



SHUTTERSTOCK



British Airways: LHR to SFO

Words Behiye Hassan

Director boarded a British Airways Boeing 777 en route to San Francisco

you're kind of done," she points out. "Here, you've got federal taxation, state taxation, and in San Francisco, as with New York, there's city taxation."

Meanwhile, female workers may find the environment a little too Y chromosome-dominated. "There's a massive movement to get more women into business here," says Brown. "They're under-represented in the technology and engineering workforce – we need more. The British consulate is bringing all-female trade missions over from the UK, and there's a lot going on at grass-roots level, in schools and so on."

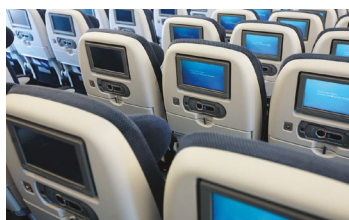
Then there are doubts about the tech boom's sustainability – any expanding bubble will always have observers rubber-necking for an imminent burst, and tongues are wagging about a sudden implosion to mirror the dotcom crash of early 2000. But for the foreseeable future, this extraordinary hotspot's clasp of the business zeitgeist is firmer than that of any financial district or seat of political power. It's hard not to compare any tech company operating outside of it – American or otherwise – to someone trying to join in the party from outside the marquee.

San Francisco's vibrant technology sector makes the city a natural draw for UK entrepreneurs, with missions such as UKTI's FinTech trade delegation – arranged to allow six UK companies to showcase the 'best of British' – becoming increasingly common. Arriving sharp and ready to wow Silicon Valley's finest after the 11-hour flight can be a challenge though, so *Director* took a trip with BA from Heathrow Terminal 5 to see if the national flag carrier could keep us bright-eyed and ready to hit the ground running...

Check-in

As we arrived for our 8.30am check-in, we found the self-service machines not working. But, despite a long queue, we reached a check-in desk within minutes – and the attendant informed us that our 11.30am flight was to be delayed by an hour. Security also had a deceptively lengthy queue, but again we cleared it within minutes and headed through to departures well before 9am.

7/10



Details

British Airways flies to San Francisco from Heathrow twice daily. Return prices start from £567 including all taxes.

britishairways.com

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Boarding

A new flight time of 12.19pm was announced and, after filling the time with help from the diverse range of shopping and restaurant offerings at Terminal 5, we made the 10-minute journey by transit to gate B40. The flight crew were impressively communicative regarding the lateness, which continued with an air-traffic delay once we had been swiftly boarded.

9/10

The seat

The flight was full so we had been allocated World Traveller aisle seat 37H at check-in. We had no trouble storing all of our belongings and found the seat in perfect order, with the usual headphones, pillow and blanket in place. Leg-room is fair for an economy flight, and overall the seat proved very comfortable.

9/10

In-flight experience

There was plenty to keep us busy during the 10-hour flight, including the entertainment system with a selection of recent movies, including *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Food options during the flight were good and we enjoyed a delicious mushroom risotto, along with plenty of snacks.

10/10

Arrival

Despite landing 15 minutes late, we disembarked quickly and sped through passport control surprisingly swiftly. After a 20-minute wait for bags at the carousel, we were out of the airport within five minutes and heading downtown.

9/10

Clockwise from top: a BA Boeing 777; Harrods at Heathrow Terminal 5; inside the plane

VERDICT Initial delays aside, communicative staff and seamless operation of the flight made this long-haul trip a relaxed one. **44/50**