

Fiyat: 120 TL - Price: US\$ 5,99

ISSN 2667-8624  
VOLUME 7 - ISSUE 33 - YEAR 2026

# AVIATION TURKEY

MRO/26  
Central Asia Uzbekistan

**GE AEROSPACE AT  
60 IN TÜRKİYE  
FROM STRATEGIC PARTNER  
TO GLOBAL AVIATION HUB**

**AIR TRANSAT  
TOUCHES DOWN  
IN ISTANBUL WITH ITS  
FIRST DIRECT FLIGHT FROM  
TORONTO**

**OLE, OLE, OLE!  
MADRID  
CUENCA, CHINCHÓN &  
ARANJUEZ BY AIR EUROPA**

**NUREMBERG'S  
QUIET AMBITION  
WHY ALBRECHT DÜRER  
AIRPORT IS ONE OF EUROPE'S  
MOST INTERESTING  
REGIONAL HUBS**



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# AVIATION TURKEY



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ISSN 2667-8624

**Yayıncı / Publisher Sorumlu Yazı İşleri Müdürü**

Hatice Ayşe Akalın  
a.akalin@aviationturkey.com

**Managing Editor**

Cem Akalın  
cem.akalin@aviationturkey.com

**Genel Yayın Yönetmeni  
Editor in Chief**

Hatice Ayşe Akalın  
a.akalin@aviationturkey.com

**Baş Yazar / Senior Editor**

İbrahim Sünnetçi  
**Haber Editörü / Editor**  
Yeşim Bilginoglu Yörük  
y.bilginoglu@aviationturkey.com

**Haber Editörü / Editor**

Şebnem Akalın  
sebnem.akalin@aviationturkey.com

**Çeviri / Translation**

Tanyel Akman

**Muhabir / Correspondent**

Saffet Uyanık

**Grafik & Tasarım /  
Graphics & Design**

Gülsemin Bolat  
Görkem Elmas

**Fotoğrafçı / Photographer**

Sinan Niyazi Kutsal

**İmtiyaz Sahibi**

Hatice Ayşe Akalın

**Yayın Danışma Kurulu /  
Advisory Board**

Aslıhan Aydemir  
Lale Selamoğlu Kaplan  
Assoc. Prof. Ferhan Kuyucak  
Şengür

**Basım Yeri**

Demir Ofis Kirtasiye  
Perpa Ticaret Merkezi B Blok  
Kat:8 No:936 Şişli / İstanbul

**Adres / Address**

Administrative Office  
DT Medya LTD.STI  
İlkbahar Mahallesi Galip Erdem  
Caddesi Sinpaş Altınoran Kule 3  
No:142 Çankaya Ankara/Turkey

Tel: +90 212 222 26 36  
demirofiskirtasiye@hotmail.com

www.demirofiskirtasiye.com

**Basım Tarihi**

Şubat- Mart 2026

**Yayın Türü**

Süreli

Tel: +90 (312) 557 9020  
info@aviationturkey.com  
www.aviationturkey.com

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## GE Aerospace at 60 in Türkiye: From Strategic Partner to Global Aviation Hub

As GE Aerospace approaches six decades of operations in Türkiye, the country has evolved from a regional market into a strategic pillar of the company's global aviation ecosystem. With a robust engineering base, advanced R&D capabilities, precision manufacturing through long-standing joint ventures, and deep-rooted partnerships across both commercial and defense sectors, Türkiye today plays a multifaceted role in shaping the future of flight.

In this exclusive interview, Aziz Koleilat, President and CEO – Middle East, Türkiye & CIS, discusses how Türkiye integrates into GE Aerospace's global supply chain, the expanding scope of engineering work at the Türkiye Technology Center, and what lies ahead for collaborations with the country's leading airlines and defense programs.

 **Aviation Turkey: GE Aerospace has been in Türkiye for nearly 60 years. What makes this market so important for the company?**

**Aziz Koleilat:** Türkiye plays a critical role in how GE Aerospace builds the future of flight. In 2026 we will mark six decades in the country, and this year the Türkiye Technology Center (TTC) celebrated 25 years, reflecting our sustained commitment to being part of the local aviation ecosystem.

We have a substantial presence in the country: an advanced

engineering center in Kartal (İstanbul) with more than 500 engineers and technicians, cutting-edge labs in Gebze, a joint venture with Turkish Aerospace, and offices in İstanbul and Ankara supporting both commercial and defense engines.

This growing footprint strengthens our engineering, R&D, manufacturing and innovation capabilities in the country, while also supporting programs around that make a real impact on aviation worldwide.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: How does Türkiye fit into GE Aerospace’s global supply chain?**

**Aziz Koleilat:** Türkiye plays an important role in our global supply chain. Through TEI, our long-standing joint venture founded in 1985 with Turkish Aerospace, we manufacture hundreds of engine components for major engine programs including the LEAP, GENx, and GE9X. We also support prototyping for the CFM RISE\* program. We see that TEI’s growth is a clear proof point of Türkiye’s precision-manufacturing depth and the strength of its skilled workforce.

When you look at TEI together with the Türkiye Technology Center and our support across all commercial airlines and US-allied defense organizations, you can see the full picture: local engineering design, software development, component manufacturing, and repair engineering, all plugged directly into GE Aerospace’s global programs. Türkiye is not just a link in the supply chain; it is a hub that touches all pillars of the industry’s ecosystem.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: Could you please tell us about the scope of engineering work being carried out by your teams in Türkiye?**

**Aziz Koleilat:** At the Türkiye Technology Center, our engineers are at the heart of some exciting work. The center, which celebrated



its 25th anniversary this year, functions as a hub for advanced engineering, supporting R&D, software development, additive manufacturing, and repair/manufacturing engineering. This means Türkiye’s talent is actively shaping projects that impact GE Aerospace operations worldwide.

Our engineers contribute to both ongoing programs and new initiatives, from software innovation to additive manufacturing projects – both the digital and physical worlds push the boundaries of what modern aerospace engineering can achieve. This work not only strengthens Türkiye’s

position as a center for aerospace expertise but also allows our engineers to solve complex challenges and bring fresh ideas into global projects, including the CFM RISE program, in ways that complement the contributions of other GE Aerospace sites around the world.



## INTERVIEW



Aizi Koleilat & Ayşe Akalın

The culture we're building here is also important. It is a culture where people can have real opportunities to expand their skills, collaborate internationally, and play a role in shaping the future of flight.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: You are a trusted partner to the Turkish commercial airline and defense industry. Should we expect new collaborations and/or orders in the near future?**

**Aziz Koleilat:** GE Aerospace has been a long-standing partner to Türkiye's biggest commercial players, who are themselves leaders on the global stage. We remain committed to supporting

national goals around connectivity, tourism, cargo, and industrial capability. When it comes to the Turkish airline industry, our focus is enabling reliable growth through leading technologies, training and

knowledge transfer, and lifecycle services. This supports our customers' fleet renewals, route expansions, and growth plans while keeping their current aircraft flying safely and efficiently.



Most recently, we were very proud to deepen our relationship with Turkish Airlines through a new agreement that includes more than 100 GEnx engines to power Turkish Airlines' 50 Boeing 787 aircraft, with an option for an additional 25 planes, along with spare engines and a 15-year True Choice services agreement. This agreement not only strengthens Turkish Airlines' wide-body fleet but also underscores Türkiye's growing role as a major aviation hub.

We have also have partnered with Türkiye's defense sector since 1966 with our engines powering the first batch of F-5A/B fighter jets ordered by Turkish Air Force. Since then, we have been supporting indigenous programs like the fighter jet KAAN, training jet HÜRJET and MILGEM naval initiatives, underscoring our commitment to remain a steadfast partner to Türkiye's defense sector.

Across both commercial and defense, we are very committed to strengthening the local industry. By working closely with Turkish suppliers and partners, we are building capabilities that do not just serve the domestic market but also feed into global aerospace programs. We are 100% committed continued collaboration with Turkish aviation industry 🇹🇷

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**TURKISH CARGO**



Hakan Kul, Country Manager Dassault Systèmes;  
Ayşe Akalin, Editor in Chief of Aviation Turkey

# From Virtual Twins to Real-World Impact: Dassault Systèmes' Vision for the Future of Aviation

**Exclusive Interview: Hakan Kul, Country Manager, Dassault Systèmes, Speaks with Ayşe Akalın, Editor-in-Chief, Aviation Turkey**

**Ayşe Akalın:** Dassault Systèmes has a strong global presence and a rich history rooted in innovation and technology. Could you please share a brief overview of the company's background and its evolution, particularly within the aviation and aerospace sectors?

**Hakan Kul:** Dassault Systèmes provides science-based solutions to sustainably transform both the organic and inorganic world. Founded in 1981 in France, its journey began with 20 engineers supporting the aerospace industry. In the last 40 years Dassault Systèmes has transformed the way products are designed, simulated and produced across a wide range of industries including aerospace, defense, transportation, life sciences, energy, and construction.

In aerospace and aviation, Dassault Systèmes has played a transformative role not just as a technology provider, but as a strategic partner. Dassault Systèmes' technology revolutionized how complex aircraft systems are conceived and developed. Industry leaders such as Airbus, Boeing, and Dassault Aviation rely on its technology to bring precision, collaboration, and innovation to every stage of product development.

At the heart of this transformation is the 3DEXPERIENCE platform, a unified digital environment that spans the entire product lifecycle from concept and design to simulation, manufacturing, and customer experience. It allows aerospace and defense companies to accelerate development, maintain the highest standards of quality, and pursue sustainability with confidence.

Today, behind many next-generation aircraft, there is a high probability you will find the digital fingerprint of Dassault Systèmes quietly shaping the future of flight.

**Ayşe Akalın:** How would you describe Dassault Systèmes' presence and strategic

priorities in Turkey? Are there any specific projects or partnerships currently underway in the Turkish market?

**Hakan Kul:** Dassault Systèmes holds a strong and growing strategic presence in Turkey, actively contributing to the country's digital transformation journey. Since opening its Istanbul office in 2008, the company has worked closely with local industries to address unique market needs, and aerospace and defense is one of the core industries we support.

Among our notable collaborations are TASECS (Turkish Aerospace Environmental Control Systems) and Havelsan, both of which exemplify the power of digital transformation in Turkey's high-technology landscape.

TASECS, a joint venture between Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) and Liebherr-Aerospace, leverages Dassault Systèmes' 3DEXPERIENCE platform to design and optimize environmental control systems for next-generation aircraft. This collaboration enhances control systems for next-generation aircraft. This collaboration enhances efficiency, sustainability, and engineering precision

— setting a benchmark for localized innovation in the aerospace ecosystem.

Similarly, Havelsan, a leading Turkish technology company specializing in defense, simulation, and IT systems, utilizes Dassault Systèmes' solutions to accelerate R&D and integrate complex systems across projects. Through advanced modeling and simulation, Havelsan achieves greater collaboration and innovation in line with global standards.

Turkey's young, dynamic, and highly skilled engineering workforce presents a tremendous opportunity. By leveraging the 3DEXPERIENCE platform Dassault Systèmes empowers Turkish companies to streamline product development, boost collaboration across departments, and adopt next-generation engineering and manufacturing practices.

The impact of such transformation is also clearly visible in global projects. For example, Brussels Airport implemented Dassault Systèmes' DELMIA Quintiq to optimize aircraft parking stands, improve planning

## INTERVIEW

efficiency, and digitize revenue streams through transparent invoicing. These kinds of operational enhancements demonstrate what is possible when airport infrastructure meets advanced digital technology—and they serve as a blueprint for what can be achieved in Turkey as well.

**Ayşe Akalın:** The 3DEXPERIENCE platform is central to Dassault Systèmes' identity. Could you elaborate on what the 3DEXPERIENCE platform is and how it transforms operations within the aerospace industry?

**Hakan Kul:** The 3DEXPERIENCE platform is a comprehensive, business and innovation platform that connects people, data, and processes across the entire product lifecycle. It integrates design, engineering, simulation, manufacturing, and more into one collaborative digital space.

In the aerospace industry, this is nothing short of a transformation. Traditionally siloed team designers, engineers, suppliers, and manufacturers can now work in real-time collaboration, eliminating inefficiencies and enabling faster, more accurate decision-making. This seamless integration accelerates innovation, reduces costly errors, and allows for the development of increasingly complex aircraft with unmatched precision.

One of the clearest examples of this transformation is Airbus and its A350 XWB program. By unifying their engineering and manufacturing teams on the 3DEXPERIENCE platform, Airbus reduced design change cycles from day to minute and achieved faster industrial ramp-up, all while improving quality and consistency. This showcases how digital integration leads to genuine business



impact, and it serves as inspiration for companies aiming to elevate their competitiveness globally.

**Ayşe Akalın:** The concept of “Virtual

Twins” is becoming increasingly significant in the context of digital transformation and sustainability. How does Dassault Systèmes apply virtual twin technology to help aerospace companies achieve more sustainable operations?

**Hakan Kul:** Virtual twin technology is a cornerstone of Dassault Systèmes' commitment to sustainable innovation. It creates a real-time, data-rich digital replica of a physical asset capturing its structure, behavior, and performance throughout its lifecycle.

In the aerospace sector, virtual twins enable engineers to simulate and optimize aircraft



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systems before any physical component is built. This reduces the need for multiple prototypes, cutting down material waste and energy consumption. It also allows for lighter, more fuel-efficient designs critical for reducing carbon emissions.

The technology's benefits extend far beyond design and engineering. Take Finnair, for instance they digitized their ground personnel planning using Dassault Systèmes' DELMIA Quintiq, moving from manual workflows to optimized, data-driven operations. This led to increased operational efficiency

and contributed directly to their sustainability goals by making better use of available resources. Such transformations empower aerospace companies to align performance

with environmental responsibility.

**Ayşe Akalın:** 3D UNIV+RSES is a notable initiative reflecting Dassault Systèmes' focus on education and innovation. How does this program fit into the company's long-term vision and support the next generation of engineers and designers?

**Hakan Kul:** Dassault Systèmes' 3D UNIV+RSES represent a step of such magnitude that it is poised to shape not only the future of the company, but of the entire industrial world. Far beyond being just a tool to support learning and innovation, it marks a change in basic assumptions redefining how we represent the world, how we design it, and how we create sustainable solutions.

By combining modeling, simulation, data science, and AI-powered content,

3D UNIV+RSES introduce an entirely new category of experience. Built on the 3DEXPERIENCE platform, this ecosystem is enriched with AI-driven solutions such as virtual companions, virtual twin experiences, and generative experiences.

This system is not only designed for large-scale industries, but it also directly addresses the needs of future engineers, designers, and solution creators. Educators and students can go beyond abstract theories and work on real-world problems, positioning themselves at the intersection of sustainability, design, and innovation. Through simulations, virtual twins, and collaborative environments, they develop not just technical expertise but also critical thinking, creativity, and cross-disciplinary collaboration skills.



© Dassault Systèmes

## INTERVIEW

3D UNIV+RSES enable the virtualization of an entire product lifecycle by linking virtual twins across design, engineering, manufacturing and operations, as well as by combining multiple virtual twins across companies.

It is a continuation of more than 40 years of Dassault Systèmes' commitment to building a foundation rooted in knowledge, science, and trust.

Today, our world is evolving toward a new economic model, the Generative Economy where sustainability is at the core. 3D UNIV+RSES sit at the heart of this transformation. It's no longer about physical products, but about the intellectual property, knowledge, and experience behind them.

For Dassault Systèmes, 3D UNIV+RSES are a new class of representation of the world. They represent a new category of experiences poised to transform the creation and manufacturing of sustainable products and services.

**✈️ Ayşe Akalın: The aviation industry continues to face various challenges, ranging from decarbonization to supply chain resilience. How does Dassault Systèmes support the sector in addressing these evolving challenges?**



**Hakan Kul:** The aviation sector is undergoing profound change, with critical challenges like decarbonization, supply chain disruption, and cost pressures pushing companies to reinvent how they operate. Dassault Systèmes offers solutions that turn these challenges into opportunities.

Using the 3DEXPERIENCE platform, aerospace companies can design, simulate, and build aircraft that are significantly lighter and more energy-efficient, reducing fuel consumption and emissions. The

integration of AI and advanced analytics supports predictive maintenance and performance optimization, extending aircraft life and reducing operational costs.

On the supply chain side, the platform creates a connected, transparent ecosystem where manufacturers, suppliers, and partners collaborate in real time. This improves agility, anticipates potential disruptions, and enhances supply chain resilience ensuring continuity even in the face of global volatility.

Through these capabilities, Dassault Systèmes empowers aerospace leaders to operate more sustainably, efficiently, and strategically.

**✈️ Ayşe Akalın:** Earlier this year, the Paris Air Show highlighted numerous breakthroughs in aviation and aerospace technology. What are your key takeaways from the event, and how do you see these advancements shaping the future of the industry?

**Hakan Kul:** The 2025 Paris Air Show was more than an exhibition; it was a glimpse into the future of aerospace. From electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) vehicles to AI-powered cockpit systems and carbon-neutral manufacturing processes, the show made one thing clear: the future is here, and it is digital, sustainable, and accelerating fast.

A standout takeaway was the unprecedented speed of innovation. Technologies that once seemed decades away are now flying or soon will be. Sustainability is no longer a distant goal but a central tenet of R&D and investment strategies.

Virtual technologies also took center stage. The 3DEXPERIENCE platform is no longer just a tool, it is becoming the engine of aviation innovation.

Whether simulating next-gen aerodynamics or optimizing global supply chains, digital platforms are driving the industry forward smarter, greener, and faster than ever before.

**Ayşe Akalın:** Finally, could you tell us about the range of solutions Dassault Systèmes offers for the commercial aviation ecosystem, including airlines and airports? How do these digital solutions enhance efficiency and customer experience?

**Hakan Kul:** Dassault Systèmes provides a robust portfolio of solutions for the entire commercial aviation ecosystem from aircraft OEMs and airlines to MRO providers and airport operators.

For airlines, virtual twin technology and data-driven insights enable smarter fleet management, predictive maintenance, and streamlined operations. These improvements reduce unplanned downtime, increase safety, and enhance the overall passenger experience.

For airports, advanced planning tools support planning and optimization of terminal flows, baggage systems, airside coordination, and more. This helps reduce congestion, increase capacity, and improve passenger satisfaction while prioritizing environmental sustainability.



Real-world examples highlight the potential of these solutions. At Brussels Airport, digital optimization of aircraft stands, and terminal operations led to measurable gains in efficiency and passenger flow. Similarly, Finnair’s workforce planning digitalization

boosted agility, reduced overhead, and improved overall operational performance. These kinds of implementations show how digitization not only streamlines processes but also creates a more seamless and customer-centric aviation experience. Similar transformations

are taking place in Turkey, where local leaders like TASECS and Havelsan are advancing digital maturity in design, manufacturing, and simulation — reinforcing Turkey’s position as a key player in the global aviation and defense ecosystem.



# IGURAL FLIGHT



# Air Transat Touches Down in Istanbul with its First Direct Flight from Toronto

Air Transat has officially commenced operations to Türkiye, with its inaugural Toronto–Istanbul flight landing at iGA Istanbul Airport on 17 December 2025. The launch marks a significant milestone in Canada–Türkiye air connectivity and further strengthens Istanbul’s position as a transcontinental aviation hub.

The ceremony was attended by Server Aydın, Chief Commercial Officer of iGA Istanbul Airport; Howard Liebman, Vice President of Government Relations at Air Transat; Ferzan Ünlüsoy, Managing Partner at APG Türkiye; Sonia Kürek, Director of Sales at Air Transat; Gizem Çolak, Commercial Aviation Leader at iGA Istanbul Airport; along with a number of other distinguished guests.

The new service makes Air Transat the ninth airline to join iGA’s network in 2025, bringing the total number of scheduled passenger carriers operating from Istanbul Airport to 116. The development underscores the

airport’s continued network expansion and its growing appeal to North American carriers seeking year-round long-haul opportunities.

At a ceremony held to mark the inaugural arrival, Server Aydın, Chief Commercial Officer of iGA Istanbul Airport, described the launch as another strategic step in reinforcing the airport’s global role. He emphasized that the addition of Air Transat enhances connectivity with the Americas while creating new prospects for tourism and trade between Türkiye and Canada.

Howard Liebman, Vice President, Government Relations of Air Transat, positioned the route as a cornerstone of the airline’s long-term strategy. He highlighted three pillars behind the launch: optimizing fleet utilization through year-round service, driving profitable growth via partnership with Turkish Airlines, and diversifying traffic by targeting both visiting friends and relatives (VFR) demand and beyond-Istanbul connecting markets.





## Year-Round Wide-Body Operations

Air Transat is operating the route with its Airbus A330-200, configured with 345 seats. Flights operate year-round, with departures from Toronto on Tuesdays and Saturdays, and an additional Thursday frequency starting May 2026. Return services from Istanbul operate on Wednesdays and Sundays, with an added Friday frequency from May 2026.

The Istanbul service is designed not only for point-to-point demand but also to capitalize on the airport's extensive transfer capabilities. Through its commercial cooperation with Turkish Airlines, passengers benefit from interline and codeshare agreements allowing single-ticket itineraries and through-checked baggage to destinations across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

Within Canada, the route is supported by feeder traffic from Montreal, Ottawa, and Winnipeg, strengthening Air Transat's domestic connectivity into Toronto Pearson.

## Commercial Expansion in Türkiye

On 10 November, APG Türkiye was appointed as Air Transat's General Sales Agent (GSA) in the Turkish market. Following the inaugural flight,

APG Türkiye hosted a dedicated gathering with leading travel agencies to introduce the airline's product and long-haul strategy.

During the event, Sonia Kürek, Air Transat's Director of Sales – Europe, provided detailed insight into the airline's Türkiye growth plans, emphasizing Istanbul's role as a strategic gateway linking North America with Europe and emerging markets beyond.





Europe, the Caribbean, the United States, South America, and North Africa.

### Istanbul's Expanding Global Role

With more than 330 destinations worldwide, iGA Istanbul Airport continues to strengthen its status as a global super-connector. Recognized by Airports Council International Europe (ACI Europe) as the "Most Connected Airport in Europe," and recipient of multiple international accolades in 2025, the airport is consolidating its role at the crossroads of continents.

The arrival of Air Transat signals more than a new long-haul route; it reflects a broader shift in transatlantic dynamics. As airlines seek balanced, year-round operations and diversified revenue streams, Istanbul's geographic advantage and partnership



ecosystem position it as a pivotal gateway linking North America with Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

For Canada-Türkiye aviation relations, the touchdown of Air

Transat's A330 in Istanbul represents not just a new service, but a strategic alignment of network ambition, commercial partnership, and global hub development

### Award-Winning Leisure Carrier

Air Transat was named "World's Best Leisure Airline" at the 2025 Skytrax World Airline Awards, reinforcing its strong positioning in the competitive leisure segment.

The airline operates a modern Airbus fleet comprising 19 A321LR aircraft and 14 A330-200 wide-body aircraft. Its international network spans



# Nürnberg



# Nuremberg's Quiet Ambition: Why Albrecht Dürer Airport Is One of Europe's Most Interesting Regional Hubs



by Ayşe Akalın

There are airports that announce themselves loudly — vast, gleaming, exhausting. And then there are airports like Nuremberg's Albrecht Dürer, which do something considerably more difficult: they work quietly and very well. A visit to NUE rarely makes it onto aviation journalists' calendars, overshadowed as it always is by Frankfurt and Munich, Germany's twin giants to the south and west. That, it turns out, is precisely the point.

I visited Nuremberg Airport recently for a briefing with Christian Kaeser, VP of Aviation Sales and Traffic Development, accompanied by Silvia Arai Hoffmann. What followed was one of the more data-rich and candid conversations I've had at an airport in some time the kind of session where numbers tell a story rather than pad a press release.

## Record Numbers, Steady Hands

The headline is hard to ignore. In 2025, Nuremberg Airport handled 4,508,765 passengers — an 11.9% increase on the previous year and a new all-time record, surpassing even the pre-pandemic peak of 2018. Airport managing director

Dr. Michael Hupe was direct about what this means: "Never before have so many people used Nuremberg Airport to fly on holiday, embark on business trips or visit friends and relatives." Average seat load factors held at 83% across the year, meaning the additional capacity was absorbed cleanly by genuine demand rather than speculative scheduling.

Ranked 9th among German airports, NUE handled just over 4 million passengers in 2024 before crossing the 4.5 million threshold in 2025. Scheduled traffic — including low-cost operations — reached 2.812 million passengers, up 10.8% year on year. Tourist traffic grew even faster,

at 13.2%, reaching 1.631 million passengers. The most popular destinations were Turkey, Spain and Greece, with Antalya and Mallorca leading the list. Flight movements also rose, with 52,918 take-offs and landings recorded — an 8.8% increase.

## The Türkiye Factor

The most striking single data point in the airport's market analysis is the dominance of Türkiye. In 2024, Türkiye accounted for 24% of total passengers at NUE the single largest country market, ahead of Spain at 22% and Greece at 10%. This represents a dramatic shift from 2019, when Turkey and Germany each held a

17% share. The direction of travel is unambiguous.

Seven Turkish carriers currently operate between Nuremberg and Türkiye: Turkish Airlines, Pegasus Airlines, SunExpress, Corendon Airlines, Freebird Airlines, Mavi Gök Havacılık, and Air Anka Hava Yolları. AJet is expected to launch services next summer, which would bring the total to eight an unusually dense carrier profile for a regional airport of this size and a strong signal of where demand is concentrated. More than one million passengers traveled on Türkiye routes



Silvia Arai Hoffmann, Senior Manager Aviation Marketing; Ayşe Akalın, Editor in Chief of Aviation Turkey and Christian Kaeser, VP of Aviation Sales and Traffic Development



in the past twelve months, with over 50% of that traffic concentrated in just four summer months, a seasonality pattern the airport is actively working to address through its incentive structure.

## A Blue Ocean in Bavaria

Kaeser's strategic framing of Nuremberg's positioning was refreshingly clear. The airport deliberately positions itself as a "blue ocean" opportunity a phrase it uses not as marketing language but as a structural description. Unlike Frankfurt or Munich, NUE operates with low competitive intensity, no night curfew, 24-hour openings, and airport charges that sit among the lowest in Germany. Standard aviation charges at NUE run at €16.34 per passenger, against €38.55 at Frankfurt and €31.93 at Munich. With the airport's Blue Ocean Bonus incentive for new and unserved routes applied, that figure drops to €5.62 — and to €5.17 when the Winter Connectivity Bonus is combined. For an airline evaluating where to place capacity in the German

market, these are not trivial numbers.

The incentive structure itself is notable for its flexibility. The Blue Ocean Bonus offers up to 80% discounts on take-off and passenger charges for new routes, running for up to five years for classic services and three years for cargo. A Winter Connectivity Bonus, night-stop incentive, volume incentive, and a discount for next-generation aircraft such as the A321neo and 737 MAX are all fully combinable — an approach designed to attract carriers rather than simply accommodate them.

## The Passenger Experience, Reimagined

Beyond the commercial framework, NUE has invested in what happens after check-in. The airport has introduced a new integrated concept in which duty-free retail and food and beverage are no longer separated but designed as a single, continuous environment. The result is a more spacious and intuitive experience — and one with a deliberate



regional identity, with local Franconian beers and wines from nearby producers given prominent placement. It is a small detail, but in an era when airports increasingly feel interchangeable, local character is a meaningful differentiator.

## An Incoming Destination in Its Own Right

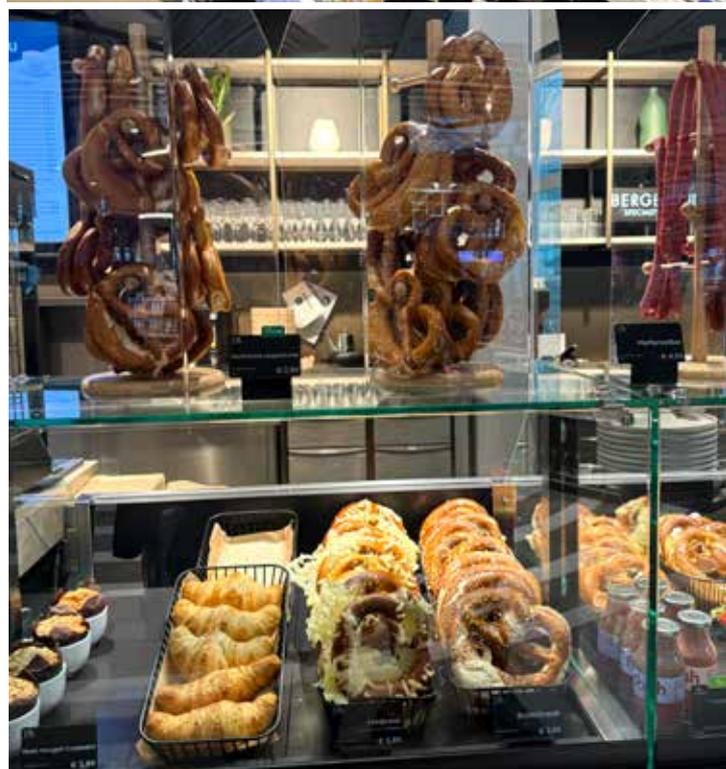
Nuremberg is no longer merely a departure point — it is increasingly a destination. The city and its surrounding metropolitan region welcomed over 800,000 international guests in 2024, a figure that has grown steadily since 2017. Hotel bed capacity has risen 45% since 2012, reaching 22,500 beds in 2024, with new brands including Leonardo Royal Hotels and Premier Inn among recent additions. The broader Franconian region offers four UNESCO World Heritage Sites — Würzburg, Bamberg, Bayreuth, and Regensburg — alongside Nuremberg's own medieval old town, its castle, the Memorium Nuremberg Trials documentation center, and the German National

Museum. Ten Michelin-starred restaurants and some 300 breweries in the surrounding area complete a cultural and gastronomic offer that considerably exceeds what the airport's size might suggest.

