

## **Press Information Kit- Product**

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- ***Company Information***

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## **Company background and history**

Since it was founded twenty-three years ago, Virgin Atlantic Airways has become Britain's second largest airline serving the world's major cities. Virgin Atlantic is the quintessential Virgin story. It has every ingredient: the small newcomer taking on the giant and complacent establishment, the people's champion introducing better service and lower costs for passengers with a reputation for quality and innovative product development.

Virgin Atlantic was developed as an offshoot of Richard Branson's Virgin Group, which was better known at the time in the world of pop and rock music. In early 1984, Branson was contacted by an Anglo-US lawyer called Randolph Fields with a proposal for involvement in a new airline. Recognising that, like the music business, aviation was a consumer led industry, and tired of the conveyor belt attitude to passengers, Branson decided it was time for Virgin to diversify. His fellow directors thought he was mad – particularly when he announced the new airline would begin operating in just over three months.

Never one to take 'no' for an answer, Branson's infectious enthusiasm ensured that staff were hired, an aircraft was found, licences were obtained and the uniforms were designed. It was not easy, especially with incidents such as an engine failure on the eve of the airline's maiden flight. On 22 June 1984 Virgin's inaugural flight to Newark took place, a flight filled with friends, celebrities and the media. The airline's aim was simple: "To provide the highest quality innovative service at excellent value for money for all classes of air travellers". Hugely popular, Virgin Atlantic has won top business, consumer and trade awards from around the world. The airline has pioneered a range of innovations setting new standards of service. Despite Virgin Atlantic's growth the service still remains customer driven with an emphasis on value for money, quality, fun and innovation.

From those early days the airline has gone from strength to strength. Now based at Gatwick, Heathrow and Manchester airports, it operates long-haul services from Heathrow to New York (Newark and JFK), Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington, Boston, Miami, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Shanghai, Delhi, Mumbai, Lagos, Sydney, Dubai, Chicago, Nairobi & Mauritius. Virgin also operates services from Gatwick to Orlando, Barbados, St Lucia, Antigua, Las Vegas, Grenada, Tobago, Cuba and Jamaica (Montego Bay & Kingston). It also operates a service from Manchester to Orlando, Barbados and St Lucia.

On 20 December 1999 Richard Branson signed an agreement to sell a 49% stake of Virgin Atlantic to Singapore Airlines to form a unique global partnership. The cost of the transaction to Singapore Airlines was £600.25 million, which included a capital injection of £49 million and valued Virgin Atlantic at a minimum of £1.225billion. The deal was finalised in early 2000.

In summer 2003 came the launch of Virgin Atlantic's revolutionary Upper Class Suite, the longest and most comfortable flat bed and seat in the airline industry. The Upper Class Suite has won twelve of the most prestigious designs awards including a Yellow Pencil award for product design and an IDEA Gold Award for Transport Design.

Since December 2004 Virgin Atlantic has launched services between London and Sydney, Mumbai, Dubai, Havana, Montego Bay, and direct flights between Manchester and Barbados and Manchester and St Lucia. New services from Heathrow included Chicago in April 2007, Nairobi in June 2007 and Mauritius in November 2007. Services between Gatwick and Kingston, Jamaica, launched in October 2007.

Virgin Atlantic announced in March 2007 that it has ordered 15 of the 787-9 Dreamliners – with options on ordering another eight 787-9s and purchase rights on a further 20 aircraft. The 787-9 Dreamliner burns around 27% less fuel per passenger than the A340-300, the aircraft it will replace in the Virgin Atlantic fleet. The order will see Virgin Atlantic take delivery of its new planes from 2011 and could be worth up to US\$8 billion.

## **The Virgin Atlantic product**

On its long haul routes Virgin Atlantic operates a three class service: Upper Class (the airline's business class,) Premium Economy and Economy. Virgin Atlantic launched the Upper Class Suite in November 2003 – a product which has won some of the most prestigious design awards in the industry and is now onboard all aircraft in the airlines fleet.

