the A380 will become as ubiquitous as the 747 once was, he said.

For one thing, travelers prefer flexible departure and arrival times that smaller aircraft allow airlines to offer.

It is, though, a crowd pleaser.

"Even though it's a double-decker and it looks like a whale, it's only modestly bigger than what's already out there."

— Alan Bender, economist

At the San Francisco airport, camera crews and passengers on other flights lined up to watch its arrival. The airport gave the aircraft a water-curtain welcome — fire engines on both sides of the plane gave it a shower. The plane's pilot, in turn, showed off the craft — giving it the equivalent of a model's spins and struts by displaying its flanks to the crowd.

"It's fantastic," said James Doyle, a 22-year-old Irishman waiting for a flight to Las Vegas. "I love it."

Seattle resident Janet Baad grabbed a prized front-row seat two hours before the Emirates flight 7222 arrived. She was en route to Germany, and a friend who works at the airport tipped her off.

"It's an amazing feat," she said. "It's probably my only chance to see it."

Contact John Boudreau at jboudreau@bayareanews-group.com or 408-278-3496.

S.F. gets eyeful of A380 aircraft

Emirates Airlines unveils super-jumbo jet for first time in Bay Area; more airlines to follow

By John Boudreau
MEDIANEWS STAFF

TEN MINUTES into the flight, trays of Dom Pérignon arrived. This was shortly after we glided over the Golden Gate Bridge on Emirates Airline's fresh-off-the-factory-floor A380 super-jumbo.

This cruise ship of the skies for the 21st century made a cameo appearance at San Francisco International Airport this week, a prelude to the Dubai-based airline's service linking the Bay Area to the Middle East, which begins Dec. 15. The flights initially will use other aircraft and then begin using A380s in two to three years, depending on demand.

Emirates' new service is yet another example of how foreign carriers, immune from the cutthroat competition within the United States,



SINGAPORE AIRLINES SECRETARY Nermin Deus explores the shower located in the first-class area of the plane.

are flying high as they hope to tap into the lucrative Northern California market.

The flight marked the first time the Airbus double-decker, the biggest commercial plane ever made, actually flew out of San Francisco with passengers — albeit non-paying ones — in a marketing push by the profit-flush airline. While well-known American carriers teeter on

bankruptcy, privately owned Emirates recorded profit north of \$1 billion last year.

San Francisco's 22-gate international terminal was designed with the A380 in mind.

Two of its gates at opposite ends of the terminal are equipped with three bridges to load and unload the plane, which can carry up to 840 passengers, depending on

how it's configured.

Singapore Airlines, Virgin Atlantic and Lufthansa Airlines also plan to use the mammoth aircraft in service to San Francisco, said Kandace Bender, airport deputy director.

Three other gates can handle the large aircraft, she said. Currently, there are no plans for A380s to fly to Mineta San Jose International Airport.

Emirates, which just took control of the first of 58 Airbus super-jumbos it has on order, gave travel agents and the media a glimpse of its premiere airplane during a two-hour spin over the Pacific.

It was more a cocktail hour at 23,000 feet as the lucky few trooped down the long aisles, Champagne glasses in hand. They inspected the plane's 14 walnut-veneered, first-class "suites" — private seats that include an array of amenities, from individual closets to personal mini-bars — between nibbles of caviar on crackers and crispy duck wontons. But

See A380, Page 2



KATARZYNA is a flight attendant on the A380.