



# British Airways case study

Home screen redesign

## Introduction.

The process that I followed for the BA app redesign is not necessarily the process that I would follow now. I prefer to work in a rapid prototyping environment, testing, learning and iterating. Given my time again I would have focused on more rounds of studio testing as well as remote testing to get some more volume and feedback before go live. Nevertheless below is the process that I followed.

The redesign of the British Airways app took just under one year to implement, from when I started in July 2013 to May 2014. For the purposes of this case study I will focus on the redesign of the home screen in order to keep it concise.

I started by evaluating the current architecture of the app and examining the experience that it offered our users. I then produced a journey map in conjunction with other members of the team, from developers, to product owners to senior stakeholders. The aim of the redesign was to better surface actions to the user where appropriate, so mapping the user journey was essential.

## My role.

I was the lead designer of native apps at British Airways between 2013 and 2016. Initially working as the sole designer on native apps, as the app team naturally expanded so did the design team and I eventually ended up leading a team that consisted of myself and two other designers.

I joined during Sprint 0 of the app redesign process in July 2013 and the redesign was eventually delivered to customers in May 2014. During this time I led all aspects of the design from the client side and during the opening sprint phases of the app I worked in conjunction with a design agency called Imano.

Throughout the design process I would collaborate with other designers across the team to ensure a degree of consistency with the BA desktop and mobile sites. In particular I worked closely with the lead designer for mobile [BA.com](http://BA.com), as a lot of the journeys in the app would hand off to mobile web for things like flight booking and online check-in.

# Journey Mapping.



Persona	Goals and Expectations
<p><b>Name:</b> Jack Gold  <b>Age:</b> 55  <b>Occupation:</b> Business owner  <b>Salary:</b> £80,000  <b>Travel:</b> Business and pleasure</p>	<p>Book a flight to a destination of his choice            View and manage his flight details            Check-in for flight            Use boarding pass</p>

No flight booking	Day of check-in	Day of flight	Post flight
<p><b>Primary need:</b> Book a flight</p> <p><b>Other needs:</b> Browse destinations View recent searches Add a booking View a flight's status</p> <p><b>Emotions:</b> Excited Overwhelmed Intrigued Happy Focused Inspired</p> <p>"I want to go somewhere hot"</p>	<p><b>Primary need:</b> Check-in for flight</p> <p><b>Other needs:</b> Seat number Weather at destination Packing check-list</p> <p><b>Emotions:</b> Anxious Stressed Apprehensive Focused</p> <p>"I hope I get the seat that I want!"</p>	<p><b>Primary need:</b> Retrieve boarding pass</p> <p><b>Other needs:</b> Terminal Flight status Flight number Gate Seat number</p> <p><b>Emotions:</b> Stressed Excited Frantic</p> <p>"Did I pack everything? I hope I make this flight"</p>	<p><b>Primary need:</b> Get to location</p> <p><b>Other needs:</b> Collect luggage Planned itinerary Standard phrases (if different language) Hotel check-in Map</p> <p><b>Emotions:</b> Exhausted Relieved</p> <p>"That was a long flight, can't wait to get to the hotel"</p>

After creating a series of journey maps it was clear that the users primary goal would be relatively predictable at certain key points of the journey. If the user didn't have a flight then the chances are they came to the app to either book or browse. After purchasing a flight everything would lead up to check-in, with the next milestone being the day of the flight, when they would want to retrieve their boarding pass.

# Inspiration and competitor research.

When designing interfaces I like to look at not just what competitors are doing but to also take inspiration from elsewhere. When designing the homepage of the BA app for example, I took a lot of inspiration from weather apps, particularly Yahoo's, which at the time used a full bleed background image of the location that you were viewing. I felt that having a background image of the destination would be effective as it would allow the user to easily identify the flight that they were looking at as well as getting them excited for their upcoming trip.

