

It is end of October 2020 and I finally pulled the trigger on a great deal from Madrid (MAD) to Sao Paulo (GRU) with Aeromexico (AM). Return ticket in business class on carrier flagship Boeing 787-9 for 1.060 EUR earning about 50k miles to Flying Blue and almost halfway to keep my Platinum status for another year. 4 long haul flights with great hard product in business class were big plus too.

**Itinerary Details**

TRAVEL DATE	AIRLINE	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	OTHER NOTES
25May21 - 26May21	AEROMEXICO AEROVIAS DE M AM 22	Madrid, Spain  Time 23:40 Terminal TERMINAL 4	Ciudad de Mexico  Time 04:50 Terminal TERMINAL 2	Fare Family Seat Number 06J (CONFIRMED) Baggage Allowance 2PC Booking Status OK TO FLY Fare Basis INNN6TOI/PV89 Not Valid After 10JUN21
26May21	AEROMEXICO AEROVIAS DE M AM 16	Ciudad de Mexico  Time 09:45 Terminal TERMINAL 2	São Paulo, Brazil  Time 21:20 Terminal TERMINAL 3	Fare Family Seat Number 06J (CONFIRMED) Baggage Allowance 2PC Booking Status OK TO FLY Fare Basis INNN6TOI/PV89 Not Valid After 10JUN21
02Jun21	AEROMEXICO AEROVIAS DE M AM 15	São Paulo, Brazil  Time 10:25 Terminal TERMINAL 3	Ciudad de Mexico  Time 18:05 Terminal TERMINAL 2	Fare Family Seat Number 06J (CONFIRMED) Baggage Allowance 2PC Booking Status OK TO FLY Fare Basis INNN6TOI/PV89 Not Valid After 16JUN21
02Jun21 - 03Jun21	AEROMEXICO AEROVIAS DE M AM 21	Ciudad de Mexico  Time 23:55 Terminal TERMINAL 2	Madrid, Spain  Time 17:55 Terminal TERMINAL 4	Fare Family Seat Number 06J (CONFIRMED) Baggage Allowance 2PC Booking Status OK TO FLY Fare Basis INNN6TOI/PV89 Not Valid After 16JUN21

I decided to book for these dates with hope travel bans will be lifted and travel will be easier. I had hope Brazil won't have hard entry requirements because the country did not close entirely in the worst pandemic time.

At the end of January I received schedule change of AM16 meaning I'd have whole day in Mexico City. I have been to Mexico City many times before and whilst I love the food scene I was not keen to spend additional day in the country so I checked my options.

Whilst working with my new potential dates I noticed the following routing.



It was luckily bookable on Aeromexico's website. After a few minutes call to customer service I was told my original itinerary can't be rebooked for this journey on my desired dates, simply because system error by Air France which was part of this itinerary as well. Luckily I knew it was bookable online as multi-city so I opted for a voucher which came without 15% of additional value as advertised by the carrier.

I quickly booked the following paying with US dollars and since these flights were cheaper, I saved another 180 USD for future use. The feeders were with Air France, so was the long haul from the capital of Mexico back to Europe, rest of the flights on AM.

I booked on short notice with about 10 days within departure so it was time to sort out the feeders to Barcelona.

I quickly booked KLM with morning departure out of Prague making my stop in Barcelona for only 3 hours. With a bit of worry and knowing I'd have to make another antigen test at the airport to be able to travel on KLM, I decided to book Austrian & Lufthansa one day before and book Mélia hotel by the airport for a night. I kept KLM option as back up if my PCR result won't come on time given flexible ticket options with Dutch national carrier.

## Your flight details

✈ **KL1350: Prague (PRG) - Barcelona (BCN)**

February 21 at 06:15

Your booking code

**Check in now** >



### Check-in tip:

Change seats for free while they last.

The PCR result came in 4 hours so I quickly hopped into car and off to Vienna we go. On the way I canceled my KLM ticket into refundable voucher. I am amazed by customer service by this airline group.

