

NO FLY ZONE?

Should Business Class be an adults-only area? Two parents debate the topic

Words by LEO BEAR & NATASHA FARUQUE

When Lottie Lion (from TV's *The Apprentice*) recently took to social media to bemoan the six-year-old 'brat' sitting next to her on a business-class flight to Paris, I found myself inwardly applauding the reality star. I don't like to think of myself as ungenerous or mean-spirited, but is the first-class cabin of an aircraft really any place for a child? I think not. I say this as a mother-of-two who regularly travels for work, and I'm not alone. According to a recent survey by *Newsweek*, 59 per cent of 1,500 American adults said they'd welcome child-free zones on planes and this November, Europeans will be able to pay 45 euros (each way) for an 'Adult Only' seat on board the Turkish-Dutch carrier Corendon to the Caribbean. Music to my ears.

Last month, I found myself in a similar predicament to Ms Lion on a flight from Muscat to London in Virgin Upper. A young boy (aged four, at a guess) dropped into the seat opposite and proceeded to play a noisy game on his iPhone. Watching him twisting, wriggling and kicking his feet, hyped up on Pringles and Percy Pigs, I reached for the first available flight attendant and politely asked to move seats. Was I over-reacting? Maybe. But it was an eight-hour flight and, to me, a seat in business class is sacred. It's something to be earned.

FIT FOR FLIGHT

Non-stop snacks, comfortable seats, personalised service and the ability to skip lines – those are the primary reasons people decide to fly in Business Class. And those are precisely the reasons why it's so good for kids. All the factors that make them – and you – cranky, are dealt with.

Do they appreciate it? Of course! And making their trip so much more luxurious ensures they are better behaved on-board – Business Class travellers are happier travellers, and that extends to little ones too. From not having to line up for bathrooms, to having room to sleep – and play – plus plenty of choice when it comes to eats and treats, if you can afford it, why wouldn't you opt for it?

Naysayers who talk about children destroying their tranquillity – which they paid additional for (News flash: so did we!), should also be campaigning to remove rowdy adults taking more than full advantage of the free bar, too. Isn't the issue with bad behaviour in general rather than in relation to kids? Perhaps the answer is to reserve areas for grown-ups only, so that everyone is happy? But don't try to block us from the front of the plane – remember, you might be in our position next!

Respected. Revered. It promises a quiet space to work on that pitch deck/novel/business plan/love letter, a chilled glass of champagne to quell the nerves before take-off. In business class, I might treat myself to a film starring Tilda Swinton or Cate Blanchett or make a dent in that Booker Prize-winning novel I've been meaning to get to for weeks. I probably wouldn't put on one of those moisturising hyaluronic sheet masks celebrities rave about, but I might spritz myself with something fragrant and refreshing every now and then and apportion a not-insignificant amount of time to gazing out of the window re-ordering my life values.

These are not things that children relish. Especially young children.

Toddlers don't want to stand in line in overly-lit, heavily air-conditioned airport terminals (who does?). They don't want to try out new perfumes in Duty Free or treat themselves to a little something in Smythson or Dior. They certainly don't want their beloved teddy bear torn from their clutches and sent through a terrifying x-ray machine. Don't get me started on the time my daughter's doo-doo got trapped in the skirt guards of a travelator... Shudder. As we all know, flying with children is a highly stressful affair and chances are, the disapproving looks will be even worse in business class.

So, here's my advice. If you can splash out on business-class tickets for Otis and Olympia, you can afford to hire a nanny to entertain your chubby-cheeked cherubs in Economy, thus leaving the front section of the plane to those who need to get some shut-eye before that big meeting or plough through a backlog of emails. Better still, leave the kids and the nanny at home. Under a certain age – let's say, five – if you're heading to a different timezone, they'll likely get ill. They'll probably keep you up at night. They don't understand jetlag. And guess what? They won't even remember the trip anyway!

Trust me. Business class or not, young children would much rather be at home in their pyjamas watching Paw Patrol than riding the skies.

And dare I say it, they might even enjoy a little break from Mummy and Daddy... ■