

Emirates joins the *pay-for-my seat* club that will annoy a few flyers

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A shift in policy by Emirates, due to take force early next month, is set to surprise and annoy a few of its customers.

The airline, commercial partner of Qantas and the world's largest international airline in its own right, is about to join the ranks of airlines that charge for selecting an economy class seat.

There are provisos. According to Arabic news outlet al-Arabiya, Emirates will institute a minimal charge for certain economy class passengers who want to choose their seats in advance. Higher fare level passengers will not be levied such seat fees but you will pay much more for this privilege.

From 3 October 2016, Emirates economy passengers can expect to pay USD 15 per person for short flights and USD 40 per person for long-haul flights – but only if they fall into certain categories – those travelling on discounted Special or Saver fares.

The exact amount will vary according to length of flight. Accompanying passengers travelling on the same booking are exempt, as are infants.

Seat selection fees are spreading. Qantas charges AUD 30 to select a seat on an economy class international flight on many routes, Singapore Airlines lets you choose a seat for free with their policy "under consideration" but many USA based carriers, European Low Cost Carriers are starting to adopt this methodology.

There's a way to avoid the Emirates charge.

High profile Travel Agents who are IATA accredited with LSA (Last Seat Availability) access can save travellers such fees, as much as \$60 USD per trip or \$160 USD per trip per person. Remember this is per sector, not per ticket!

These are substantial extra costs that consumers cannot save if they book online, or if they book via most low credentialed non-IATA Travel Agents or by phoning Emirates. Whilst you can still check in two days before take-off to try and request seats - as this method will remain free - you will only get to request a seat from the scraps left over without guaranteeing seats together, upfront, aisle or window!

Better stay close to a good Travel Agent who has the connections and credentials to do this. You can expect other carriers to follow this direction as they scammer to increase revenue from other sources.