
A321XLR

Your springboard
to unlock new horizons

January 2026



AIRBUS

Executive Summary

This white paper examines a fundamental structural shift in the aviation industry—the ability of new-generation single-aisle aircraft to enter the long haul market previously dominated by widebody twin-aisle aircraft. This single-aisle long-haul revolution is well underway, backed up by the fact that 75% of all new long-haul routes created post-pandemic are operated by single-aisle aircraft. Built upon the successful A321neo platform, the A321XLR is purpose-built to fully capitalise this shift in the long-haul market.

The analysis presented in this paper details how the A321XLR bridges the gap between range capability and economic viability. Through a variety of improvements including the addition of an integrated Rear centre tank (RCT), the aircraft can fly up to 4,700 nautical miles while retaining the cost base of a single-aisle aircraft. With a per-trip cash operating cost significantly lower than a widebody aircraft, the A321XLR maintains similar costs per seat. This unique combination allows operators to reduce their financial risk when expanding their long-haul network.

The economic benefits are achievable without compromising the operational or the commercial capabilities of the aircraft. The A321XLR features the Airbus Airspace cabin, delivering the ability to provide a widebody passenger experience with the installation of full-flat business class seats. With significant commonality with other members of the A320neo family, the aircraft offers operators a high level of spare part commonality and the ability to have crew commonality across the entire Airbus aircraft portfolio.

The operational versatility of the A321XLR translates directly into market opportunities. The A321XLR's economic benefits and performance capability can unlock over 2,200 long-range routes. The aircraft provides the opportunity to fly over 1,100 unserved long and thin city pairs, allowing operators a first mover advantage in untapped markets. The aircraft can also complement widebody operations on over 1,100 existing routes where operators can use it to boost frequencies, manage seasonality and optimise gauge without sacrificing market presence. However, the platform's total value proposition goes beyond these market segments. By lowering the barriers of entry for new operators on established routes and hedging against economic instability, the A321XLR enables the building of networks that are financially resilient, operationally flexible and globally accessible.

This paper analyses a broad spectrum of real-world data, spanning established A321neo operations, early A321XLR in service data and recent A321XLR route announcements to validate the claims made. The use of representative examples illustrate the versatility potential of the aircraft, demonstrating how the single-aisle long-haul model is successfully being deployed to address seasonal volatility, democratise access to trunk routes and elevate secondary cities into global hubs. As the A321XLRs global presence grows, so too its ability to offer operators a unique strategic advantage. It provides a low-risk foundation and the indispensable flexibility for resilient long-haul growth in an ever dynamic world.

01	The Big Picture	4
02	Introduction to the A321XLR Product A321XLR At a Glance Long-Haul Passenger Comfort Operational Commonality	8
03	The Potential Market The Route Opener (1,100+ Routes Identified) The Network Optimiser (1,100+ Routes Identified) Additional Strategic Opportunities	13
04	The Proven Single-Aisle Long-Haul Model The Route Opener The Network Optimiser - Widebody Complementarity Additional Strategic Opportunities	19
	Conclusion	35
	Appendices	36



The Big Picture



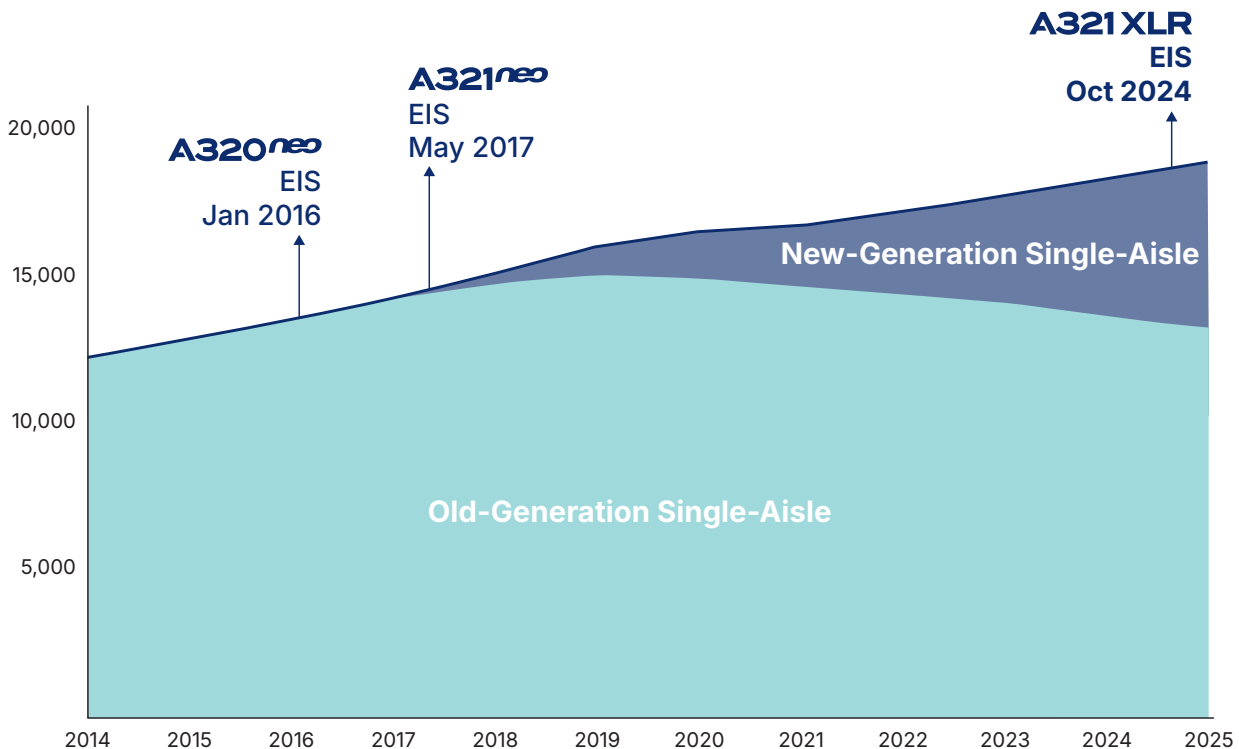


The single-aisle, long-haul revolution is well underway. Advancements in technology and ever-evolving airline business models have spearheaded the development of a new breed of new-generation single-aisle aircraft that can cover more distance, bringing low-risk capability further around the world.

There is a wave of fleet modernisations ongoing. Between 2014 and 2025, the number of new generation aircraft such as the Airbus A321neo has grown rapidly and now account for over 30% of the active worldwide single-aisle fleet. Operators have taken benefit of the improved fuel efficiency and the range of these new aircraft.

Evolution of the Total Active Worldwide Single-Aisle Aircraft Fleet

Global survey of in-service and parked medium-to-large single-aisle aircraft (Cirium Ascend)

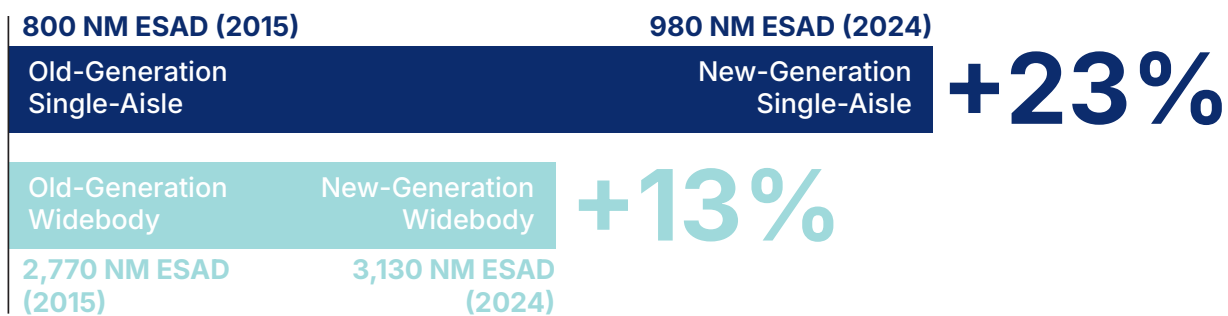


The range capability of the new-generation single-aisle aircraft extends further into the long-haul segment, with operators already pushing their new generation single-aisles to fly 23% further than the previous generation of aircraft. This is leaving a vast array of opportunities for routes that were too long for the previous generation

and not dense enough to demand the higher capacity of a widebody. Operators are now able to redeploy their widebody aircraft on routes that leverage the advantage of this large size of aircraft. These advantages include offering higher capacity on trunk routes and operating extremely long range routes among others.

New-Generation Aircraft Average Stage Length Comparison (NM ESAD)

Comparison of average stage lengths for new-generation aircraft in 2024 vs. old-generation aircraft in 2015 (OAG)

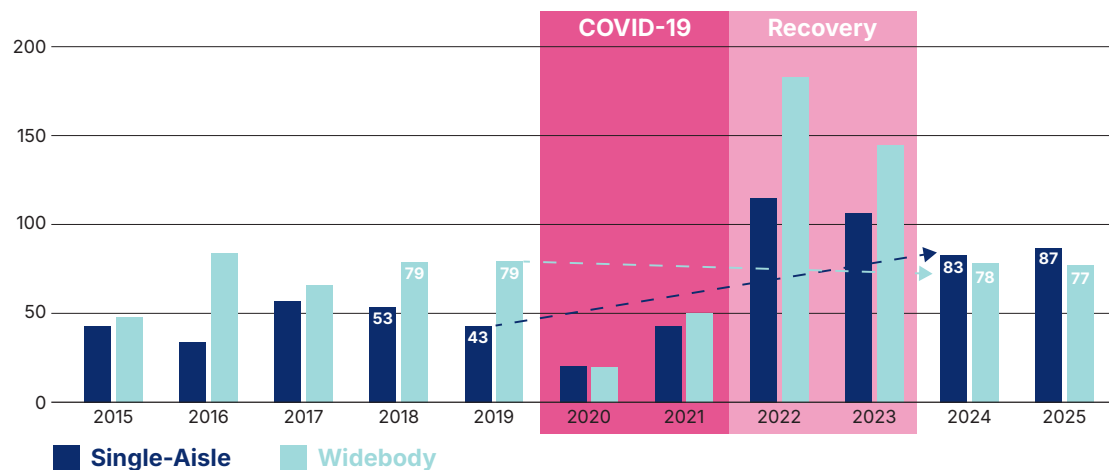


This burgeoning market segment is visible from the evolution of new routes opened by single-aisle and widebody aircraft. An analysis of long-haul routes consisting of segments between 2,500 nautical miles and 4,700 nautical miles Equivalent still-air distance (ESAD) opened year-on-year between 2015 and 2025 shows that single-aisle aircraft are increasing their presence in this segment. When comparing the periods before and after the COVID-19 pandemic (2018/2019 vs. 2024/2025), there was a 75% surge in new

routes in this segment being opened with single-aisle aircraft, while at the same time new routes opened with widebody aircraft remained stable. This pattern indicates a market shift, where longer-range-capable new-generation single-aisles with their lower risk trip cost are becoming the preferred tool for new network development. The reality behind this growth in these long, thin segments, is driven by operators pushing existing single-aisles to their operational limits.

