

step change

BRIEF: Frustrated with the lack of sleep to be had when flying long-haul economy, Emil Jacob, an inventor from Boston, USA, has decided to design his own solution to replace existing cramped seating products that offer little in the way of recline. Dubbed the FLEXSeat, his concept features a two-tier structure providing each passenger with a separate seat and bed.

DESCRIPTION: The design takes advantage of the overhead space available on large aircraft, creating two tiers. Passengers sitting in the upper tier reach their seat via an integrated, foldable staircase. Luggage is stored beneath the encasement of the steps, ensuring passengers do not block the aisles when storing away their bags. To access the storage space, passengers simply pull a handle at the bottom of the steps, similar in operation to opening the hood of a car. Greater privacy and more elbow room is assured as no two passengers sit directly adjacent. The concept also does away with the complicated reclining mechanisms used in conventional seats. On high-density routes, the bottom tier can accommodate an additional two seats at the expense of the bed, with the upper level used for storage.



VERDICT: The idea of using the space above passengers to deliver more comfort is not entirely new – *Aircraft Interiors International* covered a similar concept back in February 2003, devised by AirDesign, based in Mexico, however this used ladders instead of stairs. Such concepts face two major challenges: the first is the potentially claustrophobic ‘corridor’ effect of such tall structures in the cabin; and the second is how best to market them to ensure they do not cannibalise premium-class revenue streams.



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