

## Finnair takes delivery of first A350; announces new Asia routes

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Finnair A350

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Finnair has taken delivery of its first of 19 Airbus A350 XWBs, flying the aircraft from the Toulouse factory where it was made to Helsinki and becoming the world's third and Europe's first airline to operate the new widebody.

Finnair also announced two new Asia destinations that it will introduce in 2016 –Fukuoka, Japan, and Guangzhou, China. A key network strategy of the Finnish carrier is to expand its north Asia network – aiming to double its annual 1.42 million passengers to the region by 2020 – and the A350 is

seen as a driver of that strategy.

The airline will receive its next few A350s rapidly after the first, with three more planned this year and the fifth aircraft early in 2016. This will allow Finnair to expand its A350 footprint. Commercial services begin Oct. 9 with a European tour

starting in Amsterdam and Oslo. On Nov. 21, the airline will begin its long-haul A350 services with a Helsinki-Shanghai flight. The airline wants to be regarded as a European hub for relatively short flights to and from north Asia. Combining the advantage of its northern location with the new passenger comforts of the A350. Other Asian city destinations that will adopt the A350 include Singapore, Hong Kong, Beijing and Bangkok.

Finnair went to renowned Finnish designer Vertti Kivi of dSign for its A350 cabin design, which is influenced by Nordic style and has 24 LED mood-lighting options, including a Northern Lights mode. The mood lighting is integrated with the in-seat IFE system, so lighting on individual screens matches the cabin light ambience.

Finnair's A350 has 297 seats across a three-class cabin of business, economy comfort and economy. Business-class seating is in a 1-2-1 configuration. Economy comfort has a 38-inch seat pitch while economy has a 31- 32-inch seat pitch with a 3-3-3 configuration.

The oneworld airline plans to begin a direct flight to Fukuoka in spring 2016, with three weekly frequencies, and a four-weekly frequency to Guangzhou between May 6 and Oct. 29, 2016.

As the airline phases in its A350s, it will retire its A340s so that its long-haul fleet will be based on A350 and A330 widebodies.

At delivery ceremonies in Toulouse Oct. 7, Finnair CEO Pekka Vauramo said the arrival of the A350 was an "extremely important and special day" and represented "a new chapter in the 92-year history of Finnair."

"The A350 is the future of flying and will give our passengers a totally new experience," Vauramo said. "This aircraft takes our passenger comfort experience to a whole new level. We are a service company and we have considered every single detail to provide a unique Nordic experience."

Airbus president and CEO Fabrice Bregier said it was "a momentous day." He said that Finnair had contributed to the optimization of the A350 when it was still a paper design.

See **The Making of Finnair A350 video**, complete with its first landing at Helsinki Airport, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2augTxoLLY>. Courtesy, Airbus and Finnair