New Routes Opened by Aircraft Category

Year-on-year survey of routes opened by aircraft category between 2,500NM and 4,700NM ESAD (OAG)

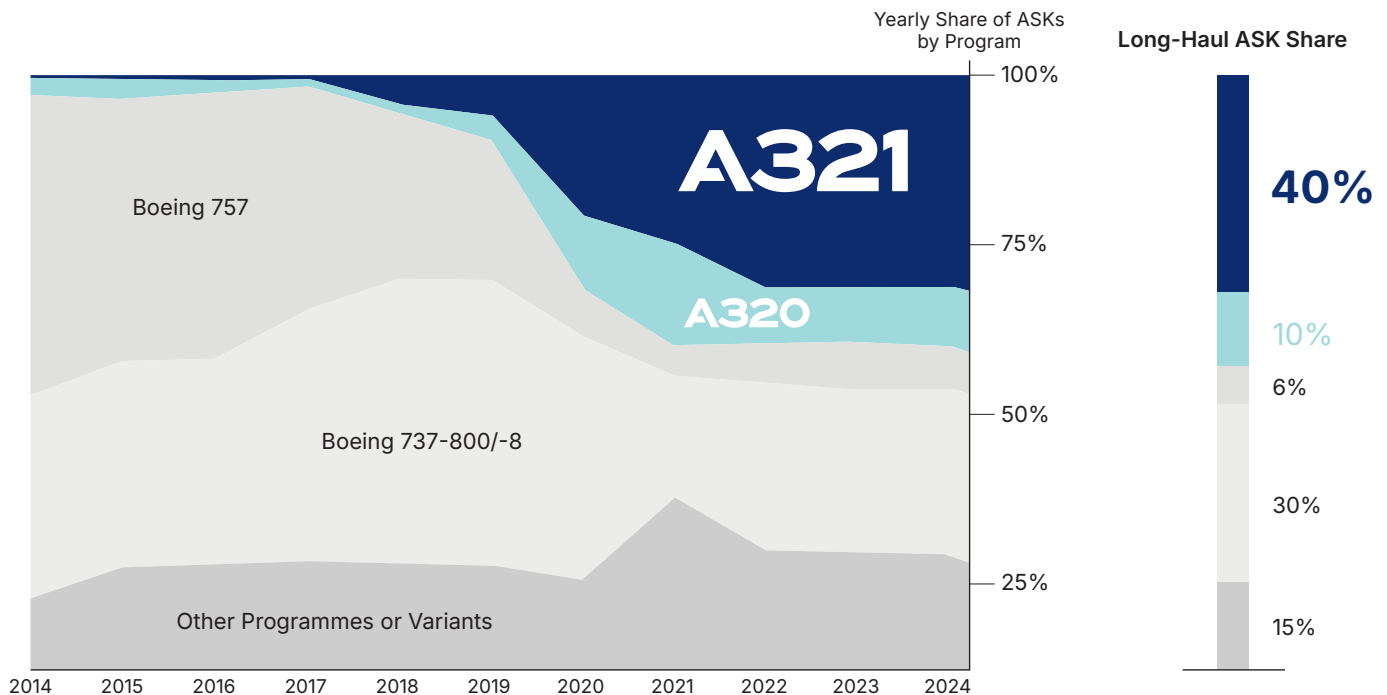


More operators are trusting single-aisle aircraft on long-haul routes, and it is the Airbus A321neo that is leading this shift. The A321 programme has progressively captured the long-haul single-aisle space and today commands a 40% share of all long-haul single-aisle operations in terms of Available seat kilometers (ASKs).

This trend is set to amplify over the coming decade with the A321neo dominating the new-generation single-aisle market, with a market share of above 80%. The Airbus A321XLR is the next phase in this evolution. The aircraft is designed to build upon the success of the A321neo, benefiting from one of the industry's most trusted platforms and best able to serve this fast-growing single-aisle long-haul market segment.

Evolution of Long-Haul ASK Share by Aircraft Programme

Year-on-year evolution of ASK share by aircraft program on routes above 2,500 NM (OAG)



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A background image of a man in athletic wear running, with motion blur lines behind him, suggesting speed and forward movement. The image is semi-transparent and serves as a backdrop for the text.

Introduction to the A321XLR Product

A321XLR At a Glance

02

The A321XLR is the result of a decade of incremental developments and is able to deliver enhanced range capability while retaining the favorable economics of a single-aisle platform. With up to 4,700 nautical miles of range, the aircraft leverages upon design changes made over the last decade to the proven A321 airframe. These developments deliver a 1,700 nautical-mile range increase to unlock true long-haul performance.

A key enabler for the A321XLR includes the option for a 101.5t Maximum take off weight (MTOW) to allow for increased fuel capacity and payload capabilities. To support this increased MTOW the landing gear has been reinforced. Moreover, enhancements to the wing design have improved the low-speed performance capabilities.

The A321XLR's most defining innovation is the aircraft's integrated Rear centre tank (RCT). Whereas the A321neo relies upon Additional centre tanks (ACTs) installed in the cargo bay for its extended range, the A321XLR's RCT is fully integrated into the aircraft's primary fuselage structure. This single 13,000-litre fuel tank holds more fuel than four ACTs while only taking up the cargo footprint of two ACTs. The integrated tank is a critical cargo business enabler allowing the A321XLR to carry eight standard Unit loading devices (ULDs) in the cargo hold. The result of these innovations is an aircraft that delivers superior range and payload capabilities with significantly reduced complexity.

Range Capability Evolution - A321neo & A321XLR



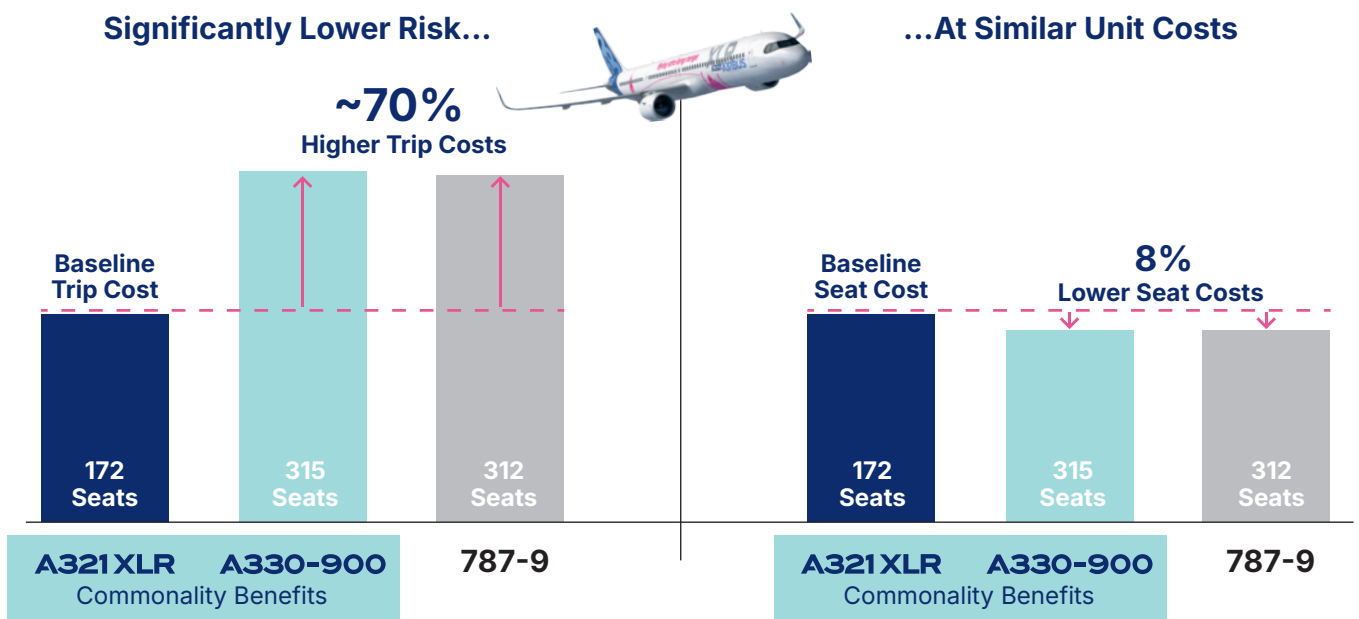
Building upon the efficiencies of the A321neo platform, the A321XLR delivers up to 30% lower fuel burn per seat compared to previous generation aircraft such as the Boeing 757. Crucially, when considering future network planning, the most meaningful comparison is against new-generation widebody aircraft operating on truly long-range routes. The following analysis focuses on a 3,400 nautical-mile segment, a route that represents the average sector length that the A321XLR is built to serve (see Table 2 in the Appendix for detailed assumptions).

On this long-haul route the A321XLR delivers revolutionary economic performance. It provides lower risk, avoiding

the approximate 70% higher trip costs associated with a typical next-generation widebody aircraft, while maintaining similar seat-costs. This tradeoff is core to the A321XLR's value proposition as it allows an airline to significantly reduce its financial risk in exchange for a minor difference in per-seat costs. It gives airlines the confidence to tap into thinner, long-range markets with the flexibility to improve overall network efficiency. The operational flexibility of the A321XLR is maximised by marginal trip cost differences compared to the A321neo on short routes. This allows airlines to increase utilisation, leading to better asset optimisation.

Comparison of Cash Operating Costs Between A321XLR and Widebody Aircraft

3,400 NM Sector Length, Typical Medium-Range 3 Class Configurations



Long-Haul Passenger Comfort

As an aircraft purposely designed for long-range missions, the A321XLR features a cabin optimised for long-haul operations, incorporating the signature Airbus Airspace design philosophy. This philosophy brings the flagship A350 cabin experience to the entire range of Airbus commercial aircraft, creating a seamless onboard experience regardless of aircraft size. Elements of the Airspace cabin on the A321XLR that are common to the existing A320neo Family include:

- Up to **18-inch wide seats** in economy class, the same seat width as on Airbus widebody aircraft.
- A **6,000 ft. average cabin altitude** to help reduce passenger fatigue on long journeys.
- Options for **advanced mood lighting** to help passengers further counter the effects of jetlag, while providing airlines more opportunities to display their unique brand identities.
- Optional **XL Bins**, which are the biggest overhead stowage bins in their class, offering more space for passenger belongings along with bringing airlines further opportunities for ancillary revenues.

