Belgium's Sobelair Adds First Boeing 737-800 with Winglets to Fleet

Sobelair, the Brussels, Belgium-based airline, today added the first Boeing Next-Generation 737-800 to its fleet of airplanes that provide both scheduled and charter service to European, Caribbean and North African destinations.

The airplane, which is the first 737-800 equipped with winglets to be flown by a Belgian airline, is leased from Boullioun Aviation Services.

The 737-800 winglets, which curve out and up from the wingtips, boost performance, allowing the airplane to fly up to 130 nautical miles (240 kilometers) farther.

Sobelair plans to use the 737-800 with winglets on its longest flights - to the Canary Islands and to Egypt and other African destinations.

"We chose the 737-800 with winglets because of its performance, its comfortable ride and its ability to fly farther -- and because our flight crews, who already operate our other Boeing 737 and 767 models, will need minimal training to operate this model," said Monique Lebersorg, Sobelair Commercial Director. She added that the low operating costs of the 737-800 also were a deciding factor.

Winglets added to a 737-800 can reduce fuel burn by up to 4 percent on flights longer than 1,150 miles (1,850 kilometers), reduce noise on takeoffs, improve the airplane's takeoff performance, increase the amount of weight the airplane can carry by 6,613 pounds (3 metric tons), and lower engine maintenance costs.

"With their premium performance and quiet engines, the Boeing 737-800s already have a reputation for being environmentally responsible," said Marlin Dailey, vice president of European Sales, Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "The takeoff benefits of winglets give 737 operators flying in and out of busy, noise-sensitive European airports even more of an environmental edge."

Boeing developed the winglet technology in cooperation with Aviation Partners, Inc.

With winglets, an all-new wing and updated liquid-crystal displays in the flight deck, the 737-800 has the most advanced-design technology in the single-aisle jetliner market. The Sobelair 737-800, which will seat 189 passengers, also has an interior modeled after the spacious interior of the award-winning Boeing 777.

The 737-800 is powered by new CFM56-7 engines produce by CFMI, a joint venture of Snecma of France and General Electric of the United States. The engines meet community noise restrictions well below Stage 3 limits and below anticipated Stage 4 limits.

Sobelair has been in operation since 1946 and has its main base at Brussels National Airport.

Boullioun, one of the world's premier aircraft operating lessors, leases aircraft to airlines for itself and in collaboration with its affiliate, Singapore Aircraft Leasing Enterprise (S.A.L.E.), in which it holds a 35.5 percent stake. Boullioun is owned by WestLB AG of Dusseldorf/Munster, Germany.

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