

Qantas to test 'ultra long-haul' Sydney to NY, London flights

August 22 2019



Qantas will use Boeing 787-9 aircraft for three test flights from Australia's east coast to London and New York

Qantas on Thursday said it will run "ultra long-haul" test flights in the coming months from New York and London to Sydney in order to assess

the health of pilots and passengers, as it eyes commercial services on the marathon routes.

Three flights aboard Boeing 787-9 aircraft will take place from October, with up to 40 passengers and crew on the 19-hour [flight](#).

Those on board will be subject to medical checks, while their sleep patterns and [food consumption](#) will be monitored, as Qantas bids to establish non-stop commercial flights from Australia's east coast to London and New York.

Qantas last year introduced the first direct service from the western Australian city of Perth to London, with the 17-hour journey one of the longest passenger flights in the world.

"Flying non-stop from the East Coast of Australia to London and New York is truly the final frontier in aviation, so we're determined to do all the groundwork to get this right," Qantas CEO Alan Joyce said in a statement.

Both Airbus and Boeing have pitched aircraft for the ultra long-haul routes, and Joyce said it was still not a "foregone conclusion" which plane will be chosen. A decision will be made on the validity of the flights at the end of the year.

"This is ultimately a business decision and the economics have to stack up," he said.

The airline posted a 6.5 percent fall in annual net profit Thursday, attributing the slide in earnings to higher oil prices and a weaker Australian dollar.

Despite record revenues, the Australian flag carrier said its after-tax

profit fell to Aus\$891 million (US\$604 million), down from Aus\$953 million the previous year.

The airline was hit by an Aus\$614 million fuel bill increase and Aus\$154 million in foreign exchange impacts.

But Joyce was upbeat about the results, which came on the back of healthy profits the previous year.

"Even with headwinds like fuel costs and foreign exchange, we remain one of the best-performing airline groups in the world," he said.

In the 12 months to June 30, underlying profit before tax—the airline's preferred measure that strips out one-off costs—was down 17 percent at Aus\$1.3 billion.

Qantas declared a final dividend of 13 cents per share and announced an off-market buyback of up to 79.7 million shares.

It will also hand its workers travel bonuses worth Aus\$32 million.

Joyce said the outlook for the airline was "mixed", with weakness in the domestic tourism market and flat corporate travel demand.

Nevertheless, he said the airline was "confident" about the year ahead due in large part to being in a "strong financial position".

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Citation: Qantas to test 'ultra long-haul' Sydney to NY, London flights (2019, August 22) retrieved 17 April 2024 from

<https://techxplore.com/news/2019-08-qantas-ultra-long-haul-sydney-ny.html>

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