

# Air France Just Opened The World's Coolest New Airport Bar



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Air France has been in the process of redesigning its flagship business-class lounge at Paris Charles de Gaulle for the past year. The airline reopened a portion of the lounge in January, and debuted the remaining section of the lounge this week, complete with a swanky all-new bar designed by Frenchman Mathieu Lehanneur.



Lehanneur's Le Balcon is now open at the Air France lounge. AIR FRANCE

You might recognize Lehanneur's work from other prestigious projects such as Café Mollien at the Louvre, the Maison Kitsuné boutique in New York City and various one-off art installations at museums and exhibitions throughout the world.

The designer turned his eye on Air France's Terminal 2E Hall L lounge and created an exclusive new space called Le Balcon where passengers can have a meal and a handcrafted cocktail between flights.

Le Balcon comprises 160 square meters (1,720 square feet). The layout is meant to evoke a sense of theatricality. There is a marble bar at its center that passengers can observe from the opera box-like circular wooden booths upholstered in plush teal velvet. Lehanneur also embedded an LED screen in the parquet floor that depicts the outside sky in real time, lending Le Balcon the feeling of suspension between the earth and the clouds.



The lounge features opera-like boxes and a gold-paneled ceiling. AIR FRANCE

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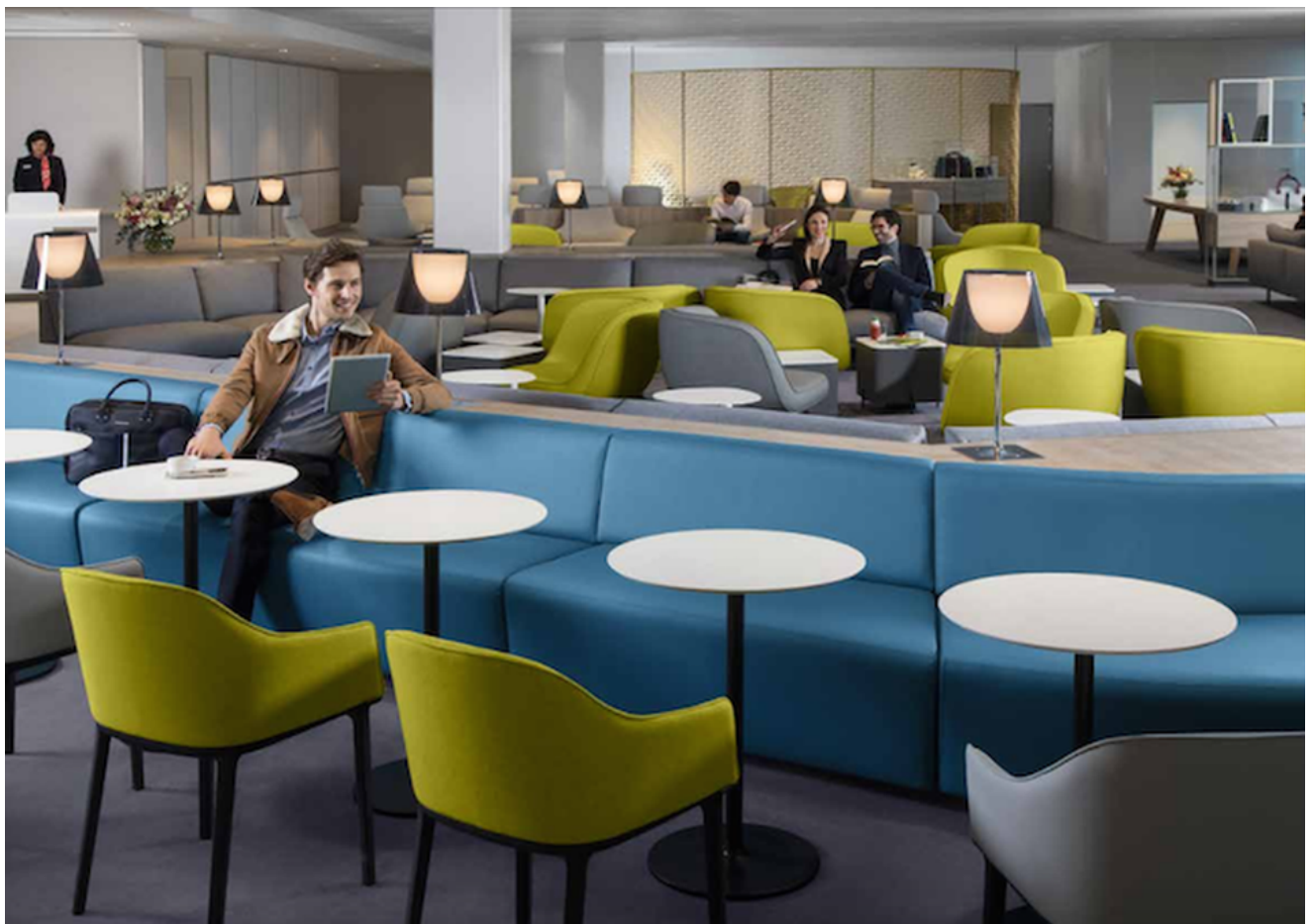
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Perhaps most eye-catching of all, though, is the ceiling, which is paneled with burnished golden mirrors – a shot of artificial sunshine indoors, not to mention a healthy dose of glamour.



