

Air Mauritius mulls narrowbody options to double fleet




PRO EXCLUSIVE

Air Mauritius Airbus A319-100, © Tis Meyer / PlanePics.org



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	Type	Base	Aircraft	Destinations	Routes	Daily Flights
	Scheduled Carrier	Mauritius	12	15	14	27

Air Mauritius (MK, **Mauritius**) aims to more than double its current fleet of 12 aircraft in the next decade to become a strong regional player and support its traditional long-haul routes to France and the United Kingdom, according to CEO Charles Cartier.

This strategy will mean narrowbody jet acquisitions with only **Airbus** types currently being evaluated including the **A220-300**, the **A320-200N**, and the **A321-200N** (as well as the **A321-200NY(XLR)** variant), he told ch-aviation at the 80th IATA AGM and World Air Transport Summit in Dubai, UAE. No **Boeing** or **Embraer** offerings are currently being considered, he added.

Cartier underlined that no decision has been made yet. The narrowbody fleet is still in a project phase and the airline is considering various options. "We all in full project work to really define how we materialise our regional ambitions," he said.

However, the "guiding principle" is reliability and fleet consistency to avoid having too many aircraft types - an important criterion for operational efficiency and cost containment. "We're looking at the most reliable aircraft based on experience; some of them would be too new for us to decide on how they will behave," he remarked.

Any choice would have to align with the airline's new ambitions to strengthen its hub and grow its regional network beyond its current scope of the Indian Ocean Islands and nearby African destinations. The carrier aims to expand regionally to focus on the so-called Indian Ocean rim, which includes the African coast along the Indian Ocean, the Middle East, Asia, and Australia. This also expands its previous

strategy of **Mauritius** being an inter-connecting hub between points in Africa and Southeast Asia. Instead it aims to become a strong regional hub for multiple destinations in the Indian Ocean rim.

While Mauritius already has a premise of a hub, the key component missing has been a strong enough fleet to ensure daily flights to the selected destinations, he explained. "In ten years' time, we should [have] more than doubled the size of the fleet in order to be a really strong regional player, and that will give value to our traditional routes."

Turboprop fleet plans

Air Mauritius' fleet currently includes no regional jets but three **ATR72-500s** and one **ATR72-600**. Cartier revealed that the -500s will be replaced with newer, leased -600s by July 2026. Having both types in the fleet has proved challenging due to crew training requirements, he said, so the carrier aims to standardise its turboprop fleet with the ATR72-600 and lease in newer models.

On the potential for the A220 to replace the turboprops, Cartier said that while the type is an interesting option, it cannot currently land at **Rodrigues Island**, a dependency of the Republic of Mauritius, due to geographical constraints. The 1,200-metre runway at Plaine Corail Airport on Rodrigues Island is to be extended to allow larger aircraft than the ATR72 thanks to USD200 million in funding - USD184 million from the World Bank and USD16 million from the European Union.

Widebody replacements

Providing an update on Air Mauritius' widebody fleet developments, Cartier said three additional **A350-900s** were due to be delivered in phases, one in 2026 and two in 2027. He said the decision on whether to purchase or lease the new widebodies has not yet been made.

The airline already operates four A350-900s, two **A330-200s**, and two **A330-900Ns**. **Previous plans to convert the remaining A350 order into A330neo** have been discarded.

"We are very happy with the A350-900s; they fit very well with our ambitions and our main traditional markets, being the UK and France. They are very good for these flights. We also use them for other flights, like **Perth International**, and even to India. We are also growing in Europe. We are starting **Rome Fiumicino**, which will allow us to increase frequencies," he explained.

Cartier confirmed the A350-900s would eventually replace the A330-200s, but the phase-out will not begin before the new A350s arrive, so not before 2026. The exact timing of retiring the -200s will depend on market growth and conditions post-2026.

Beyond the three A350-900s due by 2027, Air Mauritius is not currently looking to place additional widebody orders. It is closely monitoring market trends and maintaining a cautious approach to future fleet expansion decisions. "It will be very much dependent on how the market is growing, and for the time being we are quite optimistic that we will be able to keep them a little longer," Cartier said.