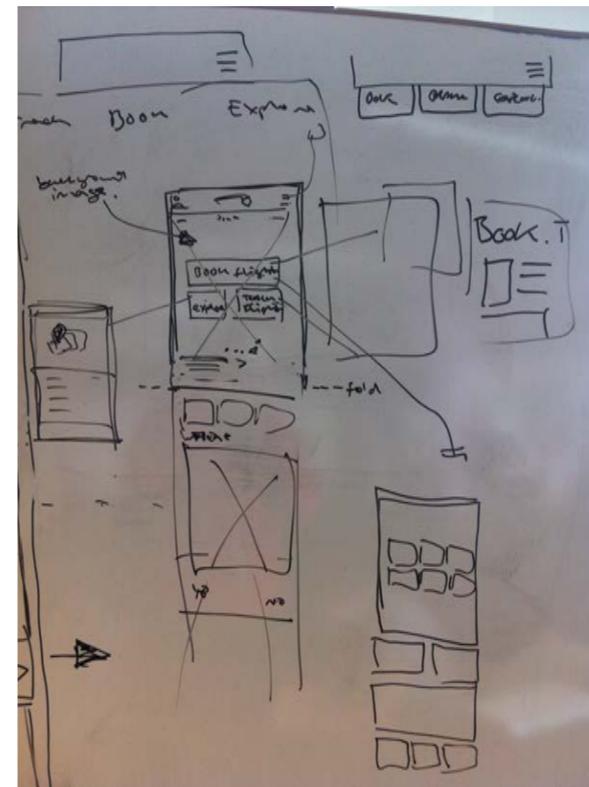
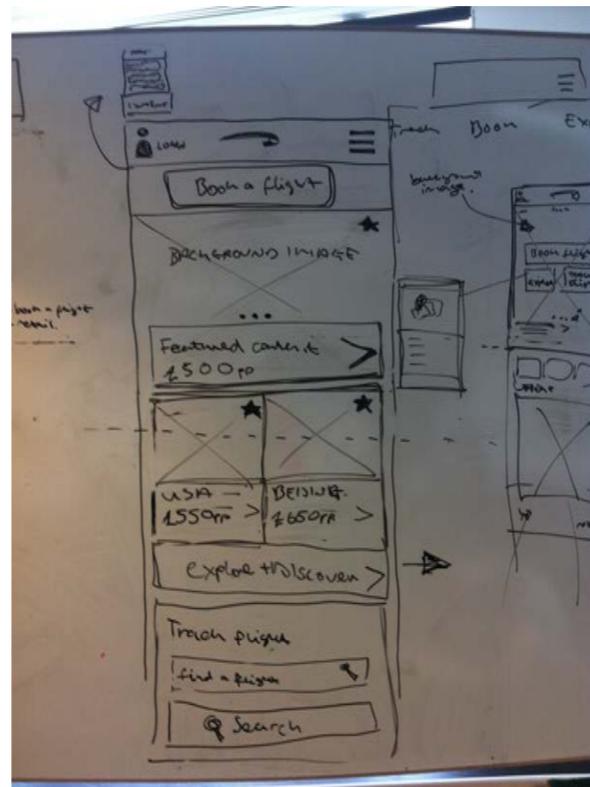
I printed out screens from different apps and websites that I found interesting and then ran a session with the rest of the team to discuss some of the ideas. I bought some star stickers and handed them out to the team and throughout the week they would go and place stars on the features that they liked and place a post-it note next to the feature/idea explaining why they liked it.

This process enabled me to get great feedback from the team as well as making them feel more involved and invested in the design process.

