

Exclusive interview: TAP plans for 2024



Sofia Lufinha Chief Customer Officer, TAP Air Portugal (left) and Aijaz Khan, Publisher, PAX International

LISBON, PORTUGAL—Headquartered at [Lisbon Airport](#), [TAP Air Portugal](#) is not only the country's flag carrier but also an ambassador of Portuguese culture. In 2023 the airline highlighted its Portuguese heritage through inflight menus, amenities and the overall product experience.

PAX International Publisher Aijaz Khan traveled to TAP's main hub recently to discuss the airline's plans for the promising year ahead.

"We are working hard to increase customer satisfaction, and we are already seeing the results," explained Sofia Lufinha Chief Customer Officer at TAP. Lufinha joined the airline in July 2022, bringing with her an extensive background in marketing and business development for various food retailers.

Lufinha tells *PAX International* that TAP's plans for 2024 include enhancing the passenger experience in the cabin and in lounges, and further infusing the product with the Portuguese identity.

"We are continuing to support Portuguese brands and bring them, the tastes and the feelings of Portugal into the passenger experience. It is something we always receive positive feedback about—once passengers get into the cabin, they feel that they are in Portugal," she said.



Sofia Lufinha Chief Customer Officer, TAP Air Portugal

Catering a sense of Portugal

Catering is arguably the most memorable aspect of the inflight experience, and TAP knows how to satisfy passengers with a curated sense of Portugal.

The airline serves only Portuguese wines. And, every two months, it introduces a new Business Class menu on long-haul flights departing from Lisbon through its Local Stars initiative.

“We believe in the quality of our wines. Our menu is a way of showing Portugal to the rest of the world. We are an ambassador of Portuguese food and wine across the globe,” Lufinha reinforced. “It is something that we are very proud of, and I think we are doing it quite well.”

The TAP Local Stars Project, available to Business Class passengers, is a partnership with The Art of Tasting Portugal. It aims to bring the best Portuguese cuisine to the world by featuring the star ingredients of each Portuguese region. TAP invited 12 renowned Portuguese chefs to prepare menus using these traditional ingredients, selecting a star product.

The Local Stars menu for January and February is created by Chef Óscar Geadas. The star ingredient in Chef Geadas’s dishes is chestnut. The main course is stewed veal, chestnut puree and mushrooms.

Passengers who do not want the Local Stars main dish can opt for the alternative pasta dish, added Lufinha.

Joel Fragata, Director of Commercial & Customer Care TAP, [Cateringpor](#), agreed that ensuring passengers are satisfied with the inflight dining experience is a major focus for the year ahead. He said TAP has plans to update its pre-ordering meal platform (available to Business Class passengers) to enhance the passenger experience and reduce waste.

“Changing meals or introducing something new is a big deal,” explained Fragata. “We consider passenger feedback and satisfaction. We test recipes, check presentation, and then we launch the product usually for one year. It stays in catering as long as passengers are still satisfied.”



TAP Air Portugal launched new Business Class amenity kits onboard featuring iconic Portuguese cosmetic brand Benamôr

Passenger satisfaction in focus

Lufinha also highlighted improving passenger feedback as another focus for TAP in the year ahead. During flights, crew report comments from travelers as part of their cabin reports. Done via mobile phones, inflight crew select the appropriate category and add the feedback in real-time. This allows the airline to adjust its product where necessary.

TAP Air Portugal introduced new Business Class amenity kits featuring the iconic Portuguese brand Benamôr in late-September 2023. Created with the help of Skysupply, the pouches have received good feedback from passengers thus far, Lufinha said.

The pouches are available in four assorted colors, each representing iconic symbols of the country and Benamôr. The kits are made of recycled plastic bottles and other PET (rPET). While bamboo was used for the toothbrush, the packaging of the toothpaste and the earplugs are made of paper.

“We took out everything that pollutes the environment, and we are working on is removing plastic,” Lufinha said. The airline is also re-evaluating its provided headphones.

IFE report: Most watched content

With a proud laugh, the TAP team reported during the interview that one of the most popular inflight entertainment contents was Portuguese language lessons.

“We just decided recently to do a bigger investment on this aspect of entertainment, as well as in new

release blockbuster movies and series,” Lufinha said. “This year, we had good content about Portuguese regions, wines and language, but blockbusters and new releases were not in line with the other airlines. So, we will invest in that next year.”

On connectivity, the airline launched free messaging on long-haul flights in October 2023. All passengers now have access to this feature and TAP has received excellent feedback. Previously, messaging was a paid package. Streaming remains a paid feature, but at a reduced price than before, on which passengers are also providing good feedback.



Left to right: Catarina Coelho, Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, Media Relations, TAP Air Portugal; Joel Fragata, Director of Commercial & Customer Care TAP, Cateringpor; Rita Tamagnini, Director of Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, TAP Air Portugal; Catarina Índio, Head of Inflight and Ground Product, TAP Air Portugal; Sofia Lufinha, Chief Customer Officer, TAP Air Portugal; and, Aijaz Khan, Publisher, *PAX International*

2024 and beyond

Looking ahead is sometimes accompanied with a quick look at the past. “The world changes a lot in two years,” said Lufinha.

She said she believes more passengers will take advantage of the Lisbon and Porto stopover opportunities as people return to their regular travel routines. The stopover deal is available for Lisbon or Porto from one to 10 days.

At Lisbon Airport, TAP will kick off 2024 with a lounge opening this month. Located after passport control in the non-Schengen area of the airport, the lounge presents an additional space for Business Class travelers to relax. The current lounge at Lisbon will remain open as usual.

With some restructuring plans in place through 2025, Catarina Índio, Head of Inflight and Ground Product at TAP, said the airline has a “goal of growth in existing places.” It will focus on optimizing and fine-tuning its routes, introducing more flights to the United States and Brazil.

“We’re always analyzing for the years ahead. It’s an amazing process,” agreed Lufinha.