

THE AIRBUS WIDEBODY FAMILY: EFFICIENCY, PROFITABILITY AND COMFORT

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As global air traffic continues to grow, airlines are seeking larger jetliners to accommodate the ever-increasing passenger volumes, and Airbus is well positioned to respond with a widebody family that offers efficiency and profitability for airlines, as well as high comfort levels for their passengers

Airbus' product line – composed of the twin-aisle A330ceo and A330neo (Current Engine Option and New Engine Option versions), the A350 XWB, and double-deck A380 – provides capacities from 250 to more than 540 seats, and builds on the company's heritage of technological advances, commonality among aircraft types and traveller well-being.

A cornerstone of this product line is the A330, the most popular widebody aircraft series ever, with more than 1,600 orders to date from over 100 customers. Building on this solid foundation is Airbus' all-new A350 XWB that is shaping the future of air travel by delivering unrivalled levels of efficiency, a quieter cabin than any competitor, and full operational flexibility on routes from regional to ultra-long range. Completing the family is the iconic A380: with more seats than any other aircraft, this 21st century flagship is ideal in meeting peak demand and accommodating capacity at crowded hub airports.

“Bigger machines” to meet robust traffic increases

François Caudron, Airbus Commercial Aircraft's Senior Vice President of Marketing, explained that with passenger volume expected to increase at a robust 4.4 per cent rate annually for the next 20 years (as foreseen by the company's newly-released Global Market Forecast), “the best way for airlines to fully take advantage of the business opportunity is to have bigger machines.”

Efficiency is a key enabler across the Airbus widebody family, with the combination of enhanced aerodynamics, improved systems and evolved jet engines allowing the aircraft to burn less fuel, thereby flying longer-distance routes. “This brings a new dimension in terms of range and capability,” Caudron noted.

Another important advantage is the commonality shared by the entire Airbus product line, tracing its roots to the digital fly-by-wire technology pioneered in commercial aviation by Airbus.

“Fly-by-wire is in the Airbus DNA. For pilots flying any of our aircraft – a small one, a large one, or a very large one – the feeling is the same,” he stated. “With the ability to obtain common type ratings and cross-crew qualification on Airbus jetliners, pilots can move among the various aircraft types with a minimum of training and a maximum of scheduling and operational flexibility.”

The optimum experience for passengers and crew

The Airbus widebody family also offers the highest standards of passenger comfort and an optimal experience aloft in all classes of service, benefitting from their wider seats, spacious and functional interiors, and the latest in in-flight entertainment and connectivity. This superior comfort experience now has a name: “Airspace by Airbus,” which provides consistent in-flight experience environment across the widebody family for both the airlines and the benefit of their passengers.

As passenger comfort remains a priority for the world's long-established airlines, it now is a factor for low-cost carriers entering long-haul international routes. “Airbus has always been a leader in recognising the evolution in consumer behaviour,” Caudron explained. “And we will continue addressing the full range of customer needs from the legacy operators to leisure carriers and the growing number of low-cost long-haul entrants.”

He added that comfort is not only for passengers, and Airbus acknowledges this by designing optimised and functional work areas for airline crews. As an example, the care taken by Airbus in designing the A350 XWB's rear galleys has become recognised and very much appreciated by crews.

“From the noise level point of view, the A350 XWB is up to six decibels quieter inside the cabin than a 787, and eight decibels quieter than a 777,” Caudron concluded. “This is a key factor of comfort and well-being for all the crews that work and live on the aircraft – keeping in mind that three decibels is a huge 50-per cent noise energy difference.”

The “widebody” Airbus military airlifter

A widebody aircraft of another type is present in the static display area during this week’s Paris Air Show: a French Air Force four-engine turboprop A400M airlifter, which is produced by Airbus Defence and Space. Demonstrating this heavy-lift aircraft’s load-carrying capabilities, the A400M is exhibited at Le Bourget Airport along with a Caesar 155-mm self-propelled howitzer. The 17-tonne Nexter-built howitzer is designed for rapid deployment, and was loaded/unloaded in minutes during Paris Air Show demonstrations utilising the A400M’s large rear ramp – easily accommodating the Caesar system, which is sized at a length of 10 metres, height of 3.7 metres and width of 2.55 metres.

