Drafted 1993
Revised 2009

Amtrak's long-distance trains offer several levels of accommodation: basic Coach (a comfortable reclining seat, water, rest rooms) and several levels of Sleeper service. There is a big price gap between Coach and the most economical Sleeper. I'd like to propose an in-between fare level I'd like to call "Coach Plus".

"Coach Plus" would differ from Superliner Coach in these respects:

1) Seats would drop completely flat, not just to a low recline;
2) A curtain could be drawn around each seat;
3) Breakfast would be included as part of the deal
4) Complimentary coffee / tea / juice available all day.

To this sciatica and crushed-disc sufferer, a completely horizontal sleeping surface makes all the difference in the world. The curtain feature would afford some snugness and privacy. Breakfast and drinks are not only desireable and fortifying, but also relatively cheap and easy to prepare and furnish.

I think every major long-distance consist should include at least one Coach Plus car.

Using a Bombardier Superliner Coach car as an example, I estimate a per-car seat reduction from 74 to about 60, a figure I admit is mostly guesswork. Enough between-seat space would have to be provided that a passenger could exit the foot of the seat-bed to go to the bathroom or for other errands—-and for the convenience of the Attendant. I also imagine that the adjacent seats might need to be slightly separated, and possibly a trifle thinner, for the curtains.

Figuring in that factor, plus breakfast and drinks (and another bathroom!), I'd project a fare of approximately Coach + 50%.

I think “Coach Plus” would open up Amtrak travel to a whole new market. I’ve heard from a lot of people about the huge overall price gap between Coach and the cheapest Accommodation. I believe there are many who might not be able to afford any level of Sleeper fare, but who could spring for the extra comfort of a flat bed and one hot meal per day.

JW

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