The airport's own data notes that Turkey could enter the top-ten source markets for incoming visitors to Nuremberg in 2025 — a development that would close a loop between the city's two strongest aviation corridors.

## A Model Worth Watching

What Nuremberg demonstrates, more clearly than most airports of its scale, is that regional aviation infrastructure does not have to be a passive beneficiary of demand — it can actively shape it. Through a combination of competitive cost structure, flexible incentives, honest market analysis, and investment in the passenger environment, NUE has built a case that is difficult to argue with. The record numbers of 2025 are the result.





# Where Aviation Meets Advent: Nuremberg Airport's Annual Christmas Rendezvous

There are industry gatherings, and then there are gatherings that manage to be genuinely memorable. Albrecht Dürer Airport Nürnberg's annual Christmas Rendezvous belongs firmly in the second category — a two-day event that combines serious aviation dialogue with one of Europe's most atmospheric seasonal backdrops, and does so with a confidence that suggests it knows exactly what it is.

This year's edition, held on 11–12 December in Nuremberg, brought together airport and airline executives from across Europe for a programme that moved

between boardrooms, a historic Christmas market, and one of Germany's most forward-looking corporate campuses all within the span of forty-eight hours.

## A Gathering of European Aviation

The breadth of participation this year reflected the growing reach of the

Christmas Rendezvous format. On the airport side, Bremen Airport, Glasgow Airport, Kraków Airport, Newcastle International Airport, and Tallinn Airport all sent representatives — a mix of coastal, Nordic, and Central European gateways that made for a genuinely diverse exchange of perspectives.

The airline contingent was equally strong. Turkish Airlines, KLM Cityhopper, easyJet, SunExpress, Pegasus Airlines, Corendon Airlines, and Mavi Gök Airlines all participated — a lineup that spans full-service carriers, low-cost operators, charter specialists, and regional players, and





that between them cover a significant share of Nuremberg's existing and potential route network. The presence of multiple Turkish carriers alongside a flag carrier of Turkish Airlines' scale was a particularly notable signal of how central the Turkey corridor has become to NUE's commercial strategy.

Rather than a large-format conference with passive audiences, the Christmas Rendezvous is designed around intimacy and access — the kind of event where conversations begun over a Nuremberg sausage at the Christmas market continue in a workshop the following morning.

## Siemens, Strategy, and the Future of Air Travel

The programme opened with an exclusive corporate insight at the Siemens Campus and Technology Center in Erlangen — a visit that placed aviation's infrastructure challenges in the context of one of Europe's most significant technology ecosystems. A meeting with the Siemens travel management team added a direct commercial dimension, bridging the gap between aviation supply and corporate demand in a way that few industry events bother to attempt.

Workshops and structured discussions followed, framed around the future of air travel — a broad canvas that, in practice, tends to produce more useful conversation when the group is small enough for genuine disagreement to surface. By all accounts,



it did. And in keeping with the spirit of the season, delegates also took part in a traditional Nuremberg gingerbread workshop — one of those programme additions that sounds like a footnote but tends to generate the most animated conversation of the entire two days. Nuremberg's gingerbread, it should be noted, is not a

seasonal novelty. It carries a protected geographical indication and has been produced in the city for over six centuries. Experiencing it in the hands of those who still make it properly is, quietly, one of the more memorable things the city has to offer.

## The Panel: A Conversation the Industry Needs

The intellectual centrepiece of the two days was a panel on innovation in airport charges and incentives — a subject that sounds dry until you consider how much of European aviation's near-term growth depends on getting it right.

The session opened with a keynote by Niklas Brehl, Manager of Infrastructure Advisory at PricewaterhouseCoopers,





titled "Single Till vs. Dual Till: Driving Collaboration Between Airlines and Airports." The distinction — whether an airport pools all its commercial revenues against its regulatory cost base, or keeps aeronautical and non-aeronautical income separate — has significant implications for how airports price access and how airlines evaluate

new routes. It is a debate that has been running for decades without resolution, which perhaps explains why it continues to generate heat.

The discussion was moderated by Ged Brown — keynote speaker, podcast host, Founder of the Tourism Seasonality Summit, and CEO of Low Season Traveller — whose background in

tourism seasonality gave the conversation a commercial edge that purely legal or regulatory moderators sometimes miss.

The panel itself was exceptionally well composed. Reinald Frankewitz, Head of Airport and Network Relations at Eurowings, brought the airline perspective with the directness that comes from

managing relationships with dozens of European airports simultaneously. Pawel Galiak, Director of Aviation and Commercial Services at Kraków Airport, offered the view from a rapidly growing Central European gateway that has navigated its own incentive structures with considerable success. Michael Hoppe, Chairman and Executive





Director of the Board of Airline Representatives in Germany (BARIG), provided the industry-wide framing that individual operators sometimes struggle to articulate. And Prof. Ulrich Hösch, a specialist in administrative and aviation law at Munich-based Graf von Westphalen, kept the discussion anchored in the specific legal framework

that governs airport charges in Germany — a framework that is, by European standards, unusually detailed and consequential.

The topics covered ranged from best-practice approaches to charge structures and incentive schemes, to the relative merits of bilateral agreements versus published incentive frameworks, to the legal considerations that constrain what airports can offer and what airlines can accept.

### The Nuremberg Advantage

What makes the Christmas Rendezvous work as a format is also what makes Nuremberg Airport work as an institution: a clear sense of its own identity and a willingness to use it. The Lord Mayor's reception, the Christmas market, the

local cuisine — these are not decorative additions to an aviation conference. They are the point. Nuremberg is a city that knows how to be itself, and the airport has learned to leverage that quality rather than apologise for it.

For the executives who attend each December, the Rendezvous has become something of a fixture — a

moment in the calendar where the pace of the industry slows just enough for the kind of thinking that quarterly reviews rarely permit. That it happens against the backdrop of one of the world's great Christmas markets is, as airport managing circles tend to say about the best route decisions, not a coincidence 🍷



# Vietnam Airlines and Turkish Travel Agencies Connect in Istanbul

APG Turkey has long had a talent for bringing the right people into the same room. Its recent Istanbul event, which gathered Vietnam Airlines alongside leading Turkish travel agencies and members of the press, was a case in point — a focused, well-curated evening that felt less like a promotional function and more like a genuine industry conversation.

At the centre of it was Tien Hoang Nguyen, Regional Director for France and Europe at Vietnam Airlines, who spoke with evident enthusiasm about a carrier in active expansion mode. Melis Özkanlı, Airlines Sales Manager at APG Network, followed with a presentation that framed Vietnam Airlines' positioning for the Turkish market with clarity and commercial precision.

## A Carrier That Has Earned Its Place

Vietnam Airlines- the national flag carrier of Vietnam and a SkyTeam Alliance member since 2010, the first Southeast Asian carrier to join the alliance — operates across a network that is larger than many European travellers realise: 106 routes, 400 daily flights, and service across 22 domestic and 36 international destinations. The fleet is one of Asia's youngest and most



technically advanced, built around Boeing 787-9 and 787-10 Dreamliners, Airbus A350-900s, and the fuel-efficient A320/A321neo family — a deliberate modernisation strategy that serves both operational efficiency and the airline's longer-term sustainability commitments.

The recognition has followed. Vietnam Airlines currently ranks among the Top 25 World's Safest Airlines for 2025 and the Top 20 World's Best Airlines — accolades supported by awards from Skytrax, APEX, and the World Travel Awards. For a carrier that navigated the pandemic



years and emerged with its strategic ambitions intact, these are not incidental achievements.

## Milan, Copenhagen, — and the Question of Istanbul

The European expansion that formed the heart of the Istanbul evening is real, accelerating, and now well documented. Vietnam Airlines launched direct service to Milan — three weekly flights on Boeing 787-9 from Hanoi — in July 2025, adding Italy to a European network that already covers Paris, London, Frankfurt, and Munich. On December 15, 2025, the airline inaugurated its first nonstop service between Ho Chi Minh City and Copenhagen, establishing the first-ever direct air link between Vietnam and Northern Europe. The new long-haul service connects Copenhagen and Ho Chi Minh City three times weekly using Boeing 787 aircraft.

And the momentum continues. Vietnam Airlines has announced the launch of nonstop service between Hanoi and Amsterdam from June 16, 2026, operating three times per week on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays using Airbus A350 aircraft — the

first direct connection between Vietnam and the Netherlands, and a route that required securing coveted slots at one of Europe's most capacity-constrained airports. With the addition of Amsterdam, Vietnam Airlines will serve eight European cities nonstop across 12 routes, including Paris, Frankfurt, London Heathrow, Munich, Milan, Copenhagen, Moscow and Amsterdam. Its share of total Vietnam-Europe seat capacity currently stands at 44.5% — a dominant position for any single carrier on a long-haul corridor.

The conversation around Turkey, meanwhile, was candid. Nguyen did not announce a forthcoming Istanbul route at the event. Istanbul already is as a transit node for Vietnamese travelers heading into Europe, and how much latent demand exists for a more direct connection in both directions. A direct service between Istanbul and Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City, or a deepened SkyTeam codeshare arrangement, would redirect a portion of that flow and create new markets simultaneously.

### APG Turkey's Role in the Equation

APG's positioning as the host of this event is itself a signal. As Vietnam Airlines' General Sales Agent in Turkey, APG Turkey is



the operational bridge between the carrier's European ambitions and the Turkish trade. The Istanbul event was, in that sense, both an introduction and an investment for future. Vietnam has emerged as one of Southeast Asia's most compelling tourism destinations — Hanoi's old quarter, Ha Long Bay, Hôi An, the

coastline of Da Nang — and Turkish outbound travelers have shown a consistent appetite for long-haul destinations that offer depth alongside accessibility. Vietnam Airlines, with its service record, modern fleet, and rapidly expanding European network, is well placed to serve that appetite.

### Sustainability and the Long View

Vietnam Airlines has committed to net-zero emissions by 2050, and its fleet modernization strategy is the operational expression of that commitment. The A320/A321neo and 787 Dreamliner families that form the backbone of its international operations represent a meaningful step forward in fuel efficiency. Vietnam Airlines also flew the first commercial passenger flight from Long Thanh International Airport on December 19, 2025 Vietnam's newest and most ambitious aviation infrastructure project, designed to accommodate up to 25 million passengers annually in its first phase and positioned as Southeast Asia's next major hub





# Ole, Ole, Ole!

## Madrid, Cuenca, Chinchón & Aranjuez by Air Europa

*While watching flamenco at Madrid's famous Michelin-starred Corral de la Morería, I realized that calling this dance merely a symbol of fire, passion, and love is not enough. Spain means life, but not just any life — living it to the fullest, courageously. Love, passion, anger — all of it. To live life fully, as it is, without hiding emotions, without fearing them, acknowledging their existence, and ultimately transforming.*

*As the famous Turkish poet Nazım Hikmet said: "Live this life as if you will never die." Spain is exactly this idea brought to life. A spirit shaped and transformed through intertwined cultures, wars, the 40-year Franco era, and all of history. It has deepened its roots in life, family, people, and the land they inhabit. That is why Spain continues to be one of the world's most visited countries, inviting people to truly live.*

*Beyond its history, multicultural and multi-religious past, vibrant entertainment, unique gastronomy, and long-standing wine traditions, Spain is a land of hidden treasures yet to be discovered. During a 6-day trip organized by TurEspaña and Air Europa, I had the opportunity to explore some of these hidden gems around Madrid: Cuenca, Aranjuez, and Chinchón.*



by Ayşe Akalın

*Cuenca, home to Europe's longest urban zipline, Tiroлина Urbana, and Spain's first abstract art museum, is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Royal Palace in Aranjuez exudes a mesmerizing atmosphere. At Bodega del Nero, a family-run business for five generations, we tasted traditional wines produced in terracotta vats. In Chinchón, we experienced authentic Spanish flavors at Mesón Cuevas del Vino, a favorite spot of celebrities such as Orson Welles, Yul Brynner, Adrien Brody, and Matt Dillon... All unforgettable stops on this journey.*

*Air Europa operates daily flights on the Istanbul–Madrid route with its Boeing 787 Dreamliner. This route has quickly become an important link between Turkey and Spain, while also providing convenient onward connections to the Americas via Madrid. In its first year, the route achieved an 80% load factor, offering over 148,000 seats, and has been warmly embraced by travelers.*



## Flying with Air Europa: A Dream Journey to Madrid From Istanbul to Madrid — in the Comfort of Business Class

The boarding call for Air Europa's flight comes just as the late afternoon light begins to soften over Istanbul Airport. There is something quietly fitting about leaving Turkey — that great crossroads of East and West — bound for Spain, another country that has spent centuries absorbing civilizations, digesting them slowly, and emerging richer for the effort.

I flew from Istanbul to Madrid with Air Europa — one of Spain's leading airlines — and the experience was, in every sense, a showcase of what modern aviation can offer. Launched in 2025, this direct service now operates daily, seven days a week, linking two of Europe's most vibrant cities. The numbers tell a compelling story: in the first five months of operation alone, over 300 flights were completed, carrying more than 90,000 passengers — with an average load factor exceeding 90%. By the end of its first year, the route had offered over 148,000 seats, and demand showed no sign of slowing.

The entire route is operated with the Boeing 787 Dreamliner — the aircraft Air Europa considers its global flagship. This was a deliberate choice: the 787's aerodynamics and engine technology allow for shorter journey times while simultaneously reducing fuel consumption and emissions, making it as efficient as it is comfortable. For a route of this strategic importance, there was no other option.

### Business Class: Five Stars Above the Clouds

On this journey, I experienced Air Europa's Business Class firsthand — and it genuinely impressed. The cabin on the 787 is designed to eliminate the fatigue that so often accompanies long-haul travel. Seats convert into fully flat beds, each with its own privacy divider and personal screen, transforming the space into a private retreat at 35,000 feet. It is precisely this level of comfort that the airline points to as one of the key reasons for deploying the Dreamliner



The Boeing 787 Dreamliner: quieter engines, larger windows, and significantly reduced emissions.

on the Istanbul route: only a widebody aircraft of this calibre can deliver Business Class the way it deserves to be delivered.

The dining experience matched the surroundings perfectly. A thoughtfully curated menu inspired by Spanish culinary traditions, paired with quality wines and attentive, personalised service, made the hours pass effortlessly. The cabin crew were warm, professional, and genuinely attentive — a reminder of just how much the human element matters in premium travel.

## Connecting Two Global Hubs

The Istanbul–Madrid route is far more than a connection between two cities. It is a bridge between continents — and a strategic asset for both Turkey and Spain. Air Europa's Madrid-Barajas hub is one of Europe's most powerful gateways to Latin America, with direct connections to Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Argentina, New York, and beyond. Passengers travelling from Istanbul can reach these destinations with a single, seamless transit through Madrid.

This is not incidental. Nearly 20% of passengers on the Istanbul service travel onwards to other destinations — the vast majority of them across the Atlantic. The route is already

proving to be a meaningful driver of Air Europa's transatlantic traffic, reinforcing the importance of Istanbul as a market that connects Europe with Asia and Africa. For Turkish travellers seeking efficient, comfortable access to the Americas, this hub-within-a-hub model is a genuinely compelling proposition.

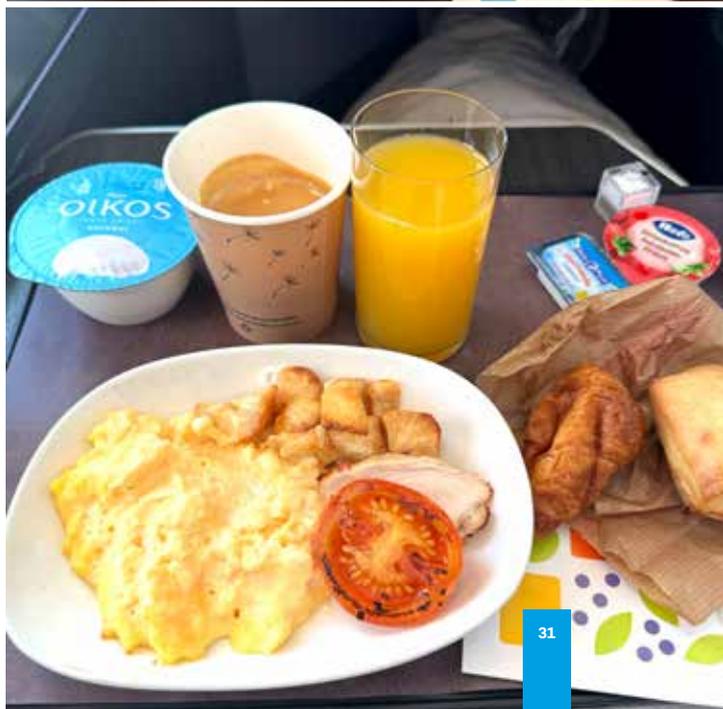
## Two Airlines, One vision

One of the most significant developments on the horizon is Turkish Airlines' planned acquisition of a 25% stake in Air Europa — a move that brings together two of the world's most important aviation hubs: Istanbul and Madrid. The two carriers already operate codeshare agreements, and their networks are deeply complementary. This partnership has the potential to reshape connectivity between Europe, Turkey, Latin America, Asia, and Africa — creating one of the most powerful aviation alliances in the industry.

For travellers, the implications are straightforward: greater choice, smoother connections, and a combined network that spans virtually every major market on earth. For the aviation industry, it is a signal that the Istanbul–Madrid axis is becoming one of the defining corridors of the decade.



Air Europa Business Class: fully flat seats, personal screens, and a curated dining experience on board the 787.







## Madrid: The City That Was Always More Than a Capital

Madrid is a relatively young capital by European standards, but what it lacks in medieval layers it makes up for in imperial ambition. In 1561, King Philip II looked at a modest Castilian market town sitting on the central plateau of Iberia — 650 metres above sea level, equidistant from every corner of his enormous kingdom — and decided that this was where Spain's capital would be.

Madrid catches you off guard. It does not announce itself the way other European capitals do — it offers no dramatic medieval skyline, no river-straddling silhouette, no grand first impression designed to overwhelm. Instead, it draws you in: with its late-night bars,

its unhurried museum mornings, its street-corner conversations, and a relationship with time that feels genuinely southern. Madrid is less a city than a way of living.

The Habsburgs filled it with paintings. The Bourbons landscaped it with grand avenues and neoclassical palaces. The 20th century brought civil war, dictatorship, and eventually, one of the most exuberant democratic rebirths in modern European history — the movida madrileña of the late 1970s and '80s, when a city that had been locked down for four decades suddenly exploded with music, film, fashion, and a very particular kind of creative recklessness. That energy never fully

dissipated. Walk through Malacaña or Lavapiés on a Thursday night and you can still feel it.

### Puerta del Sol: Where the City Begins

Every road in Spain begins at Puerta del Sol. Literally: the zero kilometre marker embedded in the pavement outside the old post office building marks the point from which all national distances are measured. The name means "Gate of the Sun," and the square has served as the city's symbolic centre since the 15th century — a meeting point, a protest ground, a celebration space, and the site of Madrid's most enduring annual ritual.

The square's most recognisable permanent resident is the bear — the symbol of Madrid, depicted in the city's coat of arms rearing against a strawberry tree, its roots reaching back to the forests and meadows

that once surrounded the medieval settlement. The bear and the madroño tree stand today as a bronze sculpture at the square's eastern end, serving as the city's unofficial meeting point and its most photographed landmark.

On New Year's Eve, Puerta del Sol transforms. Thousands gather beneath the clock tower of the old Casa de Correos, each clutching a small bag of twelve grapes. As midnight strikes, each of the twelve chimes is met with a grape — las doce uvas de la suerte, the twelve grapes of luck. Eat all twelve before the last bell fades and the new year will bring you fortune. Miss one and, well, you try again next year. The tradition dates back at least to 1895 and spread across Spain in the early 20th century, partly encouraged by Alicante grape growers looking to move a bumper harvest. It has outlasted the marketing that created it by about a century.



The 1615 edition of “Don Quixote de la Mancha” — the second part of Cervantes’ masterpiece. Four centuries later, this book still represents the timeless struggle between idealism and reality.



## Galería de las Colecciones Reales: Madrid's Most Ambitious Museum Opening in Decades

First conceived in the 1930s and finally opened in June 2023, the Royal Collections Gallery is 25 years and €172 million in the making — the biggest museum project in Spain and Europe in decades. The 40,000-square-metre building is carved into the rocky landscape beside the Royal Palace, extending from the Campo del Moro gardens to the palace's Plaza de la Armería. The location alone is extraordinary — a modern structure embedded in the hillside, with views across the city that kings once claimed as their own.

The museum houses more than 150,000 paintings, tapestries, furniture, decorative art, armour, and royal carriages amassed by Spain's monarchy over five centuries. The ground floor is devoted to the Habsburgs, with the tapestry collection and Royal Armoury alongside works by Bosch, Titian, El Greco, Ribera, Velázquez, and Caravaggio. The second floor is dedicated to the Bourbons. And beneath it all, a section of Madrid's original ninth-century city wall — built during the reign of Muhammad I of Córdoba and hidden from view for centuries — was discovered



during construction and is now displayed as one of the museum's most quietly remarkable exhibits.

The museum is free Monday to Thursday from 6pm to 8pm — the most civilised hour to arrive, when the light through the western windows softens and the crowds thin.

Beyond the museums, Madrid rewards wandering. The Barrio de los Austrias, the old Habsburg quarter, clusters around Plaza Mayor — a vast arcaded square that has served as marketplace, bullfighting arena, and public stage for five centuries. La Latina, just downhill, is where the



serious tapas crawl happens, along Cava Baja and Cava Alta: streets lined with taverns that have no interest in modernising and every reason to stay as they are.

El Rastro, the Sunday flea market that sprawls down from La Latina toward the Ronda de Toledo, is one of those places that has no business still existing in a digitised world and continues regardless with magnificent indifference. Antique furniture, second-hand books, vintage clothing, ceramics, hardware of uncertain provenance.

Opened in 1916 and the last surviving cast-iron market hall in Madrid, the Mercado de San Miguel — a short walk

from Plaza Mayor — was transformed into the city's first gourmet market in 2009. More than 20 stands spread across the elegant iron-and-glass interior offer tapas and produce from every corner of Spain — Iberian ham, Galician shellfish, Castilian cheeses, and Mediterranean rice dishes all best consumed standing, glass in hand, at whatever pace the morning allows.

Retiro Park, a former royal pleasure garden and now one of Europe's great urban parks, is where Madrid goes to breathe. Row a boat on the artificial lake on a Sunday morning and you will understand exactly why Madrileños are so attached to their city.





## Sobrino de Botín: The World's Oldest Restaurant

In the heart of Madrid's historic Austrias district, just steps from the Plaza Mayor, stands the oldest restaurant in the world: Sobrino de Botín. Opened in 1725 and confirmed by the Guinness Book of World Records as the longest continuously running restaurant on record, Botín has been owned by only two families in its entire 300-year history

The physical heart of the restaurant is its wood-fired granite oven, which has reportedly never been turned off since the day it was lit in the 18th

century. Everything else follows from that fact. The signature dishes — cochinito asado, roast suckling pig, and lechazo, slow-roasted baby lamb — emerge from that same

oven with a simplicity that three centuries of practice has made very difficult to improve upon.

Francisco Goya once worked here as a dishwasher.

Ernest Hemingway immortalised it in *The Sun Also Rises*. The room looks much as it did when both men passed through. That, ultimately, is the point.



# TÜRKİYE'NİN EN YENİ FİLOSU PEGASUS'TA!

Pegasus Hava Yolları olarak Türkiye'nin en yeni uçaklarına sahip olmanın gururunu yaşıyoruz. Toplamda **127 uçağımızla** 3 kıtada, 56 ülkede **158 noktaya** erişerek uçuş ağımızı her geçen gün genişletiyoruz.





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## Where Flamenco Meets the Table: Corral de la Morería

There are places in Madrid that exist simply to be visited, and then there are places that insist on being felt. Corral de la Morería, tucked into a narrow street in one of the oldest quarters of the city, belongs firmly to the second category.

Manuel del Rey, a son of hotel entrepreneurs and a passionate flamenco devotee, founded the tablao





on the 25th of May, 1956. It was, by all accounts, an unlikely venture — a formal flamenco stage combined with haute cuisine, in a neighbourhood that offered little obvious promise. It worked. And it has not stopped working since.

Today, the tablao is run by Juan Manuel del Rey, who continues the legacy of his parents alongside his brother Armando — a family institution now well into its second generation, still operating from the

same address, still guided by the same conviction that flamenco deserves to be experienced rather than merely watched. Meeting Juan Manuel in person, one understands immediately that this is not a business so much as an inheritance — held carefully, renewed deliberately, and taken seriously in every detail.

The stage of Corral de la Morería has hosted some of the most significant moments in the art form's modern history: Paco de Lucía premiered *Entre Dos*

*Aguas* here; Camarón de la Isla first performed on this stage at the age of thirteen. The list of artists who have passed through reads like a canon of flamenco itself.

The gastronomic dimension is equally remarkable. Corral de la Morería is the only flamenco tablao in the world to hold a Michelin star— awarded to Basque chef David García, whose tasting menu *Soniquete* draws on his roots in the north while the dancers

command the stage just metres away. The wine cellar deserves particular mention: it holds one of the most extensive collections of Marco de Jerez wines in existence, including rare and long-lost labels found nowhere else.

To spend an evening at Corral de la Morería is to understand something about Madrid that no museum or guidebook can quite convey: that here, beauty is never just decorative. It is always, in some way, alive.



With Armando del Rey, co-owner of Corral de la Morería — keeping the family flame alive since 1956.



## Luxury at Leisure: Las Rozas Village

Twenty-five kilometres northwest of Madrid, Las Rozas Village occupies a curious position in the retail landscape — too carefully designed to feel like a typical outlet, too generous with its discounts to be mistaken for anything else. Opened in 2000, it is part of a select network of nine European shopping villages, found in cities where design matters: London, Paris, Milan, Dublin, Frankfurt, Barcelona. Madrid's entry into this club is, by most accounts, one of the more pleasant.

The layout is an open-air pedestrian promenade lined with colourful

facades and architecture inspired by Mediterranean elegance — more village

piazza than shopping centre. The effect is deliberate and, it must be



Marta Marcias Bou, Senior Partnership Manager, Las Rozas Village



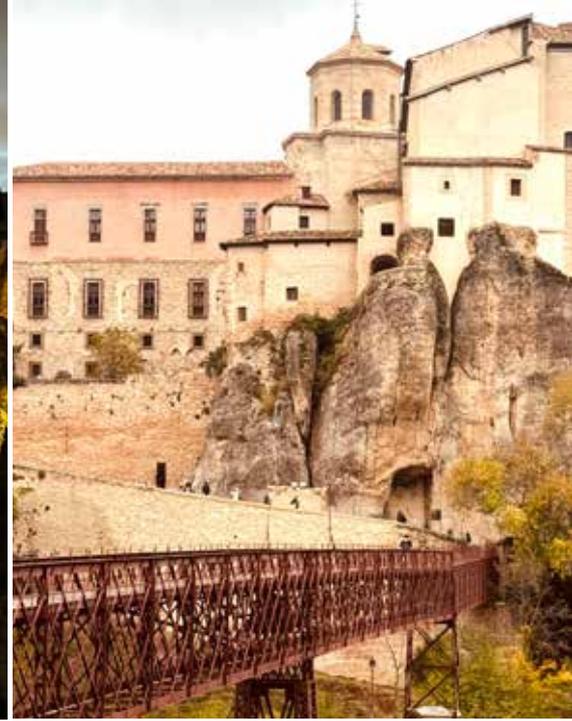
said, effective. You find yourself strolling rather than rushing, pausing at café terraces between boutiques rather than navigating fluorescent corridors.

Over 100 boutiques line the promenade — Jimmy Choo, Prada, Loewe, Bulgari, Burberry, Carolina Herrera, Versace — all offering discounts of up to 60% year-round. For those who want to give the experience a more curated edge, a personal shopper service is available, and hands-free shopping means your bags are delivered to you once you're done, so the stroll remains unencumbered





# Cuenca



## Cuenca: A City Suspended in Time

Just an hour by train from Madrid, Cuenca— one of 15 UNESCO World Heritage cities in Spain.— stole my heart with its dramatic views and medieval charm. There are places in Spain that arrive in your consciousness before you quite expect them to, and Cuenca is one of them. The old city appears suddenly as you climb from the new town below: a medieval settlement balanced on a narrow limestone promontory between the gorges of the Júcar and Huécar rivers, its buildings pressed together against the rock as if for warmth, its streets dropping away on both sides into green, vertiginous emptiness.

