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Continental Airlines today takes delivery of its first 767-200ER (extended range) jetliner. The 174-passenger 767 is the first to be delivered from a November 1998 order for 10 of the airplanes with options for 10 more. As a part of a major fleet modernization plan currently under way at Continental, the airline also has ordered 24 of the larger 767-400ER airplanes.

"This is another milestone in bringing Continental's fleet into the 21st Century," said Continental Airlines Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Gordon Bethune. "We are committed to providing the best possible service from our Newark gateway to the major cities of Europe, and we look forward to the delivery of additional 767-200ERs in the months ahead."

Continental's newest 767-200ER includes the award-winning 777-style interior, which was first introduced into the 767 family on the 767-400ER. The jetliner will be configured in two classes: 25 in BusinessFirst and 149 in economy. Because this is the first 767-200 to include the new interior, the airplane under went approximately 86 hours of flight testing and more than 100 hours of special ground testing to certify the new interior and systems with the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration.

The flight-test program included six flights to test for such things as air distribution and balance, cooling of the inflight entertainment system, and noise and smoke clearance and penetration.

"Boeing is the only manufacturer to offer a modern family of twin-aisle airplanes in the 180-250 seat category with the 767-200ER, 767-300ER and 767-400ER," said Seddik Belyamani, executive vice president, Sales, Boeing Commercial Airplanes Group. "All three variants have the new, award-winning 777 interior."

The 767-200ER has a range of 6,615 nautical miles (12,250 km) making it possible to connect city pairs such as New York to Beijing.

By year-end three of the Boeing 767-200ER models will be delivered to the airline. Continental will put its first 767-200ER into service beginning Dec. 1 on the airline's Newark to Zurich, Switzerland route, and on Dec. 14 on its Houston to Sao Paulo, Brazil route.

The Boeing 767-200ER shares many common features with the Boeing 757, which also is in service in Continental's fleet. The 767 and 757 family members share a common-type pilot rating, so flight crews benefit from reduced training. Crew members can be assigned to either model as passenger demand changes, permitting the airline to fly routes more profitably. Airlines also benefit from the similar maintenance procedures, manuals and inspection requirements.

Boeing has delivered 229 767-200 model jetliners to customers around the world, including five 767-200s that were configured for military use. Four 767-200s Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) airplanes were delivered to the government of Japan in 1998. And the first 767, called the Airborne Surveillance Testbed (AST), was modified to carry a long-wavelength infrared sensor housed in a cupola atop the 767's fuselage.

To date, 80 airlines have ordered 901 767s. To maintain market leadership, Boeing is continually improving the 767's features and capabilities. Earlier this year, Boeing announced all models would include the award-winning 777-style interior. And in September, the company said it has begun production on a longer-range 767-400ER that will fly 6,115 nautical miles (11,325 km).

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