

Air India adding 30 aircraft, first major fleet expansion in years

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Mumbai : Air India is ready for a major fleet expansion in the coming months that will significantly increase its services to North America and within India.

For far too long, the carrier has suffered from a capacity crunch due to a lack of sufficient active aircraft, losing out to other domestic and international players. But with the Tatas as its new owners, the carrier is going through a revival that it has not seen in decades. And that includes bolstering its fleet to double down on cash-producing routes.

By now, the industry is familiar with Air India's intention of fleet expansion for both the long-term and short. Apart from almost finalising a major aircraft order for its future needs, the airline has been wanting to add both domestic and international capacity in the short term.

And now, AI has issued a statement giving us a clear picture of what the coming year would look like as it leases 30 narrow and wide-body aircraft.

The airline announced on September 12 that it will induct 30 new aircraft on lease, of which five will be Boeing 777-300ER and the rest 25 Airbus narrowbodies.

The 777s will join the fleet between December 2022 and March 2023 and will be deployed on routes to the US. Of the narrow-body airplanes, four A321 aircraft will likely join the carrier's fleet in the first quarter of 2023, while 21 A320s will be

inducted in the second half of 2023. These aircraft will be deployed in domestic sectors as well as to short-haul international destinations.

Campbell Wilson, CEO, Air India, said, "After a long time without significant growth, Air India is delighted to resume expanding its fleet and global footprint. These new aircraft, together with existing aircraft being returned to service, address an immediate need for more capacity and connectivity, and mark a strong step forward. Air India has exciting expansion and renewal plans, of which these new aircraft are just the beginning."

The new aircraft will increase the fleet size of Air India by around 25 per cent. This does not take into account more than 15 narrow and wide-body aircraft that were previously grounded and have now returned to service.

The airline recently strengthened some of its existing routes within the country by adding new flights. Over the next year, it plans to tighten its grip on the domestic sector by adding capacity through the leased narrow-body aircraft and try to reclaim some of its lost market share.

The airline announced that Mumbai will see the addition of flights to San Francisco as well as to both of the New York area's international airports, Newark Liberty and John F Kennedy, while Bangalore will receive a 3x weekly service to San Francisco.