UNESCO granted Cuenca World Heritage status in 1996, recognising

it as an outstanding example of a medieval fortified city. Standing on the Puente de San Pablo — the iron footbridge that spans the Huécar gorge — and looking back at the Casas Colgadas, the famous Hanging Houses, is one of those travel moments that photographs can only approximate. These 14th-century buildings, cantilevered out over the cliff face on wooden balconies, manage to be simultaneously precarious and permanent.

The Plaza Mayor is the civic heart of the old city, dominated by the unfinished façade of Cuenca's Gothic cathedral, begun in 1182 on the site of the former Arab mosque and never quite completed — which gives it an oddly endearing quality, like a great sentence interrupted mid-thought.





## Spain's First Abstract Art Museum Lives in the Heart of Cuenca

The Museo de Arte Abstracto Español houses a remarkable collection of Spanish abstract art from the 1950s and '60s — Tapies, Chillida, Antonio Saura — that stands in striking counterpoint to its medieval surroundings. Spain's first museum of abstract art, it was founded in 1966 by Fernando Zóbel, a Spanish-Filipino visionary who, together with Cuenca-born Gustavo Torner, became known as one of the fathers of the "Group of Cuenca." Together they brought the museum to life within the iconic Hanging Houses (Casas Colgadas), leaving behind a lasting cultural legacy.

Stepping inside, visitors come face to face with the masterpieces that shaped Spain's modern art movement — works from the 1960s and '70s that still pulse with the energy of their era. Today, that legacy lives on across three fundamental and complementary spaces: the Museum of Abstract Art, the Torner Space, and the Antonio Perez Foundation. Each holds essential collections that

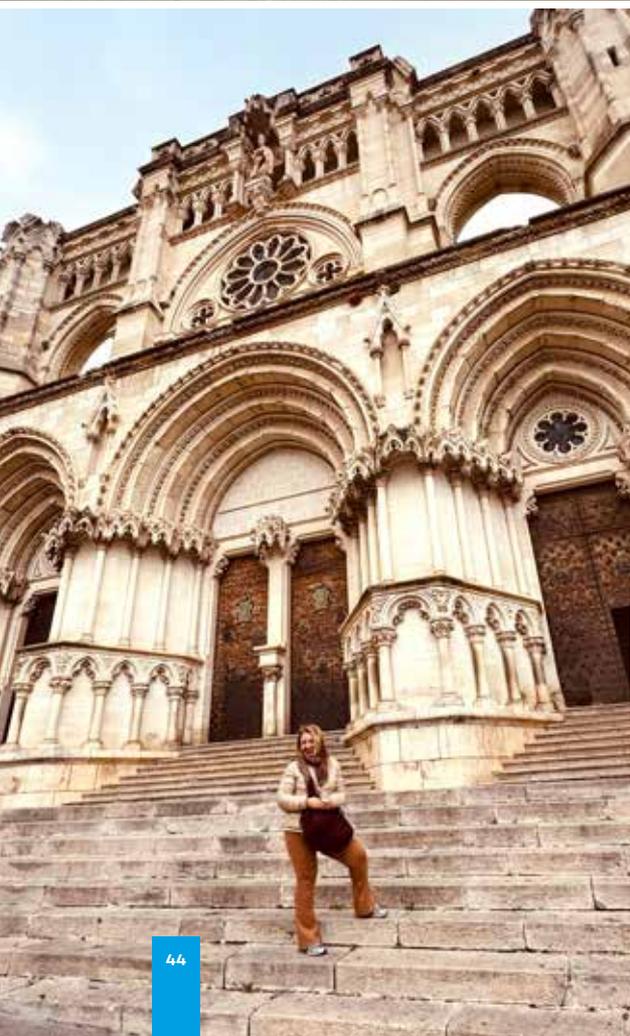
illuminate the artistic currents which crossed the Atlantic and carved out their own identity in this city.

It was, in many ways, a story of joyful coincidences — and that spirit of unexpected creative collision continues to draw hundreds of travelers from around the world each year.

## Cuenca's Sacred Landmarks

Religious tourism is woven into the very soul of Cuenca, a UNESCO World Heritage city. At its heart stands Spain's most French Gothic cathedral — described by Galdós as a "mystery of silence and darkness" — the first Gothic temple in Castile.

From the medieval El Salvador church, where the famous Las Turbas procession begins, to the 18th-century San Felipe Neri with its Roman-inspired interior, Cuenca's sacred architecture spans centuries of devotion. The Rococo Virgin de la Luz church, the Santa Cruz church now housing the Roberto Polo art collection, and the Bishop's Palace with its Diocesan Museum complete a journey where art, history, and faith converge at every turn.





## Flying Over Cuenca

For thrill-seekers, Cuenca offers an experience unlike any other in Spain. The Tiroлина Urbana, Europe's longest urban zipline, sends riders soaring 445

meters over the city at speeds of up to 70 km/h, delivering an unmatched combination of adrenaline and breathtaking scenery. Below, centuries of history unfold: medieval cliffs, hanging houses, and the winding Huécar

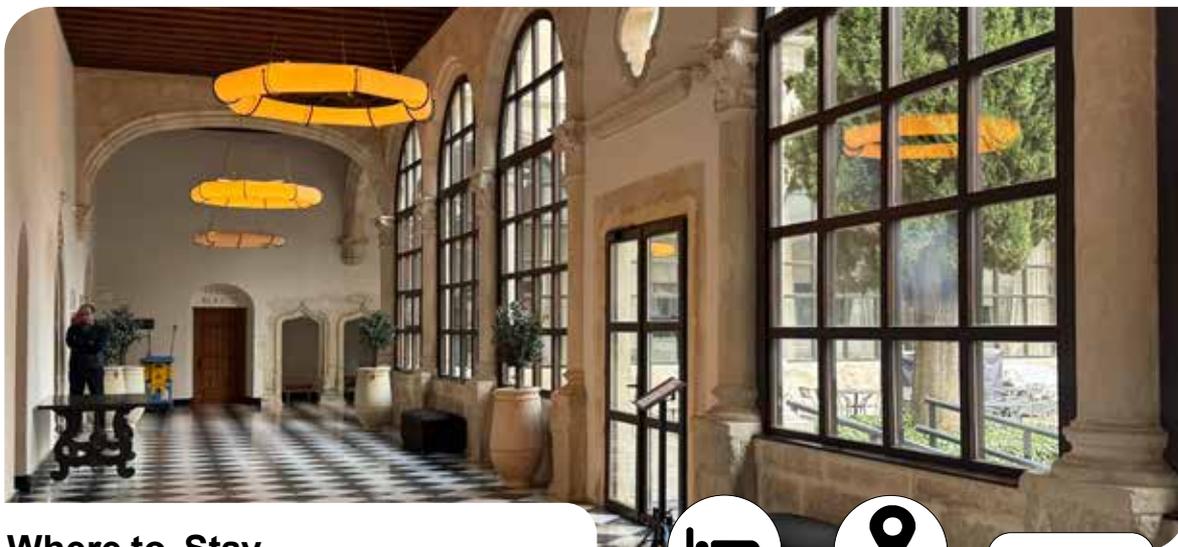
gorge stretch out in one sweeping panorama.

Just 30 kilometres north, the Ciudad Encantada adds another dimension to the adventure — a natural park of bizarrely eroded limestone formations that feels like another world

entirely, earning its name as the "Enchanted City."

Together, they make a compelling case for venturing beyond Cuenca's old town. If you're looking for something truly unforgettable in Spain, this is it.





## Where to Stay Paradores de Turismo de España

For an unforgettable stay in Cuenca, look no further than Parador de Cuenca. Housed in a former monastery, it's part of Paradores de Turismo de España — a state-run collection of historic hotels

set in castles, monasteries, and palaces across Spain. The mission is twofold: to preserve the country's cultural heritage while offering travelers a truly unique experience. And it delivers on both counts.

Waking up to views of the iconic Hanging Houses (Casas Colgadas) from a centuries-old monastery is, simply put, unforgettable. History, charm, and breathtaking scenery — all in one place.

For those seeking something more intimate, Posada de San José is a wonderful alternative stone walls, local warmth, and traditional flavors that capture the soul of Cuenca just as beautifully.



where to stay



## Where to Eat Posada de San José

where to eat



Cuenca's gastronomy is rooted in hearty Castilian tradition. Must-tries include morteruelo — a rich, spiced pâté of game meats and liver — ajoarriero, a salt cod preparation with roots older than the city itself, and resolí, a deceptively smooth liqueur of coffee, anise, and orange rind that locals drink with an ease that betrays its strength.

For a meal with a view, Posada de San José delivers on both food and scenery — its terrace looks out over one of Cuenca's most breathtaking panoramas. For something livelier, head to Restaurante Kadon in the newer part of the city, a local favorite known for creative tapas. The oxtail and tiger milk tapas are not to be missed — best enjoyed, naturally, with a cold Mahou.



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# Chinchón



## Chinchón: A Square That Contains Multitudes

Leave Madrid's noise behind and drive south for about 45 kilometres, and you arrive somewhere time seems to have stopped. Chinchón invites you to slow down at every turn — its winding cobblestone streets, the 15th-century Plaza Mayor, the unmistakable Castilian skyline framed by wooden balconies.

The drive from Madrid to Chinchón takes you through a landscape of olive groves and low vineyards, the road winding through a countryside that has changed less than almost anywhere else in the region. Chinchón itself is, in the best possible sense, a one-square town — but what a square.

The Plaza Mayor of Chinchón, dating from the 15th century, is circular in form and surrounded by three tiers of wooden-balconied houses whose green shutters give the whole thing a slightly operatic

quality. It has served as a bullring, a film set — Orson Welles, Yul Brynner, Adrien Brody, and Matt Dillon among those who have worked and lingered here — and the nerve centre of village life. During the August fiestas, the square becomes a bullring once more, as it has done for centuries.

The town produces an anise-based liqueur — Anís de Chinchón — manufactured in cave cellars beneath the town. Buying a bottle and sitting with it on the plaza at dusk is not an obligation, strictly speaking, but it would be a waste to leave without doing so. The Mesón Cuevas del Vino, one of the village's most celebrated restaurants, occupies some of these very caves: a place where the stone walls sweat gently in winter and the wine list reads like a short history of the region.

The Church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, largely rebuilt after Napoleon's troops sacked it in 1808, contains a painting by Goya — the Assumption of the Virgin — that most visitors walk past before they realise what it is. Take a moment.





## The Family That Bottles Time: Bodega del Nero

The town's real treasure lies beneath those streets, in cellars where the scent of stone and earth blend into something almost sacred.

Founded in 1870, Bodega del Nero is today kept alive by its fifth generation. In the hands of Roberto López, this winery carries within it a story of change, loss, and deliberate return.

The earliest generations produced their wine in terracotta jars. Then, as practicality gained ground, the family followed the times: Roberto's mother switched to concrete and plaster-lined vessels, the modern choice of her era. But Roberto looked further back — to his grandmother's way of doing things. He returned to the terracotta tinaja,

the ancient clay jar that had been at the heart of the winery's origins. It was not mere nostalgia. His grandmother had long insisted this was the right

path, and when Roberto finally followed her lead, the market responded. Sales grew. The story had found its audience.



## So why terracotta?

Terracotta carries a growing appeal in today's wine world. Unlike oak barrels, clay jars last indefinitely and require no deforestation to produce — making them both a traditional and an environmentally conscious choice. And there is the power of narrative: modern consumers increasingly want more than a bottle of wine. They want to hold a living piece of history in their hands.

Speaking of history — in the cellars of Bodega del Nero, there is one bottle that stops you in your tracks. Dated 1943, it is 82 years old. It can no longer be drunk, but it is occasionally used in special dishes. Made during wartime, during years of scarcity, it has somehow survived. It feels less like a bottle of wine and more like a chapter of lived history, sealed in glass.



## A Table Set by History: Mesón Cuevas del Vino

If Bodega del Nero tells the story of Chinchón through its wine, then Mesón Cuevas del Vino tells it through its table. Tucked inside a building that has stood for nearly three centuries, a few cobblestoned blocks from the Plaza Mayor, this is not simply a restaurant — it is a place where the town's entire gastronomic soul seems to have gathered and refused to leave.

Founded in 1964 by Narciso García Ortego — a doctor widely regarded as eccentric for opening

a restaurant in a village where, as locals put it, "nobody comes to eat" — the Mesón has since become one of the most

iconic gastronomic corners of the entire Community of Madrid. WineTourism Today his daughter Yajaira runs the place with the

same stubborn devotion to tradition.

The space unfolds through ancient wine cellars, cave





dining rooms and a three-hundred-year-old olive oil mill. The kitchen has never made peace with modernity — everything is cooked over wood fire, charcoal grills and clay pots. WineTourism Suckling lamb, blood sausage, migas with chorizo: the menu reads like a love letter to Castilian cuisine.

The walls and old terracotta jars are covered in the autographs of a remarkable

parade of guests — Orson Welles, Yul Brynner, Adrien Brody, Matt Dillon Bodega del Nero among them. Each left their mark on the very same vessels that once held the wine of this land.

At Bodega del Nero, the clay jar holds memory. Here at the Mesón, it has become a guestbook. Chinchón, it turns out, has a way of making everyone want to leave something behind.





## The Royal Spring: Aranjuez

Forty-seven kilometres south of Madrid, Aranjuez occupies a peculiar position in Spanish history built for pleasure, declared a Royal Site by Philip II in the 16th century and subsequently transformed by his Bourbon successors into something approaching a Spanish Versailles. UNESCO added it to the World Heritage list in 2001. Beyond the palace, the town rewards unhurried exploration: the Jardín de la Isla, laid out on a narrow island between two arms of the Tagus, offers formal parterres, ancient plane trees and fountains that still work. The Prince's Garden stretches east along the river for nearly three kilometres, more romantically landscaped in the English style. Aranjuez is also famous for its strawberries and asparagus, grown in the fertile soil

of the Tagus floodplain — and for the seasonal Strawberry Train that connects Atocha station in Madrid to Aranjuez between May and October, with costumed attendants serving strawberries to passengers on the journey south. It is, admittedly, the kind of thing that sounds contrived until you are doing it, at which point it is simply pleasant.

## The Palacio Real: Inside the Bourbon Dream

The history of the palace as a royal site began in the 16th century, but it was the first Bourbon king, Philip V, who decided to resume and expand the work in 1700, intending to make Aranjuez a rival to Versailles. For centuries, Spanish monarchs selected specific Royal Sites to enjoy each season — summer in La Granja, autumn in



El Escorial, winter in the Royal Palace of Madrid. When spring arrived, their residence of choice was Aranjuez.

The palace is a neoclassical set piece, its rooms layered with the particular decorative excess that Bourbon monarchs were constitutionally unable to resist. The Throne Room is covered entirely in velvet and furnished in Rococo style, with a ceiling painting representing an allegory of the Monarchy. The Porcelain Room, built between 1759 and 1765 by Italian artists under orders from King Charles III, is covered entirely in porcelain plates from Madrid's Buen Retiro factory — white backgrounds decorated with garlands, Chinese motifs and exotic reliefs. There is also an Arab Cabinet and an oratory with superb acoustics — every room unlike the

last, each channelling a different century's obsession.

The palace has been the scene of important historical events: the wedding of King Charles IV in 1765, the signing of the Treaty of Aranjuez in 1777, and the abdication of King Ferdinand VII in 1808. History here is not merely decorative — it happened in these rooms.

At the far end of the Prince's Garden, the Casa del Labrador — a small pleasure palace built in imitation of Versailles' Petit Trianon — contains one of the most concentrated accumulations of decorative excess in Spain: silk walls, marble floors, clocks of baroque elaboration, and the slight feeling that the whole thing was built for an audience that never quite arrived





# Never Ending Korea



# Korea Tourism Organization Expands Its Global Tourism Vision Culture, Connectivity and K-Content: A Strategic Vision for Deeper Tourism Ties

As interest in Korean culture continues to surge globally—driven by K-dramas, K-pop, cuisine and cutting-edge lifestyle trends—Türkiye has emerged as one of the fastest-growing outbound markets for South Korea. At the heart of this momentum stands the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO), intensifying its engagement through targeted initiatives.

In this exclusive interview with Aviation Turkey Magazine, Jiman Jung, MENA Director of the Korea Tourism Organization, discusses how the Istanbul event laid the groundwork for stronger institutional collaboration and rising two-way visitor flows. With Turkish arrivals to Korea projected to surpass 60,000 in 2025—more than doubling within two years—the outlook signals a new chapter in bilateral tourism relations.

Jung also outlines Korea's strategy of presenting its cultural and historical heritage through immersive, story-driven experiences—where royal palaces, UNESCO-listed sites and traditional markets coexist with contemporary K-culture, advanced technology and globally influential lifestyle trends. From Seoul's vibrant urban energy to emerging "hidden gems" such as Gangneung and Andong, and from MICE leadership rankings to seasonal festivals like the Hwacheon Ice Festival, Korea is positioning itself as a year-round, multi-dimensional destination.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: The K-Tourism Connection in Istanbul 2025 successfully connected key players from Korea and Türkiye tourism sectors. What were your main takeaways from the event, and how do you see it contributing to stronger tourism ties between the two countries?**

**Jiman Jung:** The K-Tourism Connection in Istanbul 2025 was a highly meaningful platform that brought together key stakeholders from the Korean and Turkish tourism industries.

One of the main takeaways was the strong mutual interest in developing concrete cooperation, particularly in areas such as tourism product development, cultural exchange, and market connectivity. The number of Turkish visitors to Korea is projected to more than double within just two years, exceeding 60,000 visitors in 2025, and this event is expected to serve as a catalyst for further expanding people-to-people exchanges between the two countries.

Beyond networking, the event created a strong foundation for follow-up discussions and future collaboration, which we believe will contribute to strengthening tourism ties and increasing two-way visitor flows between Korea and Türkiye.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: How do you highlight Korea's cultural and historical sites in your campaigns?**

**Jiman Jung:** In our campaigns, Korea's cultural and historical assets are presented through a story-driven and experience-focused approach.

Rather than showcasing sites as standalone attractions, we connect heritage locations such as palaces, temples, and UNESCO-listed sites with local stories, traditions, and everyday life.

This allows visitors to gain a deeper understanding of Korean culture while enjoying an engaging and immersive travel experience.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: Which destinations in Korea would you recommend to first-time visitors? Are there any lesser-known "hidden gems" in Korea that tourists should explore?**

**Jiman Jung:** For first-time visitors to Korea, we usually recommend Seoul as a starting point, combined with destinations such as Busan and Gyeongju (the 2026 APEC host city), where travelers can experience a balance of modern city life, history, and natural scenery.

In particular, Seoul, as the capital of Korea, allows visitors to see and experience in real life the iconic locations they may have encountered in the latest K-dramas and films on platforms such as Netflix.

For those looking to explore beyond the well-known routes, cities such as Gangneung, Jeonju, Andong, and Yeosu are emerging as hidden



gems, offering authentic local culture, regional cuisine, and a slower pace of travel.

**Aviation Turkey:** Are there particular regions or experiences that are ideal for short trips versus longer stays?

**Jiman Jung:** For short trips, major cities like Seoul and Busan are ideal, as they allow visitors to experience both Korea's traditional past and its cutting-edge future at the same time, while also enjoying a wide range of globally popular K-content such as K-beauty and Korean cuisine.

These cities also benefit from excellent transportation networks and a wide variety of attractions that can be enjoyed within a limited timeframe.

For longer stays, regions such as Jeju Island, Gangwon Province, and the southern regions of Korea are well suited, as they offer nature-based experiences, wellness tourism, and opportunities to engage more deeply with local culture.

**Aviation Turkey:** How do tourism experiences in Korea vary across the seasons? Are there particular festivals or seasonal events that are a must-see for visitors?

**Jiman Jung:** Korea's four distinct seasons provide very different travel experiences throughout the year.

Spring is known for cherry blossoms and cultural festivals, summer for coastal and outdoor activities, autumn for fall foliage and culinary travel, and winter for snowy landscapes and seasonal festivals.

One representative winter festival is the Hwacheon Ice-fishing Festival, where visitors of all ages can enjoy a unique experience

of ice fishing by breaking through thick frozen river ice together with family and friends.

Seasonal festivals and regional events, particularly in spring and autumn, are highly recommended, as they allow visitors to experience Korea's culture in a vibrant and authentic way.

**Aviation Turkey:** How is Korea positioned as a MICE destination for international tourists and business travelers? Which cities or venues in Korea are particularly popular for MICE tourism?

**Jiman Jung:** Korea is well positioned as a leading MICE destination in Asia, supported by world-class infrastructure, advanced technology, and a high level of service quality.

According to the Union of International Associations (UIA), Korea ranked 3rd globally and 1st in Asia as a MICE destination in 2024.

Cities such as Seoul, Busan, and Incheon are especially popular for





international meetings, exhibitions, and conventions, offering modern venues alongside rich cultural and leisure options.

The ability to combine business events with leisure experiences makes Korea particularly attractive for international business travelers.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey:** Are there specific cultural experiences or local foods that you encourage visitors to try?

**Jiman Jung:** We actively encourage visitors to experience Korean cuisine, traditional markets, and hands-on cultural activities such as cooking classes and craft workshops.

These include wearing hanbok and visiting royal palaces, making kimchi, shopping and bargaining with warm and friendly locals at traditional markets, and even learning K-pop dance routines.

Korea is also widely recognized for its beauty

industry, and experiences such as professional skincare treatments and styling similar to those enjoyed by celebrities have gained explosive popularity, particularly among female visitors.

Iconic dishes like kimchi, bulgogi, and bibimbap, as well as regional specialties, play a key role in helping visitors connect with Korean culture.

Korean cuisine is considered a representative example of well-being food, making extensive use of fermentation techniques that are beneficial for health. Visitors from Türkiye, a country recognized as one of the world's top three cuisines, will not be disappointed by the diversity and depth of flavors found in Korean food.

Food is an essential part of the travel experience and one of the most effective ways to understand local life in Korea.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey:** How do you showcase modern Korean lifestyle alongside traditional culture?

**Jiman Jung:** Korea offers a unique harmony between tradition and modernity.

Alongside historic palaces and traditional hanok villages, we highlight contemporary elements such as K-pop, fashion, design, and café culture.

With its cutting-edge technology and progressive urban culture, Korea is not just a destination to visit once, but a place people want to return to in order to continuously experience its trendy K-culture lifestyle.

By presenting both aspects together, we aim to showcase Korea not only as a travel destination, but as a dynamic country where heritage and modern lifestyle naturally coexist 🇰🇷





## Pegasus Airlines Honored Atatürk on November 10 During Press Visit to Çanakkale

Pegasus Airlines brought together members of the press in Çanakkale on November 10 for a special visit organized to commemorate the anniversary of the passing of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

The visit, held in remembrance of Atatürk's

death anniversary, combined a commemorative program with a press gathering. During the event in Çanakkale, Pegasus CEO Güliz Öztürk addressed journalists and shared the airline's latest operational results as well as its strategic priorities for 2026.

Speaking at the meeting, Öztürk emphasized that Pegasus is entering 2026 from a position of strength, supported by steady growth, a young fleet, and continued investments in digitalization and sustainability.

### Strong Performance in 2025

In the first nine months of 2025, Pegasus carried approximately 32 million passengers, representing a 14% increase compared to the same period last year. International routes were a key driver of this growth, reaching 20.5 million passengers, up 17% year-on-year.

Capacity increased by 16%, while the airline maintained a solid 87.4% load factor. During the same period, total revenue reached €2.6 billion, reflecting a 10% annual increase.

By the end of 2025, Pegasus expects to carry more than 40 million passengers, confirming strong demand across both domestic and international markets.

Öztürk noted that after the pandemic, Pegasus acted quickly to modernize its fleet, expand its flight network, and accelerate digital investments. Today, she stated, the airline ranks among the



Ayşe Akalın with Güliz Öztürk- CEO of Pegasus Airlines

top three carriers globally in operational profitability.

Looking ahead, she explained that 2026 will be a year of more balanced and optimized growth. Rather than focusing solely on rapid expansion, Pegasus will prioritize operational efficiency, cost discipline, and long-term resilience.

### Fleet Growth and Strategic Investments

Pegasus currently operates a fleet of 124 aircraft, with an average age of 4.9 years, making it one of the youngest fleets in the aviation industry. A younger fleet supports

fuel efficiency, lower emissions, and reduced maintenance costs.

Fleet expansion will continue in a structured manner:

- 9 new aircraft were delivered in 2025
- 8 additional aircraft are expected in 2026
- 43 aircraft in total will be added by the end of 2029

In addition, Pegasus signed a major agreement with Boeing for 200 aircraft (100 firm orders and 100 optional orders). Deliveries are scheduled to begin in 2028. This agreement will strengthen supplier flexibility and enhance long-term cost management.

To support its growing fleet, Pegasus is investing \$120 million in a new maintenance hangar complex. The facility will handle both light and heavy maintenance operations, as well as aircraft painting services. The first phase is expected to become operational in early 2026, with the second phase to be completed by the end of the year. The investment aims to reduce external dependency and improve operational efficiency.





## Expanding Network and Partnerships

Pegasus currently flies to 156 destinations across 54 countries, including 38 domestic and 118 international routes. Operating from its hub at Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport, the airline connects Türkiye with Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa.

Through its codeshare agreement with Iberia, Pegasus has expanded

connectivity from Madrid to 12 domestic Spanish destinations, with plans to increase this number to 17. The partnership

also strengthens access to South American routes and creates additional transatlantic opportunities.

## Digitalization and Sustainability as Core Priorities

Digital transformation remains central to Pegasus' long-term strategy. Through its Innovation Center, the airline continues to integrate artificial intelligence into customer service operations, including AI-supported call center systems and personalized ancillary product offerings.

Sustainability is also embedded in the company's business model. In line with the targets of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), Pegasus aims to reduce carbon emissions by 20% by 2030.

Key initiatives include investing in fuel-efficient aircraft, increasing the use

of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), introducing electric ground handling vehicles, improving energy efficiency, expanding paperless processes, and reducing waste.

Concluding her remarks in Çanakkale, Öztürk underlined that sustainability is not only an environmental responsibility but also a social and economic one. She emphasized the importance of increasing female representation in aviation and technology, supporting young professionals, and building an inclusive corporate culture.

As Pegasus prepares for 2026, the message shared with the press in Çanakkale was clear: the airline is moving into a new phase defined by efficiency, balanced growth, digital depth, and sustainable competitiveness—while honoring the values that continue to guide its journey 🌱



# McArthurGlen Designer Outlet Group Hosts Year End Awards Ceremony in Istanbul

Istanbul played host to one of the designer outlet industry's most anticipated regional gatherings as McArthurGlen Designer Outlet Group held its annual year-end awards ceremony, bringing together leading tourism agencies, industry partners and senior executives from across the region.

The evening brought key figures to the table: Matthias Sinner, International Markets Director at McArthurGlen Group; Sabina Piacenti, International Markets Manager; Alexey Astafurov, representing Destination Marketing and Sales; and V. Mirey Goldag, Turkey Country Manager at Tal Aviation — the exclusive representative of McArthurGlen in Türkiye.

The ceremony was more than a calendar event. It was a recognition of a market that has, by any measure, outperformed expectations. McArthurGlen has reported a sharp increase in visitors from the Eastern Mediterranean region, particularly Turkey and the numbers from

the Turkish travel agency network reflect exactly that momentum. This year, Turkish tourism agencies collectively achieved an 80% increase in leisure-driven outlet visits, marking one of the strongest year-on-year growth figures across all McArthurGlen markets.

## Awards Presented During the Ceremony

The evening recognized the agencies and operators whose performance shaped that growth:

Best Partner of the Year went to OTTO DMC; Best Group Traffic Operator to ISTYA Tourism LLC; the Rising Star award to



Red DMC; Best Itinerary Design to MNG Turizm; Best Supporting Operator to DNA Tourism; Best Off-Season Champion to Jolly Tur; and Best Marketing Partner of the Year to Kappa Tourism. Special thanks for Best Marketing Support were extended to BookingAgora.

## A Market in Confident Expansion

The ceremony took place against a backdrop of strong global performance for McArthurGlen. The

group's portfolio generated nearly €6 billion in annual sales for brand partners in 2024, supported by over 90 million annual visitors across its 23 centres in 8 countries. Year-to-date tax-free sales figures were up 13% on the previous year, surpassing pre-pandemic levels— a milestone that few in the retail industry have matched in the current economic climate.