### **THE UPPER CLASS SUITE:**

- The Upper Class suite is different to anything else flying today. The product has been designed to be separately both the most comfortable bed and the most comfortable seat in the air.
- Instead of extending from a seat into a bed, Virgin Atlantic's seat provides the passenger with a luxury leather armchair to relax on which then flips over into a separate bed with a mattress to sleep on.
- The Upper Class Suite has won some of the most prestigious design awards in the industry including the Wallpaper award for the Most Life Enhancing Item and the D&AD Yellow Pencil (Silver) award for Product Design.

### **HEADLINE FACTS:**

- The longest bed of any airline's business class product.
- It provides passengers with customised luxury furniture for sitting on and a mattress for sleeping on so passengers do not have to compromise on the comfort of either.
- The 1-2-1 / 1-1-1 configuration means passengers have their own personal space with no 'step over' by other passengers.
- Passengers can recline in the seat even for take-off and landing!

### **THE COMPARISONS:**

- The seat is 2" wider than British Airways' First Class seat and the bed is 3.5" longer, 13.5" wider in the all-important shoulder area and 3.5" wider in the lower bed area.
- The seat is 7.5" longer, 13" wider in the shoulder area and 3" wider in the lower bed area than British Airways' Club World seat.
- The seat is 2" wider than the First Class seats offered by 23 major airlines including British Airways, Lufthansa, Qantas, United Airlines, and American Airlines.

### **THE BED FACTS:**

- It is the biggest bed in business class. At 79.5" long (82" on the 747-400 Upper Deck), and 33" wide across the shoulders, the Upper Class Suite is the largest fully flat bed in comparison with any other airlines business class.
- At its widest point, the all – important shoulder area, the bed is 33" across – over 1ft of extra width compared to other airlines!
- With one touch of a button the seat converts into a bed by flipping over.

### **THE CABIN FACTS:**

- The cost of the Upper Class project including new cabin and seats is £100m.
- The seats television screen is 10.4 inches – bigger than any other airline's business class inflight entertainment screen.
- The Upper Class cabin features a private bar in an area discreet from the cabin.

## Upper Class

- The Upper Class Suite provides the passenger with a luxury leather armchair to relax on which then flips over into a separate bed with a mattress to sleep on. The Upper Class Suite is now fitted onto all Virgin Atlantic's 747-400, A340-600 aircraft and A340-300 aircraft.
- The Freedom menu offers a wide selection of light bites, main meals and snacks which can be ordered at any time during the flights allowing the passenger to eat what they want when they want. A good night flight service is also offered to passengers on flights departing after 9pm – so passengers can enjoy a gourmet meal in the Clubhouse before their flight so that once onboard they can maximise their sleep.
- Onboard bar - a private bar in an area separated from the cabin, which has a welcoming atmosphere.
- The Upper Class amenity kit - socks, toothbrush/toothpaste, earplugs, eye mask. The items above are viewed by passengers as the essentials they need to receive on a flight. We also offer passengers pens, lip balm, moisturiser and stain remover if they require these items.
- Sleeper service – “Snoozezone” is available on all evening flights of eight hours or under, departing from an airport, which has a Clubhouse where passengers can enjoy an evening meal. After takeoff they are offered a drink, then the lights are dimmed in their cabin so they can enjoy the maximum amount of sleeping time in their Upper Class Suite.
- State-of-the-art inflight entertainment system. A majority of aircraft have the V-port system offers 300 hours of video on demand where passengers can watch or listen to what they want and can start, pause or rewind their chosen movie, TV show or CD. Alternatively, there is a choice of between 14 - 20 video channels plus 9 - 14 audio channels and 10 - 15 games on selected aircraft.
- Dedicated check-in and priority boarding.
- Complimentary drinks including pre-take off champagne and ice creams during the movies.
- Unique Clubhouse lounges at selected airports featuring a health and beauty salon offering beauty treatments and hairdressing. In addition the flagship Heathrow Clubhouse has a poolside lounge, Multiscreen, observation deck, sky lounge, library, music room, playground/video games room, study, bar, brasserie/deli.
- Arrival facilities – Virgin Revivals at Heathrow features a reception, eighteen shower rooms with a valet cleaning service, a Virgin Touch salon, a bar and lounge area and a business area with free phone calls, access to email and Internet and faxing facilities.
- Complimentary airport transfers are available to and from most airports of arrival and departure; UK options include chauffeur driven Volvo or Virgin LimoBike in the UK and first class Gatwick Express travel.
- The new Upper Class Wing recently launched at London Heathrow enables business passengers to speed through the terminal quicker than ever before, moving from limo to lounge in under 10 minutes. For the first time, passengers can now benefit from a dedicated security channel, for use exclusively by Virgin Atlantic customers. After passing through this unique fast-track, they will emerge in the heart of the terminal building and only a short walk from the Virgin Atlantic Clubhouse. Upper Class passengers and Flying Club Gold members making their own way to the airport can check-in at the Upper Class Check-In, in Zone A of the main terminal, before taking a priority lift straight to the dedicated security channel.
- Drive-Thru Check In is available at London Gatwick and Johannesburg airport.
- Membership of Virgin FlyingClub, Virgin Atlantic's frequent flyer programme offering a wide range of awards and participating companies.

