

Aeroflot Begins Wi-Fi Rollout

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Aeroflot will begin to install wireless Internet in its jets this year as part of its wide-ranging program to improve service, the state-controlled carrier said Thursday.

The company will provide Wi-Fi on 26 of its long-range aircraft by the end of 2013, including 22 Airbus 330 jets and four Boeing 777s, it said in a statement. Wireless Internet will appear on 15 of those aircraft in the first quarter of this year.

"Our goal is to make Wi-Fi available on all long-range aircraft," Aeroflot chief executive Vitaly Savelyev said. "The program to be implemented corresponds with two key elements in our strategy: introducing state-of-the-art technologies in all areas of the company's activities and joining the elite of the world's airlines in terms of the quality of services."

Other new offerings by Aeroflot include additional entertainment options on flights and upgraded VIP lounges abroad, a company source told The Moscow Times late last year. This will require tens of millions of dollars in investment in 2013, the source said.

The carrier will continue to install Wi-Fi on Boeing 777 jets beyond 2013, the statement said. Aeroflot said it would introduce Internet service on 12 Boeing 777s between 2014 and 2016.

Aeroflot is expecting deliveries in the near future of new Boeing 777s that "will significantly increase the company's opportunities on long-range routes," the statement said.

Aeroflot signed a contract with the aircraft giant in 2011 to buy eight of its Boeing 777 jets, to be supplied from 2013 through 2018.

Most of the carrier's fleet is made up of Airbus jets, but Aeroflot decided to review its cooperation with the French aircraft manufacturer, Kommersant reported in 2011, citing a source in the Russian company.

The decision was a result of unreliable behavior by Airbus officials during purchase negotiations, the source said.

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