

First in Europe and First to Fly to North America: Finnair Takes Delivery of its First Airbus A350

By Cody Diamond | October 7, 2015

 312  35   1

By Cody Diamond in Toulouse / Published October 7, 2015

Today, Finnair took delivery of its first Airbus A350-900 XWB, making it the first European, and the world's third operator, of the type. In a ceremony at Toulouse, the aircraft was handed over at the Airbus Delivery Center.



© AIRBUS S.A.S. 2015 - photo by master films / P. MASOLET



FIRST IN EUROPE. FIRST TO FLY TO NORTH AMERICA

The first airplane, registered OH-LWA, is the first of nineteen A350-941's that Finnair is to receive through 2019, and it is the 18th A350 built. Finnair will receive the second aircraft in November and five additional A350s in 2016, four in 2017, four in 2018, and the final four in 2019, all of them powered by Rolls-Royce Trent XWB-84 engines. OH-LWA rolled out of the Airbus assembly line in Toulouse in June of this year, with test registration F-WZFM applied. The airliner made its first flight on September 16, 2015, and has undergone flight testing and pre-delivery checks since that date.



Follow

And now ladies & gentlemen, say "Tervetuloa"/Welcome to #A350Finnair!

4:09 AM - 7 Oct 2015

124 169

The Airbus A350 fleet will replace the existing seven fuel thirsty A340-300s, which are due to be retired between 2016 and 2017. The A350s will serve alongside eight A330-300s, all delivered to Finnair in the last few years.

As the A340s retire, the A350 will be considered for the leisure market Finnair serves. Pukka Vauamo, CEO of Finnair stated that "it will be our main airplane".

“The A350 is a new and exciting chapter in Finnair’s 92 year history and will give our passengers a new and modern experience. It is truly a proud moment for all Finnair employees who have worked on this airplane. We are extremely proud to be the first European carrier to receive the Airbus A350.” Vauamo added “This aircraft takes customer service to a new level. Finnair’s A350 has already won awards for its design. We are a service company and this is what we do. The A350 will provide every passenger with a unique Nordic experience and wireless connectivity should they desire,”



Finnair relies on the A350 to expand into Asia, and intends to twofold its Asian traffic by 2020. launching service to Guangzhou and Fukuoka next year. Its European destinations are optimally timed for connections to the Far East.

The Chief Pilot of the A350 at Finnair is Captain Marko Valtonen. Captain Valtonen has flown the McDonnell Douglas DC-9, DC-10, and Airbus A320 and A330. “The airplane is a joy to hand fly, it is even more precise than the A330, which already has excellent flying characteristics,” he remarked.

The A330 and A350 share a common EASA type rating, and will be one pilot group at Finnair. Every A350 at Finnair will be delivered with 180 minute ETOPS certification, and the type itself is capable of 370 minute ETOPS.

Beginning on October 9 through October 18th, Finnair will fly the A350 to Amsterdam, Oslo, Barcelona, Malaga, Hamburg, Brussels, Berlin, Gothenburg, Dusseldorf, Vienna, Munich, London-Heathrow, and Copenhagen. Not all destinations will be served daily by the A350. Long haul flights to Shanghai will begin on November 21. The A350 will eventually be used for flights to Beijing, Bangkok, Hong Kong, and Singapore in the near future.

“We intend to be the first to fly the A350 to North America by December. JFK is a premium destination for us, and we certainly want to fly the A350 there, seasonally at first,” Juha Järvinen Finnair’s Chief Commercial Office explained. He went on to say that the future at Finnair is one with Airbus aircraft. Finnair is also the launch customer of the Airbus A321 sharklet variation.

At the Airbus Delivery Center, Airbus Chief Executive Officer Fabrice Brégier recalled that Finnair’s history with Airbus goes back to the Caravelle and the A300. “The A350 is an exchange of culture between Airbus and Finnair, and we are so grateful for Finnair’s input I’m developing the airplane for all of our customers. We are proud that Finnair is the first

European operator and the third A350 operator in the world,” he added.

Finnair is a first-time operator of this new generation of Rolls-Royce engines (the airline’s Caravelle were equipped with Avon engines). Rolls-Royce President Eric Schulz is proud that the operator has chosen the XWB and will provide a total care package to Finnair.

The first passenger flight will be to Amsterdam-Schiphol on October 9, and will be under the command of A350 Chief Pilot Captain Marko Valtonen.

MEETING FINNAIR’S AIRBUS A350



Finnair’s A350s boast a 1-2-1 business class cabin, featuring 46 Zodiac Cirrus fully lie-flat seats with touchscreen In Flight Entertainment (IFE) and power outlets. The airplane is also equipped with 43 economy comfort class seats (35 inch pitch), and 208 economy class seats (31 inch pitch), for a total of 297 passengers, making it the highest capacity airplane in Finnair’s fleet.