## **Premium Economy Class**

Virgin Atlantic's economy service is segmented into Premium Economy (full fare economy) and Economy (all other economy fares). Premium Economy was first introduced in 1992 as Mid Class, a service aimed at the cost conscious business traveller who for budgetary reasons travels economy but still requires extra space in which to work or relax. The product was rebranded as Premium Economy in November 1994.

### **New Premium Economy seat**

- Virgin Atlantic has recently introduced a new Premium Economy seat which features:
- Enhanced ergonomics for increased comfort
- Biggest seat in its class
- Leather seat covers
- Increased seat width of 21 inches (equivalent to other airlines' business class) – around 3 inches wider than other airlines' Premium Economy seats
- Dual position footrest
- Adjustable headrest with wings
- Lumbar air bags
- Additional 2 degrees of recline – 16 degrees
- Redesigned tray table
- Laptop power

The new Premium Economy seat is currently being rolled out across the fleet. It is now onboard all of the A340-600s, A340-300s (with the exception of one aircraft) and the Heathrow Boeing 747 fleet.

The new Premium Economy cabin and service features:

- A comfortable and spacious ergonomically designed seat with 38" seat pitch (equivalent to some airlines' business class).
- Laptop power in all seats on LHR aircraft
- Priority boarding
- Separate cabin
- Dedicated toilet on selected aircraft
- Pre-departure drink.
- State-of-the-art inflight entertainment system. A majority of aircraft have the V-port system offers 300 hours of video on demand where passengers can watch or listen to what they want and can start, pause or rewind their chosen movie, TV show or CD. Alternatively, there is a choice of between 14 - 20 video channels plus 9 - 14 audio channels and 10 - 15 games on selected aircraft.
- Priority economy meal with a choice of three entrees, including a vegetarian option.
- Priority economy duty free choice.
- The amenity kit is a smart aubergine and mink coloured wallet including every traveller's essential needs inside: toothbrush and toothpaste, eyeshades, a pen, socks and earplugs.
- Newspapers available at the gate for passengers leaving the UK
- Express Economy baggage reclaim.
- Dedicated check-in at all locations.
- Membership of Virgin flying Club, Virgin Atlantic's frequent flyer programme offering a wide variety of awards and participating companies.