The A321XLR further leverages the Airbus widebody experience of long-range missions by integrating technologies such as:

- **Increased potable and waste water capacity** to support a full long-haul service.
- **Additional insulation** on cabin doors and on the forward fuselage for added thermal comfort.
- An **air-conditioning system** with up to three actively-controlled temperature zones for flexible temperature control throughout the cabin.
- Optional **heated floor panels** with technology derived from the A350 programme to ensure consistent cabin comfort in the door areas.

The A321XLR capitalises on the Airbus cabin flex (ACF) fuselage design that is already standard on the A321neo aircraft. ACF improves the structural capacity of the fuselage and optimises the door locations. By relocating the Door 2 it maximises the usable floor space to increase both overall seating capacity and available real estate in the front of the aircraft for premium seating. This combination provides operators with flexibility, establishing the A321XLR as a versatile asset for varying business models. Cabin configurations range from high-density layouts with up to 244 seats for low-cost operations, to premium multi-class layouts with full-flat business class seating. With a seat offer comparable to that of the widebody A330neo and A350, airlines are now able to perform mixed fleet operations on the same route. For example, a passenger flying the outbound leg on an A330neo and returning on an A321XLR can benefit from a completely seamless experience, enjoying an identical standard of comfort and service on both sectors.



Operational Commonality

As a member of the A320 Family, the A321XLR's commonality with other A320 Family aircraft provides a fundamental pillar to its business case. This commonality provides the powerful economic advantage of seamless integration into an Airbus operator's existing fleet. With up to 92% part number commonality in terms of spare parts provisioning*, adding the A321XLR into an existing A320 Family fleet reduces the complexity of introducing this new aircraft type.

Operationally the A321XLR shares the same Type Rating as other A320 Family members, enabling Single fleet flying (SFF)**. This allows an airline to treat its entire A320 Family fleet as a single, unified asset pool. Pilots typically require a half-day of familiarisation training to transfer between A320 Family aircraft which offers airlines the capability to reduce the high costs and scheduling complexities related to managing separate pilot rosters.

Further benefits can be achieved for operators of Airbus widebody fleet through Airbus' unique Cross crew

qualification (CCQ) which enables Mixed fleet flying (MFF)**. This capability allows a single pool of pilots to be qualified on both A320 Family aircraft and Airbus widebody aircraft such as the A330 or A350. Already leveraged by over 25 airlines worldwide, this commonality advantage can become an even stronger asset with the A321XLR. Just as passengers can enjoy a seamless experience on the A321XLR and on Airbus widebody aircraft, a single set of pilots can operate an A321XLR on the outbound leg and a A330 or A350 on the inbound leg. This advantage can reduce crew costs while allowing the airline to match fleet allocation with route demand.

Ultimately the A321XLR's advanced design delivers long-haul range capability and widebody level comfort with single-aisle economics. This positions the aircraft as the ideal platform for both opening new long and thin routes and operating alongside widebody aircraft on existing long-range routes, two key pillars of the A321XLR's market potential.

* Between ACF enabled A321neo and A321XLR

** MFF/SFF approval has to be approved by local authorities

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The Potential Market

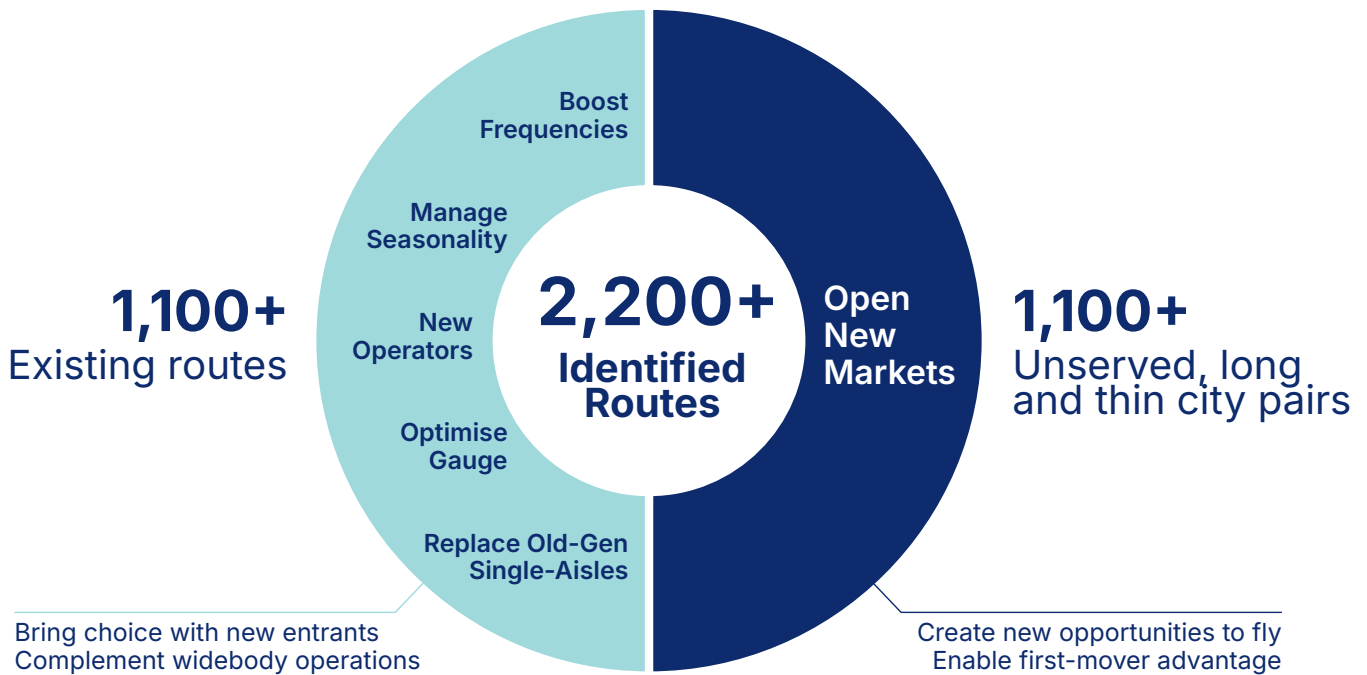


03

The A321XLR is positioned to unlock the vast potential beyond a niche role. Its advanced design creates two primary applications:

- **The Route Opener:** Opening new long-haul routes where demand is too thin at the onset of a route to profitably operate a widebody aircraft.
- **The Network Optimiser - Widebody Complementation:** Optimising existing long-haul networks by complementing widebody operations.

A macro-level analysis conducted by Airbus using passenger traffic data from Sabre and airline schedule data from OAG identified over 2,200 potential routes for the A321XLR within the 2,500 to 4,700 nautical-mile ESAD range sector fitting broadly into the two segments mentioned previously.



The Route Opener (1,100+ Routes Identified)

The methodology to identify potential routes started with looking at the worldwide passenger traffic data from 2024 and then using airline schedule data to filter out the existing routes.

To ensure a robust, future-proofed view of the opportunities, the qualifying traffic was then projected up to 2034. This projection used the 3.6% Compound annual growth rate (CAGR) from Airbus' 2025 Global Market Forecast, accounting for various market factors including:

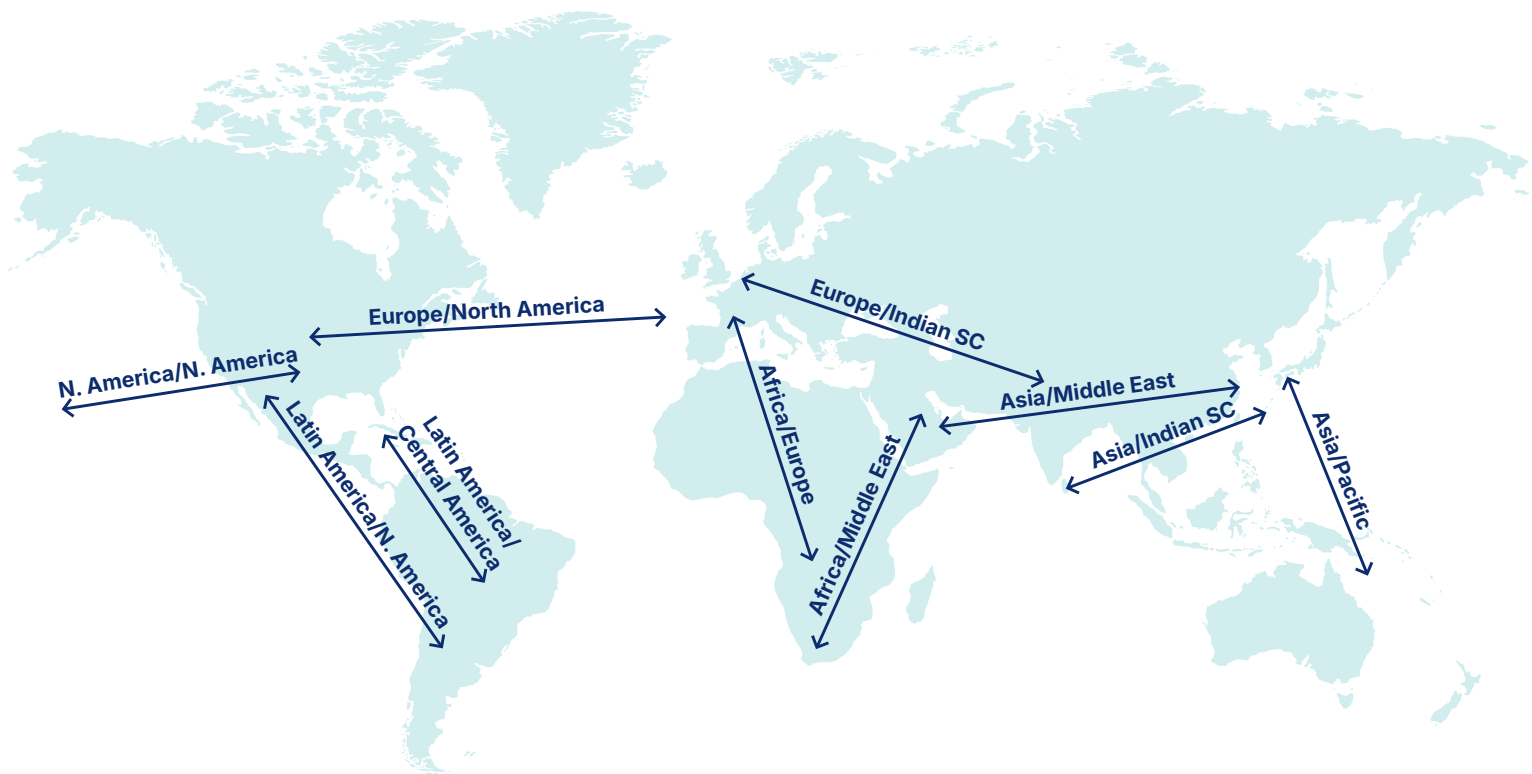
- **Market stimulation** from the addition of new non-stop connections which lead to traffic growth between the city pairs.
- **Additional connecting traffic** stemming from an airline's entire network.