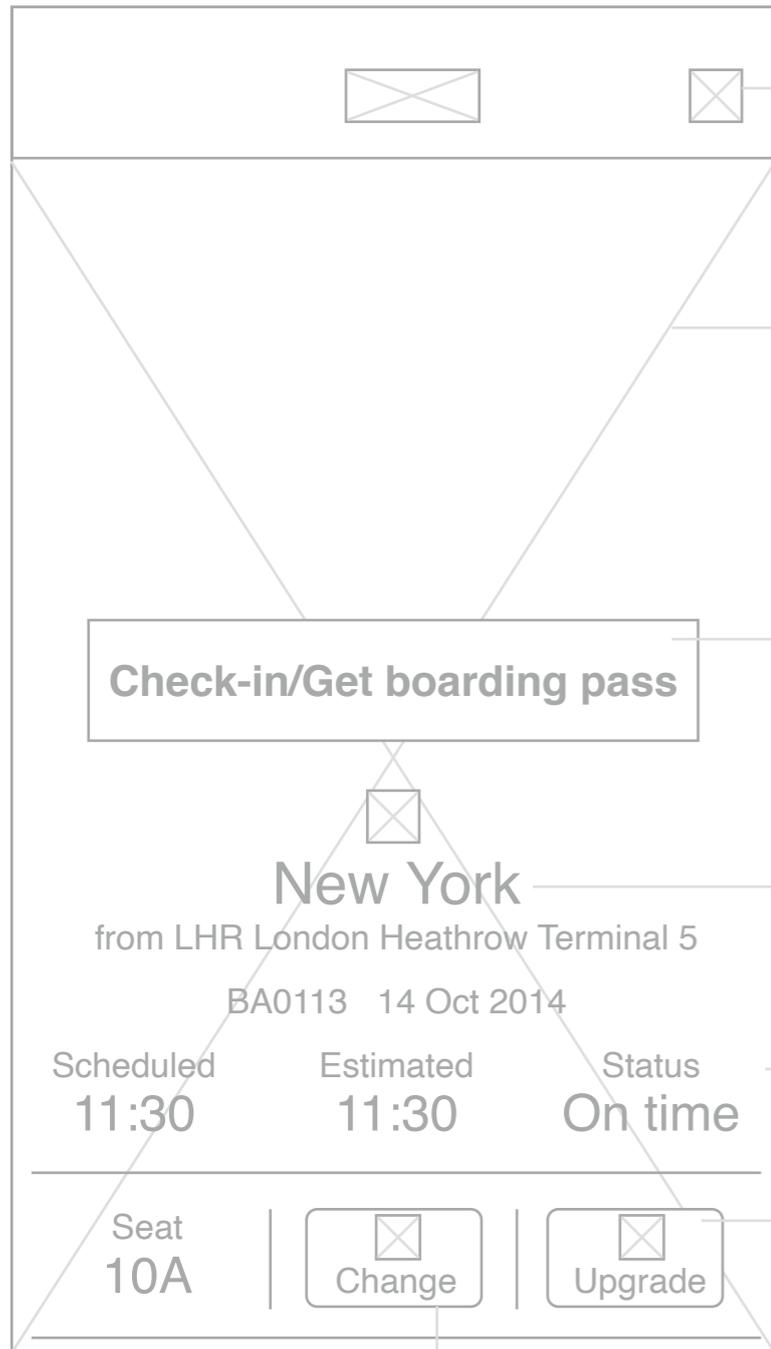


# Sketching.

After mapping out the customer journey, I ran a workshop with a team of designers from Imano where we sketched out variations of the home screen. I focused on ensuring that the key information the customer would need at each different stage of the journey would remain at the forefront of the interface. After refining the sketches I moved onto wireframing.



# Wireframing.



Side menu navigation in the top right corner, so that the user has access to the menu even when they go deeper into the app and the back button appears.

Background image of the user's destination. This helps get the user excited about their trip, as well as allowing them to instantly recognise which flight they're looking at.

Prominent call to action, allowing the user to easily check-in or get their boarding pass.

Name of destination in large font so that the user can tie the background image, flight and destination together.

