Air New Zealand Sets Speed Record with Boeing 767

Air New Zealand's newest Boeing 767 is setting records before it even goes into service. The airline took delivery of its ninth 767-300ER (extended range) airplane Oct. 28, and within hours was en route to Christchurch, New Zealand, to set a world speed record.

The record the airline clinched is for aircraft under 441,000 pounds (200,000 kilos) over a recognized course. The course is the flight path between the Boeing manufacturing plant in Everett and an Air New Zealand facility in Christchurch.

The four-person crew and the 18 passengers on board made the 6,627 nautical mile (12,273 kilometer) journey in just 14 hours and 54 minutes, landing Oct. 30 in Christchurch.

Now that the flight is finished, details will be logged with the Royal New Zealand Aero Club and provided to the Federation Aeronautique Internationale, which is the world's governing body for air sports.

"Unless Air New Zealand has another delivery flight between the same two points, the record could stand for a long time," said a proud Kevin Berry, the airline's technical liaison manager. Berry oversees production of Air New Zealand airplanes at the Boeing Everett factory.

Normally, Air New Zealand's 767 delivery flights end in Auckland. On this occasion, however, the airline will do the finishing work to prepare the jetliner for entry into commercial service at its Christchurch engineering base.

Air New Zealand has routes throughout the South Pacific and Asia, and makes flights between Los Angeles and London and between Los Angeles and Frankfurt Germany.

The newest jetliner in the Air New Zealand fleet will be used primarily for Asian routes including Korea and Taipan. The next Boeing airplane to don the Air New Zealand colors -- a 747-400 -- will be delivered next year. It will be the airline's sixth 747-400.

To date, airlines worldwide have placed 730 orders for 767s. Air New Zealand currently operates 37 Boeing jetliners, including nine of the popular 767-300ERs. The 767-300ER seats 218 passengers in a typical three-class configuration. The airplane has a range capability of 7,050 miles (11,343 kilometers).

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