## **Economy Class**

Virgin Atlantic's Economy class aims to give maximum value for money

- Contoured, space-saving seats, maximising legroom; an average seat pitch of 31"; new seats have adjustable headrests and lumbar supports.
- Pillows and blankets.
- State of the art inflight entertainment system. A majority of aircraft feature the V-port system offers 300 hours of video on demand where passengers can watch or listen to what they want and can start, pause or rewind their chosen movie, TV show or CD. Alternatively, there is a choice of between 14 - 20 video channels plus 9 - 14 audio channels and 10 - 15 games on selected aircraft.
- Choice of three entrees with main meal including a vegetarian option. Sunday roasts are available on all flights departing the UK on a Sunday.
- Free drinks.
- Membership of Virgin *flyingclub*, Virgin Atlantic's frequent flyer programme offering a wide variety of awards and participating companies.
- Special features for children (see separate section).
- For the outbound journey the amenity kit is filled with added extras including socks, eyeshades, earplugs, a Virgin Atlantic pen and a toothbrush and toothpaste - all packed into an opaque rucksack. For the inbound journey passengers receive some eye shades, ear plugs, toothpaste and a toothbrush in a wash bag.
- Leaving the UK, passengers get the choice of a complimentary newspaper.
- Passengers can check in online for all flights except from the Caribbean.

## ***Inflight entertainment***

### ***Virgin firsts in inflight entertainment***

First airline to offer business class passengers individual TVs with the introduction of Sony Video walkmans and a library of films in 1989.

First airline operating wide-bodied aircraft to offer individual TV screens and a choice of channels to passengers in all classes when in 1991 it introduced a six channel system and individual seat arm or seat back TVs.

First airline to install interactive entertainment with individual TVs in all classes with the introduction of Virgin Arcadia.

### **1 V-port**

This system is onboard some 747-400s and all A340-600s. It offers Video on Demand where passengers can watch or listen to what they want and can start, pause or rewind their chosen movie, TV show or CD.

#### **What it features:**

Over 300 hours of Video on content.

Over 110 hours of movies

Over 100 hours of tv programmes

120 cds

1 showcase audio channel featuring the top 10 cds, and a jukebox featuring 120 titles

A Quick Find facility that allows passengers to look for films starring their favorite movie star, comedy shows or language programming

A Quick Navigation facility that allows easy navigation through the main menus

A selection of audio books

19 computer games, some being multiplayer and also including suduko, who wants to be a millionaire and Battlemail Kung-Fu which has been developed exclusively for Virgin

A dedicated Kids Zone that has it's own menus and contains programming suitable for children and a parental blocking facility

Laptop power is available in Upper Class and Premium Economy cabins.

IMap is a fully interactive map application - not only can passengers track their flight, but they can also roam around the world, zoom in on different destinations and points of interest

Air to ground send and receive SMS text messaging to mobile phones and email addresses.

Seat to seat message facility

Live Text News facility providing passengers with round the clock news stories which are updated hourly!

AQA (Any Questions Answered) facility providing passengers with the facility to text their questions via the handset and receive a reply back in minutes!

27 destination guide channels

In-seat phones

2 v:web channels featuring information about Virgin Atlantic and Land Rover.

### **3 Odyssey-interactive inflight entertainment**

Some of Virgin's planes are fitted with state-of-the-art Panasonic Avionics IFE. The Odyssey system offers 20 channels of entertainment plus much more as follows:

- 12 movie channels
- 2 kids channels (featuring a combination of movies and tv programming)
- 8 TV channels featuring music, sport & news, comedy and kids programming plus the exclusive Virgin Travel guide
- 14 audio channels ranging from soul to Classical music
- A choice of 15 games, 4 of which are multi player
- Moving Skymap display which plots the aircraft's flight path
- In-seat telephones (located on the reverse of the handset)
- Air to ground send and receive SMS text messaging to mobile phones and email addresses

The Odyssey system is on a selection of 747-400 and A340-300 aircraft. Lap top power is available in Upper Class on these aircraft.

### **4 Nova**

During the summer of 2001 Virgin took delivery of five 747-400 aircraft, these were fitted with an Inflight Entertainment system new to Virgin Atlantic supplied by Thales. The system, called 'Nova', has 17 channels of seat back entertainment consisting of:

- 11 movie channels
- 4 kids channels (featuring a combination of movies and tv programming)
- 6 TV channel featuring music, sport & news, comedy and kids programming plus the exclusive Virgin Travel guide
- 14 audio channels ranging from soul music to Classical
- Moving skymap display which plots the aircraft's flight path
- Bulkhead Telephone

The Nova system is available on a selection of 747-400 aircraft, mainly operating from Gatwick. Lap top power is available in Upper Class on these aircraft.