Turkey's contribution to that story is no longer a footnote. It is increasingly central to McArthurGlen's international growth narrative, with Turkish travelers emerging as one of the most active and high-value visitor segments across the group's European network. The Istanbul ceremony, in that sense, was not merely a celebration of past performance — it was an acknowledgement of where the relationship between McArthurGlen and the Turkish travel industry is heading 🇹🇷





## From Theory to Action: Key Learning's Strategic Impact on Civil Aviation

In today's high-velocity aviation landscape, leadership is tested not in theory but in execution. For more than two decades, Martin Thisted, CEO and founding partner of Key Learning, has built a consultancy philosophy around one central conviction: knowledge only creates value when it is transformed into measurable skills. In this exclusive interview with Aviation Turkey, Martin Thisted reflects on the company's founding vision, its expanding footprint in the civil aviation sector, and how structured leadership frameworks—balancing overview, planning, and decisive action—can unlock long-term organizational performance.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: Could you tell us about the founding story and core mission of Key Learning? How would you define the vision that has brought the company to where it is today?**

**Martin Thisted:** Key Learning was founded back in the spring of 2002. At that time, we were like three former consultants working at a Danish consultancy company called Cultivator. And to be quite frank, we actually thought that we could do it better, because we thought at that time the true value of training was when it was tailor-made, not just something generic and when it was focused bringing knowledge into skills. An excellent manager is not just a person who can recite management theories but a manager who can actually turn management theory into skills.

So, we actually started the company because we wanted to offer tailor-made

training; tailor-made to the organization, tailor-made to the individual, and training focusing on bringing theory into skills. And so, we started the company back in 2002 on that note.

We were three people in the beginning. There was me, I'll get back to that, and then I had a fellow colleague also with a background from the military, just like me. And then we had another one of our friends called Mads. All of us had a background in management teaching. I kind of knew the other one, Jesper, before, because we knew each other from the military, but the big difference is that I've been working for the military's center of management.

So, on that note, I had a very strong focus on bringing knowledge into skills. You cannot use a manager or a salesperson who can, you know, mirror or, you know, just phrase up different theories when it comes to management and sales, but they need to be able to do it, actually

do it. So, turning knowledge into specific skills. That is what we're good at.

And I think this is one of the trademarks of Key Learning – and has been throughout the years and one of the reasons why we have been picked now for—you know, we have been used in 54 countries by a lot of different national companies, international organizations, spreading from the diplomacy, you know, training ambassadors and heads of trade in and around the world, working with the UN, United Nations, and working with a lot of international companies.

And that is the reason if you ask them, that is because we have this strong focus on bringing knowledge into skills. Another thing is that one of the things that one of our trademarks is that what we teach is so deeply anchored within basic psychology that you will find that most of our tools actually works across cultural barriers.

That means from a management point of view that the actual manager can use our knowledge and our tools. And it doesn't matter if he or she has an international audience or an international staff of employees, because it will work.

Today, our colleague Jesper is no longer within the company. Today, it's like me and Mads who are still there. And then, of course, we have a string of

employees and associated partners as well.

By the way, as part of that, I can also mention that Key Learning holds the award of being a Gazelle. We were awarded one of the fastest growing companies in Denmark when we just started. So, we've also proven that we are able to do what we actually teach as well.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: What are the key factors that differentiate Key Learning from other business consulting companies? In which areas do you offer particularly unique solutions?**

**Martin Thisted:** I think there are two things that actually has an impact. As I said before, our very strong focus on putting, you know, theory into skills. So, when they leave our training program, the salespeople or the leaders and managers are actually able to do the things that they have been taught, you know, putting it into skills.

And secondly, the methodology, how we teach. You're going to find out that the way we teach is extremely interactive. That means that the audience is going to be actively involved in the training and that brings a certain kind of energy into training and thereby also it strengthens the commitment.

So often you're going to find out that when, you know, even though we do

like eight or nine hours of training, then people are often going to say at the end of the training that they feel that time passed very fast, simply because the level of activity has been kind of high during the whole training.

So, with us, you will not be confronted with an endless number of slides and slide decks, but on the contrary, you're going to find out that the way that we teach that we have people to actively play a part in the training.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: What are the measurable outcomes of the management and sales training programs you provide to organizations and individuals?**

**Martin Thisted:** We have a proven track record for more than 24 years now that we're good at helping people, leaders, and organizations to increase their performance. So, we can actually measure the outcome of the training.

That is the reason also why so many of our clients are retaining clients simply because we help them to reach to their goals and it doesn't matter if they are an Airport, Airline, Bank, Capital fund, or an international organization operating in volatile environments – we deliver. We help them through training to increase their performance. So, and on that note, we have been used on several different occasions, you know, helping people, helping organizations

to simply increase their performance and thereby to strengthen the overall value of the company and an organization.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: IGA is one of the companies in your client portfolio. What kind of services does Key Learning provide to IGA?**

**Martin Thisted:** Yes, IGA, is one of our companies in our portfolio, Istanbul Grand Airport. Well, we mainly do two things. First of all, we do what I will call management and leadership training, where we help the managers to increase the overall performance in the individual departments.

But secondly, we also have a certain concept that we call diplomatic management, and that is rooted in the ability to generate results without losing the goodwill. Because when you work with international clients, when you juggle and need to navigate in between different cultural barriers, and at the same time being put under an immense pressure, then that pulls the strength on you in order to increase the performance.

And what we've been doing is that we've been trying to help IGA, Istanbul Grand Airport, how to, you know, teach some of the managers on how to deal with some of the big airlines, do the tough negotiations, do the sales, and at the same time without losing the goodwill. We call it diplomatic management.

## INTERVIEW

**✈️ Aviation Turkey:** How has Key Learning's expertise in the civil aviation sector evolved? What are your main focus areas and core competencies within this industry?

**Martin Thisted:** Well, there's no doubt in my mind that if you look upon the aviation sector, it's a very interesting sector, you know, from many different perspectives. First of all, it's a sector where things happen very fast. It's an extremely agile sector, which demands a lot from the managers because they need to be able to navigate and, you know, actually do management in very agile environments.

So, you need to be able to look ahead. You need to be able to make decisions on the spot. And you need to have a certain kind of robustness in your management.

I originally had a background from the military center of management where you would train officers to navigate in hostile and ever-changing environments. Of course, you can't say that the aviation industry operates in hostile environments like the military, but they still operate in a very agile environment, which really demands a lot from the managers in the aviation industry, just like in the military. So therefore, for me, there's no doubt that many, many of the things that we

used and many of the things that we used in order to teach officers on how to conduct management, you can actually use some of the same things here as well because being a manager is always challenging, but being a manager within the aviation industry, it's tough and it requires a lot.

So, on that note, you can say that some of our main focus areas and core competencies within that industry is Change management as discipline. It's how to deal with conflicts without losing goodwill. It's how to do tough negotiations. It's a lot about communication. It's a lot about having the basic understanding of what drives a person. It doesn't matter if it's in sales or in management and leadership. Yeah, so that's the thing.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey:** How do you analyze companies' growth, transformation, and performance objectives in your consulting projects? Which methodologies do your processes rely on?

**Martin Thisted:** The way we work, we always do a pre-analysis first. You know, even though that, you know, we have worked in many different industries, and also in the Aviation industry we always start by making sure that we have the right understanding of a company or an organization.

So, we always start by making a pre-analysis.



That means basically that we interview a string of people, not just from the top management, but also from the middle management and also on the operational layer. So, we get a good overview of the situation within the company.

These interviews are often done in a face-to-face setting, and each interview will have exactly the same questions, so you can also compare the actual answers in what they're saying.

Based upon the pre-analysis, we will then form a report and present it to the customer. And based

on the report, we'll also come with a suggestion on how we can increase the overall performance of an organization.

And then if the organization says yes to that, then we will enroll and start the actual process. And then along the way, we will measure the actual outcome and the effect of our training.

And as we said in the military, you know, every plan holds to the very first contact with the enemy, thereby saying that you might plan, but you can never know what will happen in two or three



Martin Thisted

or four months ahead. So always, you know, be able to adjust the plan accordingly. That's normally to how we work.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: In a rapidly changing global business environment, what is the long-term strategic value that Key Learning offers its clients? What are your priorities and goals for the coming period?**

**Martin Thisted:** At Key Learning, we don't believe in quick fixes, you know. E.g.; Just bring in a smart consultant, he or she will then address an issue in one or two or three hours, and

then off they go, and well, to be quite honest, that will never do, and will never have an impact.

What really has an impact is that when you're in it for the long haul, you know, the long, steady process. In one of our projects, we actually increased the value of a company by more than 25 million euro, but it took three years.

Not three years of consistent training, but three years of having meetings on a quarterly basis, but we did it. So, what I'm trying to say here is that if you just want to have a

quick fix or something like that, have a speed talk or something like that, fine, but then it's not us in Key Learning.

But if you're in it, and you want to increase the overall performance of a manager or of an organization, and you're ready to invest, not just money, but also the time, then you're going to find out that we can actually help most organizations to uncover and release the full potential and to increase their overall performance.

Because at the end of the day, you need to remember

one thing, organizations is all about people, and people, you need to understand what drives them, you need to understand what motivates them, and if you know that, then you're also able to, at the end of the day, to reach the maximum outcome of an organization.

At the end Leadership is all about generating results (of various kinds) through or by the help of other people.

And at the end – this is what we are good at Key Learning – preparing leaders, salespersons, or organizations to release their full potential.

One of the first things I learned at the Military center of Management – is the following triangle: Overview, plan and action

Often what see is when organizations or individuals are being put under pressure they often go straight into Action mode without having any overview or plan.

They just Act! Without knowing if what they do is the correct thing

What we often do in the process with Key Learning is that we generate the needed overview and develop a training plan that makes sure that the necessary competences needed to reach the listed goals are obtained

And then we help organizations to implement (action). It is not more complex than that ☺

# IATA World Financial and Passenger Symposiums 2025

## Driving Digital Transformation and Financial Resilience in Aviation

Istanbul became the meeting point of the global aviation community as the International Air Transport Association (IATA) hosted the World Financial Symposium (WFS) and the World Passenger Symposium (WPS) held in Istanbul. The event brought together leaders from finance, commercial, operations, technology, and customer experience to discuss how the industry can move from vision to real implementation.

The symposium opened with remarks from Dr. Ahmet Bolat, Chairman of the Board and Executive Committee of Turkish Airlines. In his speech, he underlined how Türkiye sees aviation as a strategic driver of economic growth and global connectivity. He reminded the audience that Turkish Airlines, with more than ninety years of history and the title of flying to the most countries in the world, connects 131 nations. As he stated, the airline carries “not only passengers but also values, hopes, and friendships.” He also emphasized that digitalization, sustainability, and changing passenger expectations require innovative solutions and strong collaboration across the industry



Turkish Airlines Chairman, Dr. Ahmet Bolat

Following the opening, Sandrine Le Borgne, Senior Vice President, Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer of IATA, set the tone for the discussions ahead. She highlighted that financial sustainability and passenger experience are inseparable. “A seamless journey for passengers cannot happen without financial sustainability,

and financial sustainability depends on delivering real value to passengers,” she said

Le Borgne also encouraged participants to imagine a different future for aviation. She asked what it would look like if airlines could fully personalize offers, accept payments in the way passengers prefer, and manage the entire journey

through a smartphone. However, she was realistic about today’s challenges. Airlines are still dealing with legacy systems, manual processes, and fragmented data. According to her, these outdated structures remain one of the biggest obstacles to true transformation

During the symposium and related press briefings, IATA made it clear that the industry’s digital transformation now has three main priorities: shifting to Offers and Orders with modern accounting, modernizing payments, and accelerating end-to-end digital identity solutions.

The transition to Offers and Orders represents a fundamental change in how





Sandrine Le Borgne, IATA CFO | Board member

airlines retail and manage their products. Instead of relying on traditional ticket-based systems, airlines aim to adopt a model that allows them to create personalized offers and manage orders in a more integrated way. The standards and frameworks for this shift have already been developed through IATA's collaborative work. The next step is large-scale adoption across the value chain.

Payments are another critical area. Airlines collectively face around USD 22 billion in payment-related costs every year. Le Borgne stressed that "payments are not a back-office detail; they are a strategic agenda item." By using modern solutions such as IATA Pay, Easy Pay, and the IATA Financial Gateway,

airlines can reduce costs, improve efficiency, and offer customers more flexibility. Modern payment systems can also free up capital for investment in innovation and sustainability

Digital identity and biometrics are also gaining strong momentum. According to IATA's 2025 Global Passenger Survey, passengers increasingly want to manage their travel through their smartphones. The use of digital wallets, mobile booking, and biometric identification is rising. Many travelers are willing to share biometric information if it helps them move faster through airports, although trust and data protection remain important concerns

Another important topic discussed was the

integration of domestic and international passenger flows using biometric digital ID. A recent study showed that replacing physical separation with digital identity solutions could reduce costs, improve operational flexibility, and shorten connection times. Airports could use space more efficiently while maintaining security and border control standards

The broader economic impact of aviation was also highlighted. A study presented during the symposium showed that aviation supports USD 82.4 billion in economic activity in Türkiye, equal to 7.4% of the country's GDP. The sector supports around 2 million jobs, directly and indirectly. Over the past decade, international passenger departures from Türkiye have increased by nearly 70%, making the country one of the world's largest aviation markets

Overall, the message from Istanbul was clear and balanced. The aviation industry has the tools and standards needed for transformation. What is required now is stronger cooperation, faster implementation, and continued focus on passenger needs. As emphasized throughout the symposium, digital transformation is not only about technology. It is about redesigning processes, improving financial resilience, and building trust with passengers.

The 2025 WFS and WPS demonstrated that the industry is aware of both its challenges and its opportunities. With coordinated action and leadership, aviation can move closer to delivering a more seamless, efficient, and sustainable travel experience for passengers worldwide 🌍



Aviation Turkey Magazine Editor & News director Şebnem Akalın,



# Aegean Airlines Launches Direct Istanbul–Thessaloniki Service

Greece's largest carrier has quietly added one of the region's more intriguing new connections. Aegean Airlines launched its new direct service between Thessaloniki (SKG) and Istanbul (IST) on 24 November 2025, operating three flights per week on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays with Airbus A320 aircraft on an approximately 90-minute sector. The route is the latest chapter in a rapidly deepening aviation relationship between Greece and Turkey.

The timing matters. Aegean already operates four daily flights between Athens and Istanbul, and five weekly services between Athens and Izmir. The Thessaloniki route adds a second Greek city to the direct Istanbul network, part of a broader push that saw Aegean maintain 43 weekly flights between Greece and Turkey during the 2025 summer season. The airline has been systematic about this expansion: from February 2025 onwards, new direct

connections also opened between Istanbul and Santorini, Mykonos, and Crete — islands that Turkish leisure travelers have long wanted to reach without routing through Athens.

For Thessaloniki specifically, the Istanbul route signals growing ambitions. Aegean remains the dominant carrier at Thessaloniki Airport with a 34% share of total seat capacity in 2025, and the airline has already announced further expansion plans including a new Warsaw service

from March 2026 and summer seasonal routes to Dubrovnik, Milos, and Zakynthos.

The two cities make a natural pair. Thessaloniki — Greece's second-largest city, a UNESCO-recognized center of Byzantine heritage, and one of the Mediterranean's most underrated food destinations has long attracted Turkish visitors by ferry and road. A direct 90-minute flight changes the calculus considerably, opening the route to

weekend travelers, cultural tourists, and the growing number of professionals doing business across both markets. With Istanbul serving as a critical hub connecting Europe to Asia and the Middle East, Aegean's new service positions Thessaloniki as an accessible gateway for Turkish travelers heading deeper into Europe and offers Greek passengers a direct entry point into one of the world's great cities, without the detour through Athens.





## Airbus & Turkish Airlines Convene Türkiye Industrial Cooperation Meeting 2025 in Toulouse

In a clear signal of deepening industrial alignment between Türkiye and Europe's aerospace champion, Airbus, in collaboration with Turkish Airlines, hosted the "Türkiye Industrial Cooperation Meeting 2025" in Toulouse. The two-day forum brought together nearly 40 Turkish suppliers and relevant public institutions with Airbus procurement leaders and major global suppliers, aiming to expand international business opportunities and further integrate Türkiye's aerospace capabilities into Airbus' global supply chain.

Held at the Airbus Leadership University in Blagnac, the event combined strategic

dialogue with practical engagement. Participants toured Airbus' final assembly line, showcased their capabilities through supplier booths, and engaged in one-on-one meetings focused on new

business prospects across Airbus programmes. Organized under the Strategic Türkiye Enhancement Programme (STEP) — a long-term initiative running through 2040 and jointly supported by Airbus, Turkish Airlines and Rolls-Royce — the gathering underscored a shared commitment to strengthening Türkiye's aerospace ecosystem, enhancing supply chain competitiveness, fostering skills development, and advancing sustainability-driven growth.

With more than two decades as an integral part of Airbus' supply chain, Türkiye today contributes to all major Airbus commercial aircraft programmes, from the A220 to the flagship A350. Every Airbus commercial aircraft delivered includes components manufactured in Türkiye — a testament to the country's expanding industrial depth and its growing role within the global aerospace value chain.





## Air Europa's New Era in Türkiye: Expansion, Growth, and a Strategic Partnership with Turkish Airlines

Air Europa's arrival in Istanbul in 2025 marked a significant milestone in the airline's strategic expansion across Europe and its deepening connectivity with the Americas. In just a few months, the Madrid–Istanbul route has demonstrated remarkable performance, underscoring Türkiye's growing importance as both a tourism and business hub. As the carrier accelerates its fleet modernization, expands long-haul operations, and advances a sustainability-driven vision, its presence in the Turkish market continues to gain momentum.

In this exclusive interview, Air Europa's Director of Alliances, Imanol Perez, shares insights into the airline's rapid growth, the role of the Boeing 787 Dreamliner in enhancing passenger experience, the expanding transatlantic network, and the strategic potential of a closer partnership with Turkish Airlines.

**✈️ Ayşe Akalın:** Air Europa launched flights to Istanbul in 2025. Could you share the initial response from Turkish passengers and how this route fits into your broader network strategy? Could you update us on the current situation?

**Imanol Perez:** The results in the first five months of activity on the route have been very satisfactory. By the end of October, we had operated more than 300 flights, carrying more than 90,000 passengers. We have recorded an average occupancy rate of over 90%, which proves the success of this new destination in our network. Our demand forecasts were not wrong.

**✈️ Ayşe Akalın:** Air Europa operates its Madrid–Istanbul route with the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. Could you share why this aircraft was chosen for this route, and how it enhances passenger experience and operational efficiency?

**Imanol Perez:** The 787 Dreamliner has been, to date, our flagship aircraft, not only for long haul flights, but also on a global level. We knew that we needed to deploy a model with these characteristics to serve flights to Istanbul, both for its technical specifications and for its design and level of comfort. The former allows us to shorten the duration of the journey while reducing fuel consumption and emissions,

thanks to its aerodynamics and engines. The latter is aided by spacious and comfortable cabins that reduce fatigue and tiredness. All this without forgetting that, with a model of this type, we can offer passengers our Business Class, which is highly valued among our customers.

**Ayşe Akalın:** Could you provide an overview of Air Europa's current fleet and any plans for fleet expansion or modernization in the near future?

**Imanol Perez:** We currently have a fleet of nearly 60 aircraft, divided almost equally between single-aisle and double-aisle models. This year, we have continued to add Dreamliner aircraft, and the first Boeing 737 MAX units have arrived, which will reach a total of 20 planes by mid-2027.

We continue to expand our fleet, above all to meet demand on our long haul routes, especially between Europe and America. This strategic vision is the framework for the recent agreement reached with Airbus, through which we will renew our long haul offering with up to 40 A350-900 aircraft. This model guarantees that we will continue to have the most modern and innovative offering on the market, balancing maximum efficiency with comfort.



**Ayşe Akalın:** What are your current destinations? Are there any plans to expand your European or intercontinental network? Beyond Istanbul, does Air Europa have any plans to launch flights to other destinations in Turkey?

**Imanol Perez:** Today, we have more than fifty direct destinations in the Air Europa network, and we are continuing to work on expanding it. In fact, in the middle of

next year, we will begin flying to Geneva, which will be our second route to Switzerland, and we will also launch a connection to South Africa. Air Europa has a very solid operation in the Americas thanks to the progressive increase in our long haul fleet, which has allowed us, in 2025, to continue increasing frequencies. We also have a very strong position in Europe, which has continued to grow in recent years and represents a very

significant part of our offering.

Regarding Turkey, the results to date are very positive and show that our bet on Istanbul was the right one. It is undoubtedly a very important market, both for tourist and business flights, thanks to its position in relation to Asia and Africa. We will continue to evaluate the possibility of increasing our activity depending on the evolution of our fleet.



## INTERVIEW



**Ayşe Akalın:** Air Europa is also a gateway to Latin America. How important is the Istanbul hub in connecting passengers to your South American destinations?

**Imanol Perez:** Almost 20% of people who have travelled with us to or from Istanbul have done so by connecting to other destinations, which highlights the importance of our position at the Madrid-Barajas hub for linking Europe with America. The vast majority of these connections (Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Argentina, New York, among others) have been to the other side of the Atlantic. Without a doubt, having Istanbul among our destinations is helping to further boost our routes to Latin America.

**Ayşe Akalın:** There have been discussions about Turkish Airlines

acquiring a 25% stake in Air Europa. Could you share your perspective on this potential partnership and its strategic opportunities for both airlines?

**Imanol Perez:** Turkish Airlines becoming a shareholder in Air Europa, with whom we already had codeshare agreements, is great news that brings multiple synergies between



the two airlines. We are highly complementary, not only in terms of our respective destination networks, but also in terms of our business vision and sense of customer service. This alliance connects two of the world's most important air hubs, Istanbul and Madrid, and offers enormous opportunities for passenger traffic and also for the air cargo market.

**Ayşe Akalın:** Sustainability is becoming increasingly important in aviation. Could you share Air Europa's initiatives to reduce its environmental impact?

**Imanol Perez:** We are very aware of the importance of the aviation industry moving towards greater operational efficiency and contributing to a reduction in global emissions. Our fleet is the main example of this and a fundamental element in our strategy in this regard, as all our models enable a significant reduction in consumption. We have set ourselves the target of reducing our CO2 emissions by 30% in 2030 compared to 2015, and although there are still a few years to go before that date, we are already very close to achieving it. In fact, we have already reduced them by more than 23.4%. To this end, we are applying all kinds of technological innovations to optimise our operations and reduce fuel consumption, adding sustainable aviation fuel

(SAF) several years ago. We have also launched an programme that provides passengers with information on the impact of emissions generated by flying and offers them the opportunity to support certified projects by purchasing carbon credits. The entire company, which receives ongoing training in this area, is aware of and united in achieving this goal.

**✈️ Ayşe Akalın: How is Air Europa leveraging digital technologies to enhance passenger experience and operational efficiency? Could you share any upcoming innovations or service enhancements that passengers can look forward to?**

**Imanol Perez:** We have always worked to incorporate the latest advances and make our operations as efficient as possible. An example of this is the use of OptiClimb, a technology that makes the climb phase of our flights more efficient to reduce fuel consumption. We also use technology to calculate routes and have even launched a Data Academy to train our team in data analysis, management, and use throughout all processes.

We also continue to improve customer service with solutions that allow everything from digitising airport check-in processes



to splitting payments between different people or credit cards, making flying with pets more accessible, and even using AI to locate forgotten items on aircraft and facilitate their recovery.

**✈️ Ayşe Akalın: What are Air Europa's long-term goals for growth?**

**Imanol Perez:** In recent years, we have managed not only to recover our activity levels prior to 2020, but also to increase them at all stages. We are determined to continue growing, offering more destinations, more frequencies, and more service improvements.

To this end, the ongoing modernisation and expansion of our fleet will be fundamental, together with an approach marked by the highest standards of personalised service, a varied and top-quality in-flight offering, and an unwavering commitment to sustainability 🌱



# Strategic Growth and Premium Experiences: Plaza Premium Group Looks to 2026

As an invited guest at the year-end event organized by Plaza Premium Group, I had the opportunity to witness firsthand how the global leader in premium airport passenger services brought together its key partners and stakeholders to share its vision for the future.

Plaza Premium Group (PPG), the world's leading provider of integrated airport hospitality and passenger service solutions, hosted a New Year celebration bringing together the management of Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, valued business partners, and key industry stakeholders. During the event, Ali Bora İşbulan, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Plaza Premium Group, outlined the company's strategic growth and development plans for Türkiye.

In his speech, İşbulan stated: "We are proud to be celebrating our fifth year in Türkiye. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the management of Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, our airline partners, our business partners, and our dedicated team in



Plaza Premium Group Deputy CEO, Ali Bora İşbulan

Türkiye for their invaluable contributions. Passenger traffic in Türkiye continues to grow steadily, and due

to its unique geographical position, the country's flight network is becoming stronger every day. Over

the past five years, PPG has achieved significant expansion in Türkiye, and we are highly motivated to continue our growth and bring new opportunities to life across the country."

İşbulan also shared that passenger traffic at Plaza Premium Group lounges at Sabiha Gökçen International Airport (SAW) increased by 36% this year. In response to growing demand, the number of international lounges at SAW will be increased to three in 2026. Additionally, a brand-new domestic lounge, featuring a completely new location and design, is set to welcome guests in the near future.



Plaza Premium Group Vice President MEA, Emreca Ergin & Plaza Premium Group Deputy CEO, Ali Bora İşbulan & Aviation Turkey Editor & News Director Şebnem Akalın & Plaza Premium Group Area General Manager, Türkiye & Hungary, Emel Yasemin Akçay, Plaza Premium Group Senior Vice President EMEA, Okan Küfeci

Another key announcement was the launch of Plaza Premium First, PPG's ultra-premium lounge concept, at Sabiha Gökçen Airport in 2026. Preparations for this exclusive offering are already underway.

PPG's global travel membership and rewards program, Smart Traveller, is also set to expand its presence in Türkiye. The platform will be strengthened with Turkish language support, aiming to reach a broader audience. Within this framework, Smart Traveller is expected to evolve into a more comprehensive "spend-and-earn" travel platform in the local market, enabling members to enjoy a more seamless, rewarding, and value-driven travel experience throughout their journeys.

Plaza Premium Group (PPG) is the global leader in integrated airport hospitality and passenger service solutions. Operating the world's largest airport lounge network, the group delivers a 360-degree airport hospitality experience to over 30 million passengers annually across more than 600 international and domestic airports in



Aviation Turkey Editor & News Director Şebnem Akalın & Plaza Premium Area General Manager, Türkiye & Hungary Emel Yasemin Akçay

150 countries, through its portfolio of 14 sub-brands.

Guided by its mission to Make Travel Better, the group introduced the world's first independent airport lounge concept in 1998. Today, its brand portfolio includes Plaza Premium Lounge, Plaza Premium First (award-winning lounges), Aerotel (the world's largest airport transit hotel brand), Refreshhh by Aerotel, ALWAYS (airport passenger services), airport dining concepts, Smart Traveller (an innovative digital experience and rewards platform), and the One Travel Experience Ecosystem (oneTECO). With its people-centric and innovative approach, PPG continues to transform airport experiences worldwide.

Plaza Premium Group entered the Turkish market in 2021 through Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport. Currently, the group operates three lounges at the airport, along with fast-track and meet-and-greet services. With a

strong focus on customer satisfaction, PPG aims to deliver a premium passenger experience at Sabiha Gökçen, enabling travelers to enjoy a business-class airport experience regardless of their flight class.

Positioned as a bridge between Asia and Europe, Türkiye plays a vital role in Plaza Premium Group's vision of creating a seamless, end-to-end travel experience. Supported by a global team of over 7,000 dedicated professionals, the group continues its rapid global growth, driven by innovation and a relentless pursuit of excellence 🌟



Human Resources Director Member of ISG & SGC MC, Serpil Köşker & Routes and Business Development, Güliz Saral & CCO Member of ISG & SGC MC, Kerem Maybek & Aviation Turkey Editor & News Director Şebnem Akalın & Routes and Business Development, Berk Göktaş



# Building Cyber Resilience in a Regulated World

We Spoke with Erdem Eriş, CEO of CyberArtsi on Cybersecurity Regulation, AI-Driven Defense, and Critical Infrastructure Security

**Şebnem Akalın:** To begin our interview, could we get a general assessment of the year 2025 from CyberArts' perspective?

**Erdem Eriş:** From CyberArts' perspective, 2025 represents a structural turning point rather than a transitional year. Cybersecurity is no longer evolving incrementally; it is being redefined by regulation, geopolitics, artificial intelligence, and supply-chain dependencies.

Organizations are now expected not only to defend against cyber threats, but also to prove resilience, traceability, and accountability always. This fundamentally shifts cybersecurity from an operational concern to a board-level governance responsibility. For CyberArts,

2025 is the year where compliance, resilience, and competitive advantages begin to converge.

**Şebnem Akalın:** With Türkiye's new Cybersecurity Law coming into force, corporate governance and operational structures are undergoing major changes. How does CyberArts guide organizations through this new era?

**Erdem Eriş:** The new law clearly positions cybersecurity as a corporate governance obligation, not a technical initiative. Our role is to help organizations translate legal requirements into sustainable operating models.

CyberArts guides organizations through a holistic transformation covering governance, people,

processes, and technology. We design compliance roadmaps, establish auditable architectures, align legal, IT, risk, and executive teams, and ensure that cybersecurity responsibilities are embedded into decision-making structures rather than isolated within technical units.

