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Short cuts: Air France's new first class cabin, India's Rajmahal Palace reopens

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An Air France 'La Première' seat

France Air France has unveiled a new first class cabin, to be installed on 19 planes in a move chief executive Frédéric Gagey said would help the airline “regain our place in the market and ... bolster our reputation as a global player”. The “La Première” cabin will be installed on Boeing 777-300 aircraft from September and will feature just four seats (or “suites” as the airline calls them). Each offers 3 sq metres of space and can be closed off by curtains; the seat converts into a 2m long, 77cm wide bed and there’s a second, smaller seat to allow passengers to dine face to face with a companion. The airline launched the cabin in Shanghai – an indication of the strong Chinese demand for first class, which is prompting several other carriers to upgrade their luxury offerings. Earlier this month Etihad revealed plans for a three-room suite called “the Residence” to be installed on its A380 planes. Meanwhile Finnair has an alternative way to appeal to premium passengers: from July 1 its lounge at Helsinki will offer the chance to take a preflight sauna. airfrance.com



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India An 18th-century palace owned by the royal family of Jaipur will reopen in November as a lavish hotel set in sprawling gardens. Built in 1729 by the Maharaja of Jaipur, the Rajmahal Palace has hosted visiting dignitaries including Queen Elizabeth and Jackie Kennedy. It was converted into a hotel in 1979 but closed in April 2013 to be completely redesigned and renovated. It will have 20 rooms and will be managed by Suján, which runs luxury safari camps in India and Kenya. sujanluxury.com