NORWEGIAN AIR CEO SAYS $69 FLIGHTS FROM U.S. TO EUROPE AROUND THE CORNER

News / Airlines

Norwegian Air Shuttle ASA hopes to sell one-way tickets to **Europe** for **$69** as early as 2017 by flying from **U.S.** airports that have low fees, Chief Executive Officer Bjørn Kjos said in an interview.

Europe's third-largest budget airline is considering flights to Edinburgh and Bergen, Norway from U.S. airports that have little to no international service today, such as New York's Westchester County Airport and Connecticut's Bradley International Airport, just north of Hartford, Kjos said.

Average prices on such routes are likely to be closer to $300 round trip, Kjos said, compared with many of Norwegian's fares that run more than $500 today because of higher fees levied by busier airports.

The potential plans are part of Norwegian's broader move to cut prices and take share from traditional flag carriers that dominate trans-Atlantic flying.

While airlines such as Deutsche Lufthansa AG offer travelers hundreds of destinations via connections in airport hubs, Norwegian is aiming to make nonstop service to small cities that

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straddle the Atlantic more common, which keeps costs low.

"I think you will see a lot to that effect within five years' time," Kjos said. "What will happen to (Lufthansa) when everyone starts to fly direct?"

Norwegian has 100 737 MAX jets from Boeing Co on order and expects to receive five in 2017. These planes are equipped to traverse the Atlantic but are smaller than most jets that currently do so, making them a better size for international flights to cities such as Birmingham in Britain, Kjos said.

Regulators will have to agree to set up customs stations at U.S. regional airports to handle international traffic, although Kjos said he is confident this can be arranged.

Norwegian is not the only airline to market cheap fares across the Atlantic.

Iceland's Wow Air recently offered one-way fares between Boston and Paris for $99. Lufthansa's low-cost subsidiary Eurowings is also starting cheap long-haul flights.

Kjos downplayed the competitive threat of Eurowings, saying, "I don't believe in their being able to operate low cost with a Boeing 767," in part because the widebody planes save less fuel and have smaller range than planes such as Boeing Dreamliners in Norwegian's fleet.

Norwegian separately reported Tuesday that it filled 96 percent of long-haul plane seats in September, helping the airline post better-than-expected results.

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