**Şebnem Akalın:** Regulators are now enforcing stricter reporting, monitoring, and auditing standards. How is CyberArts helping clients transform these obligations into long-term governance advantages?

**Erdem Eriş:** Regulatory obligations become a burden only when they are treated as checklists. We approach them as an opportunity to build institutional discipline and transparency.

By implementing centralized log management, evidence integrity, continuous monitoring, and integrated incident response models, organizations gain visibility and control over their digital operations. This not only improves audit readiness, but also strengthens executive decision-making, risk awareness, and stakeholder trust in the long term.

**Şebnem Akalın:** The new law imposes significant obligations on SMEs. How does CyberArts help SMEs adapt quickly and sustainably?

**Erdem Eriş:** For SMEs, the challenge is scale rather than intent. Many must build cybersecurity capabilities from the ground up. CyberArts addresses this through modular, scalable, and managed service models.

We enable SMEs to meet legal requirements without building oversized internal teams by providing managed SOC, incident response, compliance consulting, and awareness programs. This allows SMEs to achieve compliance efficiently while maintaining operational agility.

**Şebnem Akalın:** With log management and evidence integrity becoming critical obligations, what end-to-end architectural approach does CyberArts offer?

**Erdem Eriş:** We design end-to-end architectures that ensure integrity, traceability, and auditability by default. This includes centralized log collection across on-premise and cloud systems, time-stamped and tamper-proof storage, SIEM integration, real-time correlation, and seamless linkage with incident response workflows.

The key is not just collecting logs but ensuring they can serve as legal-grade evidence when required.

**Şebnem Akalın:** Many executives still see cybersecurity as a cost. How does CyberArts change this mindset?



**Erdem Eriş:** For critical infrastructure, cybersecurity is inseparable from national resilience. CyberArts applies sector-specific frameworks that combine regulatory compliance, threat intelligence, operational continuity planning, and crisis response readiness.

Aviation, defense, telecom, and finance demand zero tolerance for disruption, and our models are designed accordingly.

**Şebnem Akalın:** Your work with major organizations operating critical infrastructures has built strong trust across the industry. What makes CyberArts a preferred partner for such large-scale and mission-critical operations?

**Erdem Eriş:** Trust is built through consistency, accountability, and results. Our clients value our ability to operate at both strategic and operational levels, our deep understanding of regulated environments, and our long-term partnership mindset.

We do not simply deploy tools—we take responsibility for outcomes.

**Şebnem Akalın:** CyberArts emphasizes cybersecurity as a governance challenge. How does this shape your service model?

**Erdem Eriş:** This philosophy shapes everything we do. Our services are designed to align cybersecurity with governance structures, executive accountability, and organizational culture.



Technology is essential, but governance determines whether it delivers value.

**Şebnem Akalın:** How do your SOC and incident response operations differ from traditional providers?

**Erdem Eriş:** Traditional models focus on alerts. Our SOC and incident response operations focus on decisions, evidence, and outcomes.

We integrate SOC, SOME, legal readiness, and executive communication into a single response framework, ensuring speed, accuracy, and accountability during crises.

**Şebnem Akalın:** Human error remains

a major risk. How do you design effective awareness programs?

**Erdem Eriş:** Awareness must change behavior, not just transfer knowledge. We use role-based training, simulations, and measurable exercises that turn employees into active participants in defense rather than passive risks.

**Şebnem Akalın:** With VentureArts, you are building a Türkiye-US innovation bridge. What is your vision?

**Erdem Eriş:** Our vision is to help local cybersecurity startups scale globally by providing strategic guidance, regulatory insight, market access, and operational mentorship.

VentureArts is designed to transform technical innovation into globally competitive cybersecurity companies.

**Şebnem Akalın:** How is CyberArts preparing for quantum computing, zero trust, and next-generation encryption?

We actively monitor emerging technologies and design architectures that are crypto-agile, identity-centric, and zero-trust ready. Preparing early is essential to avoid future systemic risks.

**Şebnem Akalın:** What does “the arts of cybersecurity” mean in practice?

**Erdem Eriş:** It reflects our belief that cybersecurity requires precision, creativity, discipline, and foresight—much like an art form.

This mindset drives our attention to detail, evidence, governance, and long-term resilience, setting us apart from purely technical firms.

**Şebnem Akalın:** Looking ahead to 2030, what is CyberArts’ vision for cybersecurity?

**Erdem Eriş:** By 2030, cybersecurity will be inseparable from corporate governance and national resilience. CyberArts aims to be a global reference point in building secure, compliant, and resilient digital ecosystems—both in Türkiye and internationally.



# "The \$202 Billion Revolution: How Dubai Airshow 2025 Redefined the Future of Global Aviation"



by Cem Akalin

The 19th Dubai Airshow held 17–21 November 2025 at Dubai World Central, has closed as the most commercially consequential aerospace gathering in the event's history. More than

1,500 exhibitors from 115 countries filled the site, welcoming 248,788 visitors. Total signed agreements reached \$202 billion — effectively doubling the \$101 billion recorded in 2023. The cumulative value of all deals across Dubai Airshow's nineteen editions has now surpassed \$1 trillion. The event also confirmed Dubai's position — in the words of Dubai Airports CEO Paul Griffiths

— as 'without dispute, the number one airshow in the world,' with visitor numbers up 42% and exhibitor numbers up 25% since the 2021 edition.

## Static Display & Flying Program

Over 200 aircraft filled the ramp at Dubai World Central, spanning commercial airliners, business jets, military platforms and next-generation air

mobility vehicles. On the commercial side, Emirates showcased its full fleet evolution in a single static display line-up: the Airbus A380-800, the newly delivered Airbus A350-900 and the Boeing 777-300ER, each fitted with the airline's latest cabin interiors. Etihad brought its A321LR, highlighting the narrowbody's long-range credentials. flydubai displayed a Boeing 737 MAX 8 from its current



fleet. Airbus exhibited the A350-1000 and an A220-300 in Angolan Airlines colours, while Boeing's customer-operated aircraft included 737 MAX 8s from Aloula and flydubai, a 777-200ER and a 747-412 freighter from Aquiline. Chinese manufacturer COMAC made its Middle East debut with three aircraft on display simultaneously — the C919 in China Eastern Airlines livery, the C919 STD, and the C909 regional jet in business jet configuration (C909CBJ) — the furthest west the type family has ever been shown. Embraer displayed the E195-E2 Profit Hunter and E190F freighter.

The business aviation ramp was anchored by Gulfstream, which brought both the G700 and the newly certified G800 — the longest-range jet in the Gulfstream fleet at 8,200 nm / Mach 0.85, which set a Phuket–Dubai speed record of 5 hr 38 min en route to the show. Dassault displayed the Falcon 6X and 8X, its two flagship large-cabin long-range business jets. Bombardier was represented through operator Falcon with a Global Express and through VistaJet with a Global 7500. Chinese operator Deer Jet displayed a Gulfstream G450, while Royal Jet and Action Aviation each showed Boeing Business Jet BBJ 737s. Pilatus brought the PC-24 light jet, and Joby Aviation's S4 eVTOL air taxi occupied a dedicated spot in the Advanced Air Mobility Pavilion adjacent to the main hall.

Emirates opened the first afternoon's flying display with a rare three-ship formation comprising all three aircraft types in its active fleet — the A380, Boeing 777-300ER and A350-900 — a sequence that visually captured the airline's fleet evolution from widebody legacy to next-generation long-haul. The Boeing 777-9 performed its first major airshow flying display since the 2023 Dubai edition, demonstrating the agility of the world's largest twinjet in a crowd-pleasing routine across

all three trade days. The A350-1000 also flew daily, competing directly for attention in the same segment. COMAC's C919 completed several circuits over the field but limited its display to a modest fly-by pattern — nonetheless, its appearance outside China for only the second time internationally generated considerable media attention. The Joby S4 eVTOL performed five demonstration flights during the week, marking the first time an electric air taxi had ever participated in the flying programme of a major international airshow. Al Fursan, the UAE Air Force aerobatic team, made its public debut with eight new Chinese Hongdu L-15A Falcon jet trainers, replacing the MB-339NATs that had served the team since 2008, flying a 25-minute precision routine on opening day.

## Airlines & Aircraft Orders

• Emirates dominated the order book with a \$38 billion commitment for 65 additional Boeing 777-9 aircraft on Day 1, lifting its total 777X backlog to 270 jets. The airline also firmed eight more Airbus A350-900s (\$3.4bn), bringing its A350-900 total to 73 aircraft. Emirates confirmed full-fleet Starlink retrofit across all 232 in-service 777s and A380s, signed a landmark MoU with Rolls-Royce to perform Trent 900 engine MRO in-house from 2027,

and became the first UAE organization to receive Design Organization Approval (DOA) from the GCAA. Emirates also publicly requested Boeing begin a 777-10 feasibility study to address the capacity gap when A380s eventually retire. President Sir Tim Clark acknowledged the 777X would likely slip to 2027 and confirmed 224 aircraft are entering a major cabin refurbishment program, including replacing the 777-300ER's 2-3-2 business class with a 1-2-1 layout using Safran S-Lounge seats.

• The show's biggest surprise came from flydubai, which ended 16 years of Boeing exclusivity by signing its first-ever Airbus MoU: 150 A321neo-family jets with options for 100 more, worth approximately \$24 billion. The carrier simultaneously signed an MoU for 75 additional Boeing 737 MAX aircraft (\$13bn), formalizing a deliberate dual-manufacturer strategy. flydubai also confirmed its 30 Boeing 787-9s will feature a three-class cabin with business, premium economy and economy — the airline's biggest product leap since launch. A 60-engine deal with GE Aerospace (GEnx-1B) covered the 787 fleet. flydubai will adopt Starlink across its fleet and selected Panasonic Avionics' Astrova IFE with 4K OLED screens for the 787-9.



- Etihad placed a firm order for six A330-900s (new type for the airline), seven additional A350-1000s (total commitment now 27) and three A350 freighters (total now 10), plus nine more A330-900s via leasing. The package supports Etihad's publicly stated target of a 200-aircraft fleet.
- Gulf Air firmed 15 Boeing 787 Dreamliners with options for three more. Ethiopian Airlines ordered 11 additional 737-8 MAX jets. Air Senegal placed its first Boeing order — nine 737-8s, the largest jet order in the airline's history. The US FAA recently approved raising Boeing's monthly 737 production rate from 38 to 42, signaling the regulator considers quality remediation on

track. Boeing Commercial Airplanes CEO Stephanie Pope attended throughout the week.

- Air Europa signed an MoU for up to 40 A350-900s. Ethiopian Airlines ordered six more A350-900s and agreed to lease two from SMBC Aviation Capital. Uzbekistan Airways secured six A321neos. Libya's Buraq Air signed an MoU for 10 A320neo-family aircraft. Silk Way West Airlines firmed two additional A350F freighters (total: four). Airbus confirmed industrial workshare deals with UAE partners for the A400M military transport program are fully negotiated and awaiting only the UAE government's signature on a procurement contract for 8–10 aircraft.

- Air Côte d'Ivoire placed a firm order for four E175s (purchase rights for eight more), configured 12 business / 64 economy, delivery from 2027. Helvetic Airways firmed three E195-E2s with options for five more, to be delivered by end-2026.

## Next-Generation Cabin Innovation and Connectivity

The "experience economy" was a major theme at DAS25, with airlines investing billions to differentiate their on-board products.

- **Starlink Revolution:** In a major blow to traditional satellite providers, both Emirates and flydubai confirmed full-fleet retrofits for Starlink high-speed connectivity. This will provide passengers with

low-latency, "home-like" internet speeds across more than 300 combined aircraft.

- **The "Invisible" Cabin:** Lufthansa Technik debuted the NICE Intelli Table, a prototype hidden touchscreen embedded in dark wood-effect tray tables that vanishes when not in use. It allows business class passengers to control lighting and entertainment with a simple touch on a wooden surface.

- **Efficiency Through Weight:** Jazeera Airways became the launch customer in the Middle East for the TiSeat 2X. Being 30% lighter than conventional seats, this innovation allows the airline to increase its A320 capacity from 162 to 180 seats without increasing the aircraft's carbon footprint.





## The "Green Turnaround" Showcase: Decarbonizing the Apron

A pivotal highlight of the DAS25 static display was the world-first "Green Turnaround" showcase. This live demonstration, coordinated by Dubai Airports, dnata, and flydubai, illustrated a fully carbon-neutral ground handling process, proving that sustainability extends far beyond the flight deck to every aspect of airport operations.

**Electric Ground Support Equipment (eGSE):** The static area featured an array of zero-emission vehicles essential for aircraft turnaround. This included all-electric baggage tractors, electric pushback tugs, and battery-powered mobile staircases, significantly reducing the noise and carbon footprint of apron activities.

**Hydrogen-Powered Logistics:** In a move toward alternative energy, the showcase debuted hydrogen-fuel-cell-powered staff buses and catering trucks. These vehicles demonstrated the viability of hydrogen for heavy-duty airport logistics, where battery electric solutions may face range limitations.

**Zero-Emission Power Solutions:** To eliminate the need for aircraft to run their Auxiliary Power Units (APUs) while at the gate, the display featured advanced Solar-Powered Ground Power Units (GPUs) and electric air conditioning units. These systems allow aircraft to maintain cabin climate and cockpit systems using 100% renewable energy during their time on the ground.

**Autonomous & Smart Waste Management:** The area also introduced solar-powered, sensor-driven waste compactors



and automated cleaning robots designed to optimize circular economy practices within the high-pressure environment of the airport ramp.

This "Green Turnaround" initiative provided a tangible blueprint for the "Airport of the Future," shifting the industry's focus from long-term net-zero goals to immediate, actionable operational improvements

### Sustainability: Beyond the Rhetoric

Sustainability was the "golden thread" through every hall of the exhibition. The Aviation Sustainability Forum hosted at the show highlighted that the Middle East is becoming a leader in Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) production.

**SAF Commitments:** Emirates successfully operated its first demonstration flights using 100% SAF in one engine of a Boeing 777-300ER and an Airbus A380, paving the way for regulatory approval of 100% SAF usage across the industry by 2030.

**Hydrogen Propulsion:** ZeroAvia and Airbus provided updates on hydrogen-electric powertrain testing, with several regional airlines signing MoUs to explore hydrogen-powered regional routes by the mid-2030s ➔

## Katmerciler Debuts the Full-Electric Refueller Vehicle & Aircraft Fuel Hydrant Dispenser at Dubai Airshow 2025!

These fully electric vehicles and fuel hydrant dispensers, developed and manufactured entirely in-house by Katmerciler, will be exhibited at the static display area at Dubai Airshow. They can transfer fuel to a wide range of aircraft, including large-bodied aircraft such as the A380 and Boeing 777, as well as aisle-body commercial airplanes and business jets. They can utilize the underground tanks at the airport if desired, with their 5-metre baskets.

During the show, we had the opportunity to speak with Ismail Hakki Kirkil, Katmerciler's Export Sales Director. He stated that the fully electric Refueling Vehicle and Aircraft Hydrant Dispenser, which was exhibited for the first time at this year's fair, is already in use at IGA Airport in Türkiye and will soon be on duty at Antalya Airport. Kirkil noted that they are continuing their marketing activities and are collaborating closely with some Middle Eastern countries in this respect. Explaining the advantages of an electric vehicle,



Kirkil said: "This vehicle will probably only be used at airports during its service life. In this context, we are developing and producing these full-electric vehicles with our in-house R&D infrastructure, aiming for both the zero-emission concept and to reduce investment costs".

### Aircraft Refueling Vehicle

Katmerciler's Refueller vehicles are designed for mobility, allowing refueling at any point on the apron. Equipped with hose reels for over-wing and under-wing operations. These vehicles enable fast and safe fuel transfer to different aircraft types. With high-capacity fuel tanks, advanced pumping and filtration systems, ergonomic control panels, and low

maintenance requirements, Katmerciler Refuellers deliver uninterrupted service even in high-traffic operations.

### Aircraft Fuel Hydrant Dispenser.

This system transfers fuel directly from underground pipelines to aircraft, offering major advantages in speed and safety for large airports. It features advanced flow measurement systems, hydraulically powered hose reels, and user-friendly control mechanisms. Katmerciler produces these dispensers in both diesel and fully electric versions. Electric models provide an environmentally friendly, zero-emission alternative and feature a low-profile design for easy under-wing access.

## Air Cambodia Becomes Launch Customer for New Business Class on ATR 72-600 Featuring ‘X-Space Table’

Air Cambodia, the national flag carrier of Cambodia, is set to redefine regional air travel as the launch customer of ATR’s new innovative premium seat featuring the ‘X-Space Table’, a smart, plug-and-play solution that converts a standard dual economy seat into a single premium seat within minutes. Under development, its certification is expected in Q1 2027.

Following the delivery of its brand-new ATR 72-600 in May 2025, Air Cambodia plans to retrofit the ‘X-Space Table’ in 2027 across its fleet of three ATRs. The business class section will feature four business seats arranged in two rows in a one-by-one layout, offering direct window and aisle access for each traveller, as well as enhanced comfort, privacy and individual stowage compartments.

The ‘X-Space Table’ is part of ATR HighLine, the manufacturer’s collection of high-end cabin interiors introduced in 2023. It is engineered to support dynamic fleet operations, enabling swift installation and removal, allowing airlines to seamlessly switch between full economy and dual-class cabin configurations. This flexibility empowers operators to respond efficiently to fluctuating passenger demand, seasonal variations

or charter-specific requirements with minimal downtime and maximum efficiency.

“We are eager to introduce a new business class offering across our fleet of ATRs, as it will enable Air Cambodia to offer a more refined travel experience while maintaining the agility required in our operations”, said David Zhan, Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Air Cambodia. “This solution supports our commitment to providing greater comfort and choice to passengers across Cambodia, while ensuring continuity of service with our single-aisle fleet. It also strengthens our ability to adapt to evolving travel needs.”

Nathalie Tarnaud Laude, Chief Executive Officer of ATR, adds: “The X-Space Table reflects ATR’s DNA of versatility, allowing operators to create new opportunities for ancillary revenue and adapt to evolving passenger expectations around comfort and inflight experience. We are grateful for Air Cambodia’s continued trust, and we are confident that their disruptive vision of air travel will make a significant difference for tomorrow’s regional aviation.”

Air Cambodia operates ATR aircraft on key regional routes including Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville, Ho Chi

Minh City and other cities. Recognised with a three-star rating by Skytrax for its customer experience, the airline continues to enhance its service offering by being the first ATR operator to implement this specific type of dual-class configuration on its fleet.

The Cambodian airline joins a select group of carriers adopting an ATR HighLine configuration, underscoring both the strong market momentum for elevated regional travel experiences and ATR’s accelerated penetration into the premium regional segment.

This versatile portfolio offers configurations ranging from dual-class to VIP arrangements, designed to meet the unique needs of boutique airlines, corporate departments, semi-private services, luxury resorts and government fleets.

Emitting 45% less CO2 per trip than similar-sized jets, ATR HighLine-equipped aircraft are set to disrupt and elevate the regional market without compromising on environmental responsibility, making them a compelling choice for operators targeting high-end markets.

## Lufthansa Announces Return of Istanbul–Munich Route

Lufthansa Airlines has announced the resumption of its direct flights between Istanbul (IST) and Munich (MUC), set to begin on March 29, 2026, as part of its strategy to further strengthen its operations in Türkiye.

The route will be operated daily, offering passengers seamless and comfortable connections via Munich to Lufthansa’s extensive global network.

Flight Schedule:

- LH 1742 | Munich – Istanbul | 22:30 – 02:05 (+1)
- LH 1743 | Istanbul – Munich | 03:45 – 05:30

The reinstated service is expected to enhance air connectivity between Türkiye and Europe while providing greater flexibility and improved transfer options for international travelers.





## Dubai Airshow 2025: Embraer Details Record-Setting Growth Across Middle East and Africa

by Cem Akalin

Embraer hosted a dedicated media briefing at the 2025 Dubai Airshow, which brought together Stephan Hannemann (SVP of Sales & Marketing for the MEA region), Jurjan Knol (VP of Marketing for the EMEA region), and Karim Makhoulf (Chief Commercial Officer at Royal Jordanian). During the press meeting, the focus was on the commercial momentum in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region, the drivers of market growth, and an in-depth look at the airline's transformation.

### Stephan Hannemann: 'All of Our Business Units Are Firing on All Cylinders'

Opening the briefing, Hannemann painted a picture of an Embraer

group performing strongly across all divisions: "It can be summarized as all of the business units are firing on all cylinders, regardless of whether it is the defense team with the KC-390 and Super Tucano or the executive aviation team

with the four aircraft we produce, the Praetor and the Phenom families, all the way to commercial aviation."

He described the MEA region as having delivered an outstanding year and positioned the Dubai Airshow as the ideal



Stephan Hannemann - SVP of Sales & Marketing for the EMEA Region at Embraer



the Cabin layout of the E195- E2

platform to share the details: "It's been really an outstanding year for us, particularly as well in the Middle East and Africa region. That's why we thought having the Dubai Airshow is a fantastic opportunity to share with you a little bit more about what we've been up to in the region."

## Product Line and Global E2 Momentum

Hannemann walked the audience through a commercial product lineup that now spans three offerings: the E175 Plus, delivering a 64% fuel burn improvement over the legacy E175, the E190/E195-E2 next-generation family covering 100 to 150 seats, and the newly introduced E190 Freighter, on static display at the show in Bridges Worldwide livery.

On the E2's global momentum, Hannemann highlighted a string of recent wins spanning multiple operator types: "You can

see that the E2 is finding very strong momentum and appeal with different applications, from the low-costers to the hybrid regionals, all the way to the global connect carriers."

The list of new customers included Virgin Australia, ANA (15 firm E190-E2s), Airlink South Africa, SAS Scandinavia, Avelo Airlines in the US, LATAM in South America, and a lessor deal with TrueNorth for 20 firm E190-E2s plus purchase rights.

## GTF Durability: The Turning Point are has Passed

Addressing one of the most closely watched topics in the regional jet market, Hannemann declared the GTF engine durability challenges a thing of the past: "We really see that the program has seen a turning point as we have entered into the second half of 2025 in terms of the durability and reliability of the E2 fleet with global operators."

He attributed the improvement to Pratt & Whitney's 75% increase in MRO capacity between 2024 and 2026, a reduction in shop visit turnaround times of up to 50%, and the

fact that today's deliveries benefit from significantly improved engine configurations compared to early E2 production slots.

When pressed in the Q&A on whether Pratt was resolving the issues in a specific order or whether E2 operators had simply been fortunate, Hannemann pointed to a structural weight advantage: "We were the last to introduce the GTF technology and then, in addition to this, it is really driven by the lower weight of the E2. Our aircraft weigh up to nine tons less when compared with the A220 platform. This is something that is really providing a huge benefit on the E2 side in terms of the degradation and therefore also the time on wing and the maintenance cost of the E2 being substantially lower."

## MEA Announcements: Records and New Operators

On the Air Côte d'Ivoire deal, four firm E175+ orders with eight purchase rights announced the previous day, Hannemann explained the aircraft's role in the airline's network strategy: "There are

many markets near Abidjan where they simply cannot fill a narrowbody aircraft, so this is where the aircraft will deliver value for them, and of course it's the lowest risk option to going into smaller markets and new destinations."

On the E175 Plus side, Air Côte d'Ivoire (4 in backlog) and Air Peace (2 in backlog) are joined by Nigerian carrier Overland (2 delivered, 1 in backlog) alongside five existing operators: Ecuatorial Airlines, Bestfly, Air Botswana, Cap Vert Airlines, and Airlink.

Hannemann underlined in his speech the Embraer E195-E2 record-breaking ferry flight and said: "On Airlink's record-breaking ferry flight of 3,996 nm (7,400 km) from São José dos Campos to Johannesburg, which is the longest non-stop ferry flight ever recorded for this type, we would have loved to stretch the route a little further to get the 'four' in front, but this was the longest non-stop flight yet. In an airline configuration at full payload, this aircraft can fly up to 3,000 nautical miles. Of course, on a delivery flight, you fuel up the aircraft on the ground."



Jurjan Knol - VP Marketing EMEA at Embraer

The four operators currently utilizing the Embraer E195-E2 in the Middle East and Africa are: Air Peace – Nigeria (5 delivered, 11 in backlog), Royal Jordanian (7 in service, 1 more due in 2026), AirlinK- South Africa (3 in service, 7 in backlog), and Salam Air – Oman (deliveries scheduled for H1 2028, total of 6 aircraft).

Closing his section with a nod to Embraer's long history in the region, Hannemann noted that the company's very first MEA delivery, an EMB-110 Bandeirante (registration TR-LYK) delivered to Air Affaires Gabon on 20 October 1978, remained in active service until 2024, when it was retired in Kenya. Today, Embraer operates more than 300 aircraft across 65 operators in the region spanning E-Jets, ERJs, and turboprops.

### Jurjan Knol: 'Blue Ocean, Network Density and Right Sizing will Define Future Demand'

VP Marketing EMEA Jurjan Knol opened his segment by declaring: 'We've talked

about where Embraer is coming from, talked about the past; now I'll take you to the future.' He identified three structural forces that would define demand for the E2 family in MEA.

The first, 'blue ocean opportunities', refers to airlines using the E2 to open routes that were previously unviable, citing Scoot out of Singapore and Royal Jordanian as examples. The second, 'building network density', reflects how carriers like SAS are using the E2 to strengthen connectivity at their hubs. The third, and most pertinent for MEA, is 'right sizing': "There are many aircraft flying around that are actually not 100% fit for the mission. If you scale the aircraft capacity to the demand, ultimately that leads to lower costs, higher yields, and ultimately more profitability for the airlines."

### A Market Outlook in MEA Between 2025-2044

Presenting Embraer's market forecast for the region, Knol pointed to a combined MEA demand of approximately 970 aircraft

going forward, with the majority concentrated in the 100-to-150-seat category, which is precisely where the E2 family competes.

On Africa, Knol highlighted strong GDP growth, rising populations, and a growing middle class as tailwinds, but was candid about the region's connectivity deficit: "We often see intra-Africa as being underserved or unserved with passengers often having to connect via the Middle East or Europe to travel between two places in Africa. Of course, with the E2, we now have a great opportunity to open new markets. With the economics of the E2, airlines can make that work at very low demand levels that are too small to be served by larger narrowbodies."

In the Middle East, Knol acknowledged the dominance of the region's three mega-hubs but drew attention to an underappreciated opportunity: "If you drill down a little bit, you will see that intra-Middle East connectivity is still a little bit underserved compared to other regions in the world.

Load factors within the region are also lower than the global average. And again, there's an opportunity for right-sizing here. There's booming domestic markets as well, especially in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

### Karim Makhoulf: 'The E2 is a Narrowbody, not a Regional Jet'

Royal Jordanian's Chief Commercial Officer Karim Makhoulf opened with a clear statement of the airline's strategic pivot, launched four years ago around two pillars: growing tourism into Jordan, and becoming the dominant carrier of the Levant region; a market of 140 to 150 million people spanning Iraq, Syria, Israel, Palestine, and Cyprus.

The scale of growth ambition was captured in a single passage: "Four years ago, we were 23 aircraft, quite a small size for an airline which is 62 years old and which has been the pioneer here in the region. Our growth plan foresees a growth to 41 aircraft by 2028, and we are working on 52 aircraft by 2032. In passenger numbers, this means growing from 3 million to 7.1 million segments by 2028."

### Repositioning the E2 as a Narrowbody

Perhaps the most striking commercial argument in Makhoulf's presentation was his insistence on repositioning the E195-E2

not as a regional jet, but as a true narrowbody: "I think the E1 was a regional aircraft, but we can really say that the E2, in our configuration with 120 seats, is a narrowbody aircraft, and of course, it has the lowest trip cost, and therefore, it's ideal to open all these new markets and markets to come."

He illustrated this point with Royal Jordanian's actual route network, which now includes Amman-Madrid at 1,976 NM and over five hours, a sector that would have been impossible for the E1: "Before an E1, you could maximum do two or three hours. So, the E2 is fit to do so, and it is a narrowbody aircraft which obviously, with 120 seats in our configuration, is perfect to drive new markets."

## Managing the GTF Challenge

Rather than downplaying the GTF difficulties, Makhoulf addressed them directly and explained how Royal Jordanian navigated the worst of the disruption: "In the peak time, we had three to four AOG days per aircraft per month, which was manageable as well. And obviously, we extended our old E1s. We had four E1s, which were flying till this summer, and that helped us as a backup aircraft as well. So, I can say that the entry into service in this harsh and hot environment for the engine was quite successful."

The airline has recorded zero AOG since April 2025,



Karim Makhoulf - Royal Jordanian's Chief Commercial Officer

with operational reliability reaching 99.76% and utilization of 9.6 flight hours per day. Responding to a question about Jordan's classification as a 'harsh environment' for the GTF, Makhoulf gave a nuanced answer: "Jordan is obviously in a quite dry zone... And of course, we fly extensively into very harsh environments like Saudi Arabia and Iraq in the summer. So, we are in a region with a very harsh environment. But I have to say that our European flights, with long cycles, are helping us in the peak summer to relax the engines a bit"

## Fuel Efficiency: Real-World Numbers Beat the Brochure

Presenting Jan–Jun 2025 operational data, Makhoulf reported performance that exceeded Embraer's own marketing projections: "The aircraft is saving 33% on the trip cost versus the NEO and around 33% versus the E1, and this shows the enormous benefit on the sustainability side. This aircraft is really helping to reduce our carbon footprint

within Royal Jordanian, and overall, we are reducing our carbon footprint by around 32% with our new fleet."

