



## San Jose Mercury News

San Jose Mercury News (CA)

October 5, 2007

### **SUPER JUMBO JET LANDS IN S.F. AIRBUS DOUBLE-DECKER SET TO BEGIN DAILY FLIGHTS TO BAY AREA BY MID-'08**

Author: MARY ANNE OSTROM, Mercury News

Edition: Morning Final

Section: Business

Page: 1D

Estimated printed pages: 3

Article Text:

Eat your heart out, Larry and Sergey. The world's largest passenger jetliner landed at San Francisco International on Thursday -- and this plane, unlike the Google founders, got a warm welcome.

How big is it: The Airbus A380 can fit more than 800 passengers (if they all flew coach), has a wingspan nearly the length of a football field, tires 5 feet tall and a top that rises 80 feet high. Fully loaded at takeoff, it weighs more than 600 tons, powered by four massive engines.

"It's staggering," said Barbara Kaufman, who heads Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's San Francisco office.

As is the price tag. Even Larry Page and Sergey Brin of Google, whose 767 has been the subject of much criticism, might be put off by the \$250 million-plus cost.

San Francisco International should see the first commercial use of the double-decker super jumbo jet by the middle of next year, with one or two planes arriving daily, most likely operated by Singapore Airlines, Airbus officials said.

"Welcome to the future of the airline business," Barry Eccleston, president of Airbus Americas, told a crowd of reporters and airport officials.

But the A380 has had its share of problems.

When the first commercial flight takes off from Singapore to Sydney, Australia, on Oct. 25, it will be a relief for the troubled European airplane maker. The A380 is two years late in delivery because of wiring and communications issues.

One thing San Francisco airport officials are excited about is that they don't expect to get many neighbors' complaints.

State-of-the-art engines make it the quietest large jet in the air.

"I don't think we'll get complaints," said Linda Crayton, vice president of the San Francisco Airport Commission. "It's a quiet ride."

It's been a big year for San Francisco airport. JetBlue and Virgin America started service over the summer and Southwest Airlines renewed flights after a several-year hiatus.

In the fiscal year ending in June, more than 34 million people flew through San Francisco International, about 15 percent above the post-Sept. 11 low of 30 million in 2003.

Airline industry analysts note that while its novelty and size will attract passengers, only the nation's largest airports will be able to accommodate the plane. And only international carriers have placed orders for the jumbo carrier.

United and Northwest, both emerging from bankruptcy in recent years, have been courted by Airbus to consider the plane when they replace their long-haul aircraft. But neither has ordered any yet.

Airbus is touting the giant jetliner as a fuel-saver, both for economic and environmental reasons: The more people you put on a plane, the fewer take-offs and landings.

"There is an axiom in the airline industry. Once the fuel prices go up, the number and frequency of flights go down. To keep capacity, you need a bigger plane," said Jahan Alamzad, president of San Jose-based airline analyst CA Advisors.

But, he added, "The gee-whiz factor usually goes away after six months and then for the airlines the economic reality hits very hard. Really, does this airplane make sense or not?"

#### A GIANT OF THE SKIES

The world's largest passenger airliner, the Airbus A380, boasts two passenger decks and an optional lower deck for a rest area, business center, bar or other amenities. Although the A380 carries more passengers, Airbus claims that the plane has a 15 to 20 percent lower direct operating cost per seat than Boeing's 747-400, the world's most popular jumbo airliner.

Structure is made of more than 25 percent lightweight composite materials

Lower deck can include beds or showers

Caption:

PHOTO: JOHN GREEN -- MEDIA NEWS

The world's largest passenger jetliner, the Airbus 380, lands Thursday at San Francisco International Airport. It can hold more than 800 people.

PHOTO: Eccleston

"Welcome to the future of the airline business," says Airbus Americas exec.

PHOTO: TONY AVELAR -- AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

The world's largest jetliner, the Airbus A380, taxis to a stop on the tarmac Thursday on its first flight to San Francisco International Airport. The double-decker A380 makes its first commercial flight Oct. 25 when it takes off from Singapore to Sydney, Australia.

PHOTO: JOHN GREEN -- AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

The Airbus A380 jetliner that landed Thursday at San Francisco International is a test plane and is not configured with seats.

DIAGRAM: MERCURY NEWS

A GIANT OF THE SKIESPhotos (4), Diagram, Chart

Table:

CHART: MERCURY NEWS

A GIANT OF THE SKIES

BOEING	AIRBUS	
747-400	A380	
Length	231 ft. 10 in.	211 ft. 5 in.
Wingspan	239 ft. 3 in.	261 ft. 8 in.
Seats (three classes)	416 (524*)	525 (max. 840**)
Range (fully loaded)	8,355 miles	9,445 miles
Max. fuel capacity	57,285 gallons	81,890 gallons
Max. takeoff weight	875,000 pounds	1.234 million pounds

\*Two classes \*\*All economy class

Source: Airbus, Boeing, McClatchy Tribune

Copyright (c) 2007 San Jose Mercury News

Record Number: 0710060039