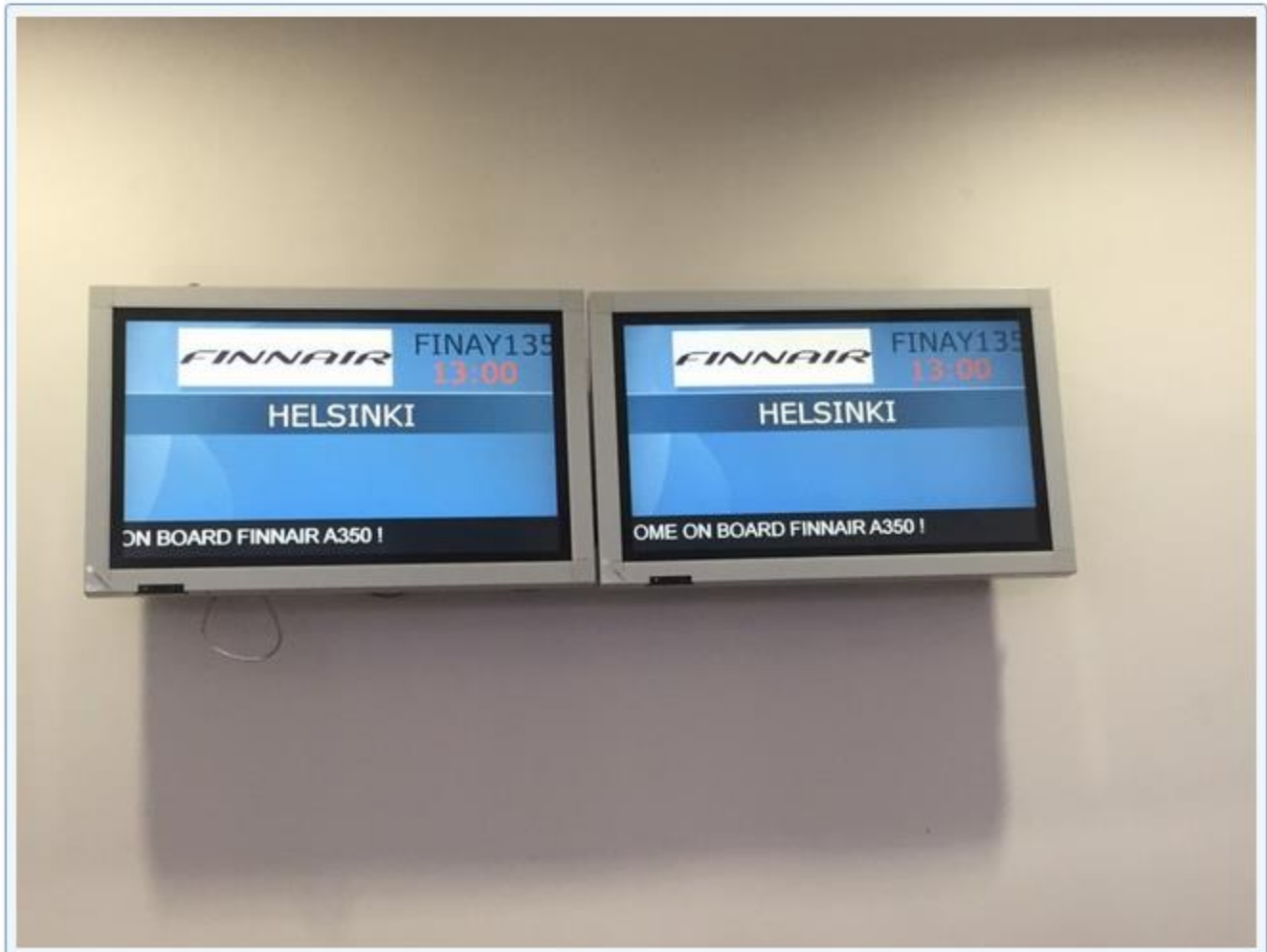


Following delivery, Finnair will use the airplane on its European network, flying to several destinations for special one-time flights, serving a dual role of sharing the passenger experience and crew familiarization.

For crew familiarization, each flight must be a minimum of one hour of block time. Juha Jarvinen explained that the flights within Europe are a great opportunity to share the uniquely Nordic experience and accomplish landing requirements for the crews. Finnair has three qualified A350 captains presently and all initial flights will be flown with two Captains.

While the first eight A350s will have the same initial configuration, the last eleven may have variations. The A350 will be the first airplane in the Finnair fleet to have a purser instead of an in flight leader, which will enable the airline to deliver a more personalized service. Finnair's A350s will also have a dedicated ladies' restroom,

WELCOME ABOARD THE DELIVERY FLIGHT!



Today's delivery flight, symbolically Finnair Flight 1350, featured approximately 200 invited guests to celebrate the arrival to Finland of the new flagship aircraft. Boarding was complete at approximately 1:35 pm and just before pushback from Spot Z130 at the Airbus Delivery Center, Captain Jari Paajanen announced "let's go home".





A flight time of just over three hours was announced, and at exactly 2 pm local time, Finnair 1350 departed Toulouse-Blagnac's Runway 32R into partly cloudy afternoon skies. Right after takeoff, in accordance with Airbus delivery tradition, Captain Paajanen rocked the wings, saying goodbye to Toulouse. After a brisk climb, OH-LWA leveled off at FL430 (43,000 feet). Once leveled off, lunch and champagne were served. The airplane was amazingly quiet, and there was no turbulence throughout the entire flight. We cruised high above the overcast covering much of Central Europe. Inside the cabin, the mood lighting simulated both blue sky and sunset, as our flight encountered both.



Shortly before 5:45 pm, we commenced our descent for Helsinki-Vantaa, and we landed on Runway 04R at 6:08 pm. A water cannon salute was received and we blocked into the gate at 6:16 pm after being towed in, as Gate 31 was not fit for powered on A350 arrival..yet.



Editor's note: Keep up with AirwaysNews by subscribing to our weekly eNewsletter. Every Saturday morning, subscribers get a recap of our top stories of the week, the subscriber-only exclusive Weekend Reads column wrapping up interesting industry stories and a Photo of the Week from the amazing AirwaysNews archives. Click [here](#) to subscribe today!

Contact the editor at roberto.leiro@airwaysnews.com

[A350-900](#)

[Airbus](#)

[Airbus A350](#)

[Finnair](#)

[Helsinki](#)

Did you like this article? Share it with your friends!

 Like

312

 Tweet

35

 Pin it

 Share

1