

## In the long-haul 787 factory, Boeing prepares for takeoff

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As airlines seek to fulfill customers' growing post-pandemic appetites for long-haul travel, Boeing is aiming to speed up production of its 787 Dreamliners after a period plagued by repeated delivery interruptions due to manufacturing defects.

At a hangar in the US East Coast state of South Carolina, the plane begins to take shape on its first assembly line -- here, the wings, cockpit, cabin and tail are still in separate pieces.

It will take about a month for the entire aircraft to come together, with the final touches added later, in the parking lot.

The US aerospace giant has already managed to up its manufacturing rate from fewer than two 787s per month in 2021 to four, and is hoping to get up to five by the end of the year.

On the second assembly line in the hangar, located in the city of North Charleston, three completed airplanes are inspected. They had to be returned for adjustments, after the discovery of several production flaws beginning in 2020.

There are still several dozen other planes under inspection, but Boeing plans to move that review process to its factory in Everett, in Washington state, by the end of

the year.

That will allow them to devote the second assembly line in South Carolina solely to plane construction, meaning they can ramp up to 10 787s per month by 2025 or 2026.

That would bring the factory close to Boeing's pre-pandemic production rate of 14 jets per month, which was achieved by splitting 787 construction between South Carolina and Washington state, before it was all consolidated to the East Coast in 2021.

Boeing says it's not worried about potential cancelations from airline clients unhappy with the delays.

"Our problem right now is more to just getting these planes in the hands of the customers," Lane Ballard, the 787 program's general manager said during a press visit to Boeing's South Carolina locations Tuesday and Wednesday, ahead of the Paris Air Show later this month.

Despite the rebound in sales of its flagship medium-haul 737 MAX last year -- giving the company its best delivery numbers since 2018 -- Boeing is pinning its financial hopes on the 787, after four consecutive years in the red.

Recent months have finally seen an uptick in orders for large planes, the market for which was already suffering before the drop in long-haul air traffic during Covid lockdowns.

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