Upon arrival to Vienna I headed to Business Class & Senator check in area where I was given boarding pass after showing my negative PCR result in no time. I was assured the middle seat in my exit row will be blocked. I also found out the lounge is in service which was a bit surprising because I thought in Covid time it does not work for Star Alliance Gold members.





The lounge was not packed and one could easily find place with a lots of social distancing. It is prohibited to consume food or drink in the lounge but the take away works perfectly and you are free to eat the gifts once you are 50 meters away from the space. I must give credit to Austrian, the selection was quite good.

Soon it was time to head to the gate area which was packed. I passed by a few gates to Germany or Switzerland and none of the flights looked close to empty, rather the opposite. I decided not to wait and boarded with other priority passengers so I could secure space for my 3 pieces of cabin baggage over my head.

Upon boarding an aircraft, which was Austrian A319 every passenger was given disinfection wipe. I was the only one to wipe the sead, armrest and seat belt. Truth be said, I only did that before on long haul flights but little care in these times never hurts especially as I was a bit afraid of test need in Brazil before coming back to Europe week later.

Take off on time and nothing extraordinary happend on this usual evening commuter hop to Frankfurt. FFP2 is mandatory on board any Austrian or Austria bound flight and I must give credit to all passengers around me for taking health measures very seriously. The service by the crew commanced shortly after the seatbelt sign was off. Only water, tea or coffee as well as the only moments when you could remove your mask.

After about half an hour we started our descent to Frankfurt where we landed on time. Deplaning was done by rows which I don't think was handled very well because making stand 7 rows in one call means more than 40 people in an aisle. It was a quite a walk to only

Senator available lounge which was with same type of catering as the one in Vienna with a small difference, fresh pretzels.

The time flew by and it was soon time to move to gate A34 which was getting ready for a flight to Barcelona. This time the gate area did not seem packed at all however the plane was fairly full. Upon stepping on board the crew distributed disinfection towels again. The onboard service was very the same as on previous leg. The uneventful flight landed in Catalunya on time and little did I know it is the end of the journey.

First, getting from a plane to baggage carousel is quite a haul. Second, many lines and many health employees pointing you where to go after answers yes or no for QR codes. Temperature check, QR scan check and we were clear to exit the airport. Luckily the shuttle to Mélia came quiet quickly. I appreciated that sea air after quite some time. I probably did not enjoy my time abroad enough ever before. Even there must be some rules for evening leavings I managed to get short walk around Vueling headquarters before falling asleep in a comfy bed.

The next morning was just chill before I went to the airport where I even made check in for my flights on counters opened for earlier departure. I wanted to get on earlier flight operated by HOP! But since my ticket was issued by AM, the agent was helpless. After realizing the lounge is open and offers great service I did not regret. New interior, good food selection and happy staff. I could not want more.



Soon it was time to board my A319 in Air France colours and head over to Paris with flight time little bit more than sixty minutes. The purser started service as soon as we were given green light from cockpit, meaning the seatbelt sign was off.

I found Air France crews operating European short hauls to be simply perfect and this flight was not exception. You can hardly expect the cold snacks to be great culinary on European skies but the crew make all the difference between actually good or bad business class product on our continent when the hard product is far from perfect. The only thing I was underwhelmed was the champagne on offer, Duval-Leroy. Air France is nowadays only one of two airlines offering this miracle on board in Europe however with all the offerings we have seen on French carrier this one is my least favorite. Soon enough we started our descent to Charles de Gaulle where we eventually landed on time. Then we were in no time at our gate.



For my transatlantic journeys I have always carefully selected going via Schiphol or flying Delta directly from other airports if flying Sky Team so I have not had many experiences



transiting at CDG before. There is so many different yet not nice stories about schengen to non schengen transfer experiences so I was happy to be through in a few minutes settling in a rather full lounge. Strangely the bar was open to help yourself style but the food selection required an agent helping you. The selection was frankly not exceptional and was not far from standard schengen lounge catering. I found the biggest difference in free champagne bottles for free use in the ice bucket.