## Passenger Experience on Long Sectors

Asked by a journalist about passenger feedback on the E2's two-by-two cabin over long sectors, Makhoulf was candid about the initial surprise factor and upbeat about the outcome: "First, customers are a bit surprised when they see two by two in the economy. But I can say, especially with the Wi-Fi experience, because obviously, we launched the aircraft with a very nice product. We have Wi-Fi on board. We have a dedicated business class with 12 staggered seats, and we are a food service carrier, so that means you get a nice meal. The noise level is quite low, and this is constant feedback we are getting from our frequent travelers."

He acknowledged the challenge of competing against wide-body aircraft on perception but said E2 was earning its reputation: "We fly three-hour sectors

against competitors operating the A380, so of course, for an E2 it takes maybe time, but the aircraft is definitely considered both good quality and good service."

## First Sustainable Profit and Growing

Makhoulf concluded his financial update with what he described as a landmark achievement for the airline: "For the first time, we reported this year in the first nine months, and this is a public figure, of course, a sustainable profitability of 32 million JD, which is around 42–43 million USD, which for an airline like Royal Jordanian is quite a significant achievement."

Load factors have risen from 74% to 81%, the fleet's average age has fallen to four years, and the airline is planning 38% growth in 2026. On future E2 orders, Makhoulf confirmed board and government approval for the 41-aircraft target by 2028, while noting that the narrowbody mix between Airbus and Embraer for the 2028–2032 plan was still being finalized 🔄

# Experiencing flydubai's Upgraded In-Flight Services



Modern travellers evaluate numerous factors when choosing an airline. While reliability, direct flights from their home city and convenient schedules remain top priorities, inflight services such as meal quality, seat comfort and Wi-Fi availability increasingly influence their decisions.



For my trip to Dubai this year to attend the Dubai Airshow, I chose flydubai and the experience offered me a fresh and memorable perspective on the airline's developing service standards.

## Convenient Connections Between Ankara and Dubai

Flydubai operates three direct flights per week from Ankara to Dubai, with a total journey time of just four hours. In October, the airline announced an enhancement to its Economy Class service, with complimentary hot meals, beverages and inflight entertainment rolling out from November 2025. As someone who travels frequently, I fully appreciate the importance of both inflight dining and entertainment on long journeys, and flydubai has clearly elevated the overall experience.

The airline has designed a selection of delicious meals for Economy

Class, transforming the four-hour Ankara–Dubai journey into a far more enjoyable experience. As part of this enhanced Economy Class offering, passengers can also enjoy flydubai's inflight entertainment system, further enhancing comfort and overall satisfaction during the journey.

## A Multifaceted In-Flight Entertainment Experience

Passengers travelling on flydubai can enjoy an engaging, multi-language entertainment platform designed to suit all ages and preferences. The system offers more than 1,000 of the latest Hollywood, Bollywood, Arabic and international films, along with an



extensive range of TV shows from major studios including HBO Max, BBC Kids and Cartoon Network.

Travellers can also explore interactive games, e-magazines, over 700 music albums and podcast episodes, or learn more about their destination through travel guides and real-time flight information.

## Experiencing flydubai Business Class

On my Dubai–Ankara flight, I had the chance to experience flydubai's Business Class, and it became clear that the airline's premium service now Competes with many established flag carriers.

Flying with flydubai journey begins at Dubai International Airport (DXB), Terminal 2, where Business Class passengers enjoy a dedicated check-in area. This private and efficient space ensures a smooth start to the trip, with baggage drop-off and passport control handled comfortably and quickly.

After passport control, Business Class passengers are welcomed into a brand-new Business Class Lounge where passengers



can relax away from the crowds, enjoy a range of delicious food options and comfortably work or relax before the flight.

Stepping onto the aircraft is where the experience truly shines. The fully refreshed Business Class cabin features modern,

spacious seating designed for maximum comfort. Each passenger enjoys a personal 15.6-inch HD screen, making the journey pass effortlessly.

Meal service varies depending on the destination, but dishes are consistently curated with care to ensure a high-quality dining experience.

For passengers wishing to rest after the meal service, the seats can be quickly and easily reclined into a fully flat bed—ideal for arriving refreshed and relaxed.

My four-hour Dubai–Ankara journey flew by so effortlessly that I almost wished for a few more hours in the air. This is the kind of Business Class experience that truly deserves to be experienced. Until the next flight... [▶](#)





# ISTANBUL ✈️ KUALA LUMPUR

## Yeni Hat Lansman Basın Toplantısı



## AirAsia X Returns to Europe via Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen (SAW) Airport After 13 Years!

AirAsia X, one of the leading long-haul low-cost airlines in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region, has decided to resume flights to Europe 13 years after suspending its London and Paris services due to high costs and changing demand. The airline operated its first nonstop flight between Kuala Lumpur and Istanbul on 14 November 2025.

Passengers and cabin crew of the inaugural flight departing from Kuala Lumpur were welcomed with a modest ceremony at the airport, held in mourning for the 20 Turkish soldiers who lost their lives in a C-130E military cargo aircraft crash over Georgia while

returning to Türkiye from Azerbaijan.

Kuala Lumpur flights, which are the longest-range services operated at Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, will be conducted by AirAsia X — the AirAsia Group's medium- and long-haul subsidiary offering budget-friendly travel — using Airbus A330-300 wide-body aircraft. The flights will operate four times weekly (Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday) on a reciprocal basis between Sabiha Gökçen (SAW) and Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA).

With the launch of AirAsia X's SAW-KLIA services, Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport has implemented

another strategic partnership aligned with its goal of becoming a major air transit hub, further expanding its global network. With the addition of the Malaysia connection, Sabiha Gökçen now connects Istanbul to 152 destinations in 54 countries, including 39 domestic and 113 international routes, served by 23 airlines.

The new AirAsia X flights between Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KUL) and Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport (flight number D7 604) are scheduled to depart Kuala Lumpur at 09:35 on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, arriving in



by İbrahim Sünnetçi

Istanbul at 16:35 the same day. Return flights (D7 605) will depart Istanbul at 17:20 and arrive in Kuala Lumpur at 08:40 the following morning.

In addition, AirAsia X's short-haul sister airline, AirAsia, operates 11 daily flights between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. This allows passengers traveling from Singapore to conveniently connect in Malaysia to AirAsia X's long-haul services, including the new Istanbul route.

As part of the launch of the new route, a press conference was held on Monday, 17 November 2025, at the Conrad Istanbul Bosphorus Hotel. The event highlighted the new route's potential to strengthen tourism, trade, and cultural interaction, as well as AirAsia X's vision of connecting Istanbul to more than 130 destinations worldwide. Attendees included Datuk Kamarudin bin Meranun, Co-founder of AirAsia and Non-Independent Executive Chairman of Capital A Berhad, Dato' Fam Lee Ee, Chairman of AirAsia X, Ahmad Amiri Abu Bakar, Consul General Of Malaysia In Istanbul; Benyamin Ismail, CEO of AirAsia X; Sinan Seha Türkseven General Manager Türkiye Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA), Hasan Hamdan, Aviation Marketing, Sabiha Gökçen International Airport and members of Sabiha Gökçen Airport's senior management.

## Speeches

Benyamin Ismail, Chief Executive Officer, AirAsia X said: "First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has joined us today to celebrate yet another important milestone for AirAsia X. Today, we are thrilled to commemorate the launch of our new route to Istanbul, Türkiye, further strengthening the global travel landscape.



For many of you who have been with us since the beginning, you know that this achievement represents an incredible journey for AirAsia X. From the outset, our ambition has been to expand our network beyond Asia and the Asia-Pacific region, and today, our return to Europe marks a significant step in realizing that vision.

AirAsia X has always been driven by one core mission: to make air travel more accessible and affordable for everyone. Our founders, Dr. Tony Fernandes and Dato' Fam Lee Ee, envisioned a world where flying would no longer be a luxury, but an opportunity for all. Over the years, we have carried close to one billion passengers, and

approximately 20% of them flew for the very first time with us.

With the affordability we now offer across Eurasia, travelers from Türkiye will be able to access more than 120 destinations across our network in Asia. This means flying not just once every few years, but several times a year at truly affordable fares.





Over the years, we have connected millions of travelers to new destinations, opening doors for tourism, business, and cultural exchange—bringing communities closer together and strengthening global ties.

We are also proud that AirAsia X was recently named the World's Leading Long-Haul Low-Cost Airline at the 2024 World Travel Awards, and received the Best International Airline of the Year award for the second consecutive year at the 2025 Australian Aviation Awards. In addition, the AirAsia Group has been recognized by Skytrax as the World's Best Low-Cost Airline for 16 consecutive years.

Today, AirAsia X serves more than 20 destinations from Malaysia. In recent years, we have expanded into Central Asia with routes such as Tashkent and Almaty, and now, with our arrival in Istanbul, we proudly reconnect Asia and Europe.

Türkiye and Malaysia share a long history of diplomatic and economic relations, and we are excited to further strengthen this bond through increased travel, trade, and cultural exchange. Istanbul is truly a jewel bridging Europe and Asia, and a must-visit destination for travelers from around the world.

We are confident that this new route will unlock

immense potential for tourism and business collaboration between our nations, while enabling travelers from Türkiye to explore the ASEAN region affordably and seamlessly. We sincerely thank all our stakeholders for their continued support and look forward to shaping the future of medium- and long-haul low-cost travel together."

Hasan Hamdan, Aviation Marketing, Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport (ISG) said: "Good morning and welcome. It is truly an honor to welcome AirAsia X and celebrate the launch of its inaugural flight connecting Kuala Lumpur and Istanbul. This is not merely the opening of a new route—it is the creation of a new bridge between Southeast Asia and Europe.

At Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, our mission is simple yet powerful: to connect people, cultures, and opportunities. Today, we serve 152 destinations across 54 countries with 22 airline partners. With the addition of AirAsia X as our 23rd airline partner, we are proud to expand our network to 153 destinations worldwide.

Travel between Türkiye and Malaysia continues to grow. Last year, more than 24,000 Turkish travelers visited Malaysia, while an increasing number of Malaysians are discovering Türkiye's rich history and

hospitality. This new direct route will further strengthen these exchanges.

ISG is experiencing remarkable growth. In the first ten months of 2025 alone, we welcomed over 40 million passengers, making ISG the fastest-growing major airport in Europe.

On behalf of Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, I would like to thank AirAsia X for placing its trust in us. Together, we look forward to writing a new chapter that connects continents and deepens the enduring ties between Türkiye and Malaysia.”

Sinan Seha Türkseven, General Manager, Türkiye Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA) said: “It is a pleasure to be here today to celebrate the launch of AirAsia X’s direct flights between Kuala Lumpur and Istanbul. Türkiye and Malaysia share centuries-old ties rooted in friendship, cultural affinity, and mutual respect.

Türkiye is one of the world’s richest and most diverse destinations. Last year, we became the fourth most visited country globally, welcoming over 62 million visitors. While the number of Malaysian visitors continues to grow steadily, this new direct route will significantly accelerate that growth.

We sincerely thank AirAsia X and ISG for taking this important step and look forward to welcoming



more visitors from Malaysia and Southeast Asia to experience Istanbul and beyond.”

His Excellency Ahmad Amiri Abu Bakar, Consul General of Malaysia in Istanbul said: “Today marks a significant milestone in Malaysia–Türkiye relations with the launch of AirAsia X’s direct service between Kuala Lumpur and Istanbul. This is more than a flight—it is a bridge connecting

our people, cultures, and economies.

Today, we are proud to see many Turkish visiting Malaysia for all-day purposes. From January to August 2025, Malaysia recorded 25,698 Turkish visitors representing a growth of 31.8% compared to the same period last year. This figure represents the highest number of Turkish arrivals in the past 15 years. Tourism Malaysia

anticipates the number of visitors from Türkiye travelling to Malaysia will reach 30,000 by the end of this year. Meanwhile Türkiye welcomed about 63.000 tourists from Malaysia from January to August 2025 an increase of about 12.6% compared to January to August 2024.

With Visit Malaysia 2026 approaching, this new route is perfectly timed to further increase tourism flows between our countries. Malaysia’s stunning islands, vibrant cities, and warm hospitality await Turkish travelers.

People-to-people connections remain the cornerstone of strong bilateral relations, and we believe this new service will bring our nations even closer together. Congratulations to AirAsia X on this bold vision, and we wish great success to the Kuala Lumpur–Istanbul route.”





### Q&A SESSION

Following the speeches, during the Q&A session, Benyamin Ismail, Chief Executive Officer of AirAsia X, answered questions from members of the press.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: “What does the ‘X’ in AirAsia X stand for? And how do you evaluate the 12.6% increase in Malaysian visitors to Türkiye, reaching 63,000?”**

A: “AirAsia is widely known as a low-cost airline group. AirAsia X is the long-haul arm of that family. The ‘X’ stands for extra-long—representing medium- to long-haul flights, typically ranging from four to eleven hours... Malaysia is an important Muslim country, but we do not see ourselves as serving just one nation.

We represent the entire ASEAN and Asia-Pacific region. Our goal is to bring as many passengers as possible from across our network to Istanbul... For example, from Australia, where Turkish Airlines does not operate direct flights from several cities, we can offer seamless connectivity via Kuala Lumpur. This is particularly valuable for the Turkish diaspora in Australia.. Indonesia is another key market for us. With a population exceeding 300 million, we aim to generate strong traffic flows from Indonesia to Istanbul via Kuala Lumpur. Our target for 2026 is approximately 140,000 passengers. If we reach that level, we will consider increasing frequencies from four to seven flights per week.”

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: “Why did AirAsia X choose Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport for its return to Europe?”**

A: “When entering a new market, the most important factor for us is choosing the right partners. Sabiha Gökçen Airport shares the same vision we have for growth and efficiency... We are a fast-turnaround airline. Being able to turn an aircraft around in 75 minutes is critical to our business model, and SAW’s infrastructure fully supports this operational efficiency... Commercially, this is a true win-win partnership. We bring traffic to the airport, and the airport supports our expansion. That alignment is why we chose Sabiha Gökçen.”

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: “How are the load factors on the initial flights, and what is your demand outlook?”**

A: “Our initial load factors are very encouraging. The Kuala Lumpur–Istanbul flights recorded 91% load factor, while Istanbul–Kuala Lumpur achieved 89%... With the Christmas and New Year travel period approaching, our forward bookings indicate expected load factors of over 80% throughout December and January.”

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: “Malaysia Airlines previously operated this route. What makes AirAsia X different?”**

A: “I cannot comment on why other airlines exited the route. What differentiates us is the scale of our group, operating over 200 aircraft across an extensive network... We are not reliant solely on Kuala Lumpur traffic. We draw passengers from ASEAN’s 750 million population, as well as from China, India, Japan, and Australia—giving us access to a market of nearly two billion people... Equally important is our cost structure. We do not leave aircraft on the ground for six to eight hours. Our 75-minute turnaround significantly reduces costs, allowing us to offer truly affordable fares.”

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: “Is this route focused only on tourism, or will it also support business travel?”**

A: "This route goes beyond tourism. It will act as a catalyst for business travel between Malaysia and Türkiye, particularly in defense, technology, logistics, and trade... We strongly believe in connecting not only capital cities, but also secondary and tertiary cities. That is how meaningful global connectivity is created."

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: "What can passengers expect in terms of comfort and service?"**

A: "Our Airbus A330-300 aircraft offer both economy and lie-flat business class seats. Our business class is often priced at nearly half the cost of full-service carriers... With strong onboard comfort, quality meals, and our multinational cabin crew, AirAsia has been recognized as the world's best low-cost airline for 16 consecutive years... We are starting with four weekly flights and, subject to demand, aim to grow to daily and potentially even double-daily services. Flying to Istanbul has long been a dream for AirAsia X, and today, we are proud to make that dream a reality."

**Comments on the AirAsia X's New Kuala Lumpur Istanbul Route**

The new nonstop (direct) service to be operated four times weekly from Kuala Lumpur to Istanbul by Malaysia-based AirAsia X (AAX) — connecting the

East and the West in one of the world's most iconic cities — marks another significant milestone in the airline's strategy to re-enter Europe and build a global low-cost carrier network as one of the pioneers of the low-cost long-haul concept. The new route also represents a major turning point in strengthening travel, trade, and tourism ties between Southeast Asia and Türkiye.

AirAsia X's return to Europe via Istanbul is not merely about launching a new flight route; it signifies the reshaping of global travel networks, the reconnection of continents, and the creation of new momentum for both the tourism and aviation industries. The key reasons behind this development can be summarized as follows:

**1. Strengthening the Türkiye – Southeast Asia Connection**

This new route directly links Türkiye to one of Southeast Asia's most important transit hubs, creating a significant opportunity for both leisure and business travel. In addition, via AirAsia X's new service, access through Malaysia to a vast region including Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Australia becomes far more affordable and convenient.

**2. Major Contribution to Tourism**

- An increase is expected in the number of tourists traveling from Malaysia and neighboring countries to Türkiye.
- For travelers departing from Türkiye to Southeast Asia, the new route offers a low-cost alternative.

This mutual flow of passengers is expected to positively impact tourism in both Istanbul and Kuala Lumpur.

**3. Affordable Long-Haul Flight Alternative**

AirAsia X is one of the pioneers of the low-cost long-haul model. As a result:

- Increased competition is expected to drive lower fares on Asia-bound flights departing from Istanbul.
- Greater market diversity will further expand travel options for Turkish passengers.

**4. Strengthening Istanbul's Role as a Global Aviation Hub**

The new route is expected to enhance the attractiveness of Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport for Asia-based airlines and reinforce its importance as a transfer and transit hub.

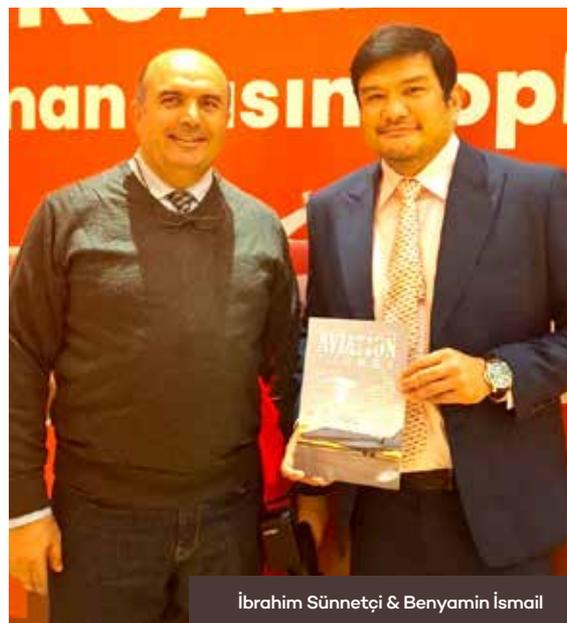
**5. Trade and Business Connectivity**

Cooperation between Malaysia and Türkiye continues across sectors such as defense, technology, textiles, food, and logistics. With AirAsia X's low-cost nonstop flights, business traffic between the two countries is expected to accelerate further, while travel and transportation costs for business travelers are anticipated to decrease.

**6. A Symbol of Post-Pandemic Recovery**

AirAsia X faced significant operational challenges during the pandemic period. The return of its Europe/Istanbul services:

- Demonstrates the airline's renewed strength, and
- Confirms the success of its strategy to return to long-haul operations.



İbrahim Sünnetçi & Benyamin İsmail



# MRO Central Asia: Powering the Region's Aviation MRO Ecosystem Through Global Collaboration

Special Interview with Olga Rybak CEO, ato comm

**✈️ Aviation Turkey:** When planning an event, how do you define your target audience, and what strategies do you use to reach them?

**Olga Rybak:** With our company's extensive

experience in organizing and delivering world-class aviation industry events, we maintain a strong focus on the Central Asia region. Our mission is to contribute to development of the

Central Asia's aviation community through bringing the world's best practices and expertise to the region. Each event has a specific theme, and we shape the target audience around that core topic.

We consistently attract top executives from airlines, airports, aviation authorities, and providers/suppliers of solutions for them. This creates not only the opportunity to hear from key industry figures

in the region during the business sessions but also an ideal environment for high-value networking.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: Since you first started organizing this event, how have the processes and scale evolved over the years?**

**Olga Rybak:** MRO Central Asia debuted in 2022 in Istanbul, Turkey—a perfect platform to introduce our new project to audiences from both the Western world and Central Asia. It spotlighted critical MRO issues for Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and other "-stan" countries. The inaugural event was primarily a conference with extensive networking to help participants connect, identify key market needs, and uncover opportunities.

Today, it runs twice a year—spring in Uzbekistan and fall in Kazakhstan. The exhibition sells out within the first month of opening; this year, we're expanding space for more stands. Attendance now exceeds 700. We see strong momentum in the event's growth, reflecting the market's and audience's readiness to discuss vital topics and build a collaborative community around aircraft MRO challenges

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: What makes MRO Central Asia unique compared to other**

**aviation maintenance events in the region, and what key outcomes do you aim to achieve for participants this year?**

**Olga Rybak:** MRO Central Asia stands out as the region's only dedicated exhibition and conference for aircraft MRO, crafted by ATO Comm specifically for Central Asia. For every edition, we consult extensively with decision-makers from airlines, aviation authorities, and MRO service providers to pinpoint the most pressing topics and needs, shaping a highly relevant program.

We continually broaden the agenda and exhibition space, enabling global experts to showcase their capabilities—both via stands and on-stage presentations tailored to the region. This year, with over 700 participants, we're building a true professional community akin to global standards, concentrating focus on the industry's most critical challenges.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: Have you introduced any new features, sessions, or technologies in this year's MRO Central Asia that attendees should be particularly excited about?**

**Olga Rybak:** This year, we're thrilled to introduce a second exhibition floor for the first time—demand exceeded our original space, so this ensures more exhibitors can join.

We're placing maximum emphasis on the exhibition, with the conference program featuring extended breaks designed for high-quality networking among participants. We are also offering a variety of side events, e.g. exclusive business breakfast, extended presentation as a side event, site visits for local MRO providers and airports, along with with constantly growing number of sponsorship packages.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: How do you ensure that MRO Central Asia provides meaningful networking and business opportunities for both exhibitors and attendees?**

**Olga Rybak:** We prioritize expanded networking time and large, dedicated spaces for attendees and exhibitors alike. Extended coffee breaks surround the conference sessions, while the exhibition layout facilitates easy meetings and discussions. Our online booking channel lets participants pre-schedule and confirm one-on-one meetings in advance. Together, this creates an ideal environment for productive negotiations and collaborations.

**✈️ Aviation Turkey: What is your vision for the future, and are there any innovations or new types of events you are planning to meet industry needs?**

**Olga Rybak:** ATO Comm's event calendar covers key areas of aviation growth in Central Asia. We host the Central Asia Aviation Summit twice yearly in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, alongside the Central Asia Digital Aviation Summit in Almaty—focusing on digital transformation in air transport. Central Asia Air Cargo Summit became a must-visit event for air cargo and logistics professional.

Recent addition is Aero Engines Central Asia, which happens twice a year – one in Uzbekistan and another in Kazakhstan. The rapidly growing Central Asian air transport and military sectors, with massive aircraft fleet modernization, demand robust MRO infrastructure, including for engines, APUs, and powerplants. These conferences and exhibitions bridges Western expertise with the region's modernizing operators.

Our events follow a seasonal rhythm—spring and fall—in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, backed by strong aviation authority and community support. This ensures we consistently attract a high-quality, targeted audience, providing timely platforms for knowledge exchange, negotiations, and discussions on the market's most pressing issues 🌐

# A Missed Opportunity in 1977 Before the F-16

## Türkiye's Attempt to Establish an Aircraft Industry with the MB-339



by Dr. Emir Öngüner  
Freelance Researcher in  
Aviation History

The mid-1970s marked a period when defense industry policies in Türkiye began to be reshaped. The embargo imposed after the 1974 Cyprus Peace Operation and the difficulties experienced in defense procurement strengthened the view that a domestic defense industry should be established in Türkiye. In this environment, developing production capabilities—particularly in the field of aviation—started to be seen as a strategic objective both from military and industrial policy perspectives.

By 1977, a concrete initiative aimed at establishing an aircraft industry in Türkiye had appeared in the press. An examination of the documentary reports published by Aytekin Yıldız in the newspaper *Milliyet* on 13–14–15 December 1977 shows that Türkiye was conducting negotiations with international aviation companies and that the possibility of producing certain aircraft models in Türkiye was being discussed. At the center of these discussions was the MB-339 jet trainer aircraft developed by the Italian manufacturer Aermacchi.



### The Road Toward the Idea of a Domestic Aircraft

Within NATO, there are two countries where Turkish pilots could receive training: the United States and the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom, however, was not in a position to provide this training capacity for present-day Türkiye. The British had arranged their training capacities according to their own requirements. Under these circumstances, the United States appeared to be the only country to which Türkiye can turn for training abroad.

However, it had been noted that the United States, which imposed an arms embargo on Türkiye, might even bring this option into question in the future. Moreover, Türkiye had a successful pilot training system that

it has established and developed over the past twenty years. This has been proven repeatedly at the international level through the results achieved by Turkish pilots in NATO and other military exercises. Training abroad would also undermine this national training system.

On the other hand, the cost of flight training for a military pilot today exceeded 2.5 million Turkish lira. Türkiye, which had to train approximately one hundred pilots every year, did not have the foreign currency resources necessary to cover this cost.

In short, alongside technological, political and financial challenges, the fact that T-33 trainer aircraft had reached the end of their service life made it necessary for Türkiye's training system to move toward a new aircraft type.

### TUSAŞ's First Major Initiative

Immediately after becoming operational, TUSAŞ (Turkish Aircraft Industries Corporation) began efforts aimed at producing military aircraft. Faced with the requirement for a “jet advanced training / close support aircraft”, which had been accepted both politically and militarily, TUSAŞ decided to establish aircraft industry facilities capable of producing combat aircraft, but to begin with the manufacture of a jet advanced training / close support aircraft.

TUSAŞ applied to ten companies that were already producing such aircraft using the latest technology. While waiting for responses from foreign companies, the institution also applied to the Ministries of Industry,

National Defense, and Finance on 26 October 1976, requesting that a Coordination Committee be established to evaluate the incoming proposals jointly and asking these ministries to appoint representatives.

The Ministry of National Defense responded positively to this proposal. Following these positive responses, it was reported that certain disagreements emerged between Minister of National Defense and Minister of Industry and Technology during the period of the First Nationalist Front Government, amid political tensions.

### Initial Proposals and First Evaluations

Among the companies participating in the international tender, the proposals of four companies were considered serious. These were the F-5F (USA), Alpha Jet (Franco-German), Hawk (British), and Aermacchi MB-339 (Italian).

TUSAŞ evaluated the proposals of these four companies according to four main factors:

- *Operational considerations: delivery time, quantity, operational and logistical characteristics*
- *License arrangements, know-how, and the characteristics of aircraft production facilities*

- *Financing conditions*
- *The status of the company and the relations of the relevant country with Türkiye*

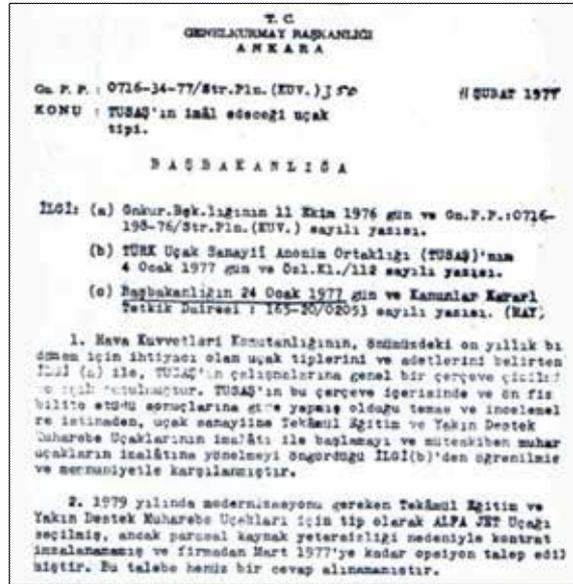
As a result of the evaluation, the Alpha Jet and F-5F were eliminated, leaving the MB-339, manufactured by the Italian Aermacchi and the Hawk, manufactured by the British BAE Systems.

### The Request from the General Staff in February 1977

A memorandum sent to the Prime Ministry on 11 February 1977 indicates that the initial contacts had in fact been carried out within the framework of the Alpha Jet trainer aircraft, developed by the Franco-German consortium Dassault/Dornier, but no progress had been achieved due to financial reasons. It was therefore deemed appropriate to initiate a new process:

“...With reference to the document determining the types and quantities of aircraft required by our Air Force Command for the next ten-year period, a general framework has been drawn for the activities of TUSAŞ.