Parked next to the A400M in the Paris Air Show’s static display area is Airbus Defence and Space’s C295 tactical transport aircraft. This is the first of two C295s for Brazil, and is outfitted with a fully-missionized search and rescue (SAR) configuration – underscoring the twin-engine aircraft’s capabilities to perform such missions over sea and land.

The Brazilian C295’s configuration includes the new third-generation version of FITS – Airbus’ proprietary Fully Integrated Tactical System – which integrates, controls and displays data from the aircraft’s mission sensors, enhancing mission awareness and facilitating decision making. The new version features touchscreen controls, larger screens and upgraded onboard computers.

After its participation in the Paris Air Show, this Brazilian Air Force C295 will perform a five-week globe-circling demonstration tour, visiting the Middle East, northeast and southeast Asia, and North America. One of the tour’s destinations is Canada, which is acquiring C295s for the nation’s FWSAR (fixed-wing search and rescue) requirements.

A “dynamic” business atmosphere at the Paris Air Show

Praising the 2017 Paris Air Show’s business environment as a “good dynamic,” Fabrice Brégier, Airbus Chief Operating Officer and President of Airbus Commercial Aircraft, met with reporters to provide a summary of company sales announced during the week. He was joined by John Leahy, Chief Operating Officer of Commercial Customers.

Based on the company’s airshow tally, Airbus Commercial Aircraft secured \$39.7 billion of new aircraft orders, composed of firm bookings for 144 aircraft valued at \$18.5 billion in catalogue prices, and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) for an additional 182 aircraft worth \$21.2 billion.

With the latest transactions, Airbus’ backlog increased to a new industry record of more than 6,800 aircraft, according to Leahy.

For its widebody product line, 12 firm orders worth \$3.6 billion were announced, along with eight MoUs worth \$2.3 billion. Underscoring the continued need for widebody jetliners, Leahy reminded reporters that commercial air traffic has been “doubling every 15 years since the dawn of the jet age. We’re not going to be able to accommodate this traffic without larger aircraft,” he added.

The single-aisle A320 Family logged 132 firm orders valued at \$14.7 billion (at catalogue prices) based on announcements during the Paris Air Show, and MoUs for 174 more worth \$19.1 billion.

Transactions detailed today at Le Bourget

Following discussions with AirAsia at the airshow, Leahy announced Airbus' latest agreement with the airline – involving an additional 14 A320ceo aircraft in order to meet near-term growth in this operator's regional network. The contract, subject to AirAsia board approval, would see the total number of A320 Family aircraft ordered by AirAsia increase to 592, reinforcing its position as the largest airline customer for the Airbus single-aisle product line.

Tehran-based Iran Airtour Airlines signed an MoU for 45 A320neo single-aisle jetliners. Brégier said Iran Airtour becomes a new Airbus customer, and he looks forward to a long-term partnership as the company's airliners are used for fleet modernisation and expansion of services to domestic and international markets.

Zagros Airlines, also of Iran, signed an MoU with Airbus for both single-aisle and widebody jetliners – involving 20 A320neo and eight A330neo aircraft. With 11 A320ceo Family jetliners already in operation, Zagros Airlines is the largest domestic operator of Airbus single-aisle aircraft in the country.

Tibet Financial Leasing – established in 2015 as the first financial leasing company in Tibet Autonomous Region – signed an MoU for 20 A321neo jetliners in response to strong market demand for more modern and fuel-efficient aircraft.

Bringing together women in aerospace

During the Paris Air Show, Airbus hosted the International Aviation Women Association (IAWA) reception where attendees from across the globe gathered at the Airbus pavilion to share their aerospace experiences. Paul Eremenko, the Airbus Chief Technical Officer, welcomed former astronaut and French Minister Claudie Haigneré; Lisa Piccione, the IAWA President, among others.

Airbus sponsors IAWA conferences as part of its efforts to promote diversity.

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