

CATHAY DETAILS EXPANSION WITH INCOMING A350S, 777XS

News / Airlines



Cathay Pacific says all of its incoming widebody jets will be directed at growth, and that the group will expand to a fleet of over 230 passenger aircraft by 2025.

Speaking to Flightglobal, chief operating officer Rupert Hogg details that Cathay will add 22 Airbus A350-900s to its fleet over the next two years, followed by 26 A350-1000s from 2018 through to 2020. From 2021, it will also take the first of 21 Boeing 777-9Xs on order.

The mainline carrier now has a fleet of 124 passenger aircraft, comprised largely of Airbus A330s, Boeing 777-300ERs, and some 777-200s, 777-300s, 747s and A340s. Regional unit Dragonair has a fleet of 41 A320 family and A330 jets.

“The 777s, we don’t have to retire any of those in the next 10 years... The key takeaway is that everything we’re buying at the moment is for growth,” says Hogg. “We want to grow about 4-5% in ASKs yearly.”

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Under Cathay’s strategy, the -900s will primarily be targeted at helping the airline open new points in Europe, and to add a second or third frequency to existing destinations such as Milan and

Amsterdam, says Hogg.

The -1000s will meanwhile allow the Hong Kong flag carrier to fly additional frequencies “more cost effectively” to points in North America, and for upgauging on services where traffic rights or airport capacity are constrained.

“We see a combination of -900s, -1000s and existing 777s In Europe, North America and increasingly in Australia,” he says.

In the longer term, when the 777Xs arrive, the aircraft will mainly be put on routes to North America and Europe, particularly those with high volumes of both passengers and cargo.

The three incoming aircraft types, together with the relatively young 777-300ERs, will hence form the core of Cathay’s long-haul operations. The 777-9X is expected to fill the role now served by the 747s and 777-300ERs, effectively replacing both types over the longer term.

The -900 should eventually replace Cathay’s small fleet of 777-200s and also older A330-300s, while the -1000s will likely replace both the A340s and 777-300s.

Hogg says the airline is not considering the A330neo, adding that “broadly speaking, at the moment we’re okay with the range that we’ve got”.

“That is a lot of aircraft we have coming in a relatively short period of time. But we need it because the growth is there,” he says.

“We have the unique advantage to North America and we’re keen to keep selling that market, and we’re joining the number one and two economies in the world. We see China’s outbound tourism particularly as being a long term big volume big growth story.”

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