“An 18th-century palace owned by the royal family of Jaipur will reopen in November as a lavish hotel set in sprawling gardens.”

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

By Tom Robbins

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.

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