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The New Airbus A350 Will Make Your Noise-canceling Headphones Optional

by Marisa Garcia November 30, 2016



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The first of Airbus’ new A350-1000 enjoyed a successful first flight last week. It is a “stretch” version of the A350XWB family which uses technology to make flying more comfortable—starting with much less noise.

“The A350 cabin has set the reference for twin-aisle twin-jet long-range aircraft,” said Francois Caudron, senior vice president of marketing at Airbus. “It’s spacious and very quiet and we bring more fresh air to the cabin.”

Peace and Quiet

One of the biggest advantages of this aircraft family is that you don't have to splurge for fancy noise-canceling headphones—unless you really want to.

“An A350 XWB is nine decibels quieter than a Boeing 777-300ER, and it is six decibels quieter than the newer 787 Dreamliner,” Caudron said. “Decibels are not measured in a linear scale—it's an algorithmic scale—so three decibels is actually double the noise energy.”

Caudron says this quieter cabin can also lead to better in-flight service, because it's a better work environment for flight crew.

“[They're] in a much better mood to deliver service to the passengers,” Caudron said.

Breathe Easy

The A350XWB also supplies 20 percent more fresh air than other long-haul aircraft models, better environmental controls with eight different temperature zone settings, and an option for humidification in first class and business class similar to private jets.



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In case you're wondering why the back of the plane doesn't get an option for fancy humidifiers, it's because the greater number of passengers automatically keeps humidity at more comfortable levels. In premium class, fewer passengers results in dryer air.

A Connected Aircraft

Another perk is that Airbus has made this a “digital native” aircraft. Wi-Fi systems can be installed at the Airbus factory, with three connectivity suppliers for airlines to choose from, which makes it easier for airlines to add the service.

“Passengers expect a seamless experience, whether they are on the ground or in the air,” Caudron said. “They want to enjoy their experience but also have a smartphone and tablet with the emails and the social media and network connections in real-time.

“It's a modern aircraft, spacious aircraft, and most of all quiet,” he said. “It's even more important because it's a long-haul aircraft. When you're going to fly for 14 hours long you want to be in a wider seat and in a quiet cabin.”

More Room

Because the A350-1000 is about 23 feet longer, Caudron says airlines have room to add 40 extra seats. Airbus wants to keep those extra 40 comfortable for all with standard 18” seats in a nine-abreast seating configuration for economy class. Every passenger also gets a little extra legroom because the boxes and wires which control the in-flight entertainment are hidden, instead of taking up space under passenger seats.

Everyone seated at a window gets a window—there are no seats up against a wall. These planes also have larger panoramic windows so sky photos will look better on Instagram.

There are also larger overhead bins which can fit more carry-on luggage—enough for at least one carry-on bag per passenger.

Whatever seats an airline picks, the aesthetics of the aircraft are enhanced by the plane's architecture, which includes very high ceilings that create a sense of space onboard even when you're sitting at the back.

And the A350-1000 will also have a 40-percent larger premium area, with speculation mounting on just how airlines will turn that to passengers' advantage.

More Light

A programmable LED ambient lighting system offers airlines a range of 16.7 million colors for airlines to blend, creating settings for different phases of flight.

Finnair uses this setting on its A350 long-haul flights to put on a special Northern Lights show in the dark. Airlines have also programmed the lights to reproduce more natural sunrise and sunset lighting which helps passengers regulate their body clocks to reduce the effect of jet lag.



Qatar

In all, 11 airlines have placed 195 orders for this new A350-1000, including: Asiana Airlines, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Etihad Airways, Japan Airlines, Qatar Airways, United, and Virgin Atlantic. Eight of the A350-1000 customers have also bought the A350-900 model, which reflects airline confidence in the economies and passenger features of this plane.