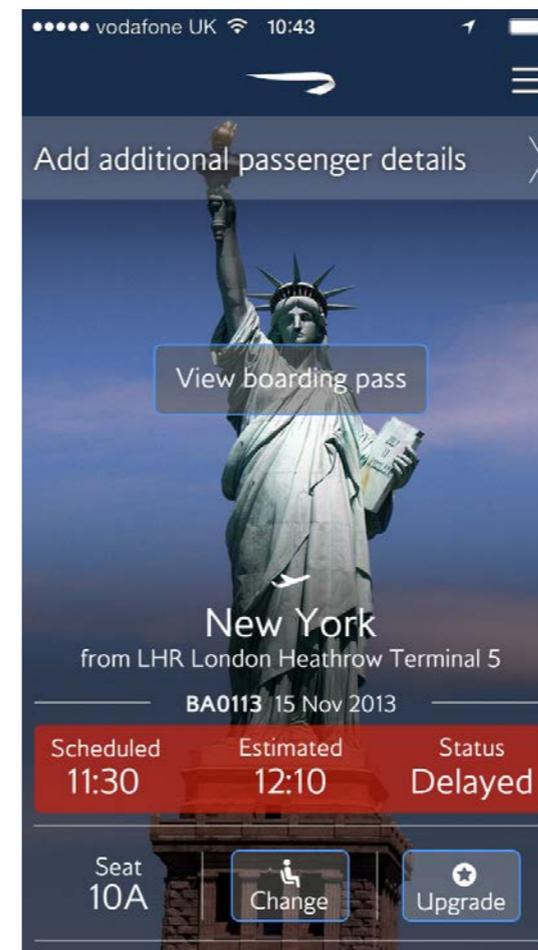
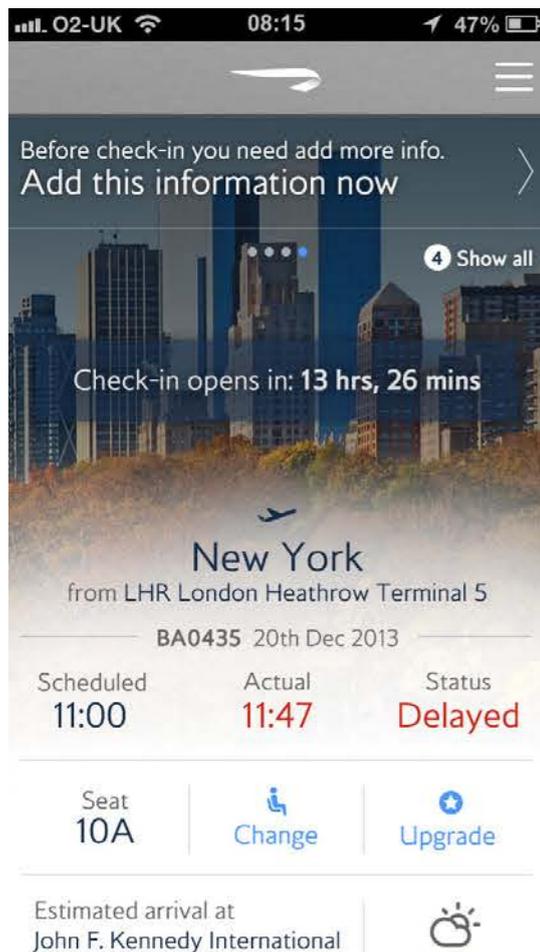
Flight status clearly visible so that users are made aware when flights are delayed or cancelled.

Prompt to upgrade, could potentially show an upgrade price.

User can change seat if they haven't yet retrieved a boarding pass. Once the boarding pass is retrieved, this option will be hidden and only the seat number and upgrade buttons are shown.

# UI design exploration.

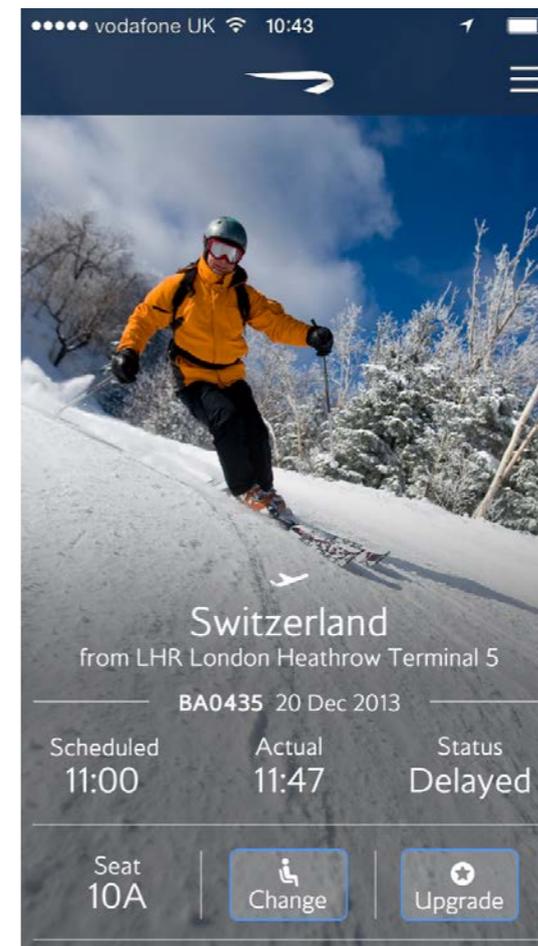
After sketching and wire framing I became happy with the placement of the core information. It was essential that this information where possible would remain above the fold. I started with the information on a white background as this was most legible, but I felt that the user interface lost some appeal as the image was pushed too much into the background and the white fade made everything look foggy and didn't work well with beaches in particular. I decided to investigate a full-bleed background, but as you can see below the legibility of red text suffers. I decided against the design shown in the second screenshot pretty quickly. Although it indicated clearly to the user that they should swipe up for more info, I felt the gesture could cause issues with the control panel, which at the time was activated by swiping up from the bottom. I moved onto option 3, but found that the key call to action of 'view boarding pass' got lost and that the large red banner for a delayed flight really interfered with the image.