The time flew by and after a few minutes chat with another Czech flyer headed to Manchester it was time to made my way to gate where our chariot awaits its long transatlantic journey to the capital of Mexico. I find red eye west bound transatlantics to be cool and to be honest I have only experienced on Aeromexico. And Latam if we counts South America's flights too.



I was one of the last persons on board after gate PCR result check again. I selected seat in sixth row meaning I was in the main cabin. The reason why I did not select seat in mini cabin was simple. I knew getting sleep on this flight was the main goal and I wanted to get the service done quickly which is not often the case in mini cabin and I also experienced this on AM between Mexico and Amsterdam a few years ago.

The cabin is amazingly fresh and this type of reverse herringbone configuration works just perfect for me giving everyone ultimate space of privacy, storage space and the middle seats works perfectly for couples with no need to lean forward when having a conversation. I only wished Qatar Airways had the same finished because this seat has hardly any mistake.

After pre-departure beverage with choice of champagne, orange juice or water it was time to take our Dreamliner to 37 thousand feet and head over the Atlantic. I obviously selected the champagne which was Jacquart making me wonder why this might be better choice than the Air France one.

Soon after take off it was clear we are not taking the north, Greenland route and were headed directly to the ocean to appear over Florida about 10 hours later. After fantastic dinner where we had choice from three mains it was time to fall asleep. The seat is wide for bend-knee sleepers and the footwell is enormous as well. I got to sleep extremely well and woke up above Bermuda with closed eye until we were passing over the United States of America where I have not been for eleven months due to ban, my longest period without visiting the freelands.



Soon enough it was time to serve pre-arrival snack over Texas gulf. I was a bit worried this would be standard breakfast selection, meaning either pass this one and try to sleep a bit more or at least eat the fresh fruit and leave the rest.

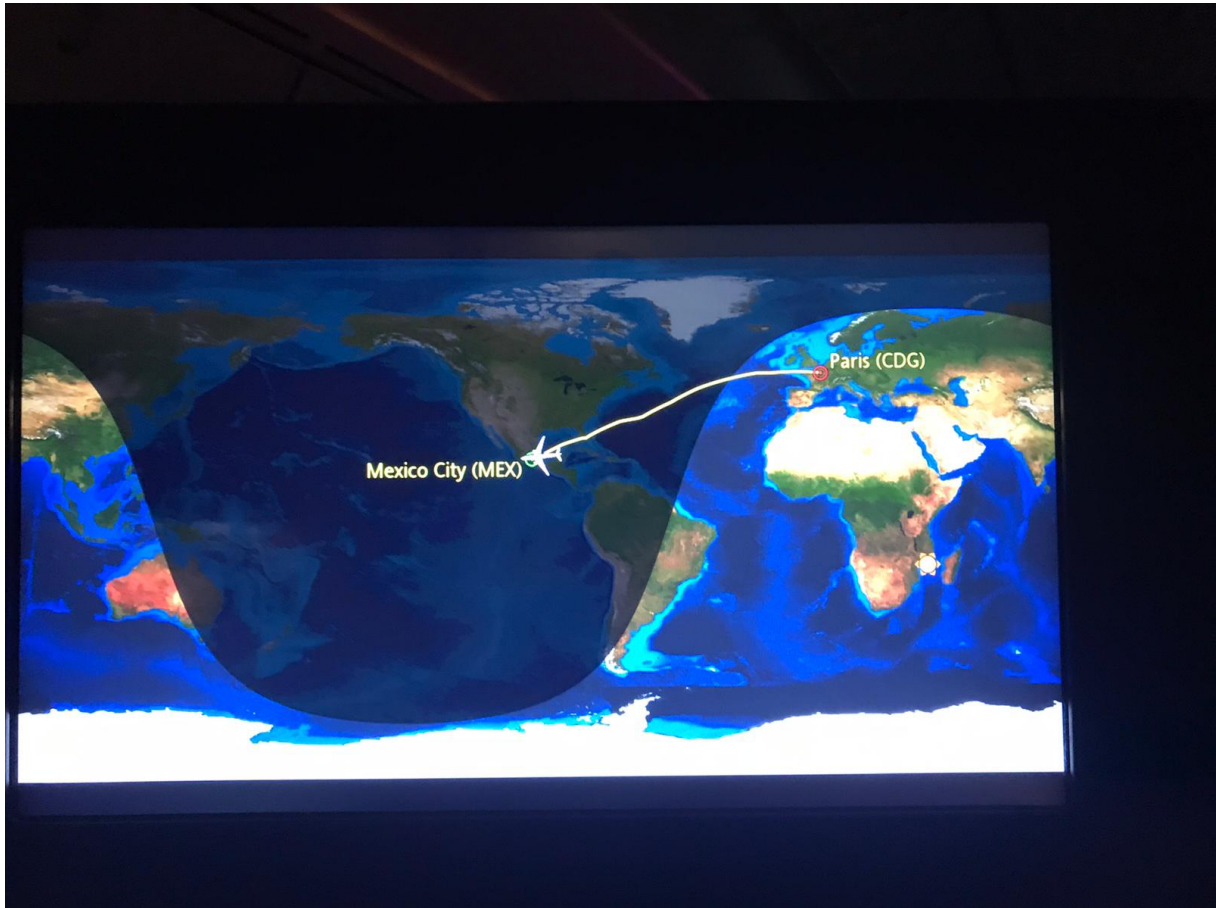
Again, three choices between an egg omellete, quiche and cereals. Knowing the CDG catering did great job with dinner I selected the quiche. And it did not dissappoint. Or maybe I did not have airplane breakfast for too long. Or maybe both. Eventually the cabin got ready for landing and I could enjoy one of my favorites descents in the world. Landing at Benito