- A realistic **direct market capture** that considers that not all of the traffic on the newly opened nonstop route will go through the nonstop link.

Finally, the projected traffic was filtered to identify those routes that could support a viable and sustainable service. This criteria was defined as having a minimum threshold of three weekly frequencies and an industry accepted load factor on a typical A321XLR configuration (see Table 3 in the Appendix for detailed assumption listing).

The results showed that the A321XLR's potential reaches worldwide with over 1,100 opportunities for new market connections, linking both transcontinental and transoceanic city pairs, as exemplified by the top 10 route flows.

Top 10 New Long-Thin Route Flows by Region Pairs



The A321XLR's potential to open new markets spans a diverse spectrum of traveller profiles. For instance, the aircraft offers the ideal gauge to reopen the corridor between the capital cities and massive population centres such as Cairo (Egypt) and Bangkok (Thailand), restoring a route that originally supported three weekly widebody frequencies prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly it can unlock high-yield corporate opportunities between economic hubs such as Zurich (Switzerland) and Bengaluru (India), enabling direct services for the specific travel needs of large Indian tech firms and their Swiss banking and insurance clients. In the North Atlantic the A321XLR can continue to fragment the market

by connecting cities such as Napoli (Italy) and Washington D.C. (United States of America). Here, the aircraft can profitably cater for a specialised traffic mix that captures the steady flow of government personnel and the visiting friends and relatives (VFR) traffic driven by the significant U.S. Navy presence in the region.

Finally, this capability can extend to thin leisure markets like Montevideo (Uruguay) to Cancun (Mexico). By leveraging Montevideo's high per-capita income and strong travel culture, operators can capture the year round demand generated by the growing trend of South American real estate investment in the Riviera Maya.

The Network Optimiser (1,100+ Routes Identified)

Connecting new markets is only part of the A321XLR's potential, the other opportunity lies in its capability to optimise existing networks. The platform's flexibility enables it to work side-by-side with an airline's widebody fleet to unlock network-wide efficiency. Through analysis of existing widebody routes between 2,500 and 4,700 nautical miles ESAD, three key areas were identified where the A321XLR can add significant value:

- **Managing seasonality:** The A321XLR allows airlines to maintain a consistent service level, even on widebody routes where demand fluctuates significantly between peak and off-seasons, often leading to frequency cuts. By operating the A321XLR in the off-season, airlines can protect their market share and unlock latent demand that would otherwise be too thin to support the original widebody frequencies.
- **Boost frequencies:** The A321XLR is a low-risk solution that enables operators to significantly enhance their presence on established trunk routes and build stronger brand recognition. Furthermore, it is the perfect tool for increasing flight frequencies on routes with less than daily widebody flights, thereby capturing more passengers who value scheduling flexibility.
- **Adapt Gauge:** The A321XLR can enable operators to precisely match capacity to demand without compromising on the long-haul passenger experience. By "right-sizing" the capacity offered on these sectors, airlines can maximise profitability across their network.



Additional Strategic Opportunities

Beyond these two main pillars, the A321XLR's unique economics create other strategic opportunities. Its low-risk profile can 'democratise' long-haul flying, lowering the barrier to entry for smaller or low-cost carriers to challenge incumbent airlines on established routes, with a smaller, more efficient gauge.

The A321XLR's inherent range flexibility serves as a powerful hedge against market volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). This aircraft is not locked into a single mission profile. If geopolitical events, economic shocks, or a health crisis suddenly disrupt long-haul demand it can be easily reallocated to high-demand shorter-haul routes. At the same time, its extended range benefits provide the operational adaptability to navigate sudden challenges such as routing around newly closed airspace.

With over 2,200 potential routes identified, the market opportunity is vast, and operators are already capitalising on this potential by leveraging the A321XLR to expand the single-aisle, long-haul model.

A white Airbus A321XLR aircraft is shown in flight, positioned as if it is flying through the large blue number '04'. The aircraft is angled upwards and to the right, with its wings and tail clearly visible. The background is a solid blue color.

04

A blurred image of a male runner in a red singlet and white shorts, captured in mid-stride. The runner is positioned in the lower half of the frame, moving from left to right. The background is a solid blue color with some motion blur effects.

The Proven Single-Aisle Long-Haul Model

04

The A321XLR officially entered long-haul service on 14 November 2024 when Iberia started operating it on their daily service between Madrid and Boston with a block time of 8 hours, 45 minutes. Following this milestone, there have been over thirty long-haul route announcements or route launches as more operators begin to deploy the platform.

While these new A321XLR services are starting to tap into the market potential outlined previously, the aircraft's recent Entry into service (EIS) means its full market impact is not yet visible. To therefore prove the success of the single-aisle long-haul operating model, the following case studies focus on established A321neo long-haul operations. For each use case, an A321XLR parallel is presented, highlighting how operators are already using or are planning to use the purpose-built platform to expand upon this model.

The Route Opener

Connecting Thin Markets Unsuitable for Widebody Operation

Airline: Jetstar Airways. Route: Sydney, Australia to Rarotonga, Cook Islands (3,405 NM ESAD)

This route is a classic example of a long and thin market, connecting a major hub (Sydney) to a secondary leisure destination (Rarotonga). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic Jetstar Airways' main competitor operated this route using a Boeing 787 aircraft. The service was infrequent, averaging just once-weekly, indicating that demand was too thin to consistently support a high-capacity widebody. The operator eventually stopped the service during the pandemic, leaving this market unserved.

In June 2023 Jetstar Airways identified this unserved market as an opportunity and instead of using a high-risk 787, the carrier leveraged the low trip cost of the A321neo to enter this market with a smaller aircraft gauge. This lower-risk approach allowed the airline to immediately offer a three times weekly service, providing a significant increase in both flexibility and its brand presence on the

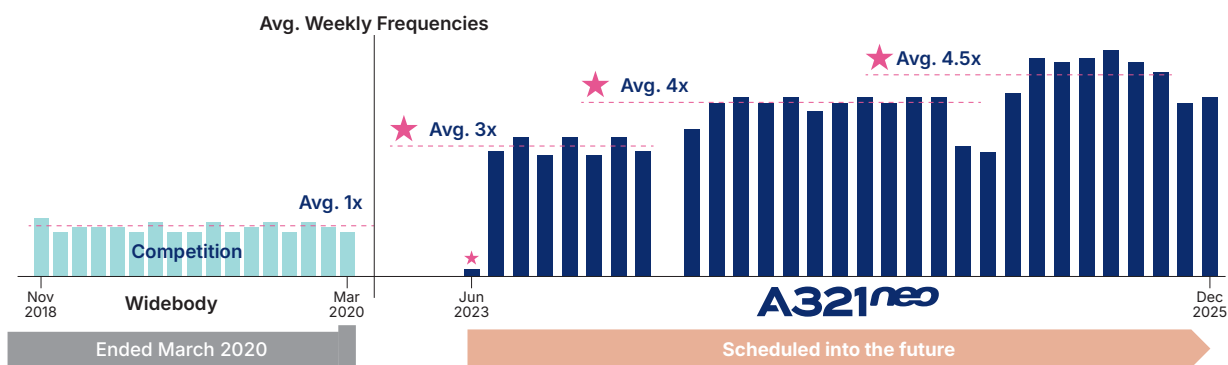
market compared to the previous once a week service using a widebody aircraft.

Leveraging the A321neo's capabilities, Jetstar Airways successfully increased its service, with the market responding positively. By the end of 2025, the airline was offering an average of over four weekly frequencies, a significant step-up in service.

The combination of this low-cost offering and the step increases in frequencies stimulated the market significantly and the total traffic on the route grew by over 65% in terms of Passengers daily each way (PDEWs) when comparing traffic data from 2018 to 2024. In 2024 Jetstar Airways' new nonstop service proved to be overwhelmingly popular, with 85% of passengers choosing it over a connecting service via a hub such as Auckland. This represents a substantial increase compared to the 58% of passengers who flew nonstop in 2018.

The A321neo Succeeded Where the 787 Struggled

Study of frequency offering: Sydney - Rarotonga (OAG)



Where the competitor could not sustain the thin route with the 787, Jetstar Airways used the A321neo's low-risk profile to enter the route and to subsequently grow the market. The A321neo's economics now enable a high-frequency schedule, showing how new-generation single-aisle aircraft can build a successful long-haul operation within a thin market.

The A321neo has validated the route-opener model for Jetstar Airways and the arrival in 2027 of their A321XLRs will

deliver the performance to fully optimise it. It will eliminate the payload and fuel trade-offs associated with more complex ACT installation to provide the uncompromised range needed to further expand a network. This extended range more importantly unlocks the opportunity to introduce a genuine long-haul business class product. By offering a premium experience comparable to their widebody fleet, Jetstar could tap into high-yield traffic that the current all economy configured A321neos may not be able to capture.

