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The world's longest airliner, the 777-300, has been working for 18 months. Some of its key operators assess its progress

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ALTHOUGH AIRBUS Industrie pioneered the widebody twinjet concept in the early 1970s, its rival Boeing has developed the configuration to its ultimate size and weight, with the 777 family.

When it flew in June 1994, the 777-200 was the world's largest and heaviest twinjet, taking over the mantle from the Airbus A330, and it offers the greatest range for such a design. It is powered by the highest thrust turbofan engines ever certificated – 75,000-98,000lb thrust (334-436kN) – and was the first twinjet to have 180min extended range twin-engined operations (ETOPS) approval in place at service entry. The latter was part of the manufacturer's intense effort to provide a mature, service-ready airliner at introduction.

These twinjet achievements were taken over by the 777-300 when it flew in October 1997, along with another record: its length of 73.8m (242.3ft) makes it the longest airliner built (a full technical description of the 777-300 appeared in *Flight International*, 3-9 December, 1997).

The introduction of a stretched derivative three years after the 777-200 arrived in 1995 was planned from the start, so when Cathay Pacific Airways received its first 777-300 in May 1998, it was part of a Boeing master plan set at the start



“Cathay insisted on the installation of three external cameras which display in the cockpit to aid manoeuvring on the ground”