# UI design exploration.

As I had now completely settled on a full bleed background image I had to ensure that the information was clearly legible on all types of images. I tested with beaches, snowy destinations and cities. It took a long time to ensure that the copy worked with all sorts of different images, as we didn't have the time or resource as a team to have to be highly selective about the images we could use.

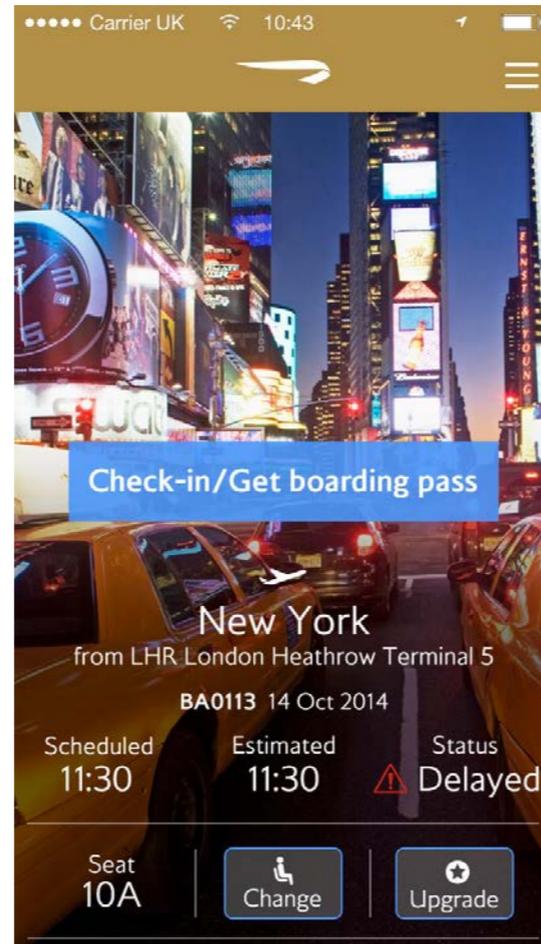
The use of the secondary CTA style for the core action did not work here as illustrated by the first screenshot. I investigated this option as I liked the idea of a transparent button as it would not interfere with the background image as much as a button with a solid colour. However its importance became too diluted. It was now that I decided to drop all use of colour for text, it had to be legible and therefore it had to be white.



