

## IndiGo adds 3 wide-bodies for Europe expansion

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New Delhi: Just one day after introducing its first wide-body aircraft, IndiGo signed a lease agreement for three additional Boeing 787-9 jets with Norse Atlantic Airways.

The new aircraft are set to arrive in India in the second half of 2025 and will operate long-haul routes from the country, the airline confirmed.

Airline CEO Pieter Elbers said plans are underway to expand operations to Europe. These additional three damp leases will bring the total number of wide-body jets in IndiGo's fleet to four aircraft.

The carrier also said that Norse and IndiGo will continue to explore opportunities to broaden the cooperation and the possibility of contracting more aircraft.

On February 6, IndiGo signed a firm damp lease agreement with Norse Atlantic for one Boeing 787-9, the delivery of which is on track, and it is

scheduled to start operations on the airline's Delhi-Bangkok route from March 1.

Elbers said, "This will help us make strategic inroads and establish the brand in the European market. As we execute our broader strategy to strengthen and extend our international network, we are steadily advancing towards our vision of becoming a global player by 2030, firmly rooted in India and driven by continuous expansion."

The initial term of the agreement is six months, extendable to up to 18 months, subject to regulatory approvals.

IndiGo, which ditched its low-carrier status last year, seems to have adopted a hybrid format by introducing a Premium category seat - IndiGoStretch - and aggressive expansion plans to Europe.

The carrier, India's biggest airline by market share, competes against the country's national carrier, Air India - which went back to the Tata Group fold in 2022. Since then, both airlines have been on an aircraft shopping spree. As of January 2025, IndiGo operates a fleet of 403 aircraft, primarily Airbus models, including the A320, A320neo, A321neo, and ATR 72-600. Its wide-body fleet includes two wet-leased Boeing 777s from Turkish Airlines. To meet rising demand and address aircraft groundings until December 2024, IndiGo also wet-leased Boeing 737 MAX jets from Qatar Airways, Corendon Airlines, and Airbus A320s from Smartlynx Airlines and Freebird Airlines.

To support and accelerate its long-haul expansion, IndiGo has placed a firm order for 30 Airbus 350-900 wide-body aircraft with an option for an additional 70 aircraft, with deliveries expected to commence in 2027.

Air India's total orderbook for Airbus aircraft now stands at 344, with six A350-900s having already been delivered, Airbus said in December last year. As of January 31, 2025, Air India's order book at Boeing stood at 153 B737 MAX, ten B777-9s, and 20 B787-9s. The contracts include options for another fifty MAX and twenty B787-9s, according to aviation.

According to travel research company - VIDECA - the Indian travel opportunities remain highly dynamic. Virendra Jain, Co-Founder and CEO of Videca, said, "Air is the largest among the four travel categories (rail, bus, road), accounting for 49 per cent of the total India travel

market in FY24. It is expected to reach 51 per cent by the financial year 2027." He said, "Over 1,700 aircraft are expected to be delivered to Indian carriers in the next decade.

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