Bringing Worldwide Connectivity to a Secondary Market

Airline: Aer Lingus. Route: Dublin, Ireland to Cleveland, United States of America (3,603 NM ESAD)

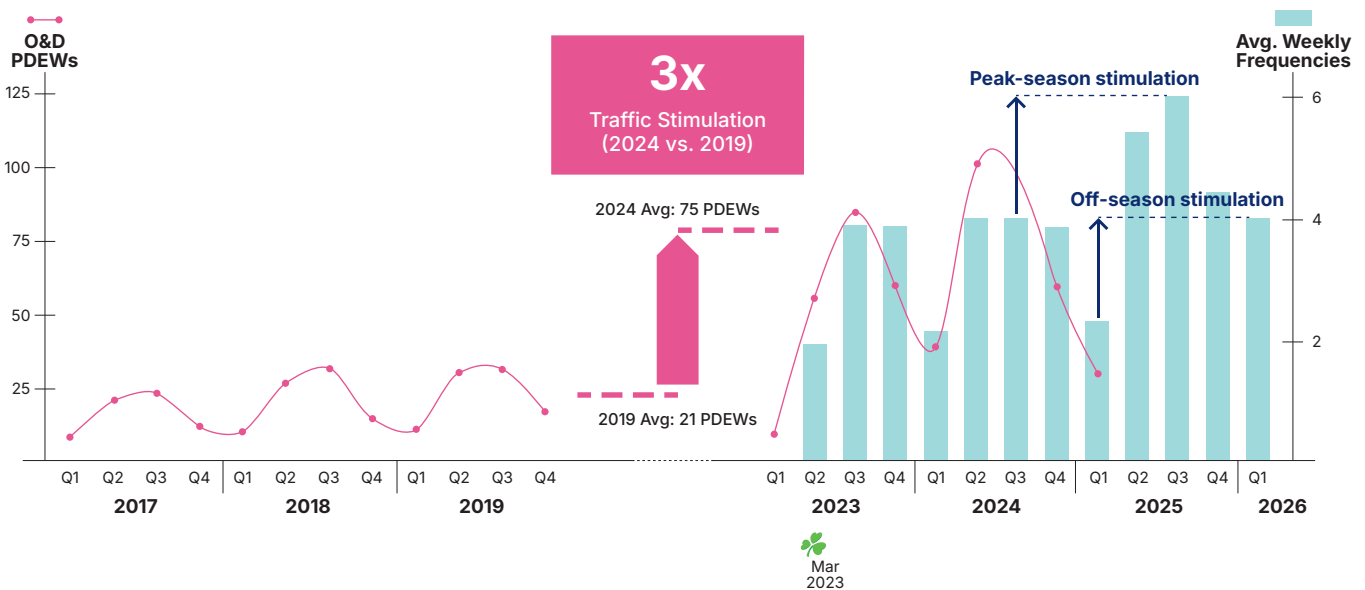
This route is a powerful example of bringing a long-haul connection to a secondary market. Historically the market between Cleveland and Dublin was extremely thin with an average of only 21 PDEWs in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The low level of traffic combined with high seasonal variation made the route uneconomical to operate with a widebody aircraft, and therefore remained unserved.

In March 2023, Aer Lingus used the A321neo to challenge this assumption. The low trip cost of the platform allowed the airline to launch a nonstop service with significantly

lower financial exposure despite the initially low demand. This resulted in stimulating the market by three times : from an average baseline of 21 O&D PDEWs in 2019, jumping to an average of 75 in 2024, the first year where the route was operated throughout the entire year. In addition to serving O&D traffic between Dublin and Cleveland, the route forms a new spoke in the Aer Lingus network with over 20% of passengers connecting onward to destinations in the wider system. These traffic flows resulted in an average route load factor of over 78% throughout 2024 and Aer Lingus reached a commanding market share of over 70% against competing connecting itineraries.

Aer Lingus Successfully Brings Long-Haul Connectivity to Cleveland

Study of frequency offering and traffic response: Dublin - Cleveland (OAG/Sabre)



While traffic on this route still fluctuates seasonally, the A321neo's flexibility makes it a viable operation. The low trip cost lets Aer Lingus profitably manage this seasonal variation, with the service up scaled to six weekly frequencies in the 2025 peak season, and plans to upscale service to a robust four weekly service in the 2026 off-season.

Aer Lingus has now begun deploying the A321XLR to refine and expand the transatlantic strategy established by the A321neo. The A321XLR's extended range has allowed them to unlock new services to Indianapolis and Nashville in the United States. These new routes bring direct long-haul, international connectivity to key secondary markets to further solidify the airline's brand presence as a premium carrier between Europe and the United States.

Elevating Secondary Markets into Network Hubs

Airline: Air Arabia. Route: Sharjah, United Arab Emirates to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (3,294 NM ESAD)

This route exemplifies the challenge of building lasting connectivity from a secondary city. Sharjah, located in the same catchment area as Emirates Airlines' massive Dubai hub, has seen its traffic potential to Kuala Lumpur absorbed by the larger airport due to existing services between Kuala Lumpur and Dubai. As such, the market was channelled through Dubai despite the latent demand present between the two cities.

Air Arabia initially launched the route in July 2019, though operations were suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic. Resuming service in March 2023, the airline capitalised on the A321neo's long-range capability and single-aisle

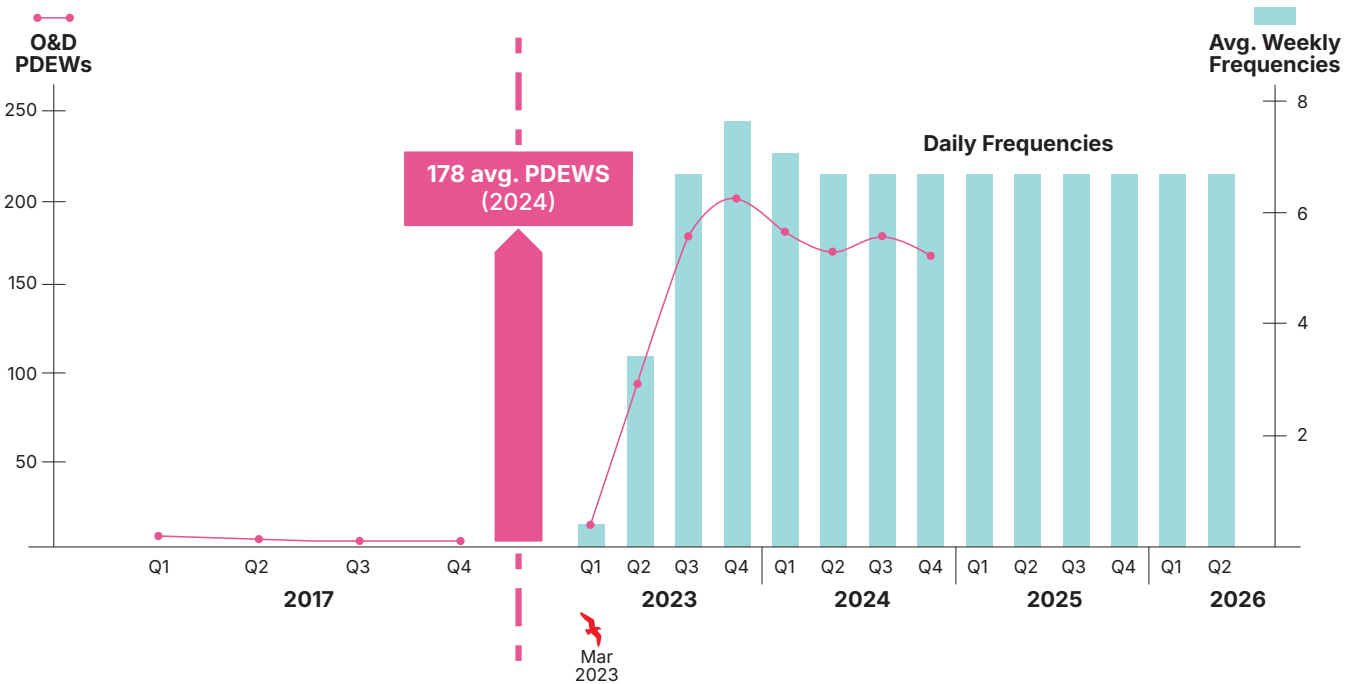
economics. This allowed them not only to reinstate the route but also to aggressively expand the service.

They reintroduced nonstop flights with an initial schedule of five weekly frequencies to provide a direct alternative to the Dubai hub. The A321neo's lower trip costs made this re-entry possible, enabling profitable market stimulation in segments previously deemed too limited for widebody aircraft.

Within a few months of the route's restart, Air Arabia increased the frequency to a full daily service to meet demand. This daily schedule is now maintained for the future, with the route sustaining an average of 178 PDEWs in 2024.

Air Arabia Leverages A321neo to Strengthen the Sharjah Hub

Study of frequency offering and traffic response: Sharjah - Kuala Lumpur (OAG/Sabre)

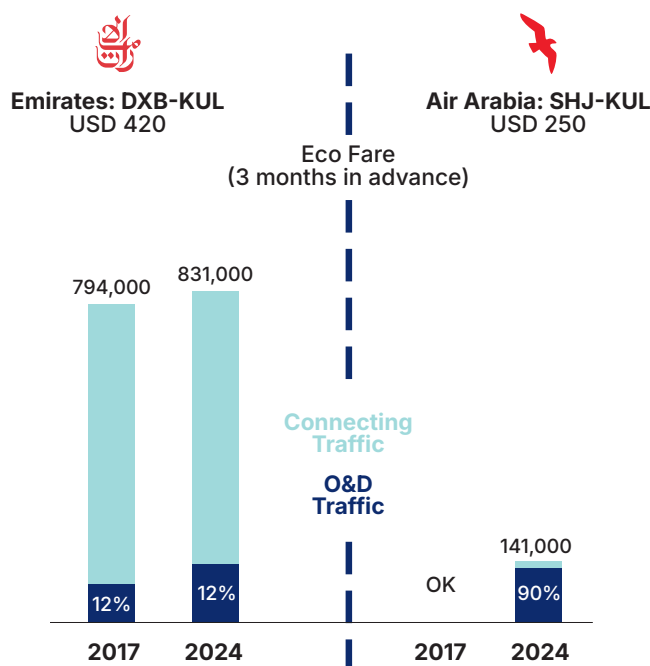


The A321neo enabled the airline to access a distinct, more price-sensitive passenger segment, which contributed to the overall market growth. Between 2017 and 2024, traffic on the established premium Dubai to Kuala Lumpur route with Emirates grew by 37,000 passengers, while Air Arabia's new service added 141,000 new passengers in the same time frame. This growth is underpinned by the distinct price advantage of Air Arabia's long-haul low-

cost model. A survey of representative fares for flights three months prior to departure reveals an average price of USD 250 from Sharjah, compared to USD 420 from Dubai. This is evident in the passenger mix, where 90% of Air Arabia's passengers in 2024 were O&D passengers, compared to only 12% on Emirates' service between Dubai and Kuala Lumpur the same year.

Air Arabia Successfully Taps into Long-Haul Low-Cost Market

Study of average O&D economy class fare (USD):
Dubai - Kuala Lumpur and Sharjah - Kuala Lumpur (Sabre)



Sharjah to Kuala Lumpur is just one example of Air Arabia's success with the A321neo. Their future fleet of A321XLRs will probably allow them to take this proven

'hub-building' strategy even further by building a stronger network to the world from Sharjah and from the other Air Arabia subsidiaries' hubs.

