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VIP super jumbo 'a flying yacht'

*A*rabian Knight readers of long-standing may recall an article published in the magazine's Summer 2002 issue about a design for a VIP version of the new Airbus A380. That particular project never came to fruition, but now the designer – Edése Doret Industrial Design of New York – is well advanced on a new A380 project for an undisclosed Middle Eastern client.

In the years since the American design firm worked on its first A380 project, the super jumbo has become a reality, logging many hours of test flights during the course of this year, following its maiden flight in April. The practice of using larger corporate aircraft such as the BBJ and ACJ has also become more entrenched, allowing aircraft interior designers to become ever more ambitious in terms of their vision and imagination.

For the designers of executive jet interiors, a key skill has always been the ability to make the most of limited space. Traditionally, corporate aircraft have been relatively small and designers have striven to pack in as many comforts and facilities as possible while still maintaining some sense of spaciousness. With the A380 space is a reality, so there is no question of creating

an illusion of roominess, but rather of taking advantage of the available space and light.

This new design by Edése Doret is certainly very striking, and is characterised by contemporary modern shapes and colours and by areas of open space which take full advantage of the space offered by this huge aircraft.

If there's anything which underlines just how enormous the A380 is its the image of two staircases in close proximity – one leading up from the main deck to the upper deck and a second descending to the cargo deck where there are various crew facilities. The A380 is generally described as a double-decker aircraft, but the truth is that the aircraft actually has three decks, and even that smaller "lower lobe" offers more space than all but the largest of conventional business jets.

If the new breed of very light jets can be described as flying limousines – an airborne Mercedes or Lexus – the A380 is more of a flying yacht, or even an airborne home, with space for working, entertaining and relaxing. Highlights of the accommodation include a principal stateroom with its own dressing room and an en-suite bathroom which may well include a Jacuzzi for the ultimate in in-flight relaxation.

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This would not be the first such installation, admits Edése Doret. A Boeing 747 design by the Dee Howard of the US for a Saudi client some years ago included a Jacuzzi, although advances in technology since then mean that the new design does have one feature not found in that earlier jet: a 42-inch TV in the bathroom.

Watching one's favourite movie on a large screen while lounging in a Jacuzzi at 43,000 ft is surely about as far as the normal international air travel experience as it's possible to imagine. (This aircraft is a TV salesman's dream, with 42-inch LCDs and the occasional 50-inch model, scattered throughout both upper and main decks.)

In fact, the principal stateroom and its adjoining facilities occupy an area equivalent to more than half of the space available in a BBJ or ACJ. What's more, this suite is not the only sleeping accommodation on the upper deck; a guest cabin further aft also has the benefit of an en-suite private bathroom – albeit without a Jacuzzi.

Between the stateroom and guest cabin – which doubles up as a lounge when not required for sleeping accommodation – the upper deck also has a principal's office and a lounge.

Aft of the guest cabin is the dedicated upper deck galley and then a private dining area with a table to seat eight. After eating here the host and his guests may choose to retire to the Khaima or Oasis lounge which can best be described as a tented majlis area. This is located at the very rear of the aircraft and a balustrade and staircase at the back of the lounge looks out onto a mosaic trompe l'oeil effect on the



domed pressure bulkhead which marks the limit of the cabin areas.

In various parts of the aircraft are seats which are not designed for use during take-off and landing – evidence of just how much space is available in this huge aircraft. In small business jets by contrast, even the lavatories occasionally double up as seats certified for use by cabin crew in take-off and landing. In the Khaima lounge, the design for this Gulf client has floor cushions rather than conventional seating, in a total departure from normal airliner practice.

The main dining room (top) accommodates 14 people, while the Khaima lounge has the unusual element of floor cushions rather than seats.

Televisions are scattered throughout the upper and main decks.



Descending to the main deck from the Khaima lounge the first area encountered is the support staff lounge – a small area to the aft of the main staff seating cabin where these passengers can congregate for a change of scenery or for small meetings. That staff cabin has conventional airline style seating for 28, with comfortable seats with the TVs and other facilities expected in modern aircraft.

Forward of the staff cabin are the aircraft's two main galleys. These are capable of serving the needs of the staff and also of producing elaborate meals for the aircraft's main dining room where the owner can host formal meals, whether in the air or on the ground in some foreign city. The dining table is designed to seat 14 and will be manufactured in resin (for weight and safety considerations) to simulate a glass top.

Forward of the dining room is the A380's main lounge where guests would congregate before being summoned to the dining room. A wet bar or mini-galley here stores drinks and snacks.

A smaller lounge forward of the main lounge serves as a reception area at the aircraft's main (Number 1 door) entrance and this open plan area – combined with stairs to upper and lower decks – creates an immediate sense of space and light as passengers or visitors board the jet. The intention here, says Edése Doret, is to impress visitors, taking full advantage of the space to ensure that all who board this aircraft are in no doubt as to its extraordinary scale and capability.

In addition to the stairs to upper and lower decks, this reception or lobby area also has a short flight of stairs leading forward up to the flight deck.

Accommodation in the “lower lobe” comprises a crew rest area with beds for eight, a “club-style” four-seat lounge, crew galley, crew wardrobe and storage space and the aircraft's Communications Room.

Edése Doret Industrial Design is a corporation of young designers with a head office in New York City and representation in Kuwait, in addition to several European countries. Each associate brings to the company decades of experience in aircraft interior design as well as product, graphic design and architecture.

Although the firm does get involved in the design, development and completion of consumer products, graphics, yachts and architecture, its core business is in the aviation industry. It designs custom aircraft interiors for heads of state, corporations, private individuals and some of the world's leading airlines.

Edése Doret came to this A380 project with an already impressive list of completed projects. Nothing compares to an A380 for sheer size, but the company's aviation interior design portfolio also includes an Airbus A319CJ, two A320CJs, an Airbus A340-600, a BBJ and several other Boeing 737s, a McDonnell Douglas MD-11ER, a Falcon 900B, an Embraer 135 and an Embraer 120 Brasilia.

The company was also able to “hit the ground running” on this project by virtue of all the work that had gone into its earlier A380 project. Even though stylistically that project was very different, the work that went into it ensured that Edése Doret and his team were very familiar to the structure and systems of the A380 airframe. ■