

EXPAT

THURSDAY, 21 DECEMBER

The Prince of Delta Air

by [Lucas Laursen](#)

I had to force myself to adopt a more leisurely pace through the airport. I was no longer bound for the teeming crowds and hard plastic seats of the main lobby. My glutei were headed for a better place, thank-you-very-much. The gate agent had, through the grace invested in her by Delta Airlines, invited me to direct my steps to the Crown Room on my way to the business class cabin. Why that's lovely, thanks. I'll be there.



I don't have any business in business class. First of all, I don't have a business. Or a job. Then there's that other word: class. Let's just say I've been wearing the same pair of blue jeans, not counting the odd outing in my flashy zip-off trekking pants, since summer. So the frequent-flyer perks from my former life as a jet-setting, bi-coastal college student jar my current starving-writerly sensibilities.

For example, this fall I stretched a three-pound bag of potatoes, two pounds of pasta, and some rice into three months of suppers.

Yet, in the Gatwick Crown Room I scarfed three bags of Kettle Crisps, seven triangular sandwiches without crusts, and washed it down with a Guinness and a tumbler of 10-year-old Scotch.

This fall I furtively snuck a stale copy of *The Guardian* out of my favorite café at the end of the night, instead of paying for it in the morning like everyone else.

But in the Crown Room I greedily tore through *The Guardian* and *The Herald Tribune* and walked out with copies of the *Wall Street Journal*, *CNN Traveller*, and *Business Traveller*.

In short, I aim to make the most of my frequent flyer status while it lasts. But I am troubled by the conversion that takes place when I am bumped up to the business cabin. I catch myself assuming the airs of someone who actually paid for the privilege of boarding first and the comfort of a wider seat. I grumble about the people trying to jump the boarding line. Can't they see that it says "Boarding Group 1" on my ticket?

The flight attendants in the business cabin don't help, since they use a more disarmingly polite, solicitous tone of voice than my scruffy appearance usually inspires. It only feels fair to adopt their elevated diction and low murmurs. Orange juice out of a champagne glass? Why not?

But you can usually tell the “scholarship” business flyers like me. My eyes are a little wider at first, and my gaze lingers fondly on the seats just a bit too long. My carry-on bags are more likely to have two shoulder straps and a broken zipper than an Italian polished leather exterior. And if you look carefully enough, you’ll also see a tiny chip on my shoulder.