WORLD'S LONGEST-RANGE AIRCRAFT, THE AIRBUS A350-1000ULR TAKES TO THE SKIES

News / Manufacturer

The A350-1000ULR (MSN 707), the first of 12 aircraft ordered by Qantas has completed its first flight in Toulouse, France. The aircraft, fitted with special flight test instrumentation, flew for three hours 43 minutes reaching an altitude of slightly above 41,000 feet. The aircraft was flown by a dedicated Airbus Flight Test crew.A350-1000ULR is being developed for Qantas Airways to enable non-stop flights between Sydney and London for the first time ever - a distance of almost 10,000 nautical miles, with flight times of up to 22 hours. This is made possible primarily by the integration into the aircraft structure of an additional rear centre tank, enhancing further the aircraft performance and increasing the range of the aircraft by 1,000 nautical miles.

During the first flight the crew carried out general aircraft performance checks and tested the new fuel system architecture. This marks the start of a two month flight test campaign to certify the modifications. In addition, a new galley air cooling system will also be certified, which features lighter and more efficient refrigeration units for very long flights. The ventilation and temperature control of the cabin will also be thoroughly tested.

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Following the flight test campaign, MSN 707 will be retrofitted to Qantas' commercial specifications. The second A350-1000ULR to be produced for Qantas and the first scheduled to be delivered to the airline in April 2027, is now at an advanced stage of final assembly and ready to roll out of the paint shop in the coming days. This will be followed by completion of the premium four class cabin layout and engine installation.

The A350-1000ULR is the fourth passenger variant of the best-selling A350 Family, joining the A350-900, A350-900ULR and the A350-1000. Together, the aircraft have set new standards in long haul air travel, with a step-change reduction in fuel consumption and carbon emissions, and new levels of passenger comfort.

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The passenger line-up will soon be joined by the all-new A350F freighter, also currently under development at Airbus, with first flight planned later this year.

At the end of April 2026, the A350 Family had won 1,579 orders from 68 customers, with over 700 aircraft flying with 41 operators, primarily on long haul services across the globe.

Qantas has ordered 12 A350-1000ULRs under Project Sunrise, designed to overcome one of the last frontiers in non-stop travel from Australia. In addition the carrier also has 12 standard A350-1000s on order for future operation across its long haul network.

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