

Surprise Asian carrier to resurrect abandoned ex-American jets

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Dhaka: Eight Airbus A330-200s that American Airlines retired at just six to seven years of age are about to fly again after spending more than half a decade in the desert.

Vietnamese leisure airline startup Sun PhuQuoc Airways is acquiring the jets as part of its plans to launch long-haul operations and expects to receive them between June 2026 and March 2027.

American Airlines had abandoned the planes in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, when it retired its entire A330 fleet, alongside all Boeing 757s and 767s.

The move significantly constrained the carrier's long-haul growth capacity as travel demand rebounded strongly, with expected Boeing 787 Dreamliners delayed due to supply-chain constraints.

Now, after six years of storage, the A330s are getting a new home on the Vietnamese island of Phu Quoc, where Sun PhuQuoc Airways is based.

The airline said it plans to introduce the type in September, launching long-haul flights to destinations in Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan, Australia, Mongolia, Oman, Turkey, and the Czech Republic.

The A330s were originally built for US Airways, which American Airlines inherited post-merger. The jets had recently been reconfigured to include premium economy seating at the time of retirement.

Each aircraft features 247 seats across three cabins — 20 business class seats in a reverse herringbone configuration, 21 premium economy seats, and 206 economy class seats.

Aviation analysts said the new operator is likely to keep this configuration, as Vietnamese carriers typically retain the original cabin layout of their acquired jets.

The new leisure startup carrier, Sun PhuQuoc Airways, received its air operator's certificate in September 2025 and commenced commercial operations in November 2025.

The airline currently operates a fleet of 10 Airbus A320-family aircraft, comprising two A320neos, two A321s, and six A321neos.

Beyond the eight A330s, Sun PhuQuoc has ambitious growth plans that include acquiring 20 Boeing 787-9s, signaling its intent to become a notable player in Vietnam's long-haul aviation market.

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