

Farnborough Fantastic

July 2024

AVIATION AFICIONADOS PERSPECTIVE

During a Group Visit to
Farnborough International 2024
Airliner Experience sampled all
on offer and more
by Aidan Nolan



Experience Farnborough

Biennial – The term conjures up a special occasion in anyone's mind. In certain African locations, once every so often, all species of animal found in that region gather at a lifeline watering hole, where all bickering and hunting are put aside for a brief moment.

Farnborough is in a way, a watering hole of sorts, where global aircraft manufacturers, aviation companies and indeed airlines come together for a week-long assembly in July of every other year. The extravaganza focuses the aviation community on the Hampshire location with thousands travelling to immerse themselves in the latest aircraft available on display, flying demonstrations, cutting edge aerospace engineering and the most recent technological trends.

Of course, for enthusiasts the overwhelming attraction is the exquisite line-up of aircraft from manufactures highlighting their latest models and the afternoon airshow, where seeing is believing, with aircraft displaying close to they're performance envelope.

Airliner Experience obtained a front-row seat at Farnborough International 2024 during an exciting Trade Day. A morning flight from Dublin to Gatwick followed by rail and bus transport to the venue, saw the group arrive into a maelstrom of aircraft eye-candy. Attempting to observe all on offer in one sitting was difficult. And where to begin?



Top - ATR 72-600 Demonstrator of ATR Aircraft
Above - Heli Operations - Westland Sea King
Images by Airliner Experience



Airbus A220-300 of jetBlue in motion
Image by jetBlue

Well, that part soon straightened itself out as Airliner Experience had organised several private visits to aircraft on display by prior arrangement, beginning with Heli Operations and the iconic Westland Sea king and its rotary partner on the day, an Agusta Westland AW139. An interesting helicopter maintenance and training company with bases at Somerton, Portland and Culdrose in southern England. The Sea King is a firm favourite with enthusiasts and it's proven track record is outstanding.



The *battleship grey* liveried Sea King on display equipped with additional radar dome, is typical of the type used by the German Naval Aviation Command with Heli Operations providing training for the organisation.

The group received a comprehensive and informative tour of both helicopters by an enthusiastic and welcoming crew.

From rotary classics it was on to a British Institution, an appointment with British Airways and a visit on board the airlines latest Airbus A320neo. Looking splendid wearing the iconic *Chatham Dockyard* livery, G-TTNY the latest arrival from an order for 26 A320neo's was parked parallel to the active runway at Farnborough Airport.

BA cabin crew provided drinks and snacks at the stairway base and once on board, the group took their seats for a briefing by Ben, Senior Global Communications Executive with British Airways.

Left - Heli Ops - AW 139
Image by Airliner Experience



G-TTNY A320neo new to the British Airways fleet
Image by Airliner Experience



British Airways Airbus A320neo G-TTNY on display
Image by Airliner Experience

Proud to showcase the all-new aircraft interior, several of the airlines A320neo's have received this new installation with many materials and workmanship being





Above - On tour with jetBlue A220-300
Image by Airliner Experience

provided by UK companies and from regions around Britain. The 180 seat all-economy interior looked a more high-end product than one might have expected, the refit certainly giving an air of prestige.

The A320neo's larger engines are a main visual clue to the latest A320 design, along with wing sharklets. Since it's introduction into service, G-TTNY has been based at London Heathrow and has operated flights to Rome, Milan, Venice, Florence, Malaga & Athens, Kos & Dalaman

with a visit to Istanbul and Edinburgh in the mix.

Our Airbus sampling continued as the group's next appointment was with jetBlue and the airlines latest A220-300. An aircraft type not as familiar to some as the A320 / A321, the A220 although sighted at Irish airports with Air Baltic, Air France and Swiss operating the type, not used on the more highly trafficked routes.

Passing through the Airbus chalet we gained access to the Airbus aircraft display arena, where A330-900neo, A220-300, A400M, C295, H160 helicopter and various Airbus drones including Wingman Model were exhibited. An impressive line-up of just some of the latest aircraft on offer from Airbus.

Warmly welcomed by Abad, our jetBlue host took it in his stride to introduce us to the A220-300. Boarding the aircraft was a first for some. The cabin, bathed in natural light due to the larger than normal cabin windows. Plush black leather

seating is found in the 3 - 2 layout with IFE screens built into the seat backs, which would be uncommon in an all-economy class cabin if this was a European airline. However, the US market takes a different view of cabin comforts which takes into account possibly longer flight distances.