## **Upper Class airport lounges**

### **Arrivals lounges**

Lounge facilities are available on arrival at:

London – Heathrow Revivals – arrivals lounge with facilities including showers, Cowshed spa, business centre (with PCs, fax and photocopier), lounge bar and deli serving breakfast and snacks. Daily newspapers and magazines available.

### **Departure lounges**

Virgin Atlantic offer Clubhouse facilities at the following airports and at other airports Virgin Atlantic fly to, there are agreements with other carriers or the airport itself to offer lounge facilities.

- London - Heathrow The Virgin Clubhouse
- London – Gatwick The Virgin Clubhouse Gatwick
- New York – Newark The Virgin Clubhouse Newark
- New York – JFK The Virgin Clubhouse JFK
- Boston The Virgin Clubhouse Boston
- Washington The Virgin Clubhouse Washington
- San Francisco The Virgin Clubhouse San Francisco
- Tokyo The Virgin Clubhouse Tokyo (recently refurbished)
- Hong Kong The Virgin Clubhouse Hong Kong
- Johannesburg The Virgin Clubhouse Johannesburg

Facilities available in these lounges include:

- Complimentary drinks & bar menu
- Newspaper and magazines
- Fax, photocopier, computers.

Complimentary WiFi is now available for passengers visiting the Heathrow, Gatwick, JFK, Washington and Hong Kong clubhouses. WiFi is currently being rolled out across all the clubhouses.

## **Upper Class lounges**

### **The Virgin Clubhouse at Heathrow**

The new Virgin Clubhouse at Heathrow opened in March 2006. The £11m flagship lounge, which is over 2,500 square metres in total, was created by the Virgin Atlantic design team with the help of Softroom, the London based architectural practice, with interiors designed to feel like a private members' club. The Clubhouse provides the ultimate pre-flight experience for every passenger with an array of exciting and unique features.

**The Reception** – Guests enter the clubhouse via a grand staircase and are welcomed at a concierge desk that offers travel and secretarial support. Alternatively, passengers can press a concierge button on any phone situated around the lounge for service at their seat.

**Cowshed at the Clubhouse** – A range of treatments available for both men and women. The range of treatments available are:

Shave treatment - a shoulder massage, power cleanse & invigorating scrub, wet shave and tone & condition.

Facial – shoulder massage, double cleanse & exfoliation, hot towel infusion and eyebrow tidy.

Collagen eye treatment – shoulder massage, double cleanse, pressure point massage around eyes & collagen eye mask.

Manicure – file tidy, cuticle clean up, hand & arm massage or polish

Pedicure – cleansing & exfoliating foot soak, file tidy, cuticle clean up, refreshing leg massage or polish.

There is also a range of shorter treatments including:

Shoulder & neck massage

Head massage

Leg & foot massage

Eyebrow tidy

File & paint

St Tropez spray tan

**Bumble and bumble Hair Salon** – Offering a range of stylish cuts to men and women.

**Spa** – Spa pool, sauna with six steam rooms and six showers.

**St Tropez Tanning Booth** – Fully automated tanning or spray tan by professional therapist.

**Poolside Lounge** -Upper Class passengers can relax in an oasis of tranquillity. A ceiling to floor Japanese water wall runs gently into the pool helping passengers to unwind and relax.

**The Den** - Games area featuring a pool table and retro video games consoles.

**Multiscreen** – Entertainment area featuring state-of-the-art video projection system, which can simultaneously show a multitude of channels or be reconfigured as one single cinema screen.

**Playground** – Children's activity centre featuring the latest games and toys and dedicated children's television.

**Observation Deck** – South-West facing area running along the length of the Clubhouse with large windows for great views of the runway.

**Gallery** – Viewing area behind the bar, which has a dedicated Fumoir.

**Sky Lounge** – Hideaway mezzanine at the top of a white staircase with loungers, daybeds and leather seating, a skylight and full width sloping windows.

**The Roof Garden** – Unique outside garden with great views of the runway and airport action.

**The Brasserie** – An informal area with a continental feel, where diners can choose from a menu to cater for every appetite and sit at individual tables or booths.

