Boeing 777 Distance and Speed World Records Confirmed

It's official - the Boeing 777 has earned its way into aviation history as the globe-circling commercial jetliner - flying the fastest and farthest of its size and class.

The Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI), the world aviation-record governing board, has certified the flight this spring of an increased gross weight (IGW) version of the 777-200 as holder of the "Great Circle Distance Without Landing" record. The record was set on a 12,455.34 statute miles (20,044.20 km) flight from Seattle to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Another record, "Speed Around the World, Eastbound," was set on the return flight by traveling the Seattle-Kuala Lumpur-Seattle route at an average speed of 553 mph (889 kmh). The FAI's U.S. counterpart, the National Aeronautic Association (NAA), granted its certification in May.

The airplane, dubbed the "Super Ranger," was painted in Malaysia Airlines livery. It flew non-stop March 31 from Boeing Field in Seattle to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, touching down in time for Malaysia Airlines' 50TH anniversary celebration. The airplane refueled and sped back to Seattle.

Both records were held previously by the Airbus A340-211, set when the A340 flew Paris-Auckland-Paris June 16-18, 1993. During that flight, the A340 -211 set the "Great Circle Distance Without Landing" record, traveling 11,814.90 statute miles (19,014.31 km), and it set the record for "Speed Around the World, Eastbound," traveling at an average speed of 490.80 mph (789.86 kmh).

The NAA will formally recognize Boeing for this achievement during the association's meeting this fall.

The 777-200 IGW has the same physical dimensions as the initial -200 model, but carries an additional 14,200 gallons (53,826 liters) of fuel in its wing center section for a total of 45,220 gallons (171,170 liters). This increases the range of the aircraft from 5,925 statute miles (9,525 km) to 8,225 statute miles (13,220 km).

Boeing last week completed the final body join of its newest family member, the 777-300. During final body join, the fuselage sections are joined together, forming a structurally complete airplane for the first time. The -300 is a stretched, higher-capacity derivative of the 777-200. At 242 feet, 4 inches (73.8 meters), the new airplane is 33 feet, 3 inches (10.1 meters) longer than the -200. It carries 20 percent more passengers, for a total of 368 to 550, depending on the configuration. The stretched derivative has the same fuel capacity as the 777-200 IGW, and serves routes up to 6,560 statute miles (10,500 km). A typical route would be Tokyo to Singapore, Honolulu to Seoul or San Francisco to Tokyo.

The first 777-300 is scheduled for delivery to Cathay Pacific Airways of Hong Kong in May 1998.

The Boeing 777 airplane family has captured more than 67 percent of the market share for airplanes in its class since the program was launched in October 1990. Twenty-five airlines worldwide have ordered 323 777s. To date, Boeing has delivered 81 777-200s to 13 airlines.

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