

Nowhere to go but up for LATAM

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María Estela Espinoza, Senior Manager of Inflight and Lounges Customer Experience at LATAM Airlines Group

María Estela Espinoza, Senior Manager of Inflight and Lounges Customer Experience at LATAM Airlines Group, admits that though the last two years have been challenging, the future is bright for LATAM. An airline industry veteran with 17 years in the biz, Espinoza is fueled by cautious optimism for not only LATAM but the entire industry, and she and her team know that they are on the right track.

“We firmly believe that we are a company that delivers a recognizable differential to its stakeholders,” she explains, noting three pillars that are at the heart of LATAM’s competitive – and attractive – position in the industry: that it serves more than 100 destinations; that it has a standard of punctuality that has been recognized time and time again on an international level; and that it strives to be attentive while delivering a differential service that satisfies the needs and expectations of its customers.

But that, she stresses, is just the beginning of the carrier’s defining characteristics.

The LATAM passenger journey is anchored by its catering, which has been curated to reflect the Latin American cultures and flavors that have long inspired the carrier’s style of service.

“We work with different caterers around the world, which are responsible for executing our services according to the duration and type of flight,” says Espinoza. “The renewal of our menu is crucial to

improving our customers' travel experience, so we are constantly redesigning them.”

To wit, the airline recently launched a new service concept on its regional and long-haul international routes that features wine pairings from the only master sommelier in Latin America, Héctor Vergara. From Economy to Premium Economy to Business, each cabin ushers guests to their destinations through regionally inspired cuisine and meal delivery that puts sustainability at the forefront of the experience.

Espinoza and her team also recognize the importance of a well-designed and functional amenity kit. Incorporating sustainable elements and relying on the talents of local designers, the carrier’s latest release, a partnership between LATAM and amenities expert WESSCO International, supplies Premium Business cabin passengers with a series of cosmetic and comfort products that keep the Latin American spirit in mind. (For full details, see *Wowing with Wellness* on page 18.)

As Espinoza explains, “The design of the bags is the work of South American artists chosen for their emerging trajectory and/or for being transformers of their communities. The first two artists to join this initiative are Tomás Olivos of Chile and Hamilton Aguiar, who hails from Brazil.”

Regarding its fleet, the airline is undergoing, as Espinoza puts it, one of the “most significant fleet renewal processes” ever undertaken in the company’s history for its narrow-body and wide-body Airbus fleet. Looking to its newly committed aircraft, LATAM has begun to receive the first of its 87 Airbus 320neos. Having arrived last June, it will soon be incorporated into the airline’s subsidiary Brazilian fleet.



The offerings in each of LATAM’s cabins usher guests to their destinations through regionally inspired cuisine and meal delivery with a focus on sustainability

Onboard, passengers can view the latest media with the airline's proprietary entertainment platform, LATAM Play, where more than 150 movies, 400 episodes and countless music options - more than 700 hours of content in total - are available for consumption through their mobile devices. The program also allows travelers to purchase Wi-Fi and to send and receive text messages through WhatsApp, Facebook messenger and iMessage for free while in the air.

In addition, Warner Media has recently partnered with LATAM to bring HBO Max content to LATAM Play, a move that is a first for the region. Shortly before *PAX International* spoke with Espinoza, the partnership helped bring another first to the skies.

"As part of this alliance, the first episode of the series *House of the Dragon*, a prequel to *Game of Thrones*, was broadcast to passengers flying on three of the group's routes to Madrid, from Santiago, São Paulo and Lima," she says. In keeping with the theme, passengers were welcomed by hosts with gifts, and even treated to a greeting from the captain in Valyrian, the language of one of the show's most popular empires.



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All in all, it's the distinctive onboard experience offered by LATAM that makes it heads and tails above the rest, she says. "This is where we have the opportunity to interact with our customers for the longest time."

The coming years will have LATAM continuing to make both subtle and large-scale changes in its never-ending goal of providing the highest level of service to its passengers, without losing sight of sustainability. Small changes, after all, can have the biggest impact - and the industry should take note of where they are going.

What is needed are “simple, intuitive products, according to the needs of each customer, where empathy, problem-solving and friendliness will continue to be fundamental to achieving an excellent customer experience,” Espinoza notes. “A more connected world is also a kinder and more empathetic world, and that is part of our service challenge.”

And connecting people, places and ideas is what LATAM does best.

LATAM clears most plastic from Economy cabin



Single-use plastics on LATAM will be a thing of a past by 2023

LATAM recently announced changes to its Economy cabin service that has allowed it to eliminate more than 1,200 tons of single-use plastics. The airline reported in September that 75 percent of plastic is gone from Economy Class

The airline says the changes are the equivalent of eliminating 36,000 plastic bottles that hold 500 milliliters. The new service seeks to implement a more sustainable cabin and considers important changes in the materiality of all items on board (cups, cutlery, trays), replacing them with more sustainable materials such as bamboo cutlery, reusable trays, kraft paper packaging for cutlery, and certified sustainable paper cups.

These changes have been implemented on all of LATAM group's regional and long-haul routes, and are part of the group's sustainability strategy, which aims to eliminate 100 percent of single-use plastics used in its operations by 2023.

“Caring for the planet is a challenge for everyone, and a necessary destination for LATAM, which is why we reviewed our services and identified nearly 1,800 tons of single-use plastic on board our international flights. Our teams got involved to redefine all details of our service, making a positive

change for our customers, and also for our planet," said Paulo Miranda, LATAM Airlines Group Vice President of Customers.

This new proposal is in addition to the changes made in the Premium Business cabin, which include the incorporation of reusable bags to cover rest items and eco travel kits for passengers, which include a bamboo toothbrush with a sugar cane lid, earplugs with packaging made of kraft paper and socks and eye covers made from recycled plastic.

The group has also implemented recycling and reuse measures. On domestic flights in Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador, LATAM has a program called Recycle Your Trip, through which cabin crew members separate plastic and cans on board (in Colombia, this separation takes place on the ground). In addition, together with women entrepreneurs and partner organizations, the group continues with its uniform reuse program in Peru, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil, giving a second life to the uniforms of employees.

These initiatives are part of LATAM's sustainability strategy, which includes goals such as zero waste to landfill by 2027, reducing and offsetting 50 percent of domestic emissions by 2030, and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.