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# The Key to Finnair's Continued Long Haul Success: Geography

AIRLINES & AIRPORTS | [JOSH LEW](#) | NOVEMBER 03, 2015

Compared to the likes of European heavyweights Lufthansa and Air France/KLM, Finnair is a pretty modest airline. At first glance, Finland's flag carrier only seems like a viable travel choice if you are going to be in Helsinki. For long-haul fliers, however, the cheapest, most convenient path from Europe to other parts of the globe often passes through the Finnish capital.

Finnair has always been a pioneer in the world of long-haul flying. The carrier was able to take advantage of its northerly latitude to offer quicker service to destinations on the other side of the world by flying over the North Pole and Siberia. This trend continues today. Using its fleet of long-range Airbuses, the airline whisks fliers from Helsinki to Bangkok, Tokyo and New Delhi.

## A history of long-haul success

Finnair was once the first name in long-haul flying. It was the first European airline to fly directly to Japan (in the early 1980s using the iconic DC-10). It was also the first carrier to travel between Europe and Beijing using a Siberian route, which proved much faster than traveling a more southern line.

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In recent years, the airline has been focused on regaining and retaining its profitability, not on expanding its route offerings. Now, however, it is once again ready to make its mark on Europe's long-haul marketplace. As it did when establishing records in the 1980s, the Helsinki-based carrier will take full advantage of its unique geographic location to get an edge on the competition.

### **Using geography to beat the competition**

Norwegian Air Shuttle has been making a lot of headlines lately. The upstart Scandinavian carrier has been announcing long haul routes left and right. Though Air Shuttle's distinctly painted planes do fly to places like Bangkok and Dubai, most of the airline's focus has been on expanding into the U.S. marketplace. The Norwegian carrier has ignored the areas of East Asia that Finnair is now eyeing. The reason: location.

Helsinki is just [far enough to the east](#) to allow Finnair planes to get to Chinese, Japanese or Korean cities and then to return home on the same day. This means that they can establish *daily* service to places like Guangzhou, Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong. Even if they flew from Copenhagen or Stockholm instead of Oslo, Norwegian would not be able to accomplish that kind of 24-hour turnaround.

### **Dabbling in North American expansion**

For the record, Finnair is also expanding into North America with new routes to Miami and Chicago now supplementing the carrier's longstanding service to New York.

These transcontinental services will get a little bit easier and faster when 18 Airbus A350-900s are delivered. Finnair is the first European airline to use these long-haul jets, and they are the third airline in the world to put their logo on an A350's tail. The carrier's current Airbus A340s will be phased out over the next two years.

For fliers from Europe, the road to Asia could run through Helsinki. At the very least, these travelers can check to see if Finnair's long haul services could save them time and money by providing a non-stop link to the East.

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