Above - Airbus display included H160 Helicopter
Image by Airliner Experience

Large overhead bins and sculptured ceiling add to the airiness and brightness of the interior.

Blueminicano (N3203J) is the second last A220-300 delivered to jetBlue from it's current order of 35 aircraft.

A220 MADE ITS WAY ACROSS THE ATLANTIC TO FARNBOROUGH

Flying The Flag for ATR Aircraft at Farnborough
SE-MKM ATR 72-600 of Braathens Regional Airlines
Image by ATR Aircraft



A320NEO'S LARGER ENGINES MAIN CLUE TO LATEST A320 DESIGN

Manufactured at Airbus' Mobile, Alabama plant in the US, the A220 was only completed three days prior to the Farnborough Airshow. Once released from Mobile, N3203J was flown to Airbus at Montréal, Mirabel International Airport before departing for jetBlue at New York - JFK Airport.

ATR

The aircraft then made its way across the Atlantic to Farnborough, with only several crew members on board and little or no luggage. Although ETOPS certified, it remains a relatively rare occurrence for an A220 to perform a Transatlantic flight as there are currently no scheduled passenger services operating the type across the Atlantic. Eager to return to the US, N3203J departed Farnborough, the evening of our group visit, now integrated into the jetBlue fleet network.

ATR FLOWN BY FORMER AIR FORCE PILOT

A short stroll to the adjacent site brought the group to our next aircraft visit. From a distance the ATR 72-600 of Braathens Regional Airlines - BRA was easily recognisable with it's rainbow-coloured tail fin. The Swedish airline operates up to 14 ATR 72-600's and SE-MKM has been with the airline since 2020. It's usual territory is performing scheduled flights up to 1 hour 15 minutes to & from Stockholm.



Boarding has now started
BA A320neo G-TTNY
Image by Airliner Experience

Our invitation was with ATR Aircraft who had two ATR's present at Farnborough. SE-MKM as a static display aircraft and F-WWEV the manufacturers demonstration model which performed aerial display's, flown by former Air Force pilot, captain Matthew Olivier. A slower pace of life indeed, displaying the ATR compared with his former career but displaying the performance envelope of a modern commercial passenger turboprop requires significant airmanship.

Anna from ATR Aircraft provided an informative tour of the ATR 72-600 for



Blueminicano N3203J of jetBlue
Image by Airliner Experience

During our group visit to ATR, it just happened that the manufacturers demonstrator model F-WWEV began its flight display.

We took great pleasure in pausing our tour to view the ATR 72-600 perform it's impressive aerial manoeuvres, from our excellent vantage point along the boundary line, within the ATR Aircraft encampment. The finale of this display culminated with a spectacularly short landing as F-WWEV barely touched down as

brakes and reverse thrusters were vigorously applied, demonstrating the incredible STOL capabilities of the aircraft. Bravo!

From small, nimble regional turboprop aircraft, to enormous airliners, our visit to Air India's latest Airbus A350-900 was nothing short of breathtaking and must surely equate to the epitome of current aircraft design. Just look at it! A thing of beauty.

Abhinav and Vineet from Air India very kindly arranged for Airliner Experience to visit VT-JRH and to sample the delights the flagship aircraft has to offer. Magnificent in appearance, the A350 a firm favourite with many, looks even better in Air India's revised livery. Vivid red's against a cool white backdrop, colourful tailfin and spice-red underbelly emphasise the A350's best styling attributes.

Once the top of the double-flight stairs was reached, the welcome on board was warm as we entered



Above - Tailfin of Blueminicano A220-300 with fuselage showing aircraft model titles
Images by Airliner Experience

Left - ATR 72-600 Cabin & Flight Deck
Images by Airliner Experience



Above - ATR 72-600 SE-MKM
Image by ATR Aircraft

our group. The interior made a surprising change from the more familiar 3 – 3 seating found on A320's and B737's. The ATR design houses a 2 – 2 cabin layout and is a welcome setting to sit back and relax within. For ATR Aircraft, sales were a little slower than preferred as only a single new order was received during the week-long event at Farnborough, from Air Tahiti for four ATR 72-600's.



Business Class. Our tour by cabin crew was delightful, with information imparted enthusiastically as the Suites were explored and surveyed. Up to 28 private enclosures are currently installed on Air India's A350's, with 24 seats in Premium Economy and 264 Economy seats. VT-JRH delivered to Air India in April this year (2024) is the fifth A350 from a current order of six.