The A321XLR in Action: The Next Wave of New Market Connections

The previous case studies provide clear examples for the benefits of the long-haul single-aisle model to open connections between long and thin markets using the A321neo. While these A321neo operations prove that the market demand is real, the aircraft used were essentially medium-haul platforms adapted for long-haul missions.

The A321XLR is the custom-designed solution, offering superior range and payload capabilities precisely where

they are needed. Within a year of its Entry into service (EIS) in November 2024, the aircraft has already enabled operators globally to announce or launch nine new nonstop market connections. As the map below illustrates, the A321XLR is immediately being utilised for the exact types of new routes this paper envisioned, ranging from fresh transoceanic city pairs to long-thin connections that integrate new secondary cities into the global network.

New Market Connections Unlocked by A321XLR



The Network Optimiser - Widebody Complementarity

Managing Seasonality

Airline: Aer Lingus. Route: Dublin, Ireland to Toronto, Canada (3,303 NM ESAD)

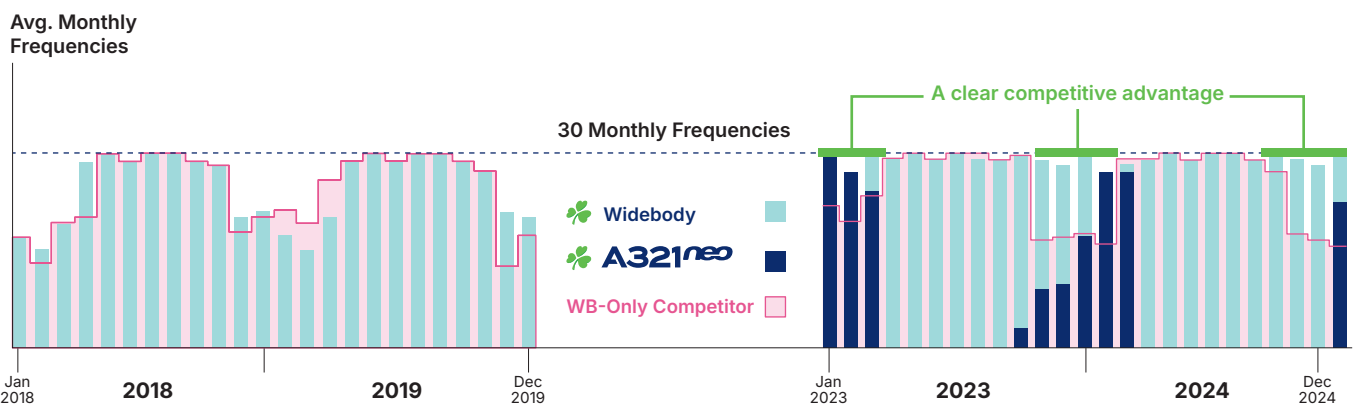
The Dublin-Toronto route is a classic example of a highly-seasonal transatlantic market, driven by strong summer tourism. After the retirement of the Boeing 757, this route was operated exclusively by widebody aircraft. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Aer Lingus and its main full-service competitor maintained nearly identical schedules on this route. Both carriers offered a daily widebody frequency during the summer peak season, which was reduced to a less-than-daily frequency in the winter off-peak season. The reliance on a widebody-only strategy, driven by high trip costs, necessitated compromising on year-round flight

frequency and missing out on potential latent demand, particularly during the off-season.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, Aer Lingus broke this cycle by introducing the A321neo as a precision tool to work in tandem with their A330 widebodies. While the A330s add capacity during the peak season, the A321neo is progressively deployed in the off-season. Its low trip cost allows them to profitably maintain a near-daily service all year, creating a decisive advantage, especially in capturing high-yield business passengers who demand year-round schedule consistency.

Aer Lingus Manages Seasonality with A321neo

Study of frequency offering: Dublin - Toronto (OAG)

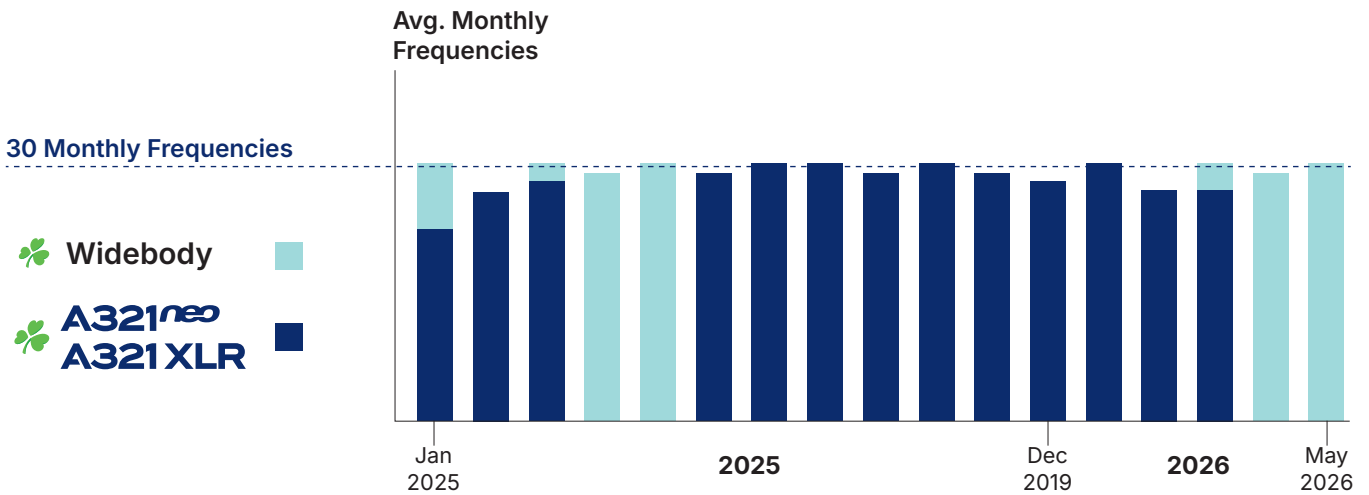


Crucially, this strategy does not compromise the premium product. Aer Lingus' A321neo is configured with full-flat business class seats, ensuring a consistent, widebody experience that protects their brand perception. This also supports high, year-round premium fares, with an average fare over USD 1,300 in certain off-peak months. By maintaining a daily market presence the airline unlocked latent off-season and stimulated passenger demand by over 40% in PDEWs when comparing November 2024 traffic against the widebody only baseline of November 2019.

The carrier is further reinforcing the normalisation of their seasonal services by integrating the A321XLR into the route's off-peak rotation. By deploying the A321XLR alongside the A321neo, Aer Lingus gains a new level of operational robustness. The A321XLR's additional fuel capacity and increased MTOW ensure that the airline can maintain its full premium offering year-round. This mixed-fleet usage allows the airline to match the correct aircraft to the mission profile, locking in the year-round consistency that drives their competitive advantage and their brand recognition.

Aer Lingus Continues Schedule Regularisation with A321 neo and A321XLR

Study of frequency offering: Dublin - Toronto (OAG)



Boosting Frequencies

Airline: TAP Air Portugal. Route: Lisbon, Portugal to Belem, Brazil (3,482 NM ESAD)

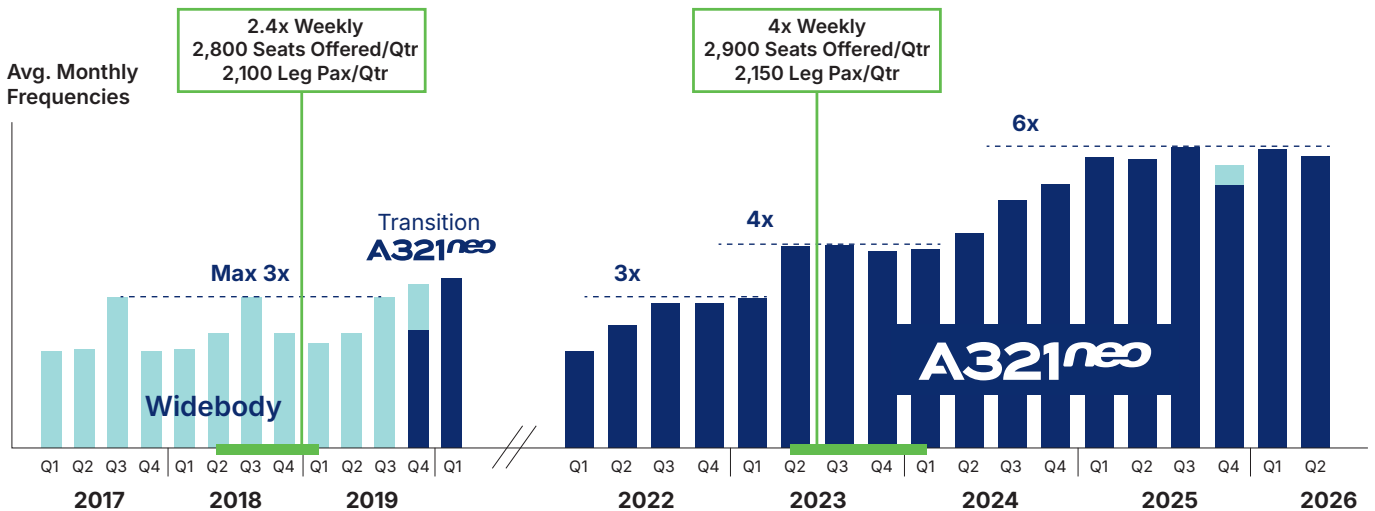
Prior to 2019 TAP Air Portugal operated this transatlantic route exclusively with widebody aircraft. Demand and seasonal variations resulted in the airline deploying less-than-daily frequencies with widebody aircraft, peaking at only 3 weekly frequencies in the high season. This lack of flexibility limited passenger choice and left gaps in the schedule. In 2019 the carrier made a strategic shift to an A321neo only operation which leveraged the aircraft's lower trip costs to offer more frequencies. The post-COVID-19 period provides an example of how TAP Air Portugal leveraged the aircraft's gauge to unlock more choice for passengers. When comparing the widebody

operated period of Q2 2018-Q1 2019 to the Q2 2023-Q1 2024 period when the route was operated by its A21neo, the frequency increased from on average 2.4 flights per week to up to 4 flights per week.

This shift effectively maintained similar seat count and traffic volumes while providing passengers with significantly more flexibility. Leveraging the scalability of the A321neo allowed the airline to implement step increases to their schedule, up to the six weekly frequencies they now operate. This expansion reinforces their brand presence and allows them to offer passengers more choice while maintaining a widebody comparable experience.