The cocktail program was created by the head bartender of Paris's tony Hotel Lancaster, and will be available every evening from 7:00-9:00pm. Among the specialty libations are "Un Air de Paris," that is a spin on the classic champagne cocktail with champagne, Cointreau and Cognac. The bar will also serve a rotating destination cocktail of the month inspired by Air France's route network, with cities like New York, Tokyo and Johannesburg highlighted. This month's is the "Shanghai," with champagne, lychee liqueur, ginger beer and lemon.

For non-drinkers, the team will create non-alcoholic mocktails, each based on a new iconic ingredient from around France each month. July's drink is called the "Summer in Menton," and includes grapefruit juice, lemon and verbena syrup.



The lounge can accommodate up to 540 guests. AIR FRANCE

Passengers can also sample the cuisine at the new "Gourmet Table" dining area, which is modeled after a fast-paced Parisian brasserie with an open kitchen where chefs will prepare dishes in front of customers. There are also self-service counters with hot and cold buffets, and a selection of wines chosen by the airline's sommelier, Paolo Basso.



The Gourmet Table is a brasserie-style eatery with an open kitchen. AIR FRANCE

Aside from Le Balcon, the lounge, which is over 34,000 square feet and has space for 540 guests, features a plethora of other new features and elements. Those include the largest wellness area of any Air France lounge, with two Clarins spa treatment rooms, two private saunas, luxury shower suites, a relaxation area with loungers and mini-suites for resting, and a detox bar serving flavored Evian infusions and teas from Palais des Thés.



The new wellness area includes a relaxation space and a Clarins Spa. AIR FRANCE

The rest of the lounge is subdivided into areas like “Le Club” for private meetings, “At Your Service” for help from airline staff on things like seat assignments and flight changes, “Air France Shopping” with for a little retail therapy and the “Le Petit Salon” quiet area where the use of smartphones is strongly discouraged.



There are plenty of private areas in the new lounge. AIR FRANCE

There is also a kid's zone designed for children ages 4-12 with amenities like games and Sony PS4s. The lounge features standard amenities like free Wi-Fi and a press rack with the day's periodicals.





The children's section includes PS4s. AIR FRANCE

The newly refreshed lounge is open daily from 5:30am-11:30pm. It is open to passengers flying Air France, KLM or SkyTeam international business class.



You might have access to the lounge based on your itinerary and your elite status. AIR FRANCE

Those with SkyTeam Elite Plus and Flying Blue Gold and above elite fliers flying Air France, KLM or SkyTeam the same day. Other passengers may be able to access it for a fee that varies by elite status and class of service.