A350 – JUST LOOK AT IT! A THING OF BEAUTY

The enormous galleys are fitted with the latest inflight catering facilities and double as social gathering spaces for passengers looking to keep mobile during long-haul flights. During our on board visit to VT-JRH, the enthusiasts eye caught sight of the cabin crew-rest area indicated by the slightly lower curved protrusion within the central overhead bins, towards the rear of the economy cabin. On investigation, a hidden door with stairs leading to the bunk-area was revealed.

London is firmly on the route map for Air India's A350 with a start date from September '24 and the airline intends to restart flights to New York - JFK from Delhi (DEL) & Mumbai (BOM). The sense of occasion from boarding the classic Air India



Air India A350-900 VT-JRH
Image by Airliner Experience



Above - An Air India Welcome - Image by Air India

Boeing 747's (200, 300 & 400 Series), the last of which retired from the fleet in March 2021, is probably not quite at the same level when flying the airlines' new Airbus A350-900's but in terms of comfort, refinement and cabin features, the difference is vast.



Above - Air India A350 - Image by Airliner Experience

Airliner Experience were the final guests to de-board VT-JRH as the crew quickly prepared the aircraft for departure. It's temporary parking spot becoming an active area with tug arriving to tow the A350 onto the main runway. Possibly one of

the largest aircraft to take off from FAB, the A350-900 powered up for it's take-off roll that evening as Air India 1148 for the short hop to London Gatwick before performing a revenue flight back to Delhi.

Another aircraft beckoning Airliner Experience to visit was the new Airbus A330-900neo of Virgin Atlantic, looking magnificent wearing the airlines 40th Anniversary livery. While an invitation was granted to our group, an important media photo-shoot encroached on our slot time, preventing us from boarding *Ruby Rebel*. G-VSRB – ‘RB’ for Richard Branson perhaps - was fresh out of the box for Virgin Atlantic, having performed its first flight barely a month earlier on 14th of June.

While the colour palette appears limited, designers nailed it back in 2010 when creating the current Virgin Atlantic livery. Signature red tail fin, matching red engine nacelles with metallic ivory fuselage, set off with ultra-thin over-sized elegant type-style written in deep purple using lower-case for the airlines



Virgin Atlantic A330-900neo G-VSRB
Image by Airliner Experience



Air India A350-900 VT-JRH
Image by Airliner Experience

name. All fused together exceptionally well to forge an unmistakable brand.

G-VSRB positioned center-stage within the Airbus enclosure received much attention from guests of Farnborough 2024. By Thursday evening it was time for G-VSRB to leave the gathering. The twin Rolls-Royce Trent 7000 engines sounding glorious upon departure to Heathrow. Currently it operates US and Caribbean routes daily from the UK. The 'neo' A330 becoming a strong performer within the Virgin Atlantic fleet.

VIRGIN ATLANTIC, LOOKING MAGNIFICENT WEARING THE AIRLINES 40TH ANNIVERSARY LIVERY

Sharing parking space with Gulfstream G700 A7-CHB of Qatar Executive, was a wide-body of note, Boeings 787-9 of Qatar Airways. The airline, a regular attendee at Farnborough Airshow was proud to display A7-BHQ which featured the new Qsuite in Business Class. This aircraft only joined the Qatar fleet in June 2024.

After four days of showcasing Qatar Airways, the B787-9 prepared to



Qatar Airways B787-9 A7-BHQ
Image by Airliner Experience

depart the Hampshire location direct to Doha, on Thursday as Virgin Atlantic's A330neo was getting underway. Once the Airbus climbed out, a tug towed A7-BHQ down Runway 24 before pushing it backwards to the upper end of the runway to provide every metre of assistance in getting airborne. The aircraft requiring full length for take off.

Engine start-up procedure occurred once the B787 was positioned and tug released. During departure preparations, a Royal Jet Boeing 737-700(BBJ) A6-AIN on approach to Farnborough inbound from Ostend, requested landing clearance. This was the aircraft's fourth attempt at a landing due to low cloud base and the fact that arriving aircraft were required to rely on a visual approach rather than the usual ILS. The B737 diverted to Stansted after its final attempt to land.

The B787 had parked next to sistership Gulfstream G700

A7-CHB of Qatar Executive. The business jet being the latest instalment from Gulfstream and remains at the pinnacle of high-end luxury private jet travel when it comes to speed and range.

