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Air Plus Comet yesterday became the world's first operator of a Boeing 737-300 with advanced-technology blended winglets and the latest carrier in Spain operating Boeing airplanes.

The winglets, which curve out and up from the plane's wing tips, improve an airplane's performance and allow it to fly more than 185 kilometers farther than a 737-300 without winglets.

Winglets also offer excellent environmental benefits, including reduced fuel use, takeoff and landing noise, and in-flight engine emissions.

"As the first worldwide customer for the new 737-300 blended winglet, we will be the first to experience the fuel savings and environmental benefits they bring," said Alejandro Avila, Air Plus Comet technical director.

The 737-300, leased from Aircraft Leasing Management, was delivered today. Headquartered in Madrid, Air Plus Comet provides long-distance charter flights between Spain and European locations and the Americas. It began operations in 1997.

Its 737-300 seats 148 passengers and will primarily be used on Canary Island and European routes.

"This winglet-equipped 737 is another example of how Boeing Commercial Aviation Services can help improve an air carrier's economics, increase aircraft reliability and deliver superior passenger comfort," said Daniel da Silva, vice president of customer support for Boeing Commercial Aviation Services in Europe.

Aviation Partners Boeing, a joint venture of Boeing and Aviation Partners, Inc., developed the winglets. The winglets can be installed on 737-300, -400, -700 and -800 models. More than 28 carriers fly nearly 300 winglet-equipped 737s.

Air Plus Comet also recently added a Boeing 747-200, seating 392 passengers, for Caribbean routes.

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