**The Deli** – Deli offering a light new food alternative with fresh produce and daily specials. There is a 7 metre long marble clad table for diners.

**Grab and Go** – Two stations offering healthy and indulgent snacks as well as selection of drinks and bottled water.

**Cocktail Bar** – The 14 metre long cocktail bar serving a selection of classic drinks and sophisticated cocktails.

**The Office and Library** – Private room with eight business stations, fax machines, telephones, printers, photocopiers and library with antique refectory table (which has been retained from the previous Clubhouse and originally came from Sir Richard Branson's house.)

**Internet Access** – The Clubhouse is fully wireless and there are numerous lap top points dotted around the different areas. There are also 8 Sony laptops with internet access at different points for those wishing to browse the net. The Clubhouse is also a T Mobile Hotspot.

## **The Virgin Clubhouse Gatwick**

The Gatwick Clubhouse was opened on 22 September 1998 by Roland Rivron, Jonathon Ross and Richard Branson. The Virgin Clubhouse offers a modern classic environment offering a comfortable, innovative, witty and colourful atmosphere.

The Clubhouse is located beyond passport control in the South Terminal. It is designed to offer a choice of environments where the passenger can relax, have fun and enjoy themselves whilst waiting for their Virgin Atlantic flight.

Travellers are invited to explore the Clubhouse to find the space which best captures their mood at that particular time of day. The full spectrum of choice available is best explained by a tour through the rooms:

### **The Reception**

On entering the Clubhouse, guests are greeted and welcomed at the concierge desk that offers information on Virgin Atlantic services.

### **The Bar**

Located at the far end of the Clubhouse, the bar offers a breakfast menu that includes a selection of hot and cold food, plus a drinks bar.

### **The Library**

The library offers a wide selection of books, with antique leather furniture to relax on. Newspapers and magazines are also provided.

### **The Games Room**

A spacious room with two Playstations, an Xbox and two Fingaboxes. A selection of children's toys and books are also available.

### **The Business Centre**

This room has individual work stations offering phone, fax, photocopying facilities as well as access to the Internet and international financial news services.

### **Virgin Touch**

Virgin's pre-flight grooming and relaxation salon offers a wide range of facials, massages and beauty treatments for male and female passengers, all by Virgin's fully qualified beauty therapists. Hair cutting and styling is also available.

### **Cinema**

A red floor to wall padded surround sound cinema, which offers comfy sofas and beanbags with a wide-screen cinema where terrestrial and Satellite television can be viewed.

**In addition the Clubhouse offers:**

### **Toilets and showers**

Ultra modern restrooms with showers and facilities for baby changing and for those with disabilities.

### **Telephone booths**

Local and national are free of charge. There is a charge for international calls.

### **Wardrobe area**

Offering lockable lockers and hanging facilities.

