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Finnair ready to raise its profile in the Chicago air travel market

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Among international airlines, Finnair is not one of the most-widely recognized among air travelers in the United States as whole, or Chicago in particular.

But that could start to change – at least Finnair executives hope so – when the Finnish national carrier starts nonstop service between Chicago's O'Hare International Airport and Helsinki, Finland on June 23. The new service will initially operate seasonally three times weekly (Monday, Thursday and Saturday) through Oct. 17.

Finnair will operate the new route using an Airbus 330 outfitted with 32 to 45 premium business class seats and 218 to 257 economy class seats, including several rows of economy comfort seating with more legroom.



Finnair will fly an Airbus 330 nonstop between Helsinki and Chicago three times weekly... more

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Finnair's business class... more

With the addition of the Chicago-Helsinki route, Finnair will serve a total of three U.S. markets. The carrier also operates year-round from New York City's John F. Kennedy International Airport to Helsinki and seasonally from Miami, Fla. to Helsinki.

As a member of the One World airline alliance along with American Airlines, Finnair will be able to synch its Chicago-Helsinki flight with AA's vast network of routes from O'Hare to domestic United States markets. O'Hare is American's second largest hub.

Though Finnair is entering the Chicago market with seasonal-only service, that could very well expand at some point in the not too distant future to year-round service.

Finnair execs are very keen on establishing the airline's home airport in Helsinki

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as a hub through which Finnair passengers arriving from Chicago and other European and North American markets can transit to flights to Russia and Asia. As many international airlines are now realizing, Asia has become a huge growth market for aviation travel.

Helsinki Airport also has the advantage of being a small, easily navigable facility that makes connecting to other flights relatively effortless. Plus, the arrival time of Finnair's new flight from Chicago to Helsinki is especially convenient for connecting to flights onward to Asian destinations, according to Finnair execs.

But first of course, Finnair and Chicago have to get to know each other, which will take some time. But the carrier has gotten a strong vote of confidence from Skytrax, the United Kingdom-based independent rating service for airlines. Skytrax has recognized Finnair as northern Europe's best airline for six consecutive years.

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