# UI design exploration.

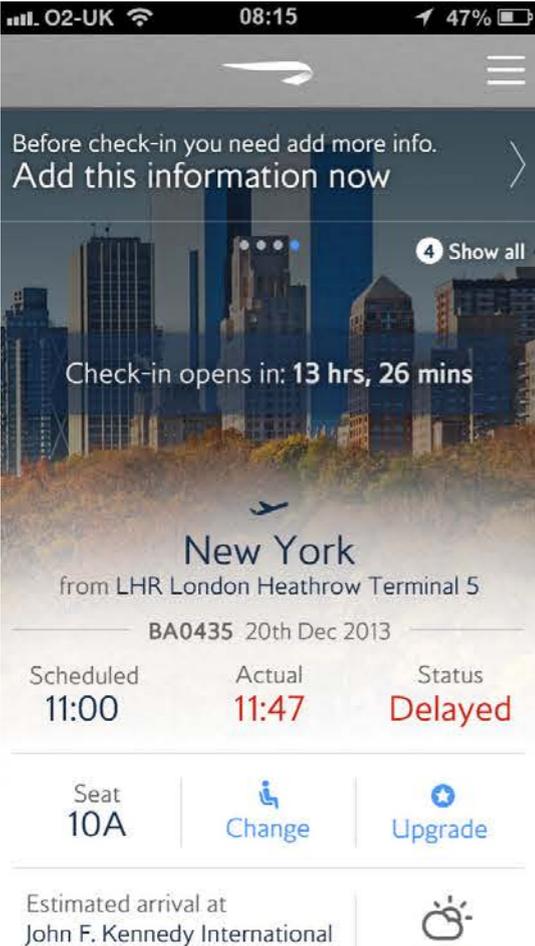
Although I'd decided I could not use coloured text to highlight a delayed flight, I still wanted to explore options to draw the users attention to the delay, as this was very important information for our users. I tried putting the text on a red background, but then it looked too much like a button and often times we had no further information for the customer. I tried using a hazard icon as shown in the second screenshot, but this felt like it upset the balance as all of the copy had been centre aligned; it also became lost on certain images, such as this one. In the end I decided to drop any way of drawing attention to this information and just test with customers to see if they could quote their flight status.

I ended up choosing light blue for the primary call to action. It felt more inviting than red, which was the only other colour in the palette that I could have used. I added a very slight transparency to the button in order to let the image bleed through a little.

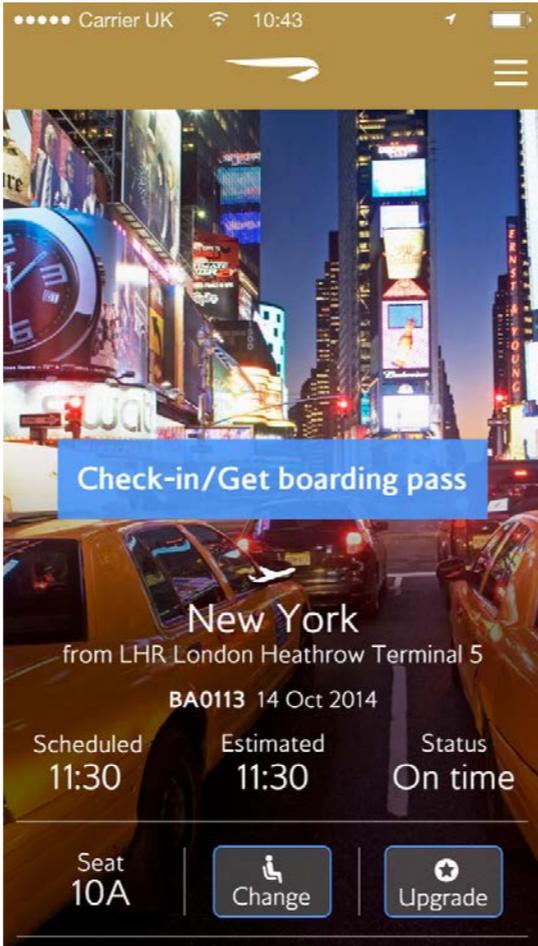


# Deciding what to test.

After going through the UI exploration phase I personally had my heart set on the full bleed image, but had concerns with the legibility. I felt confident with the layout of the content after doing some gorilla testing of my own with people in the office, friends, family and even people in Terminal 5 and coffee shops. I didn't want to add too many variables, so the majority of the testing on the home screen would focus around legibility, usability and how the two interfaces would make the customer feel.



VS



# Testing.

After putting together a full scale HTML prototype, I testing with 10 participants in a studio over a 2 day period in which I facilitated the observation room. Alongside the studio testing I also carried out some ethnographic research at T5 with customers catching a flight that day.

The key findings from the report were:

Customers were able to find details of their flight effectively and easily.