## **Recent Awards**

### **2008**

#### **Red Dot Awards**

Hall of Fame – Design Excellence

#### **Rough Guides**

Voted most child-friendly airline

#### **Business Travel World Awards**

Best Longhaul Business Airline

#### **Globe Travel Awards 2008**

Best Scheduled Airline to US/Canada  
Favourite Airline

### **2007**

#### **World Travel Awards 2007 - US**

World's Leading Airport Lounge

#### **Zagat's 2007 Global Airline Survey - US**

Best Frequent Flier Program in the World

#### **Travel & Leisure's 2007 Global Vision Awards - US**

Corporate Initiative for Environmental work

#### **Business Travel Awards 2007**

Airline of The Year

Best Airline - Economy

Best Airline - Business

Best Scheduled Airline, Long-Haul

Favourite Scheduled Airline, Long Haul

Best Customer Service for an Airline

#### **Business Traveller Awards**

Best Business Class

Best Premium Economy

#### **Travel Trade Gazette Awards**

Best Business Airline

#### **Conde Nast Reader Travel Awards**

Best Leisure Airline – long-haul

#### **Red Dot Awards**

Product Design – LHR Clubhouse

#### **D&AD Awards**

Environmental Design – LHR Clubhouse

#### **Jet Set Airline Awards - US**

**Winner of eCityofStyle 2007 Jet Set Airline Award**

#### **Lighting Design Awards 2007**

Isometrix Lighting & Design **for the** LHR Clubhouse

#### **Design Week Awards**

**Best of Show – LHR Clubhouse**

**Hospitality Environmental – LHR Clubhouse**

#### **Travel Weekly's Readers Choice Awards - US**

Best International Airline

#### **Travel Weekly Globe Awards**

Best Scheduled Airline to USA/Canada

#### **TTG Business Travel People Awards**

Best Sales Team

### **2006**

#### **Buying Business Travel Diamond Awards**

Best Business Airline

#### **Buying Business Travel Diamond Awards**

Best Transatlantic Airline

#### **FX Design Award**

Winner - Best Leisure or Entertainment Venue

#### **Campaign Poster Awards**

5 Awards – Advertising

#### **Group Leisure Magazine Awards**

Best Airline for Groups

#### **TTG Awards**

Airline of the Year - Business

#### **Business Traveller**

Best Business Class

Best Premium Economy

#### **Conde Nast Traveller Awards**

Top Business on Transatlantic routes

#### **BACA 'Excellence Awards'**

Best Passenger Airline

#### **Business Travel World Awards 2006**

Best Long-haul Business Airline

#### **Cargo Airline of the Year Awards - Air Cargo News**

Cargo Airline of the Year - Virgin Atlantic Cargo

Best Cargo Airline to North America - Virgin Atlantic

Cargo

#### **Air Carrier International - Air Cargo World**

Award for Excellence - Virgin Atlantic Cargo

### **2006 US Awards**

#### **Business Traveler's Reader's Choice Awards**

**Best Business Class in the World**

Best Premium Economy

#### **Forbes**

Best Business Class

#### **Conde Nast Traveler**

Top Business Class on Transatlantic Routes

#### **Skytrax 2006 World Airline Awards**

World's Best Business Class Lounge

**North American Travel Journalism Association**  
Best Foreign Airline

**Travel & Leisure World's Best Awards**  
**Conde Nast Reader's Choice Awards**  
Virgin Atlantic scored in the top 5 out of all airlines  
for both of these awards

## **2005**

**DBA Design Effectiveness Awards**  
Industrial Product – Upper Class Suite

**Business Traveller Awards**  
Best Premium Economy Class

**New Media Age Effectiveness Awards 2005 - Travel  
Category**  
Virgin Atlantic Web site redesign

**Lighting Design Awards**  
Transport Lighting – Upper Class Suite

**Air Transport World Awards**  
Passenger Service Award

**International Forum (IF) Design Awards**  
IF Product Design – Upper Class Suite

**Cargo Airline of the Year Awards - Air Cargo News**  
Best Cargo Airline to North America - Virgin Atlantic  
Cargo

**Air Carrier - Air Cargo World**  
Award for Excellence - Virgin Atlantic Cargo

## **2004**

**Wallpaper Design Awards**  
Most Life Enhancing Item – Upper Class Suite

**BSME Awards – Editor of the Year**  
Michael Jacovides – for Carlos

**TTG Awards**  
Best Long Haul Scheduled Airline

**Travel Bulletin Awards**  
Top Leisure Scheduled Airline

**Business Traveller Awards**  
Best Premium Economy Class

**Magazine Design Awards**  
Best Design Magazine of the Year – Carlos  
Best Use of Illustration - Carlos  
Best Designed Customer Magazine - Carlos

**IDEA Awards**  
IDEA Gold Award – Transport Design – Upper Class  
Suite

**Red Dot Awards**  
Best of the Best high Quality Design – Upper Class  
Suite Interior  
Best High Quality Design –Upper Class Suite