Taking things back a notch, a little gem of an aircraft in attendance, De Havilland Canada DHC6-400 Twin Otter C-GVKI offered by Viking Air Ltd. Complete with unique blue-white-grey pixilated livery, the go-anywhere turboprop receives full marks for its journey from Canada to the UK. Its no secret the Irish Police force "An Garda Siochana" showed more than a passing interest in the display aircraft. Having operated a Britten-Norman Defender in a surveillance role for decades, a replacement is on the cards. C-GVKI departed Farnborough travelling to Casement Aerodrome -

Baldonnell, Dublin, home of the Irish Air Corps on Thursday 25th July and on to Shannon Airport.

A7-BHQ – REQUIRING FULL LENGTH FOR TAKE OFF



Qatar Executive Gulfstream G700 A7-CHB
Image by Airliner Experience

An aircraft, familiar to Irish enthusiasts and proudly displayed by Airbus within it's enclosure at Farnborough was Airbus (CASA) C-295W FA-655 '230' of the Mozambique Air Force. The first of its type for the Air Force, its all-white livery contrasting to the battleship grey colour of the Irish Air Corps versions which currently total 4.



A400M Atlas - Royal Air Force ZM416
Image by Airliner Experience

An item of note omitted from the Mozambique Air Force example is the nose-mounted infrared camera.

Rubbing shoulders with the C-295W was undoubtedly the brute of the show. Even stationary it has a swagger, a tough rugged image, the Airbus A400M Atlas of the Royal Air Force never fails to draw a crowd. Maybe due to it's cartoon-like proportions or its butch design where "form follows function" is certainly the design philosophy for this quad-turboprop, troop transport aircraft.

Presented by the Royal Air Force, ZM416 commanded visitors attention. Each time one glances at this aircraft, some additional external feature is noticed. A busy design, with aspects appearing as if enlarged by 200%, it's a wonderful flying machine, one we shall never tire of viewing.

An unexpected treat by the European manufacturer was the sight of an Airbus H160M helicopter which features *blue edge* blades and a biplane stabiliser at the rear. This latest model features the forefront in rotary design. A most interesting chopper.



Airbus (CASA) C-295W
Image by Airliner Experience

Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer occupied a front row position at Farnborough 2024. Laying out it's stall, was a comprehensive range of commercial and military aircraft, displaying the heights the manufacturer has climbed to over the past two decades.

The successful E195-E2 *Profit Hunter* was a welcome return to the event, this year wearing the *Tech Eagle* motif, and what an eye-catching livery PR-ZIQ exhibits. The over-large Pratt & Whitney PW1900G turboprops are a significant size increase over the previous generation E195 but this is what helps provide the performance advantages for the 146-seater in terms of fuel economy and range not to mention it's slightly higher cruise speed compared to the A320 & B737. Launch customer Azul Brazilian Airlines with an order for 71 models and Porter Airlines signing for 75 195-E2's goes some way to the over 300 examples currently on the order books. PR-ZIQ performed an aerial display at Farnborough, pushing the airliners performance envelope.

Embraer E195-E2 PR-ZIQ
Image by Airliner Experience



A newcomer in the form of an Embraer E-Freighter was E190F N986TA, in an all-black livery with turquoise titles. The recently launched freighter variant of the E190 can accommodate a payload of over 10.5 tons within its narrow body. Seeking a niche between ATR-72F and Boeing 737-800F cargo aircraft, Embraer is targeting a slice of an untapped market, providing both new build aircraft and conversion freighters.

Each freighter is equipped with strengthened floor and large cargo door enabling the E190F to transport six ULD containers.

Joining the Embraer family line-up was the exciting C-390 Millennium PT-ZNG military transport turboprop aircraft. Not it's first Farnborough Airshow, the C-390 is one of the



Embraer C-390 Millennium PT-ZNG
Image by Airliner Experience



Embraer E-Freighter E190F N986TA
Image by Airliner Experience



Embraer C-390 Millennium PT-ZNG
Image by Airliner Experience

more unusual aircraft designs available in today's market. Complete with camouflage livery the troop transporter can carry up to 80 soldiers equating to a 26 ton payload. The aircraft thrilled the crowds with an aerial display giving a view in its natural habitat.