Based on the contacts and examinations conducted by TUSAŞ within this framework and according to the results of preliminary feasibility studies, it has been learned with satisfaction that it foresees beginning the aircraft industry with the



Gn.P.P.: 0716-34-77/Str.Plın.(KUV), Milliyet, 13.12.1977

manufacture of Advanced Training and Close Support Combat Aircraft and subsequently moving toward the production of combat aircraft.

The Alpha Jet aircraft had been selected as the type for the Advanced Training and Close Support Combat Aircraft requiring modernization in 1979; however, due to insufficient financing the contract could not be signed, and an option was requested from the company until March 1977. No response has yet been received regarding this request...”

### The Search for International Proposals for the Aircraft Industry

TUSAŞ began preparing a draft agreement to be

offered to the companies producing the MB-339 and Hawk aircraft that had passed the initial evaluation. In June 1977, the agreement text was completed and sent to experts at the Ministry of Industry and Technology and the Ministry of Finance for review.

On 15 August 1977, the Aermacchi submitted its final proposal, while BAE Systems, the manufacturer of the Hawk, requested additional time. On 30 August, BAE requested a second extension and then submitted its proposal. TUSAŞ subsequently conducted an evaluation between the two offers.

This evaluation determined that although the Hawk had superior performance, its conditions were very demanding. In particular, it

**YERLİ UÇAK DOSYASI VE TUSAŞ...**

Türkiye'de kurulacak olan uçak sanayiye ile ilgili belgesel araştırma

**AYTEKİN YILDIZ**

**10 büyük firmadan**

**teklif istedi**

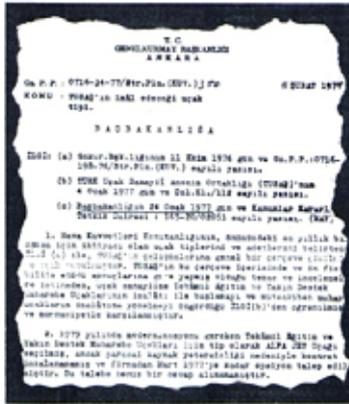
**B**İLGİN politik tercih, gerek teknik tercih, ABD teklifi ve hâgüne göre karışık geliştirilecek olan savaş eğitimi için Düşük Hızda yitirilene göre değerlendirilmeye alınmıştır. Bu Hükümetin de Türk pilotlarının eğitim yapabileceği düzeyde yerli bir üretim olmalıdır. Ancak, Amerika ve İngiltere'de İngilizce konuşulan Türkiye'ye bu eğitim kapasitelerini sağlayabilecek durumda değildir. İngilizler eğitim kapasitelerini kendi ihtiyaçlarına göre ayarlamışlardır. Bu durumda, Amerika, dışarıya eğitim konusunda başvurabilecek tek ülke olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Oysa Türkiye'ye silah imalatına uygulanan kısıtlamalar son hızla kaldırılmıştır, bu kapsamda dışarıya eğitim için bir anlaşma yapılması mümkündür. Üstelik, Türkiye'nin yirmi yıldır kurumsallaştığı, başarılı bir eğitim sistemi vardır. Bu eğitim sistemiyle, NATO

**TUSAŞ, yabancı firmadan teklif istedi**

**İhale sonunda dört firmanın önerisi ciddi bulundu ve bazı faktörler gözönünde tutularak teklifler üzerinde bir değerlendirme yapıldı. Sonuçta İtalyan ve İngiliz firmalarına ön tercih tanındı**

**Milliyet, 13.12.1977**

**Türk pilotlarının dışarıda eğitim görmesine politik ve mali açılardan olanak bulunmaması üzerine, savaş uçağı yapımı için çalışmalara girişen TUSAŞ, eğitim uçağı ile işe başlamaya karar vererek 1976 temmuzunda uluslararası bir ihale düzenledi**



**Bakanlığın görüşüne alınmaksızın, uygun görüşleri iki firma ile ve öncelikli olarak, ulusal emsallerle yapılmıştır. Bu nedenle ilgili sektörün durumu uygun görülmemiştir.**

aircraft's maneuverability, flight life, suitability for combat operations, and maintenance and logistical convenience were also examined.

Since the primary missions expected from the aircraft under consideration were advanced training and combat readiness training in peacetime and offensive operations in wartime, both the MB-339 and the Hawk were considered suitable for advanced and combat training. However, it was noted that the MB-339 was more suitable than the Hawk in terms of carrying a greater payload over longer ranges. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of operational considerations, a preference for the Hawk model also emerged. In selecting the aircraft type, political, economic, and technological factors—such as service life, sustainment, and development capability—were taken into account.

was noted that the Italians were offering significant financing opportunities to Türkiye. This was attractive to TUSAŞ officials because the country was facing a shortage of foreign currency. For example, BAE stated that 20,075,500 USD in external financing would be required and requested that 100,300,000 USD (more than 90 percent) be paid by Türkiye in 1978. Aermacchi stated that the required external financing would be 13,422,000 USD and proposed that repayment be spread over ten years. In addition, it requested 16.5 million USD (about 14 percent) for 1977.

During this process, Türkiye's objective was not simply to purchase a new aircraft. The main goal was to establish a production infrastructure in Türkiye

that would enable aircraft assembly and eventually develop manufacturing capability. Commentary in the press indicates that this initiative was seen as one of the first serious steps toward establishing an aviation industry in Türkiye.

### The Emergence of the MB-339 Option

During the evaluation of the proposals, the offers presented by the British and Italian aviation industries came to the forefront. Issues such as the

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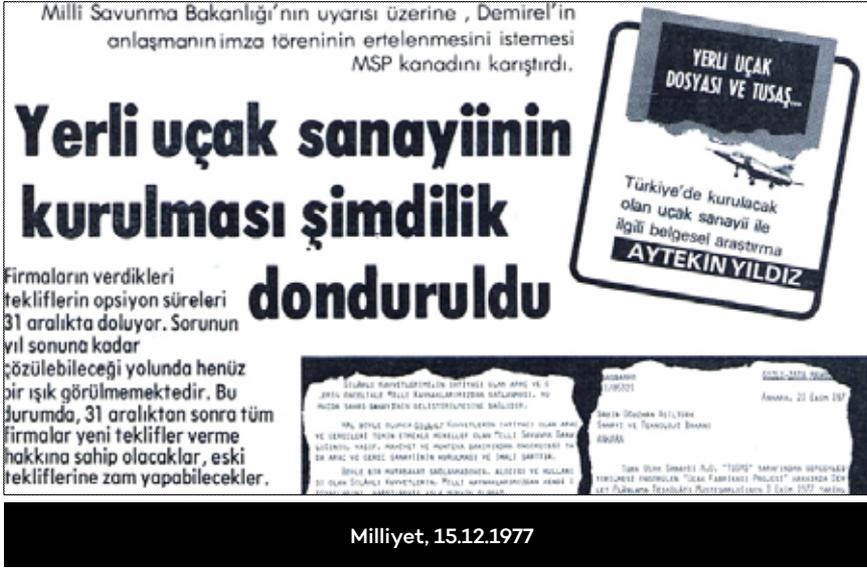
**AYTEKİN YILDIZ**

**TUSAŞ, İTALYANLARA «EVET» DİYOR**

**TUSAŞ, İtalyan firmasının koşullarını daha uygun bulmuş, Milli Savunma işe üstünlük yönünden İngiliz uçağının ağır bastığını ileri sürerek kararı TUSAŞ'a bırakmıştı.**



**Sonuç olarak, yukarıda belirtilen faktörlere ve açıklandığı gibi, en uygun uçak tipini seçmek üzere,**



regulating the establishment of TUSAŞ had not yet been completed. For this reason, it was emphasized that signing the licensing and manufacturing agreement in haste would not be appropriate.

Demirel's decision caused panic within the MSP wing of the coalition government. Deputy Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan invited Demirel and several TUSAŞ officials to a meeting and attempted to persuade him, but was unsuccessful. Attempts by Minister of Industry Asiltürk to convince Demirel also failed.

However, contacts continued, and on the morning of 26 October, shortly before the ceremony was to begin at Ankara Palas, where most of the invited guests had already gathered, the ceremony was postponed to 29 October. In order to find a solution to the issue, a meeting was held at the Ministry of National Defense on 28 October. Officials from the Ministries of National Defense, Industry, and Finance as well as TUSAŞ representatives attended the meeting. Officials from the Ministry of National Defense once again stated that further examination was necessary.

A two-week period was set to conduct these investigations. The 29 October ceremony was postponed indefinitely, and the Italians returned to their country. The issues

As a result, it was stated that the final work to determine the most suitable aircraft type should be carried out by TUSAŞ and that the outcome should be reported to the Ministry of National Defense. Despite the Ministry's view that the Hawk was superior, it was considered appropriate to leave the selection to TUSAŞ.

At a final meeting of the TUSAŞ Board of Directors, consisting of General Manager Mehmet Akyurt, Deputy General Manager for Technical Affairs Hasan Tuğ, retired General Kemal Engin, retired Lieutenant General Hulusi Kayman, retired Brigadier General Şevketin Kural, and businessman Ayhan Bayöken, a decision was taken unanimously, six votes to zero, to proceed with the MB-339.

The idea of producing the MB-339 in Türkiye was not based solely on a military requirement.

Newspaper reports frequently emphasized that aircraft production represented a technology transfer opportunity that could strengthen Türkiye's industrial infrastructure. This assessment reflected the increasing role of air power in the military thinking of the period and the strategic importance of aviation technology for the defense industry.

### Disagreement Within the Coalition Government

After the decision was taken, members of the TUSAŞ Board visited Minister of Industry and Technology Oğuzhan Asiltürk. After the decision was conveyed, the minister asked when the agreement was expected to be signed, and 26 October was set as the date.

Preparations then began. The Italians were invited to Türkiye, invitations for the

ceremony scheduled for 26 October were printed, and the Prime Minister, the Chief of the General Staff, ministers, and force commanders were invited. However, an unexpected veto came from the office of Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel.

The justification was that the procedures carried out in the General Staff's letter dated 7 July 1977 and the Ministry of National Defense's letter dated 20 July 1977 contained deficiencies and shortcomings and that the evaluations made regarding the project had not yet matured sufficiently. In essence, there was no clear consensus among the relevant institutions regarding which aircraft type would be produced, in what quantity, and within what scope.

According to Demirel, the coordination processes required by the legislation

that had been decided for examination at the meeting in the Ministry of National Defense were never concluded. As a result, the establishment of a domestic aircraft industry in Türkiye was effectively frozen for a period.

### The Planned Production Model

According to newspaper reports, the aircraft industry planned to be established in Türkiye would not have been limited to an assembly line. The project envisaged the establishment of production facilities, the development of maintenance infrastructure, and the domestic production of certain aircraft components.

These approaches demonstrate that Türkiye was discussing a major industrial investment for the time. Aircraft production would not only meet defense requirements but would also provide technological development in areas such as metallurgy, electronics, and precision manufacturing.

### The Political and Economic Stakeholders of the Project

However, information in newspaper reports indicates that serious obstacles existed to implementing the project. The year 1977 was a period of high political instability in Türkiye. Coalition governments and economic crises made



it difficult to implement large-scale industrial investments. According to reports in the press, the aircraft industry project generated differing views within the government and among state institutions. As seen above, the Ministry of Industry, Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Finance, the General Staff, and the management of TUSAŞ defended different positions.

The high cost of the project also became an important subject of debate. The 10 billion lira investment estimate mentioned in the press represented a very large figure considering the economic conditions of the time. For this reason, no definitive political decision could be reached and the initiative was eventually put on hold. The wording used in newspaper reports indicates that the project was not formally cancelled but was effectively frozen before implementation.

### Why a Trainer Aircraft and Why the MB-339?

When discussions began

in the mid-1970s about launching an aircraft production program in Türkiye, the idea of taking the first step with a jet trainer aircraft came to the forefront. As noted in the General Staff's memorandum dated 11 February 1977, the first attempt was made with the Alpha Jet, but it did not succeed. When newspaper reports and official correspondence from the period are examined, it becomes clear that this choice was based on several key considerations related to both military needs and industrial policy:

#### 1. The Turkish Air Force's urgent need for a training aircraft

By the mid-1970s, a significant portion of the training aircraft used by the Turkish Air Force consisted of platforms purchased from the United States in the 1950s. Jet trainers such as the T-33, as well as basic training aircraft such as the T-34 and T-41, had become outdated technologically and increasingly expensive to maintain.

Moreover, due to the embargo imposed after the Cyprus Operation, the supply of spare parts had become more difficult. For this reason, modernizing the training system and transitioning to a new jet trainer aircraft was considered necessary from both operational and logistical perspectives.

#### 2. The most suitable starting platform for establishing an aviation industry

For countries seeking to establish a new aviation industry, trainer aircraft are generally considered the most suitable starting point. Compared with fighter aircraft, they are less costly and their production processes are relatively less complex.

In Türkiye's case, it was planned to begin with aircraft in the trainer and light attack category in order to gradually develop aircraft manufacturing experience. At later stages, it was envisaged that production could move toward combat aircraft.

### 3. The technical and industrial suitability of the MB-339

Developed by the Italian manufacturer Aermacchi, the MB-339 was regarded as one of the modern jet trainer aircraft of its time. Its design for both advanced jet training and light attack missions made it an attractive option for the needs of the Turkish Air Force.

In addition, the MB-339 program had a structure open to licensed production, and it was believed that technology transfer could be achieved through a production line to be established in Türkiye. For this reason, the aircraft was evaluated not only as a training platform but also as a tool that could help establish the infrastructure of an aviation industry in Türkiye.

### An Opportunity Lost at the Signing Stage

While discussions continued within the government, in the final days of December 1977 the general manager of Aermacchi, who had been waiting for the agreement to be signed, left Türkiye after the decision-making process was prolonged and the parties failed to reach a consensus.

Looking back today, the MB-339 production initiative discussed in 1977 can be considered an important but unrealized opportunity for Türkiye's aviation industry. It is also clear that the debates conducted in the press during that period played an important role in shaping defense industry policies in Türkiye. These discussions demonstrated that technological capability in aviation requires a long-term strategic approach, and they helped create an intellectual foundation for the steps that would be taken in later years 🌐



## Global Success for Hitit's 30th Anniversary Annual Report

Hitit secured first place in the technology/software category at the LACP Vision Awards with its 2024 Annual Report, marking its 30th anniversary. The company also ranked second overall among the global Top 100 companies.

Hitit, a global provider of airline and travel technology solutions, achieved significant recognition at the Vision Awards organized by the League of American Communications Professionals (LACP), one of the world's most respected platforms for communication and reporting excellence.

In addition to winning its category, Hitit was placed second in the overall global ranking of 100 companies. The LACP Vision Awards, widely regarded as a prestigious benchmark in the field. The Awards evaluate corporate reports and company activities on an international scale, based on criteria such as message clarity, narrative quality, creativity, and stakeholder communication.

Founded by two visionary women entrepreneurs at a time when reservation and ticketing processes were just beginning to integrate technology, Hitit has since grown into a global airline and travel technology company supporting dozens of airlines and sectoral players across six continents. Prepared around

a special 30th-anniversary theme, the Annual Report reflects the company's transformation journey through the concept of "Perfect Synchronization." It underscores Hitit's commitment to innovation and its role in shaping the future of airline industry. The report presents a comprehensive narrative of its broad technology ecosystem, spanning reservation systems, loyalty programs, payment infrastructures, and airline retailing.

With a team of approximately 500 experts, Hitit highlights not only its technological capabilities but also its long-term partnerships; people-centered approach, and solutions designed to enhance passenger experience. The report's narrative language and structure are intentionally crafted to mirror the company's operational model, one that functions simultaneously and harmoniously across diverse geographies.

Nevra Onursal Karaağaç, CEO of Hitit, commented on the achievement: "The recognition of our annual report, prepared especially for our 30th anniversary, on a prestigious international platform is invaluable to us. Looking ahead, we aim to continue this strong alignment with our business partners through solutions – both practical and innovative – that help shape the future of global aviation."

## Air Astana Completes 50th C-Check at Its Own Technical Centre

Air Astana has successfully completed its 50th C-check on an Airbus A320 aircraft at its technical centre in Astana. This milestone marks a significant step in strengthening the airline's technical capabilities and advancing heavy maintenance capacity in Kazakhstan.

The achievement reflects years of consistent investment in engineering infrastructure, workforce training, and the expansion of in-house maintenance expertise.



Each C-check involves extensive structural and systems inspections in full compliance with international aviation standards and requires more than 20,000 man-hours.

Robert Dando, Director of the Astana Technical Centre, stated that performing complex maintenance checks in-house ensures full quality

control, reduces reliance on overseas providers, and supports the development of domestic technical expertise.

Today, Air Astana performs all types of C-checks for Airbus family aircraft at its bases in Astana and Almaty. Since 2019, the airline has completed 28 C1-checks, 5 C2-checks, 10 C6-checks, and 7 C12-checks, supported by a

highly qualified team of EASA Part 66 licensed engineers and mechanics.

The continued expansion of advanced maintenance capabilities highlights Air Astana's contribution to the development of Kazakhstan's aviation industry and its commitment to high standards of safety and reliability.

## Singapore Airlines and Wingie Enuygun Group Sign NDC Partnership

Singapore Airlines (SIA) and online travel marketplace Wingie Enuygun Group have signed a New Distribution Capability (NDC) partnership to provide customers with more competitive fares, richer content, and direct access to Singapore Airlines' wide range of products and services.

Through this agreement, ENUYGUN and its global brand WINGIE will gain

direct access to SIA's NDC-enabled content. Customers will benefit from greater transparency and flexibility, including access to additional services such as seat selection and extra baggage.

The partnership focuses particularly on enhancing the booking experience for travel between Türkiye and the Asia-Pacific region. By leveraging NDC technology, both parties aim to offer a more seamless and

personalized reservation process.

Singapore Airlines Türkiye General Manager Melvin Tan stated that the collaboration reflects SIA's commitment to working closely with innovative digital partners, highlighting Türkiye as an important source market for Asia-Pacific travel.

Wingie Enuygun Group Deputy General Manager Orkun Özkan emphasized

that the integration supports their goal of providing broader options and an improved booking experience, while strengthening their global growth ambitions.

The partnership supports Singapore Airlines' modern distribution strategy and enhances Wingie Enuygun Group's global reach, with further joint marketing initiatives planned for the future.

## Emirates Takes a Pioneering Step Toward Accessible Travel in Istanbul

Emirates, the world's first Autism-Certified Airline, brought its vision of accessible travel to Istanbul through its "Travel Rehearsal" programme, hosting 11 children with accessible travel requirements and their families at Istanbul Airport (IGA). The initiative, which is gradually being rolled out across 17 airports in Emirates' global network, allows participants with disability to experience every stage of the travel journey in a supportive and structured environment.

As part of Emirates' "Accessible Travel for All" approach, the Travel Rehearsal program aims to make air travel more predictable and comfortable for individuals with accessible travel requirements. By familiarizing families with airport procedures and onboard environments ahead of time, the programme helps reduce anxiety and build confidence before an actual flight.

Sami Aqil Abdullah, Senior Vice President, Emirates Airport Services Outstation & Business Support, emphasized that accessibility is a core standard across every stage of the customer journey:

"Accessible travel is not a single initiative for Emirates; it is a systematic approach embedded into every step of the journey. Through the Travel Rehearsal program, we aim to eliminate pre-flight uncertainty for children with autism and their families, making the airport and aircraft experience more predictable and reassuring. Our Istanbul implementation demonstrates that accessibility is not only about assistance — it is about independence, confidence, and dignity," and he continued: "Accessibility is not a finished goal — it is a commitment that continues to evolve. As the world's first autism-certified airline, we are dedicated to improving inclusive travel experiences at every stage of the journey. By expanding the Travel Rehearsal program across global destinations including Istanbul, we are turning this commitment into meaningful, measurable action.

We thank our partners at Istanbul Airport (IGA) for their contribution to our initiative, and ensuring that people of disability receive the necessary care and support they require during their airport journey."



During the Istanbul experience, participants walked through the full travel process — from airport transfers and check-in to passport control, lounge access, and an aircraft tour. The experience demonstrated how an Emirates journey unfolds smoothly and safely, from ground services to onboard, while fostering trust between trained Emirates teams and passengers with disabilities.

Emirates became the world's first Autism-Certified Airline after more than 30,000 cabin crew and ground staff completed specialized

autism awareness training. The programme equips employees with in-depth knowledge of the autism spectrum, common misconceptions, challenges faced during travel, and personalized support strategies tailored to individual passenger needs.

So far, Emirates has performed its travel rehearsal programme in Dubai, Barcelona, Brussels, Budapest, Christchurch, Durban, Istanbul, Luanda, Madrid, Nice, Oslo, Paris and Venice, with more destinations committing to the programme every month.

## Pegasus Opens New Aircraft Maintenance Centre at Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport

Pegasus Airlines has significantly increased its technical maintenance capacity and capabilities by opening its new aircraft maintenance centre at Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport. With an infrastructure based on digitalisation, efficiency and sustainability, the hangars will offer simultaneous maintenance to five narrow-body aircraft, thereby significantly increasing the company's operational strength. With an initial investment of USD 40 million, Pegasus aims to optimise time and resources in maintenance processes, enhance operational efficiency, and reduce maintenance-related aircraft downtime.

The project, which commenced in January 2025, has been completed within a year. In this initial phase, two maintenance hangars capable of providing line and base maintenance for five narrow-body aircraft simultaneously, as well as one paint hangar, have been put into operation. In the second phase, to be completed in the last quarter of 2026, an additional hangar providing base maintenance for five more narrow-body aircraft will become operational. In the third phase, planned to start within 4-5 years, this hangar will be expanded to accommodate ten narrow-



body aircraft, marking the completion of the aircraft maintenance centre investment.

These first-phase hangars, which bring line and base maintenance activities together under one roof, have been designed to support a comprehensive range of technical operations. These include line maintenance, engine and landing gear replacements, avionics and structural modifications, base maintenance procedures, full aircraft painting and livery design and coating, as well as component maintenance and training activities.

**Güliz Öztürk:**  
**“The new hangar investment is a strategic step for faster and more optimised operations”**

Commenting on the investment, Pegasus Airlines CEO Güliz Öztürk said: “Every investment we make in technical infrastructure takes our operational strength one step further. Our aircraft maintenance centre investment at Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport is a strategic milestone in Pegasus’ sustainable growth journey. Our new hangars will not only enable us to manage the maintenance needs of our growing fleet more effectively, but also accelerate our transformation focused on digitalisation and efficiency. By managing our aircraft maintenance processes more quickly and in a more optimised way, we aim to provide our guests with an ever more seamless travel experience.”

### Pegasus Strengthens Maintenance and Operational Capabilities with Phase One Hangars

Capable of servicing five narrow-body aircraft simultaneously, these hangars are equipped to accommodate all narrow-body aircraft types, with authorisation for Boeing 737 NG and Airbus A320/A321 family CEO and NEO models.

Located within 18,000 square metres of enclosed space and supported by a 25,000 square metre apron area, the facility is strategically positioned at the transition point between the two runways of Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport. The first-phase hangars, implemented

with an investment of approximately USD 40 million, will not only increase technical capacity but also create additional employment for around 200 people. The facility will primarily serve Pegasus' growing fleet; in the future, depending on capacity availability, it will also be able to accommodate aircraft belonging to other airlines.

## Digitalisation and Sustainability Combined in the New Hangar

The hangar also represents an important pillar of Pegasus' digital maintenance and sustainability vision. Processes will operate more quickly and efficiently thanks to practices such as paperless maintenance processes, a digital warehouse and tool management system, unmanned Personal Protective Equipment dispensers, and AI-supported occupational health solutions. Preventive maintenance activities and data analytics systems enable maintenance needs to be anticipated in advance, supporting uninterrupted operations. In terms of sustainability, an infrastructure focused on energy efficiency and waste management was chosen for the hangar construction.



## Airnorth Strengthens Long-term Partnership with Embraer Through Fleet Support Agreement

Airnorth has strengthened its long-standing relationship with Embraer through a new multi-year support agreement with Embraer reinforcing the airline's commitment to safe, reliable operations across Northern Australia and beyond. The agreement provides comprehensive maintenance, repair and spare-parts support for Airnorth's Embraer E170 and E190 fleet under Embraer's Pool Program.

Airnorth Supply Chain Manager Bradley Norrish said the agreement underpins the airline's ability to deliver consistent, dependable services across some of Australia's most remote and operationally complex routes.

"Reliability is everything for a regional airline like Airnorth," Mr Norrish says.

"This agreement gives us confidence that our Embraer fleet is backed by world-class OEM support, with fast access to components and technical expertise when and where we need it. It also allows us to manage costs more effectively, reduce aircraft downtime, and keep our focus where it belongs — safely connecting communities and supporting the dependable services our customers rely on."

"We are proud to mark a decade of partnership with Airnorth and appreciate their renewed confidence in Embraer through this agreement. Operating in some of the region's most challenging conditions, Airnorth plays a vital role in connecting communities, and we remain fully committed to providing

tailored, reliable support for its E-Jets," says Carlos Naufel, President and CEO, Embraer Services & Support.

Embraer's Pool Program offers comprehensive component support to airlines worldwide, leveraging the company's technical expertise and extensive services network. The program delivers significant savings and economies in component repair and inventory holding costs, reduces warehousing needs, and operates within a framework of guaranteed performance levels. Embraer Services & Support provides a wide range of customized solutions designed to enhance the after-sales experience and support the growing global fleet of Embraer aircraft.

## Deutsche Aircraft Appoints Anastasija Visnakova as Chief Commercial Officer

Deutsche Aircraft announced the appointment of Anastasija Visnakova as Chief Commercial Officer (CCO). In this role, she will oversee the company's global commercial activities, including sales, marketing, communications, customer service and aftermarket.

Anastasija has spent more than three years as Vice President Sales and Marketing, where she played a central role in strengthening Deutsche Aircraft's commercial presence, building customer relationships and supporting the successful market introduction of the D328eco®. Her appointment reflects the continued growth of the company as it moves closer to industrialisation and entry into service.

As a member of the Executive Committee, Anastasija will lead a unified commercial



organisation focused on the entire customer journey, from first contact and aircraft acquisition to entry-into-service, daily operations support and long-term aftermarket care. Concentrating these functions under one leadership role creates clear revenue accountability and ensures a consistent, customer-focused approach across all markets.

"I am honoured to take on the role of Chief Commercial Officer at such an important

moment for Deutsche Aircraft," said Anastasija Visnakova. "With the D328eco approaching entry into service, our priority is to deliver a seamless customer experience and build strong, lasting partnerships. I look forward to working closely with our teams and our global community of operators as we continue to grow."

"Anastasija's appointment as Chief Commercial Officer is a natural and well-deserved step," said Nico

Neumann, Chief Executive Officer of Deutsche Aircraft. "She has been instrumental in shaping our commercial strategy and strengthening engagement with customers. Aligning sales, marketing, communications, customer service and aftermarket under her leadership reinforces clear ownership of the full commercial and customer cycle as we prepare for our next phase of development."

Anastasija brings extensive international experience across the airline and aerospace sectors, with a strong record in commercial strategy, sales leadership, customer partnerships and market development.

This appointment highlights Deutsche Aircraft's commitment to building a strong executive team as it prepares for the industrialisation and entry into service of the D328eco.

## SunExpress Receives Four New Boeing 737-8 Aircraft

SunExpress, a joint venture of Turkish Airlines and Lufthansa, continues to receive new aircraft as part of its growth and fleet modernization plans. In January, the airline added four more Boeing 737-8 aircraft to its fleet.

The aircraft, registered as TC-SLD, TC-SLC, TC-SLE,

and TC-SLF, were delivered from Boeing's facilities in Seattle on January 9, 13, 14, and 27, respectively. The last aircraft added to the fleet landed at Antalya Airport on January 29 following a planned fuel stop. TC-SLF is scheduled to begin operations in the first week of February.

SunExpress had received five Boeing 737-8 aircraft in 2025. With the addition of the four new aircraft delivered in January, the total number of aircraft added to the fleet from existing orders has reached 23.

The newly delivered Boeing 737-8 aircraft provide

reduced fuel consumption and lower emissions thanks to advanced engine technologies compared to previous-generation models. They also offer passengers a quieter, more modern cabin design, delivering a more comfortable and environmentally friendly travel experience.

## India's Regional Mobility Boom Points Clearly to Turboprops

ATR, the world's leading regional aircraft manufacturer and only producer of commercial turboprops today, has released a new white paper demonstrating that India's fast-expanding regional connectivity demand is fundamentally a turboprop market.

Based on ATR's MobilityMonitor platform, a backcast model built on the observation of tens of millions of actual journeys across all modes, the study finds that over 90% of India's 4.6 billion annual inter-city journeys are under 400 nautical miles, the range where turboprops deliver unbeatable economics compared to regional jets, especially in low-fare environments and in today's context of rising fuel prices.

The white paper, Exploring India's Connectivity Landscape, identifies up to 900 new domestic routes, of which 420 fall squarely into turboprop territory. ATR estimates that 35 million of the 90 million additional annual passengers expected with UDAN-backed airport expansion could only be served efficiently and sustainably by turboprops.