TAP Air Portugal Boosted Connectivity to Belem with A321neo

Study of frequency offering and traffic response: Lisbon - Belem (OAG/Sabre)



This shift helped TAP Air Portugal to optimise their fleet network-wide. Since introducing the A321neo on long-haul routes in 2019 TAP has increased the average scheduled sector length of its widebody fleet by 9%. This shift enabled the airline to redeploy its larger aircraft to missions better suited to their capacity, such as increasing seats offered on the key Lisbon-Sao Paulo route.

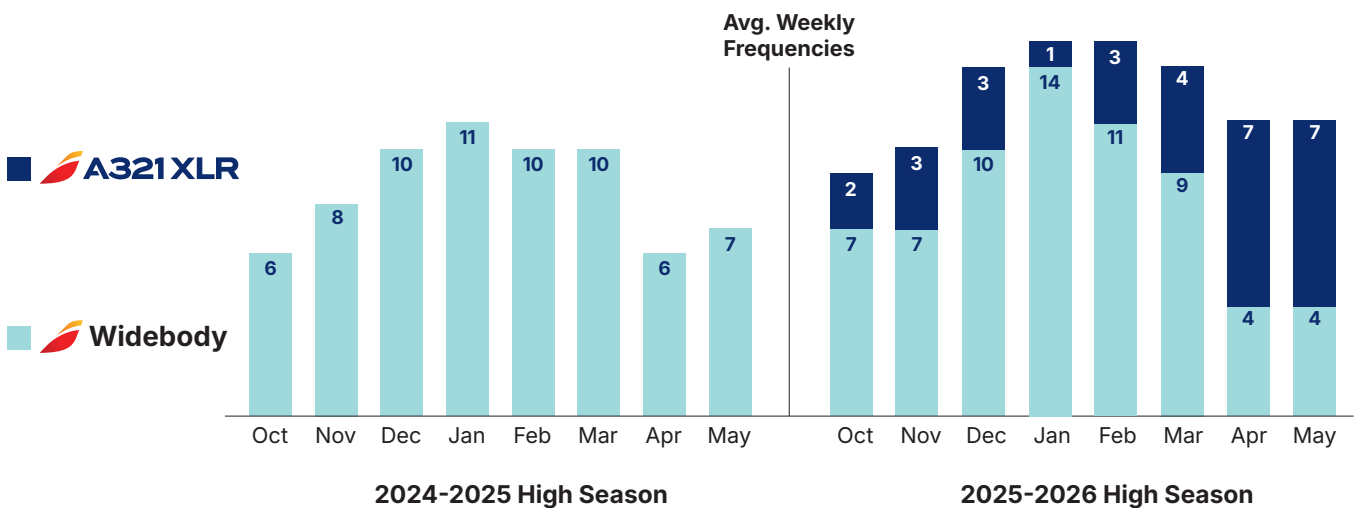
While the A321neo optimised capacity on the Lisbon-Belem route, the A321XLR offers the extended range necessary to decouple remaining tag-on flights. One example is the Belem-Manaus continuation where three weekly flights are planned by 2026. As Lisbon-Manaus is approximately 540 nautical miles ESAD longer than Lisbon-Belem, the A321XLR could enable the airline to upgrade Manaus from a one-stop add-on to a dedicated nonstop service from Lisbon, allowing the airline to replicate the “frequency booster”

model by launching a high-frequency direct service. As this leg grows with demand, it can simultaneously free up the Belem aircraft for faster turnarounds and to increase revenue opportunities across the airline's network.

Current A321XLR operators are already applying this frequency-boosting logic to optimise certain routes. Iberia is leveraging its A321XLR between Madrid and Santo Domingo to complement its widebody fleet. In the 2025-2026 high season, the carrier added extra capacity on the trunk route, moving from a previous maximum of 11 weekly frequencies to a twice-daily service in the peak months. Building on this further, in the shoulder months of April and May, the XLR will take over the majority of frequencies to allow Iberia to maintain 11 weekly flights and therefore ensure year-round schedule consistency and market leadership.

Iberia Leverages A321XLR to Increase Frequencies to Santo Domingo

Study of frequency offering: Madrid - Santo Domingo (OAG)



Adapting Gauge

Airline: Aer Lingus. Route: Dublin, Ireland to Newark, United States of America (3,265 NM ESAD)

Beyond using the platform to open new thin routes, Aer Lingus is leveraging the single-aisle economics of the A321neo and A321XLR to optimise its entire long-haul network. When comparing schedule data between 2025 and 2019 it can be seen that the carrier started using the A321neo on four routes previously operated exclusively by the A330.

An example of this is the Dublin-Newark route. In 2019 this was operated by a daily A330 flight with 317 seats. By 2025 the airline had substituted this with a daily A321neo service with 184 seats. Aer Lingus was able to maintain its daily frequency and continue to offer a comparable widebody passenger experience. This move also allowed a better alignment of capacity with market demand while significantly reducing the trip cost.

Instead of replacing widebody aircraft, the introduction of A321neo led to the widebodies being reassigned to different routes within the network. In fact, the airline's in-service A330 fleet grew from 13 to 15 aircraft between 2019 and 2025 just as its A321neo and A321XLR fleet expanded from zero to 10 aircraft.

This strategy of "right-sizing" released valuable widebody assets, allowing Aer Lingus to redeploy its A330 fleet on routes better suited to its range and capacity capabilities. The released capacity from routes such as Dublin to Newark, alongside fleet growth, powered a major network expansion. The airline launched new A330 routes and increased frequencies on key sectors.

Aer Lingus Uses A321neo to Expand Widebody Reach

Aer Lingus transatlantic routes (OAG)

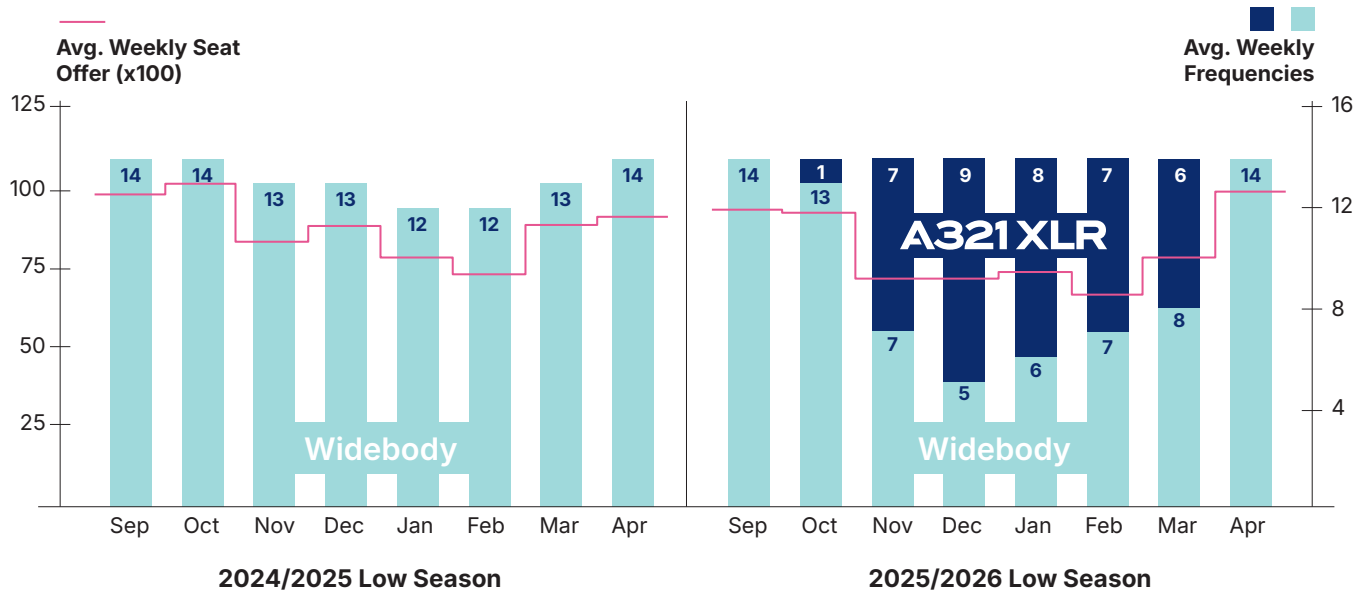


The A321XLR amplifies this network optimisation model, providing the range capability to apply capacity gauging even further. Iberia is currently leveraging the platform by implementing this strategy on the Madrid to New York JFK route. Initially starting with a widebody-only schedule in 2024-2025, the airline is using the A321XLR to effectively decouple frequency from capacity during the 2025-2026 winter season. By deploying the aircraft

during off-peak months Iberia can tailor its seat offer to match demand to reduce trip costs and financial risk. Crucially, the airline is able to offer a competitive frequency that can in some months actually surpass that of the previous year's schedule. This allows Iberia to preserve its market presence year-round while releasing widebody capacity for sectors better suited to their size.

Iberia Optimises Capacity to New York JFK While Maintaining Similar Frequency Offering

Study of frequency and capacity offering: Madrid - New York JFK (OAG)



Additional Strategic Opportunities

New Entrants

Airline: JetBlue. Route: New York City, United States of America to London, United Kingdom (3,524 NM ESAD)

