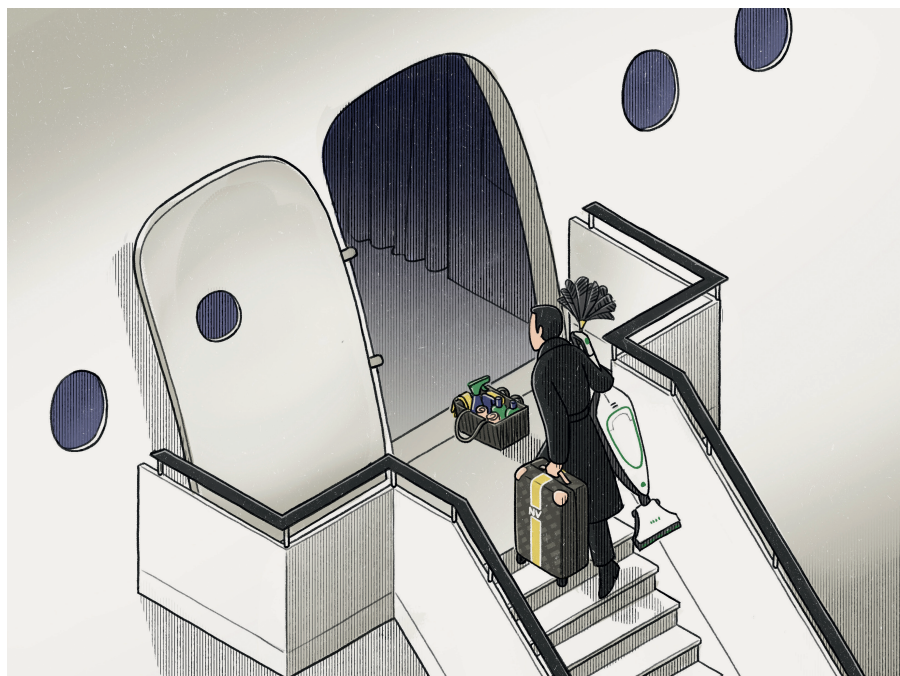


THE VINSON VIEW

Quality maniac and master shopper Nick Vinson on the who, what, when, where and why



PICKY NICKY'S FLYING WISH LIST

Use more doors

Let's have direct flight bridges to first, business and economy on long haul, for quicker boarding and disembarkation - once we land, we just want to get off and no one should have to wait.

Lounge food

Ditch the cornflakes, baked beans and other supermarket offerings. Take a look at what is offered in terms of fresh, cooked-to-order food in the lounges of Qantas and Qatar Airways, for example.

Water

Get rid of single-use plastic water bottles. Find a better way to serve water.

Premium arrivals service

See what the competition does in Asia with arrival services. If a hotel can offer to meet you at the air bridge when alighting your flight, assist with luggage, and fast-track you through immigration and customs, then airlines can offer the same.

Cleaning

I'd rather not have to carry on a vacuum cleaner.

Don't make Nicky go nuts

Serve them in a dish.

01 All the air rage

Picky Nicky asks his carrier to clean up its act

I was one of the 380,000 customers who had their names, addresses, email and card details stolen recently from an airline. The airline dealt with this by instructing us to contact our card providers and follow their instructions on how to manage the breach of data - buckpassing that left the banks' call centres overloaded. The same carrier suffered computer system failure last year, stranding thousands of customers over a long weekend. Commentators blamed cost cutting for both incidents.

Cuts do not go unnoticed. I found toenail clippings beneath my feet on a recent flight with the carrier; I've also seen used tissues, dirty napkins, not to mention a seriously soiled toilet in first class in New Delhi, which had not been cleaned between flights. Cabin crew tell me of plans to take out the coat cupboard at the front of the business cabin on short haul flights, so the airline can fit another row of seats. Flying to New York first class recently I paid for Wi-Fi - you might think that could be included.

Then there's the food. The airline's lounge serves baked beans for breakfast and toasted supermarket sliced bread. In business, the short haul offer of late has been a salad or a 'panini' with mozzarella of dubious quality, tasteless tomato and a bread roll as an accompaniment. Yup, bread with bread. There's lots of animal protein

on the recently updated menu and vegan must be booked as a special meal. More plant-based meals would be popular and a great way to offset carbon, as livestock farming produces more greenhouse gases than the aviation industry.

I generally ask for nuts, which are served in a packet in business class and on a dish in first. I still sympathise with the nut rage of Heather Cho on that front (in 2014, the then Korean Air vice-president had one of its planes turn back to the gate after a row over her nuts being bagged, not on a plate). I've been doing some maths. In economy, a 70g bag of nuts is sold for £1.60. In business, you get a 16g pack, worth about 36p. A perk for forking out to fly in a premium cabin?

In January, when my flight from Mexico was postponed by 20 hours by text message, the customer service phones were closed in Mexico, the US and the UK, and I had an 11-and-a-half-hour wait until they reopened. A day late for a job, with no way to move a connecting flight and left to pay up front for a night in a hotel myself, I wondered why an airline that flies to 75 countries can't manage a 24-hour call centre.

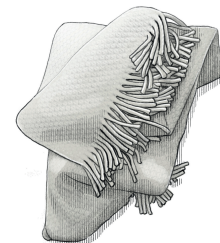
I am a picky passenger, I don't do low cost and I don't do economy, and I don't expect my premium purchase value to be eroded. Please fly to serve the customers rather than just the shareholders. ★



02

A sucker for a carry-on

The Kobold VC100 is a small handheld vacuum cleaner powered by a lithium-ion battery and made by German specialist Vorwerk. £129, kobold.vorwerk.co.uk



03

Take a comfort blanket

Hand-loomed in Scotland in two shades of cashmere, this 'Clyde' blanket by Connolly is ideal for snuggling down on long haul in any cabin. £2,400, connollyengland.com