

Gulf Air flies its first transcontinental lower emissions flight

A Monitor Report

Date: 15 April, 2021



Bahrain : Gulf Air has recently operated its first transcontinental lower emissions flight with a Boeing 787-9. The Bahrain-based carrier operated the flight using Sustainable Aviation Fuel provided by Neste on a flight from Helsinki to Bahrain.

Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAFs) are being trialed by airlines worldwide as they look to reduce their environmental impact. However, thanks to the low supply of such fuels, they are currently costly to make, meaning that they are largely unpopular to airlines. As such, some airlines, like the Lufthansa Group, have resorted to asking passengers to pay for them voluntarily.

In late March, Gulf Air operated its first transcontinental flight using SAFs. On March 26, A9C-FF, a two-year-old Boeing 787-9 flew from Bahrain to London. This is a usual route for Gulf Air. Rather than returning to Bahrain, the aircraft instead flew from London to Helsinki. Having arrived in Helsinki at 14:04, Neste refueled the aircraft. Instead of straight aviation fuel, Neste's SAFs were introduced to the fuel system.

Two days later the aircraft went on to fly over the Bahrain F1 race with SAFs, suggesting it may have tankered fuel over for the flight. According to the airline, this fuel provides an 80 per cent reduction in greenhouse emissions compared to fossil fuels.

According to Gulf Air, while the Boeing 787-9 was on the ground, a SAFA inspection was undertaken. According to EASA, a SAFA inspection is used to ensure that third country operators meet EASA's requirements. EASA states that such examinations can either be completed when an aircraft is suspected of non-compliance with EASA regulations or on a random spot-check basis.