**ID Annual Review Awards**  
Best in Furniture – Upper Class Suite

**Group Travel Awards**  
Best Airline for Groups

**The Design and Art Direction Awards**  
Transport Product Design - The Upper Class Suite

**The Guardian Travel Awards**  
Best Business Airline

**Communicators In Business Awards**  
Internal Online Publications – Verb Online

**Design Week Awards**  
Industrial Product Design winner –Upper Class Suite  
Editorial Design winner – Carlos

**Business Travel Awards**  
Best Long Haul Business Airline

**Travel Weekly Awards**  
Best Transatlantic Airline

**Recruitment Advertising Awards**  
Graduate / trainee – Engineering Apprenticeships  
General Appointments – Hairdressers ads  
Hospitality / Travel / Leisure – IFBT ads

**Cargo Airline of the Year Awards - Air Cargo News**  
Best Cargo Airline to North America - Virgin Atlantic  
Cargo  
Best Cargo Airline to the Far East - Virgin Atlantic  
Cargo

## *Richard Branson: biography & background*

### *Founder and Chairman of the Virgin group of companies*

Richard Branson was born in 1950, and educated at Stowe School, where he established a national magazine called Student at the age of sixteen. He started a student advisory service centre aged 17 to help young people. In 1970 he founded Virgin as a mail order record company and shortly after opened a record shop in Oxford Street, London. During 1972, a recording studio was built in Oxfordshire where the first Virgin artist, Mike Oldfield, recorded "Tubular Bells" which was released in 1973.

The first album of the newly created Virgin records went on to sell over 5 million copies. Over the years many household names, including Genesis, Phil Collins, Peter Dinklage, Simple Minds, The Human League, Culture Club, Janet Jackson and The Rolling Stones helped make Virgin one of the top six record companies in the world. The equity of Virgin Music Group – record labels, music publishing and recording studios – was subsequently sold to the Thorn EMI in 1992 in a US\$ 1 billion deal.

The interests of Virgin Group had now expanded into international "Megastore" music retailing, book and software publishing film and video editing facilities, clubs, travel, hotels and cinemas through over 200 companies in 29 countries.

Virgin Atlantic Airways, formed in 1984, has become the second largest British airline and operates a fleet of Boeing 747 and Airbus A340 aircraft to a network of 30 destinations worldwide. The airline was founded on the concept of offering a competitive and high quality Upper Class and Economy service. The airline is now the holder of every major travel award.

Since 1985, Richard has also been involved in a number of world record-breaking attempts. In 1986, his boat 'Virgin Atlantic Challenger II', rekindled the spirit of the Blue Riband by crossing the Atlantic Ocean in the fastest ever recorded time. This was followed a year later by the epic hot air balloon crossing in 'Virgin Atlantic Flyer' which was not only the first to cross the Atlantic but was the largest ever flown. In January 1991, he crossed the Pacific Ocean from Japan to Arctic Canada, again breaking all existing records with speeds of up to 245 miles per hour. Between 1995 and 1998 Richard Branson and Per Lindstrand and Steve Fossett made a number of attempts to circumnavigate the globe by balloon. In late 1998 they made a record breaking flight from Morocco to Hawaii but their dream was shattered by bad weather before a Swiss team successfully circumnavigated the globe early in 1999.

In 1996 Virgin Group launched Virgin Express, a short-haul airline based in Belgium offering a low cost, no frills service and flying within Europe. Virgin Rail operates two rail franchises and is engaged in a \$3.2 billion fleet replacement programme to create one of the most modern rail networks in the world with high speed tilting trains already in operation. In 1999 Virgin entered into the telecommunications business launching Virgin Mobile and in 2000 low cost airline Virgin Blue was launched in Australia, both of these companies have subsequently floated. The Virgin Group today comprises over 200 independent companies, with combined annual sales of some \$8 billion and total employees of around 35,000.

Sir Richard Branson recently announced that the Virgin Group has entered into an agreement to licence the technology to develop the world's first privately funded spaceships dedicated to carrying commercial passengers on space flights. Virgin has formed Virgin Galactic, a new company, which will become the world's first commercial space tourism operator.

In the 1999 New Years Honours list Richard Branson received a knighthood for his 'services to entrepreneurship'.

Richard is married to Joan with two grown children, Holly and Sam.