India remains one of the most price-sensitive airline markets in the world. To



support the government's UDAN objective of affordable, widespread connectivity, airlines must operate the most competitive aircraft for their networks. Turboprops offer: 45% lower fuel burn and emissions than comparable regional jets, Superior economics on short-haul sectors, which dominate India's mobility landscape, Right-sized capacity for Tier 2/3 demand patterns, Resilience to high fuel prices, which represent up to 40% of Indian carriers' operating costs.

"With a need for affordable air travel, and fuel costs set to increase, turboprops are

the only economically viable solution to scale regional connectivity profitably," says Alexis Vidal, ATR's Senior Vice-President Commercial.

India currently records only 3% of inter-city travel by air, significantly below nations like China or the United States. ATR's study shows that the rapid expansion toward 230 airports by 2030 could radically shift this landscape by bringing millions of travellers within a 90-minute radius of an airport.

The report says that people living within 90 minutes of an airport are up to three

times more likely to fly than those living farther away. Today, only about 30% of India's population, approximately 425 million people, live close enough to an airport where it would become a convenient option.

"The lack of an airport does not imply the absence of mobility demand, especially in a country with an extensive rail network such as India. With the current airport infrastructure out of reach for so many Indians, it is no surprise that air travel accounts for only 3% of domestic inter-city trips," Vidal adds.



## Sabiha Gökçen Airport Achieves a Strategic Milestone

OAG, the world's leading aviation data and analytics platform providing insights to the global travel industry since 1929, has described Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport's 2025 performance as "a strategic achievement among Europe's top 10 airports."

Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport (SAW) closed 2025 as a defining milestone year, redefining its operational limits and reinforcing its position in the global aviation arena. Celebrating its 25th anniversary, Sabiha

Gökçen Airport welcomed 48.4 million passengers, once again proving its status as one of the world's most significant international connectivity hubs.

Recognized as the digital compass of the aviation industry and one of the most trusted authorities shaping global aviation strategies, UK-based OAG published its "Busiest Airports in the World 2025" report on 15 January 2026, based on Global Airline Schedules Data.

The report, which analyzes full-year 2025 data (January–December) and

presents year-on-year (YoY) and pre-pandemic comparisons (including 2024 and 2019 figures), highlighted Sabiha Gökçen Airport's performance with the statement: "a strategic achievement among Europe's top 10 airports."

### Number One in Capacity Growth: 15% Increase

In OAG's ranking of Europe's top 10 airports by seat capacity, Sabiha Gökçen Airport recorded the highest year-on-year growth among its peers. In 2025, the airport increased its capacity by 15% compared to the previous year, reaching 28.6 million one-way (semi-route) seats.

The report noted that major European hubs

such as Frankfurt (FRA) and Munich (MUC) have yet to return to their pre-pandemic (2019) capacity levels. While both airports showed signs of recovery compared to 2024—by 3% and 5% respectively—Sabiha Gökçen Airport's 15% growth allowed it to surpass Munich, which fell to tenth place.

Sabiha Gökçen was the only new entrant to the "Europe's Top 10 Airports" list. Having ranked 11th in 2024, the airport climbed two positions to ninth place in 2025.

Maintaining its leadership in long-term growth performance, Sabiha Gökçen Airport expanded its capacity to 37% above 2019 levels, making it the fastest-growing airport in Europe compared to the pre-pandemic period.

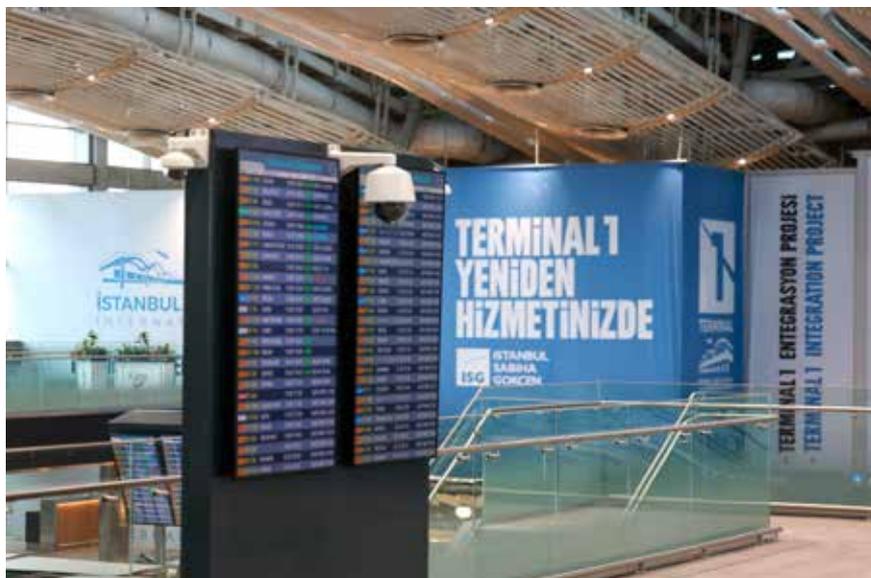
## OAG: Istanbul's Rise as a Global Hub

Commenting on the 2025 Busiest Airports in the World rankings, John Grant, Chief Analyst at OAG, pointed out that global aviation has entered a new phase of growth and underlined Istanbul's rising position as a global hub.

In his specific assessment of Sabiha Gökçen Airport, Grant stated that the 48.4 million passenger figure corresponds to an average load factor of 84% throughout the year, noting that this result is fully aligned with market expectations and represents a consistent performance indicator.

### Kerem Maybek: "ISG's Success Is the Tangible Result of a Transformation Vision"

Evaluating this achievement not merely as an increase in volume but as the tangible outcome of ISG's holistic transformation vision—where technology is positioned as a strategic enabler—Kerem Maybek, Chief Commercial and Strategy Officer of Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport, emphasized that in 2026 the airport will continue to support rapidly growing traffic through sustainability



principles and technology-driven investments, while delivering a world-class passenger experience.

**Maybek stated:** "Thanks to its geopolitical advantage at the heart of three continents, Türkiye has become one of global aviation's most prominent hubs—offering both rapid access and efficient connectivity. From Istanbul, the epicenter

of this critical logistics corridor and a jewel of global tourism, we connect 55 countries through 23 airlines, serving a total of 154 destinations, including 39 domestic and 115 international routes. Our airport has evolved beyond being merely a destination; it has transformed into a vast ecosystem that sets new global hub standards for aviation."

**He concluded:** "With stronger, faster, and more integrated connections to Istanbul and its surrounding regions via road, sea, and rail networks, Sabiha Gökçen—the 'Airport of the City and Cities'—will continue to offer passengers not just a transit point, but a comfortable, seamless, predictable, and digitally enhanced travel experience."





## Flying Toward 2033: Turkish Airlines' Strong Q3 2025 Financial and Operational Performance

Continuing its steady growth in line with its 2033 strategic targets Turkish Airlines generated USD 1.1 billion in Operating Profit in the third quarter of 2025.

- In the third quarter of 2025, total revenues increased by 4.9% year-on-year to approximately USD 7 billion. In the first nine months of the year, total revenues exceeded USD 17.8 billion.

- Operating profit for the third quarter reached USD 1.1 billion, bringing operating profit for the

January–September 2025 period to USD 1.7 billion.

- Consolidated assets amounted to USD 43.2 billion, while total employment, including all subsidiaries, exceeded 101,000 employees. Taking indirect effects into account, the Company's contribution to the Turkish economy in the first nine months of the year reached USD 46 billion.

- Investments made under the 2033 strategy totaled USD 3.6 billion in the first nine months of the year.

- Supported by strong

October traffic results, with a 19% increase in passenger numbers and a 16% rise in cargo volumes, as well as robust forward bookings, Turkish Airlines expects its full-year 2025 EBITDA margin to be within the long-term target range of 22–24%.

Announcing its third-quarter 2025 financial results, Turkish Airlines continued its uninterrupted growth despite extraordinary global developments. Despite uncertainties stemming from trade wars and ongoing engine-

related challenges across the industry, the Company achieved the highest third-quarter passenger number in its history, carrying 27.2 million passengers during the period.

Maintaining uninterrupted growth for the past 18 consecutive quarters, Turkish Airlines increased passenger capacity by 8.2% year-on-year in the third quarter of 2025, reaching 43% above pre-pandemic levels.

During the July–September 2025 period, Turkish Airlines' total revenues



rose by 4.9% year-on-year to approximately USD 7 billion, driven primarily by strong passenger operations. Passenger revenues increased by 6.1%, supported by demand responding positively to capacity growth. However, despite the increase in total revenues, declining unit revenues and ongoing cost pressures led to a 21.3% year-on-year decrease in operating profit, which declined to USD 1.1 billion in the third quarter compared to the same period in 2024.

Commenting on the third-quarter 2025 results, Prof. Dr. Ahmet Bolat, Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee of Turkish Airlines, stated:

“The profit we achieved in the third quarter of 2025 once again underlines Turkish Airlines’ ability to adapt to all operating environments thanks to its diversified revenue structure. As Türkiye’s most valuable international brand, we will continue our growth and investments without interruption within the scope of our 2033 strategy. Our objective is not solely profitability; our focus is always on long-term success.”

Turkish Airlines’ EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, Amortization, and Lease Expenses), a key indicator of its operating cash generation capability, reached USD 2.1 billion in the third quarter of 2025, with an EBITDA margin of 29.6%. Supported by the strong outlook in forward bookings, the Company maintains its expectation that the full-year 2025 EBITDA margin will remain within the long-term target range of 22–24%.

During the third quarter, Turkish Airlines also continued its efforts to expand commercial partnerships. In addition to numerous codeshare agreements with airlines around the world, the Company reached an agreement to acquire minority shares in Air Europa, one of Spain’s leading airlines. Through this agreement, Turkish



Airlines aims to strengthen its global connectivity, expand passenger and cargo networks between Spain and Türkiye, open new tourism markets in Latin America, and increase tourist inflows and economic contribution to Türkiye.

Targeting a fleet of over 800 aircraft by 2033, Turkish Airlines expanded its fleet by 8.4% year-on-year, reaching 506 aircraft as of September 2025, despite bottlenecks in aircraft manufacturing.

To further enhance operational efficiency, flexibility, and passenger comfort, the Company finalized negotiations with Boeing for aircraft orders, including 50 firm and 25 optional B787-9/10 aircraft, as well as 100 firm and 50 optional B737-8/10 MAX aircraft.

Implementing its centennial strategy targets with confidence, Turkish Airlines continues its journey of sustainable growth with consistent success.

# Pegasus Airlines Announced an Order for CFM LEAP-1B Engines to Power its Boeing 737-10 Fleet

Pegasus Airlines and CFM International announced that they have signed an agreement for up to 300 LEAP-1B engines to power the company's future fleet of Boeing 737-10 aircraft. The agreement also includes spare engines and a long-term maintenance agreement.

Pegasus Airlines CEO Güliz Öztürk said in a statement, "Since we began operations in 1990, CFM engines have played an important role in creating a reliable and more efficient fleet serving Pegasus passengers. We are extremely satisfied with the operational performance of the LEAP engine family and aim to bring the same performance and operational stability to our Boeing 737-10 fleet. The LEAP-1B engine's lower

emission values and higher fuel efficiency will contribute significantly to both our 2030 carbon reduction target and the industry's 2050 net-zero emissions target."

Gaël Méheust, President and CEO of CFM International, said, "This agreement represents a significant expansion of our long-standing and highly successful partnership with Pegasus Airlines. We are pleased to continue providing the level of support that Pegasus has come to expect and rely on from CFM International. We believe that the 737MAX 10 aircraft equipped with LEAP engines will make a significant contribution to Pegasus Airlines' ongoing growth strategy by providing longer range, lower emissions,

superior fuel efficiency, and unmatched reliability."

Pegasus Airlines, as the first operator in the world to use the LEAP engine, successfully completed its first commercial flight on the Istanbul-Antalya route in July 2016. The airline, which began its commercial operations with CFM56-3 engines, continued its growth by adding fleets powered by CFM56-5B and CFM56-7B engines. Today, Pegasus continues to grow with the latest generation aircraft powered by both LEAP-1A and LEAP-1B engines. With an average age of 4.9 years, Pegasus' fleet is one of the youngest in Turkey and the second youngest in the world.

CFM LEAP engines have achieved the fastest

ramp-up in commercial aviation history, with over 4,000 aircraft delivered. Thanks to advanced manufacturing technologies such as composite fan blades and ceramic matrix composites, they offer 15% higher fuel efficiency and the same reduction in carbon emissions compared to previous-generation CFM56 engines. Supported by advanced condition monitoring systems and an open MRO network, LEAP engines deliver proven takeoff reliability, achieving the highest operational utilization rates for narrow-body aircraft.

According to the Pegasus Airlines ch-aviation 2025 Youngest Fleet Award, it has the world's second youngest fleet among airlines with over 100 aircraft.



## AJet Launches Istanbul–Beirut Flights

Turkey's youngest airline, AJet, has launched direct flights from Istanbul to Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, one of the Middle East's major cities. The first flight from Sabiha Gökçen Airport to Beirut Rafik Hariri International Airport took place on December 2.

AJet, which already operates flights to Beirut from Ankara and Adana, launched its Istanbul–Beirut route with a flight on December 2, 2025.



After a 1 hour and 45 minute journey, the aircraft was welcomed with a ceremony at Beirut

Rafik Hariri International Airport. The ceremony was attended by AJet and airport executives.

AJet will operate daily flights from Istanbul to Beirut, one of the Middle East's most important cities with its rich history, multicultural structure, and gastronomy.

AJet, which is steadily expanding its flight network across Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa, will contribute to the development of tourism and trade potential between the two countries with its new route.

## FAI Aviation Services DMCC Scoops Best Air Ambulance Provider Win

FAI Aviation Services DMCC, a leader in the provision of mission-critical aviation services, is delighted to have been honoured as 'Best Air Ambulance Provider Middle East,' at the recent Middle East Aviation Innovation Awards 2025.

Setting sail on a mega yacht with international industry peers, Barbara Baumgartner, Managing Director of FAI in Dubai, accepted the award, alongside Michael Axtmann, Managing Director of Germany's FAI Technik, during a gala evening, coinciding with the Dubai Air Show.

"It was terrific to celebrate with our guests and industry colleagues. This is a solid endorsement, once again,

for our dedicated and brilliant team who work so hard," said Barbara.

### Medevac business aircraft in demand in the Middle East

The awards rounded off an excellent debut presence at Dubai Air Show for the FAI

where talks in the exhibition hall centred on the need for more medevac aircraft availability in the region – especially from Saudi Arabia – where many more airports are opening up. "The Middle East is a very important market for FAI. Owing our aircraft fleet outright is a unique selling point for the FAI Group. We

don't have to wait for owner permission to dispatch a medevac or charter aircraft," said Barbara, who has several leads to follow up on post show.

Equally important are the close relationships FAI enjoys with medical professionals and hospitals around the world, but especially in the Middle East, where there are sensitivities with culture.

FAI's VIP Air Ambulance and air charter missions, performed by dedicated Bombardier Challenger and Global aircraft in the Middle East account for around 20% of the company's operations. This month the company will welcome a Bombardier Global 6000 and in January two Learjet 60XRs to its fleet.



## flyadeal Launches Five New Routes from Madinah Base

flyadeal, Saudi Arabia's fast-growing low-cost airline, has rung in the New Year in emphatic style launching five routes from Madinah, its newest operational base in the Kingdom.

The introduction of scheduled flights to Sabiha Gökçen in Istanbul and four domestic cities of Abha, Al Hofuf, Jazan and Tabuk, takes the number of flyadeal destinations from Madinah's Prince Mohammad bin Abdulaziz International Airport up from three to eight. Until now, flyadeal had served Dammam, Riyadh and the Egyptian capital Cairo from the Holy city.

The capacity hike represents a 40 per cent increase in the number of flyadeal operated flights out of Madinah to 88 a week, giving customers greater travel options. Two aircraft are now permanently positioned at the airport, joining flyadeal's three other operational bases of Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam.

To mark the expansion, airport officials joined flyadeal management led by Chief Commercial and Customer Officer Rogier van Enk, for a fanfare of engaging activities celebrating with passengers.



Steven Greenway, flyadeal Chief Executive Officer, said: "We've steadily built capacity from Madinah, but this expansion of five new routes at the beginning of the year is a statement of intent from flyadeal to develop Madinah into one of our key operational bases."

He added: "Having aircraft positioned in Madinah gives us the flexibility to quickly upgrade with more frequencies or add routes to a schedule which will continue to be built up, giving our customers more choices and convenience of direct flights to travel within the Kingdom and beyond. Madinah was a natural addition as a base given its prominence as the second holiest city in the Islamic world and a key gateway for pilgrims."

The expanded schedule supplements flyadeal's dedicated year-round Umrah flights from

several countries direct to Madinah, north of the Saudi port city of Jeddah.

Rogier van Enk, flyadeal Chief Commercial and Customer Officer, said: "The additional routes aim to cater to both outbound travel for holidaymakers and business travellers living and working in and around Madinah, while also attracting inbound pilgrimages. My commercial team and I look forward to continue working with the authorities at Prince Mohammad bin Abdulaziz International Airport to explore more opportunities building air travel connectivity in line with Saudi Vision 2030."

flyadeal's additional routes support an already high demand operation from Madinah. Daily Cairo flights are now being served 11 times a week; frequency on the Dammam route is up from 19 to 26

flights each week; and Riyadh maintains a five-times daily schedule.

The new domestic routes serve different parts of the Kingdom – southwest coastal city of Jazan; Tabuk in the northwest; Al Hofuf in the country's Eastern Province; and Abha in the southwestern mountainous region of Aseer province.

Almost 60 per cent of flyadeal's 44-strong narrowbody fleet of Airbus A320s is based at King Khalid International Airport in the Saudi capital Riyadh; 11 aircraft are positioned at King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah; five at Dammam's King Fahd International Airport; and now two in Madinah.

flyadeal's growth strategy includes its fleet topping 100 aircraft by 2030 and network more than tripling to over 100 destinations within five years.

# Airbus Reports 793 Commercial Aircraft Deliveries in 2025

Airbus delivered 793 commercial aircraft to 91 customers globally in 2025 and registered 1,000 new gross orders in the Commercial Aircraft business. The backlog at the end of December 2025 increased to a new year-end record of 8,754 aircraft highlighting the strong market demand for Airbus' product portfolio. In 2025, Airbus achieved another healthy book to bill above one.

In a continued complex and dynamic operating environment, deliveries in 2025 maintained an upward trajectory. The year witnessed several landmark deliveries and welcomed new operators of the A220, the A321XLR, the A330neo and the A350-1000 across all regions. Airbus also won repeat orders and key new customers in both single aisle and widebody campaigns. The widebody backlog reached a year-end record of 1,124 aircraft.

Airbus aircraft deliveries showed a steady upward trend over the 2023–2025 period. In 2025, Airbus delivered a total of 793 aircraft, exceeding the 766 deliveries in 2024 and 735 deliveries in 2023.

By aircraft family, the A320 Family remained the backbone of Airbus deliveries. Deliveries increased from 571 aircraft in 2023 to 602 in 2024, reaching 607 aircraft in 2025.

The A220 Family recorded notable growth during the period. Deliveries rose from 68 aircraft in 2023 to 75 in 2024, before increasing significantly to 93 aircraft in 2025.

In the widebody segment, A330 Family deliveries remained relatively stable, with 32 aircraft delivered in both 2023 and 2024, followed by a modest increase to 36 aircraft in 2025.

A350 Family deliveries declined from 64 aircraft in 2023 to 57 aircraft in both 2024 and 2025.

Overall, Airbus' delivery performance over the three-year period was driven primarily by growth in the narrowbody segment, reflecting sustained airline demand for single-aisle aircraft.



## BGS Renews Partnership with airBaltic

Baltic Ground Services (BGS) has extended its contract with the Latvian airline airBaltic for more than a year. Under the renewed agreement, BGS will supply fuel to airBaltic aircraft at two airports: Palanga and Riga.

Effective November 1, 2025, the agreement confirms that BGS will remain responsible for fueling airBaltic aircraft at Palanga (PLQ) and Riga (RIX) airports until the end of 2026. In Riga, BGS will provide fueling services for a defined part of airBaltic's operations, in accordance with the airline's procurement results.

According to Vitalis Dūdys, BGS Group's Head of Commerce, the new agreement once again confirms that the company delivers top-quality services and is a trusted partner. He notes that BGS and airBaltic have successfully cooperated for more than a decade - since 2015.

"Throughout all these years of collaboration, airBaltic has had many opportunities to experience our professionalism and

service quality firsthand. The continuation of this partnership is a great recognition for us. Our goal remains the same - to continuously improve and support airBaltic in achieving its ambitious goals," he said.

airBaltic continues expanding its operations and strengthening its position in the Baltic region. The renewed agreement with BGS supports the company's operational planning and service quality across its network, including daily flights between Palanga and Riga, offering passengers convenient connections to more than 80 destinations from the largest airport in the Baltics, RIX Riga Airport.

BGS is part of Avia Solutions Group - the world's largest ACMI (Aircraft, Crew, Maintenance, and Insurance) services group, which operates a fleet of 145 aircraft. The group's companies also provide various aviation services, including aircraft maintenance, pilot and crew training, and ground handling.

## ABL Aviation Completes 15-Aircraft Mandate with Delivery of Final Airbus A220-300 to Air France

ABL Aviation, a global independent aircraft investment management firm, has completed the delivery of the fifteenth and final Airbus A220-300 aircraft (MSN 55393) to Air France, marking the successful completion of a long-term, 15-aircraft mandate between the two companies. The milestone reinforces a strategic partnership rooted in innovation, disciplined execution, and trust.

Powered by two Pratt & Whitney PW1521G-3 engines, the Airbus A220-300 supports Air France's ongoing fleet renewal strategy by offering greater fuel efficiency, lower carbon emissions, and enhanced operational performance. Its flexible



range capabilities and quieter, more comfortable cabin further improve the passenger experience on the airline's short and medium-haul network.

"This final delivery is a proud milestone for ABL Aviation," said Ali Ben Lmadani, Founder and CEO of ABL Aviation. "From the first aircraft to the fifteenth,

our partnership with Air France has shown what can be achieved through alignment, discipline, and shared vision. We are grateful for Air France's continued trust and proud to have supported their fleet modernisation strategy with one of the world's most efficient narrow-body aircraft."

Since the inception of the mandate, ABL Aviation has worked alongside Air France and its investors to structure and deliver 15 Airbus A220-300 aircraft, each supported by tailored financing and rigorous execution standards. This transaction highlights ABL Aviation's capability to manage complex, multi-year mandates and underscores its growing leadership in the global aircraft leasing and asset management space.

With this latest delivery, ABL Aviation further strengthens its position as one of the most active managers of the Airbus A220 platform, combining deep experience in cross-border structuring with hands-on portfolio execution.

## Daher Strengthens Its presence on Airbus' A321 Final Assembly Lines in France

Daher has been entrusted with an industrial services assignment on Airbus' second A321 final assembly line (FAL) in Toulouse, France – effectively doubling the scope of its operations related to the build-up of this single-engine jetliner.

Since 2022, Daher has been the lead service provider for the A321 FAL in Toulouse, named after Jean Luc Lagardère. At the end of 2025, Airbus renewed the contract for the initial final assembly line, and awarded Daher the same operations on the second FAL at the Toulouse site.



These services include preparing the fuselage (cabin equipment, electrical systems,

cockpit, carpeting) and the wings (preparation of assembly surfaces, hydraulic draining, hatch

removal) – ensuring quality and smooth workflow throughout the process.

"This expansion reflects the strength of our partnership with Airbus," explained Cédric Eloy, the CEO of Daher Industrial Services. "We successfully supported the launch of the first Airbus A321 FAL, and we're now continuing the journey with the second final assembly line. By pooling expertise and strengthening synergies, we provide Airbus with a reliable and competitive operating model."

## Turkish Airlines Carried 7.3 Million Passengers in December 2025

According to December 2025 Traffic Results; The number of carried passengers recorded as 7.3 million. International load factor was 82.6% while domestic load factor was 82.7%.

Number of international-to-international passengers carried increased by 14.1% from 2.8 million in 2024 to 3.2 million in this period.

Available seat kilometers (ASK), increased by 9.2% to

23.3 billion during the period of December 2025 from 21.4 billion for the same period of 2024.

Cargo/Mail carried during the period of December 2025 increased by 15.9% from December 2024, totaling 192.4 thousand tons.

According to the January-December 2025 Traffic Results; The total number of passengers increased by 8.8% to 92.6 million compared to the same

period of 2024.

The number of international-to-international passengers carried increased by 12.8% to 35.7 million from 31.7 million in the same period of 2024.

Total load factor was recorded 83.2%. International load factor was 82.9% while domestic load factor was 86%.

Available seat kilometers (ASK) increased by 7.5% to

273.2 billion from 254.1 billion for the same period of 2024.

Cargo/Mail carried during this period increased by 8.4% to 2.2 million tons from 2 million tons in the same period of 2024.

By the end of December 2025, the number of aircraft in the fleet was 516.

Traffic results are consolidated and include Turkish Airlines main brand and AJet data.

## Matthieu Louvot Appointed Airbus Helicopters CEO

Airbus SE (stock exchange symbol: AIR) has appointed Matthieu Louvot Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Airbus Helicopters, effective 1 April 2026. He will report to Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury and be part of the Company's Executive Committee.

Matthieu Louvot, currently Executive Vice-President Strategy for Airbus, will succeed Bruno Even, who has decided to leave the Company to pursue his next personal and professional objectives.

"I am deeply grateful for Bruno's leadership at the helm of Airbus Helicopters over the past eight years. Under his tenure, the Division expanded its product portfolio, transformed its industrial

system and has been placed on a sustainable and profitable growth trajectory. I respect Bruno's decision to step down and explore new avenues for the next phase of his career," said Guillaume Faury, Airbus CEO. "Our teams at Helicopters will benefit from the leadership of Matthieu, whose extensive experience in the helicopter industry and broad knowledge of the Division's operational and strategic priorities will enable a smooth transition. I wish him every success in the role and look forward to seeing Airbus Helicopters reach new heights under his lead."

A graduate of the Ecole Polytechnique and Ecole Nationale d'Administration,



Matthieu Louvot started his career in the French administration, including as advisor for industry at the French Presidency. He joined Airbus Helicopters in 2010

where he held a number of management positions including Executive Vice President Customer Support & Services and Executive Vice President Programmes.



## AJet Connects Ankara to the Balkans

Rapidly expanding its international operations in Ankara, AJet will connect the Turkish capital with two more Balkan capitals. The airline is launching flights from Ankara to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia. Tickets for the flights, which will begin in July 2026, are now on sale starting from \$79.

### Four weekly flights from Ankara to the Balkans

AJet already operates flights from Istanbul to Sarajevo and Skopje—two of the Balkans' most popular cities known for their history, culture, and natural beauty. Now, the airline is establishing an air bridge from Ankara as well.

Direct flights from Ankara to Sarajevo will start on July

1, 2026, operating twice a week on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Flights from Ankara to Skopje will begin on July 2, 2026, operating twice a week on Thursdays and Sundays.

### AJet plans to add 9 countries and 10 more destinations from Ankara in 2026

Continuing to increase the number of destinations it serves from Ankara, AJet is expanding its network from Europe to the Caucasus, and from the Middle East to North Africa. Currently operating flights from Ankara to 35 destinations in 26 countries, the airline plans to add 9 more countries and 10 additional cities to its network by the end of 2026.



## VatanJet Prepares for Long-Range Flights by Adding the Gulfstream G550 to Its Fleet

Turkey's air taxi sector continues to grow with strong and reliable brands, and VatanJet remains committed to strengthening its fleet through strategic investments. As part of this vision, the company is preparing to add a 2015-manufactured Gulfstream G550 to its fleet—an aircraft renowned for its long-range capability of 12,500 km, high performance, advanced flight control systems, and exceptional comfort features. The acquisition process for the aircraft was completed in December 2025.

Configured with a 13-passenger capacity and a refurbished executive cabin layout, the Gulfstream G550 is currently located at Gulfstream's facilities in Savannah, USA, where it is undergoing general maintenance and final technical inspections. The aircraft is planned to join the VatanJet fleet and commence operations in February.

With its next-generation technological equipment, spacious and comfortable cabin design, and impressive range enabling intercontinental

flights, the Gulfstream G550 will significantly enhance VatanJet's service capabilities. By complementing the company's existing medium-range operations with long-range flight capabilities, the new aircraft will further elevate service quality and play an important role in VatanJet's mission to provide passengers with a safer, more flexible, and more exclusive flight experience.

VatanJet officials also emphasized that the addition of this aircraft will support the expansion of the company's international operations network, enabling the company to raise service standards in long-range operations and respond more effectively to growing customer expectations.

Continuing its investments in line with a vision of continuous development and innovation, VatanJet aims not only to expand but also to modernize its fleet. Through these efforts, the company will further strengthen its position in the private aviation sector while continuing to deliver a premium flight experience to its guests.





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