Juarez is always a treat doing our final low over the city almost being able to see into offices in high buildings. You can't find many better landings, if any.



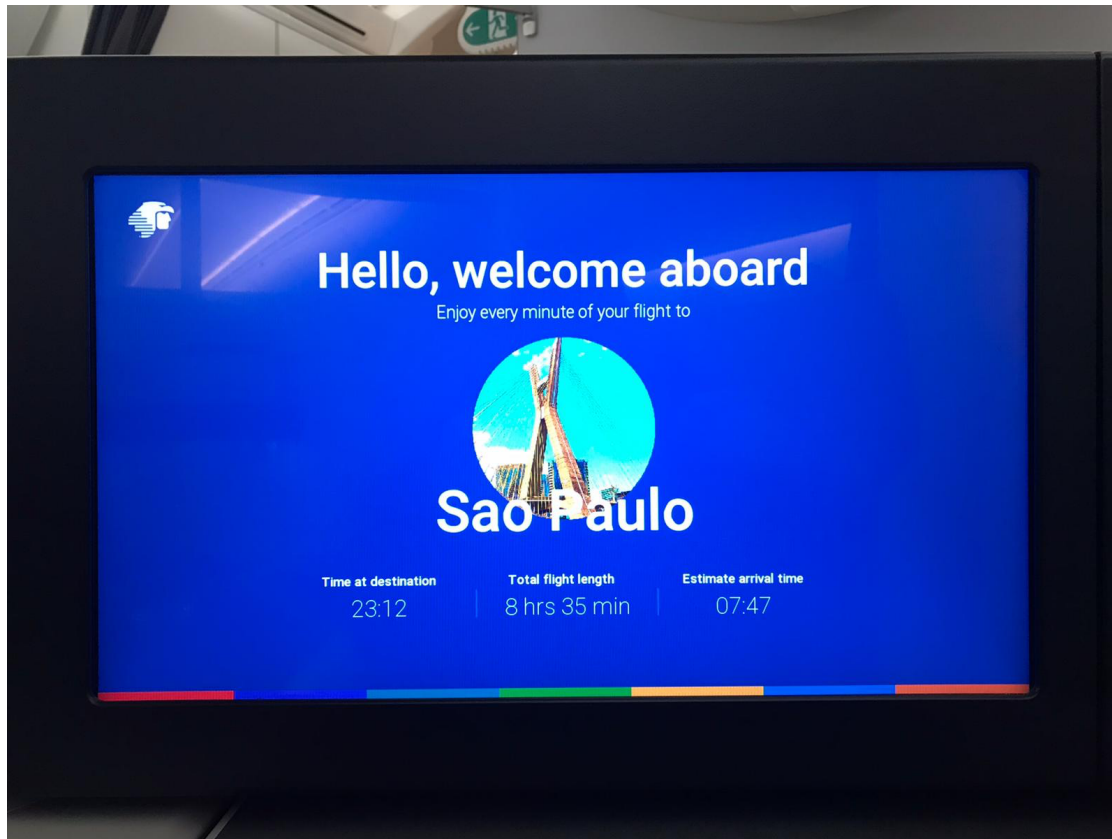
With custom declaration filled up on a plane and first in line to leave the plane I was the very one to be checked by doctor on jet bridge and off through immigration. Now the worst part of the journey begins. I wanted to reschedule my flights due to long layover in Mexico but flying on a short notice meant the same connecting time. Knowing my test would still be valid at the time of boarding in the evening I eventually did not turn left onto the stairs up to transfer zone but rather to the right and off the airport we go. It was 4am in Mexico with temperature around 6 Celsius and having only blazer I managed to get a few minutes on fresh air before going back to check in for Aeromexico branded boarding pass and through security. I spend the whole time in freezed AM lounge which offered drinks, both alcoholic and non alcoholic as well as any basic food. At this time I regret doing this!