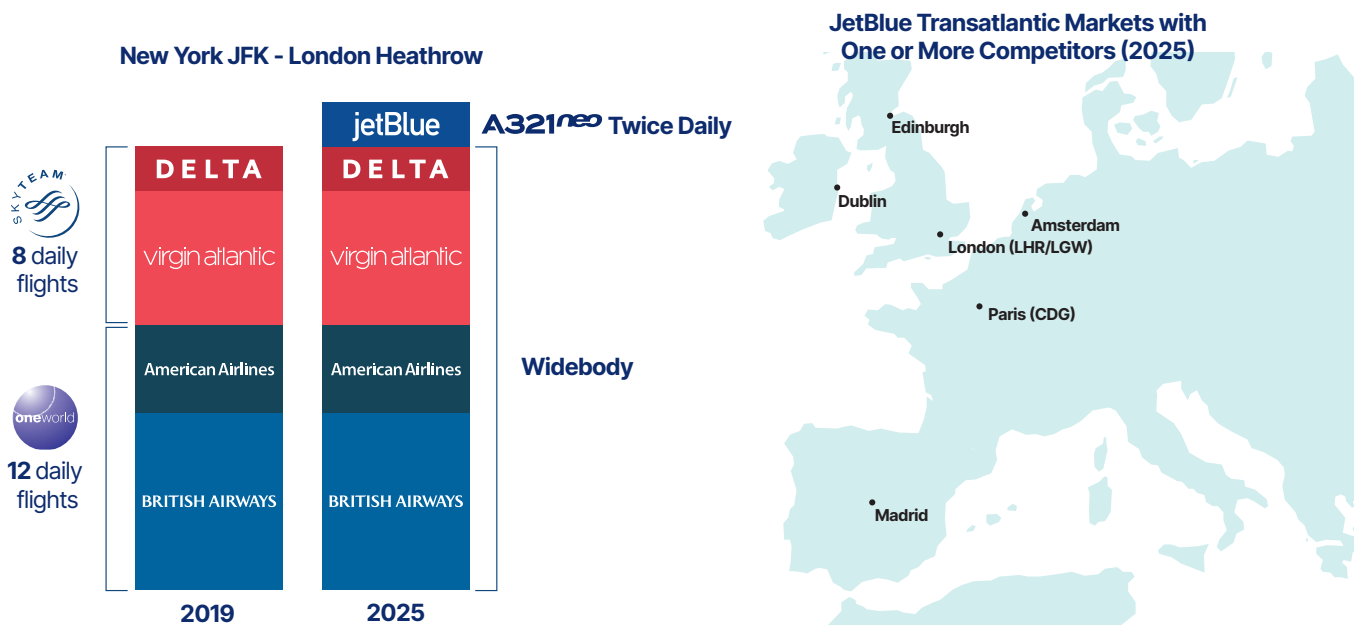
The single-aisle economics of the A321neo have significantly lowered the entry barrier to long-haul markets. It enables new players and Low-cost carriers (LCCs) to challenge incumbent carriers on some of their most established and profitable trunk routes. A clear example of this is JetBlue's entry into the highly competitive market between New York and London. Historically and even today, this route is dominated by massive airline alliances and joint ventures operating high-capacity widebody fleets. During the COVID-19 downturn JetBlue took the opportunity to enter this market using the A321neo. By leveraging the aircraft's significantly lower trip cost, the

airline could operate with a lower-risk gauge while offering a premium product comparable to a widebody aircraft.

JetBlue's sustained, year-round presence in this market, operating two daily flights, demonstrates its success, even when competing directly with the high frequencies offered by incumbent airline alliances. This demonstrates that airlines with differing business models can effectively compete in markets held by legacy carriers. Since opening the New York City and London route JetBlue has replicated this model from its hubs in New York and Boston to other competitive transatlantic markets including Paris, Amsterdam, and Dublin.

JetBlue Successfully Penetrates London and Other Transatlantic Markets with A321neo

Study of frequency offering: JetBlue transatlantic markets (OAG)

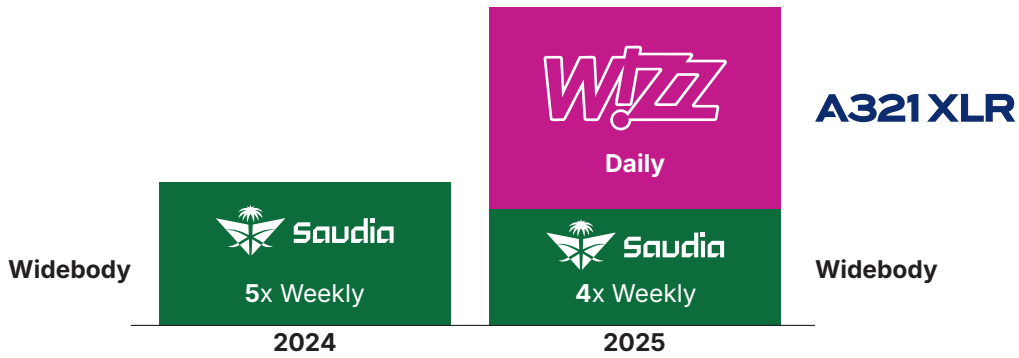


The A321XLR is essential for scaling this model to longer ranges and new regions. The aircraft's enhanced payload and range capabilities enable new entrants to penetrate into deeper international markets with this low-risk strategy.

For instance, Wizz Air used the A321XLR to launch a daily schedule between London Gatwick and Jeddah alongside the incumbent full-service operator, Saudia. The A321XLR's efficient gauge enabled the start of an immediate daily service, delivering schedule consistency with a lower financial risk profile than that of a traditional widebody operation.

Wizz Air Opens London Gatwick to Jeddah with A321XLR

Study of frequency offering: Wizz Air and Saudia (London Gatwick - Jeddah) (OAG)



By lowering the financial barrier of high trip costs the A321XLR will continue to allow diverse business models on long-haul routes, from LCCs to flag carriers. This capability is already reshaping the global route map, enabling operators to penetrate long-range markets where other carriers are already present. As the A321XLR's global

fleet size increases, this trend is already visible in six routes that were either announced or are currently operated by airlines today. This number is set to grow as the aircraft continues to demonstrate its ability to further unlock competitive long-haul markets.

Competitive Markets Unlocked by A321XLR



A321XLR as a Hedge Against Uncertainty

In an operating landscape increasingly characterised by market volatility and geopolitical complexity, the A321XLR provides a layer of network flexibility. As it retains the trip cost structure and physical footprint of a single-aisle aircraft, the aircraft is not locked into a single mission profile. It can operate long-haul sectors while remaining effective if redeployed to medium-haul or domestic trunk routes when market conditions shift. This versatility ensures that the aircraft remains a productive, revenue-generating asset across a wide

range of demand scenarios, in addition to its primary function as a long-haul single-aisle platform.

Beyond economic hedging, the A321XLR's extensive range provides critical operational resilience. For example, sudden airspace closures can force airlines to fly complex, circuitous routings to avoid no-fly zones. In the specific case of IndiGo, their A320neo operated flight between New Delhi and Baku was forced to deviate significantly due to regional airspace restrictions, increasing the flight time by almost one hour.

IndiGo Maintains Market Connectivity Despite Geographic Volatility

Study of operated flight profiles: New Delhi - Baku (Flightradar24)



While this example highlights the flexibility of the A320neo Family on shorter sectors, the A321XLR brings this necessary range buffer on medium to long-haul missions. Its 4,700 nautical mile range ensures that unexpected routing extensions on intercontinental flights can be absorbed effortlessly to maintain service continuity. This also allows operators to bypass closed airspace and continue nonstop where other aircraft types might face costly diversions or technical stops.

The aircraft's operational adaptability matches its critical economic resilience, as demonstrated by TAP Air Portugal during the COVID-19 pandemic. The A321neo allowed the airline to maintain connectivity between Portugal and Brazil when widebody operations were grounded due to prohibitive cash operating costs. By right-sizing capacity to the low

demand the airline was able to operate with a significantly lower cost base, enabling it to maintain critical service continuity between the two regions.

The A321XLR standardises this capability for the future, transforming the long-haul fleet into a flexible asset. Just as IndiGo demonstrated the operational resilience of the A320neo, they are now advancing this strategy with the A321XLR, flying between Mumbai/New Delhi to Athens. Despite ongoing regional tensions, the airline is leveraging the aircraft's extended range to grow its international network. They effectively turned network resilience into a standard operational capability. The A321XLR ensures airlines can maintain connectivity and revenue streams even when navigating the most complex operational disruptions and economic downturns.

Conclusion

The single-aisle long-haul revolution is an operational reality that is fundamentally defining the current and future global aviation landscape. The A321XLR stands as the enabler of this shift, bridging the gap between single-aisle economics and widebody-level range to unlock a potential market of over 2,200 routes. By delivering similar seat costs and significantly lower trip costs than typical widebodies, the aircraft transforms long-haul flying into a flexible, lower-risk opportunity.

Crucially, this lower risk is matched by a high standard of operation. The aircraft delivers a widebody-equivalent passenger experience through the Airspace cabin while ensuring seamless operational integration for airlines via operational commonality with Airbus fly-by-wire widebodies. Whether deployed as a 'Route Opener' to capture first-mover advantage in unserved markets or as a 'Network Optimiser' to provide network-level benefits, the A321XLR is a versatile solution to the industry's most pressing challenges. As operators worldwide integrate this platform, they are not merely upgrading their fleets but are securing a powerful hedge against market volatility, ensuring a more resilient and accessible network.

Discover where the A321XLR can take your unique network next.

Contact us at single-aisle.marketing@airbus.com to start the conversation.

Appendices

Data Sources

Multiple data sources shown in Table 1 have been used to substantiate the conclusions drawn in this paper.

Table 1 - Data sources used in the white paper

Data Source	Data Type
OAG	Airline schedules data
Sabre GDD	Origin/destination and leg traffic data
Cirium Ascend	Fleet information data
Flightradar24	Realtime flight data

Assumptions Listing

To ensure the integrity and transparency of all analyses presented in this paper, all calculated values are derived from a consistent set of either analytical or industry-standard assumptions as shown in the following tables.

Table 2 - Assumptions related to A321XLR vs. widebody cash operating cost comparison

Parameter	Value
Evaluation Sector	3,400 NM
Flight Profile	JAR 3% Trip Fuel Contingency 200 NM Diversion Distance
Fuel Price	2.8 USD/USg
Cabin Configuration	A321XLR: 3 Classes (172 Seats) A330-900neo: 3 Classes (315 Seats) 787-9: 3 Classes (312 Seats)

Table 3 - Assumptions related to A321XLR route opener analysis

Parameter	Value
Average CAGR - Airbus Global Market Forecast (GMF) Projections - 2025	3.6%
Study Period	2024 to 2034
Minimum Weekly Frequency Threshold	3
Additional Connecting Traffic (% of 2034 Nondirectional Traffic)	15%
New Traffic Stimulation (% of 2034 Nondirectional Traffic)	250%
Market Capture if Direct Flight	70%
Target Load Factor at Flight Launch	70%

List of Abbreviations and Terms

ACF: Airbus Cabin Flex

ACT: Additional Centre Tank

ASK: Available Seat-Kilometer

Avg: Average

CAGR: Compound Annual Growth Rate

CCQ: Cross Crew Qualification

EIS: Entry Into Service

ESAD: Equivalent Still-Air Distance (All ESAD values referenced are indicative)

GDD: Global Demand Data

GMF: Global Market Forecast

JAR: Joint Aviation Requirements

LCC: Low-Cost Carrier

MFF: Mixed Fleet Flying

MTOW: Maximum Takeoff Weight

NM: Nautical Mile

O&D: Origin and Destination

Pax: Passengers

PDEW: Passengers Daily Each Way

Qtr: Quarter

RCT: Rear Centre Tank

SA: Single-Aisle

SFF: Single Fleet Flying

ULD: Unit Loading Device

USg: US Gallon

VFR: Visiting Friends and Relatives

VUCA: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity

WB: Widebody

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