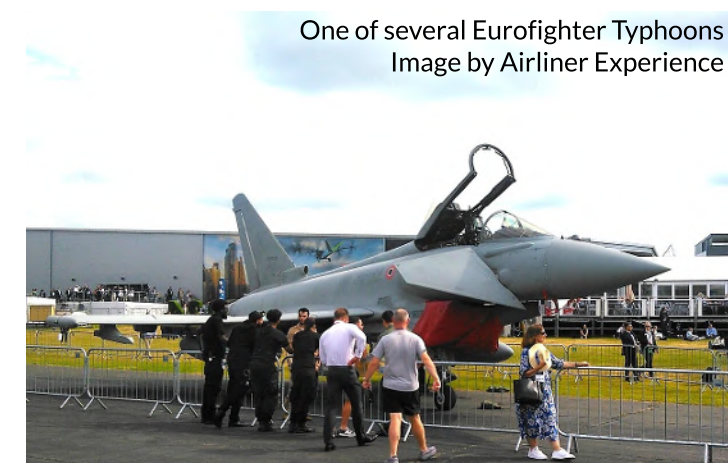


Current European operators of the C-390 include the Hungarian and Portuguese Air Forces with Austria, Czech Republic, Netherlands and Sweden possibly acquiring the type in the near future. PT-ZNG departed Farnborough on Thursday morning, destination Dublin Airport and then Baldonnell in Dublin. At the opposite end of the scale, Embraer A-29 Super Tucano – light attack aircraft was present, a most capable aircraft in its own right.

Among the list of aircraft performing aerial demonstrations throughout the week were a number of military fighter jets, always guaranteed to grab the crowds attention. For sheer drama, there's nothing quite like Boeing's F-15 igniting it's afterburner to blow away any cobwebs. An F-16 of the Royal Danish Air Force in a lively livery was put through its paces as were two F-35's of the Royal Air Force and U.S. Air Force – exhibiting the sleek modern silhouette the aircraft possesses.



Boeing F-15 QA Eagle - Qatar Emiri Air Force
Image by Airliner Experience



One of several Eurofighter Typhoons
Image by Airliner Experience

Eurofighter Typhoon had an airborne outing by an RAF example with an Italian Air Force model taking to the skies later in the week. The Red Arrows kicked off the show on Monday with their renowned spectacular display and everyone's favourite, the incredible Chinook of the RAF, put on a wonderful demonstration which included both flying and operational.

ROYAL AIR FORCE



RAF Chinook in flight
Image by RAF

On a larger scale, the RAF performed a flypast with Airbus A330 MRTT "Voyager" one of their refuelling tankers and one of their P-8 Poseidon's based on the Boeing 737. A highly anticipated flyby was conducted by the iconic B-52 Stratofortress of the U.S. Air Force. The approaching aircraft outline sending a chill down one's spine, the elusive B-52 remaining level in flight sailing past, its reputation preceding it.

Making its debut at Farnborough 2024 was Airbus A321XLR F-WXLR. The new demonstrator wearing special *London – New Delhi* livery is the current hot-ticket. Some calling it an aviation game-changer, permitting thinner routes of far greater distances to be conquered by airlines that dare.

A321XLR AN AVIATION GAME – CHANGER

A stunning aerial display was enjoyed by all, as the Airbus flight crew showed us what the XLR variant of the A321 can do in experienced hands. Spectacular!

At this year's Farnborough extravaganza, new-age aerial transport were revealed to visitors. Namely, UAV's (large scale drones) and electric powered aircraft.



Airbus A321XLR F-WXLR
Image by Dami

.....THE CURRENT HOT-TICKET



Airbus A321XLR F-WXLR
Image by Richard Lewis

Airbus was well represented with several UAV's on display. The Airbus Aliaca, Capa-X and Flexrotor featured but the Wingman was the stand-out model, with it's turtle mimicking design and 15.5m in length.

GreenJet's brought their Interceptor and Lift Cruise Sentinel drones along with Leonardo and their Astore and Awhero UAV's.



Airbus Wingman Drone - Image by Airliner Experience

The USAF showed off the well-publicized Reaper UAV with it's 20m wingspan, 1,850 km range and high velocity 715 kph speed.

Next generation electric powered passenger aircraft were represented by Lilium Jet capable of 175 km range and 250 kph speeds, Supernal SA-2 and WISK Generation 6.



WISK Generation 6
Image by London Eye



VoltAero
Image by Airliner Experience



Supernal SA-2
Image by London Eye

How did Farnborough 2024 compare with previous shows? The Farnborough Airshow is a special experience comparable only to itself and possibly the Paris Airshow. It's true to say perhaps, the absence of Boeing was noted but the airframer has much on it's plate at present. Airbus certainly filled any vacuum with a bonanza appearance in 2024.



Airbus A350-900 - Image by Air India

While it was no surprise Russian manufacturers were again unable to attend, one may have looked forward to appearances from the Chinese with Comac C-919 and C909 (ARJ-21) and Xi'an, disappointingly not to be.

A great aspect of Farnborough is that we can all look forward to the next one, in two years time, continuing the tradition first started in 1948.

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