Boeing Delivers First Extended Range 747-400 to Qantas

Boeing [NYSE: BA] today celebrated the delivery of the first new 747-400ER passenger jetliner to Qantas Airways. Accepting the airplane on behalf of Qantas was the airline's goodwill ambassador and actor John Travolta. Travolta recently completed a 12-stop, 41,632-mile (67,000-kilometer) world tour using his own Boeing 707, painted in 1960's Qantas livery. The airline will officially take delivery of the airplane this week.

The international airline, based in Sydney, Australia, is the launch customer for the model, having placed an order in December 2000 for six of the new jetliners. Qantas plans to use the airplanes, which can fly farther than earlier models of the Boeing 747, on ultra-long routes across the Pacific.

"The 747 has been a key to our long-haul success for more than 30 years and this latest model with its enhanced performance capability will continue to give Qantas a competitive edge, especially on long-haul trans-pacific routes," said David Forsyth, executive general manager -- Aircraft Operations, Qantas Airways, Ltd.

Qantas has been a Boeing customer since it became the first non-U.S. airline to order Boeing 707s in 1956. The airline currently operates, or has on order, a Boeing fleet of 138 jets, including 747s, 767s, 737s and 717s.

"As you would expect from an airline based 'Down Under,' Qantas is a long-haul expert and we're sure this new 747 will provide an important competitive edge," said Toby Bright, vice president, Sales -- Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "Dating back to their first jet airplanes in the 1950s, Qantas has always urged Boeing to provide more range. We're very pleased to meet this latest request from a customer of such long standing with the launch of the 747-400ER."

The passenger cabin of the 747-400ER has an all-new three-class Boeing signature interior that expands upon the comfort and spaciousness of the award-winning Boeing 777 interior. Although the 747-400ER has an identical exterior appearance to existing 747-400 airplane, the flight deck features new liquid crystal displays and reduced noise levels, and the structure features a strengthened fuselage, landing gear and parts of its wing, along with new, larger tires.

The 747-400ER is the same size as today's 747-400, but can either fly farther or carry more payload. The airplane has an increased takeoff weight of 910,000 pounds (412,770 kilograms) -- 35,000 pounds (15,876 kilograms) more than the existing 747-400 airplane.

That extra takeoff weight allows operators to fly about 500 miles (805 kilometers) farther or carry 15,000 pounds (6,800 kilograms) more passengers or cargo, a key capability on demanding long-haul Pacific routes such as Melbourne-Los Angeles. The key to additional range is a series of new fuselage fuel tanks.

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