Customers loved the full-bleed imagery, despite saying that the text was easier to read on the prototype with the white background.

Customers showed no sign of confusion when the home screen would show them different actions in accordance with their journey.

Customers wanted more attention to be drawn to the flight status if they were delayed or cancelled. Even though they were able to find the flight status easily and quote it back accurately.



Wyoming Studios

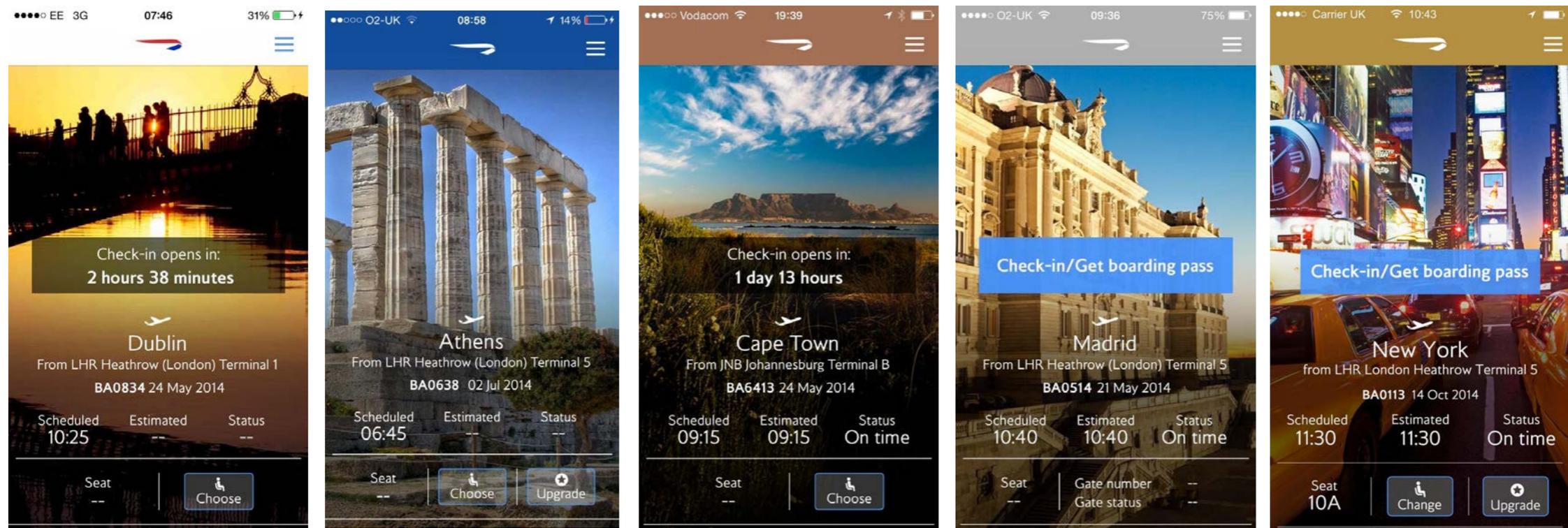


Terminal 5, Heathrow

# The final screens.

Below are some examples of the screens that made it to live, showcasing some of the different locations and scenarios that users can be in. British Airways has a tier system of white, blue, bronze, silver and gold. In order to make the app feel more personal, the header colour changes to reflect the users tier. The home screen is centred around the users next flight, with a destination image used for the background to help build excitement and identify to the user at a glance, the flight they're looking at.

The call to action is prominently displayed and changes depending on how far away the flight is from check-in. Users can scroll down to see a few more personalised features, such as tracked flights and recent searches.



## Results and reviews.

Shortly after the release of the redesigned iOS and Android apps back in May 2014, revenue on mobile doubled and continued to rise. Both apps received positive reviews in the app stores and were well received on social media sites Facebook and Twitter.

Customers have commented that they find the app extremely easy to use and that the UI is clean, attractive and modern. I set out to try and make the app emotionally engaging and appear to have achieved that, with customers responding positively to the use of an image of their upcoming destination being used as the background image to their flight.

UX is not just about helping users complete their goals, but creating a compelling experience so that they come back time and time again.

# App Store reviews.