I felt blessed to see my flight getting ready for boarding and without further checks I found myself in mini cabin of our Dreamliner taking us to Sao Paulo over the night in 8 hours and 35 minutes in the air. The cabin behind me with 3-3-3 seating was close to full meanwhile I was alone in mini cabin with a few more people between door L1 and L2. I surprisingly did not pass out before dinner which I was little dissapointed with. Although it takes some risk to be seated in mini cabin if speaking about service I did not expect to have choice only between chicken and pasta. Beef was already out of question which hurts a bit when you consider you are the highest elite passenger on board. So hungry for some protein I went with chicken which was far from perfect business class meal but the dessert made it up a bit.





After that very well deserved sleep until a few moments before the breakfast service was getting ready. This time I selected the salmon and although I do not usually have breakfast as soon as I wake up the salmon felt very fresh. Soon enough we started our descent to Guarulhos. All birds from Europe were already on the ground but I could not see any of three US choices we can fly with which meant no waiting at immigration. These birds were still behind us. After quick moments at immigration with a few questions I was through without problems and along the full baggage claim of Iberia from Madrid I made my way upstairs to Terminal 3 to check all the details I needed to know before I would get tested here before flying back to Europe.







I had my answers in no time, the Covid-19 test centre is in the middle of the terminal, price less than 60 USD and results in 4 hours and if positive, airline will rebook you for free. However I did not ask for quarantine rules, sometimes it is not good to know before needed to know I guess?

I found myself in corridor between Terminal 3 and Terminal 2 to make my way for Latam check in as I was headed two hours later to Rio de Janeiro. I chose Latam over Gol for better timing and I wanted to get some movement on my Alaska status as well. The check in itself was done soon enough and through empty security I got myself a few minutes before boarding to restricted area which was packed by people. So our A319 to Santos Dumont was. The flight was uneventful with only Portuguese speaking crew without english safety instruction. The service was zero as well but due to shortness of flight one can understand. After all I do not remember if any airline I flew between Sao and Rio offers anything. Soon after touch down I found myself in Black Uber to Copacabana for three nights.



After nice time in Rio it was time to go back to cold Europe. Firstly I needed to get from Rio to Guarulhos. Booking on a short notice meant I had to book well priced flight to Congonhas and then believe in my own skill with transport to Guarulhos. A question never hurts so I was rebooked by check in agent for free onto direct service to my desired airport. Unfortunately this flight was leaving 2 hours later in the evening and eventually got delayed by an hour but I did not need to transfer between the two airports.



Uneventful flight again with stunning night Rio's views. I really like wifi connection on LATAM's planes giving you opportunity to at least track yourself. After landing in Sao Paulo and quick taxi to the very same gate we used when flying vice-versa a few days ago I made my way to Terminal 3 for Covid-19 test.



The whole process was simple and I was soon off to Hilton near the airport. The bed was extremely comfy so I woke up on my alarm clock before the sun was up again to be if possible alone in breakfast room. Surprisingly this time it was buffet style. Maybe it differs city by city in Brazil. Wanting to be at the airport rather earlier than later I took ordered shuttle and made myself dropped at Terminal 3. Check in was a breeze and I was given all boarding passes all the way to Spain. Truth be said the check in agent was at first quiet surprised I am headed to Europe with Aeromexico but no further questions.



Unfortunately the lounge is not open so I walked myself out of the terminal and spent a few more last minutes on fresh air in front of the terminal. I am amazed by all the bike riders having GRU as destination. I need to practice this back in my country too!

Security and immigration was a breeze and I only walked around the terminal to enjoy the view on some birds I have not seen in a long time. I could not imagine seeing USA bound planes would be so satisfying but yes, it has been 11 months since my last intercontinental flight. And I was used to do many monthly.



Eventually it was time to board our bird. I boarded with business class passengers after temperature check. I had assigned myself again seat in mini cabin however this time I was not alone. Again the seat gives everyone perfect space of privacy so it was not issue at all. I'd say the economy cabin was not that full as on my flight to Brazil however the front lie flat seats were occupied well making the load factor to be nice for Aeromexico revenue team.

Cabin crew check up on me before taking off with my special meal order. I wouldn't call it special as I only selected beef in manage my booking with a worry the selection would be gone again but really in the papers it was with note as special meal. With a little hope I'd be served first and ready to get some snooze I had to bid a farewell to this country and look forward Mexico, in a little less than 9 hours in the air!





The service started quickly and boy was the beef well done! Hands down one of my best meals in business class, this would qualify as great dining on the ground in a well-rated restaurant as well. We had choice between cake and ice cream for dessert. I played dumb a bit hoping I'd get both but maybe I should just have asked for both. So I only got caramel Haagen-Dasz which did the work. Since my late arrival back to Sao Paulo and early wake up I napped for a while and woke up when we were in the middle of Columbian airspace.

I walked myself to bar area at L2 and with a company of Jacquart and a few snacks I managed to make the time fly by and soon we were ready to land in Mexico City again. I stared all the descent out of the window, yes I really love this approach so much!

Upon deboarding there was not a doctor this time and going through immigration was not hard either. I had to move my way to Terminal 1. Strangely, Air France uses this terminal. For everyone's convenience I'd say T2 would be better choice. The train transfer was quick enough and soon I found myself at check in counter again. I had boarding pass ready from GRU but La Premiere was a goal on this flight.

I anyway turned off the offer for 156 000 Flying Blue miles or 1.250 EUR cash. I was printed new boarding passes two-in-one all the way to Barcelona and was informed about lounge near gate 19. The security was a breeze, I guess I was able to use some sort of quicker line without any priority signs though.

Walking past the duty free an agent in front of the lounge simply asked if flying Air France which I said yes and I found myself inside. The lounge offered great wifi connection and more like a la carte service with mexican dishes and drinks to be delivered by the bartender. I only saw buggy outside the lounge so with a little smile I asked if I can get it to the gate and the answer was simply yes, so I selected the transfer for 7pm, way ahead of my departure.

The time in the lounge was great with very attentive service. I was in heaven. The buggy agent told me I did the right thing to ask for the transfer as the gate is very far. I did not believe at first but boy I wouldn't want to walk all the way. One more PCR check at the gate and off to the plane. Well, ghost plane. 1F, 9J, 0W and 18Y. That was the load!



Air France B777-300ER is in very premium heavy configuration, 4F, 58J and W and Y cabin so you can imagine how much alone I felt in the big business class section. Since I was quiet early on board I managed to get about four or five glasses of Duval-Leroy. I was also handed an amenity kit, this time not from Etro as AM gives out however stylish and useful small bag. A proper paper menu was given before departure as well and shortly I was thanked for being Platinum member with first choice on board. Nice to be in home skies!



Don't get me wrong, I like 787 when seating in a good business class seat but there is something exceptional about sound of GE90, the biggest airplane engine on the world. I enjoyed take off like it was first time with tail camera on. Off to Paris!



The service started quickly after departure but Mexico City catering proved itself as just not very good. The beef steak did not have a steak taste and order components weren't any better. Few more glasses and time to sleep! I woke up almost at the end of our transatlantic crossing with breakfast to be served shortly. I however passed on this and focused on rest until the sign was on again meaning we are ready to land back in Europe. Due to wings we landed an hour before our actual plan. Be it as it may it ain't really win with a business class seat and 8 hour layover.



However after landing we were for about 30 minutes on a single remote place with only french and spanish announcement so I had no clue what was going on. Eventually we parked the beauty on remote stand and after a few more minutes waiting for stairs we got into priority bus which took us to the terminal.



And again not very favorite transfer at CDG but again with no issues and I found myself in the lounge again. This time I selected my seat downstairs and by any mistake or not the staff closed the stairs so most of the time I had the area of lounge just for myself. Talk about proper social distancing!

Sun was settling down quickly and we were the last Air France departure of the day. Just next to flight to somewhere in south of France so by the time I got to the gate area it was packed by people. I did not wait much and board our plane as soon as priority passengers were invited.





1A for journey to Spain in full A319. I was hoping to get A318 at least on one of the feeders but both Air France flights were pretty full. If there was not mask requirement nobody would notice this flight is in the middle of pandemic when people are afraid of traveling!



We eventually took off on time after seeing my triple-seven from Mexico going to Incheon. Korean sends the same aircraft at the same time so I wonder if AF flight is simply cargo. I had luck with great purser again. Another genuine guy in the uniform. The service started quickly with some foies gras on the left side and something indescribable on the right side. Definitely not good dinner. After a few more glasses of Duval-Leroy we landed back in Spain. Given my only 7 hour long layover I did not bother exiting the airport and just survived the night nearby my Frankfurt gate.

In the morning I noticed I only got check in confirmation and not real boarding pass so it was a big hassle to get one at the gate since nobody understood I was only in transit and on different reservations. Without any PCR checks as my destination was Austria which gives you option to get tested within 24 hours of arrival I was soon on my way to A320neo which would take me to Frankfurt. Again pretty full flight with only few empty seats, luckily the middle in my exit row remained empty. Given the time departure I fell asleep right after take off so I can't comment on service.

Landing in Germany was pretty much on time and this time I only had a short layover. My next flight on Austrian to Vienna was departing from gate nearby the lounge so I could not reject the pretzel offer. I boarded our A319 with group 1 boarding, settled in in exit row and watched again boarding off close to full flight. Luckily nobody again next to me. I am not sure if there is some algorithm letting the seat empty next to Star Gold flyer or I simply had luck. Anyway we departed a bit after our schedule and I again slept the whole flight. I guess the service is the same anyway no matter what time of the day it is. Lovely weather day before in Paris and sunny morning in Frankfurt were past in foggy Vienna, welcome back to winter time!

All passengers except those in transit were forced to take stairs up. This floor leads to passport control where the army checked up on everybody. I was through within a minute after only saying I am not staying in Austria but have a car ready to go directly across the border.

It was fantastic trip, great price for mileage accrual and 4 long haul flights. I am ready to do this again in March!