

INTERNATIONAL

AIRBUS SELLS 30 A350 AIRLINERS TO INDIA'S LARGEST CARRIER INDIGO

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BY PHILIPPE JOUHANET • OCT 17, 2025

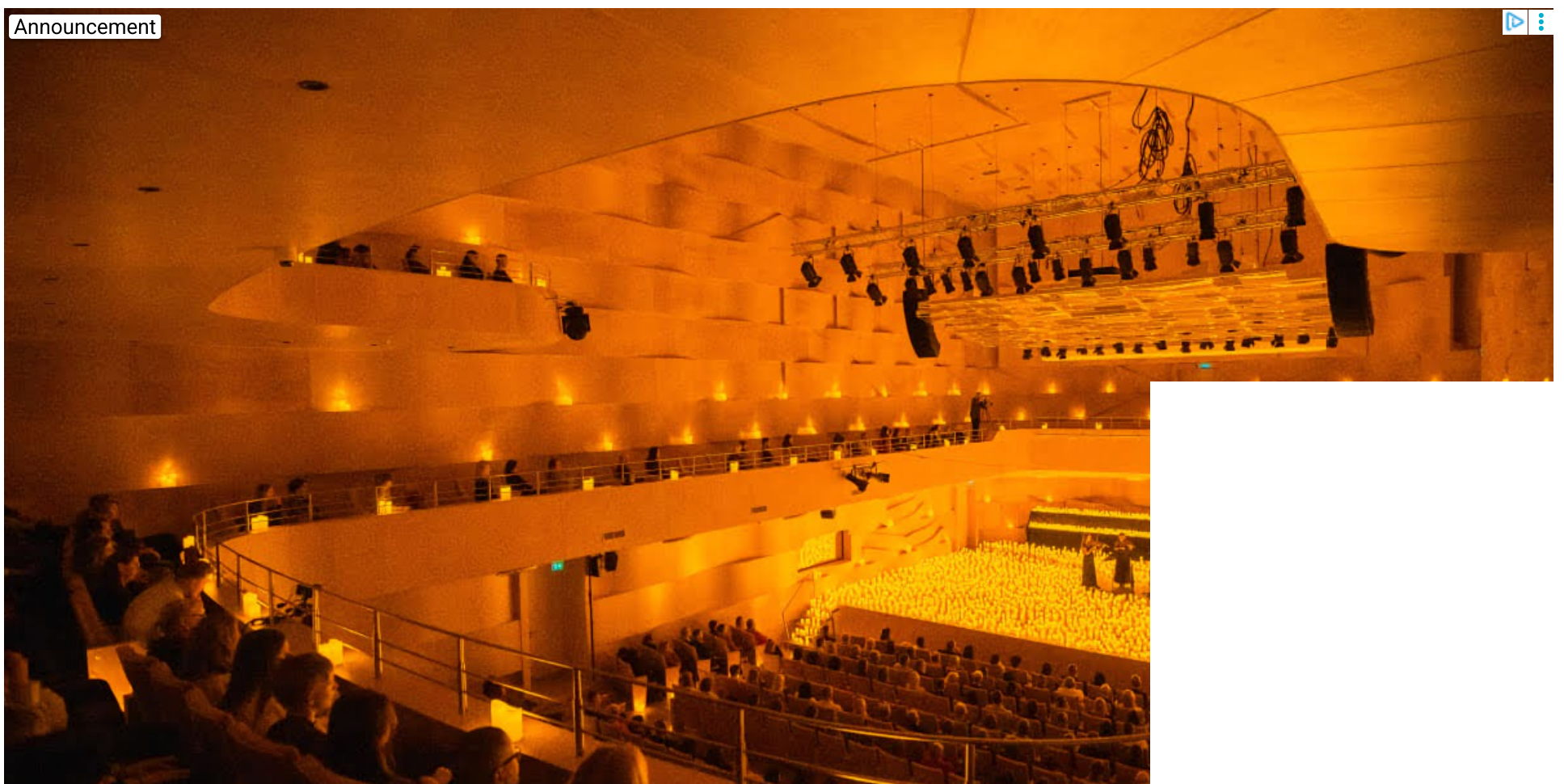
Continuing its ambitious trajectory, the Indian airline IndiGo formalized on October 17, 2025 the transformation of a memorandum of understanding signed in June into a firm order for 30 Airbus A350-900s.



This transaction brings the total number of A350s ordered by the airline to 60. It is part of IndiGo's strategy to invest in the long-haul segment and strengthen its presence on the international scene. This new shift requires a fundamental overhaul of IndiGo's growth model, which has previously focused on domestic and medium-haul routes. This article explores the issues, challenges, and prospects of this decision.



Announcement



A strategic choice for long-haul growth

The origin of the memorandum of understanding and its conversion

In June 2025, IndiGo signed a memorandum of understanding with Airbus for 30 A350s, but it was not immediately converted into a firm commitment. Today, October 17, that option was exercised: the order became firm. This conversion is an expected but crucial step in the carrier's journey towards long-haul capabilities. IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers hailed this progress as a confirmation of confidence in the future of the Indian airline industry.

A350 order doubled: a first in India

With these 30 additional aircraft, IndiGo has a total of 60 A350s on firm order. This number puts it in a strong position to compete with other global operators on intercontinental routes. Until now, the airline's A350 orders have been limited, but the transition to a widebody fleet signals its ambition to conquer new markets. According to Benoît de Saint-Exupéry, Executive Vice President of Sales at Airbus, "the A350's fuel efficiency, range, and passenger comfort perfectly align with IndiGo's long-haul development plans." This explicit support from Airbus lends credibility to the initiative.

Technological and ecological advantages of the A350

Performance and energy efficiency

The Airbus A350-900 is recognized as one of the most modern wide-body aircraft. Its structure incorporates lightweight composite materials, its two new-generation Rolls-Royce Trent XWB engines are optimized for fuel efficiency, and Airbus announces 25% lower fuel consumption, operating costs, and CO₂ emissions compared to older competitor models. In addition, the aircraft is already designed to accept up to 50% sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). Airbus is targeting full SAF compatibility by 2030. These eco-friendly features are strong assets in a context of increasing pressure on aviation's carbon footprint.

The highlights of the A350, the world's largest airliner!



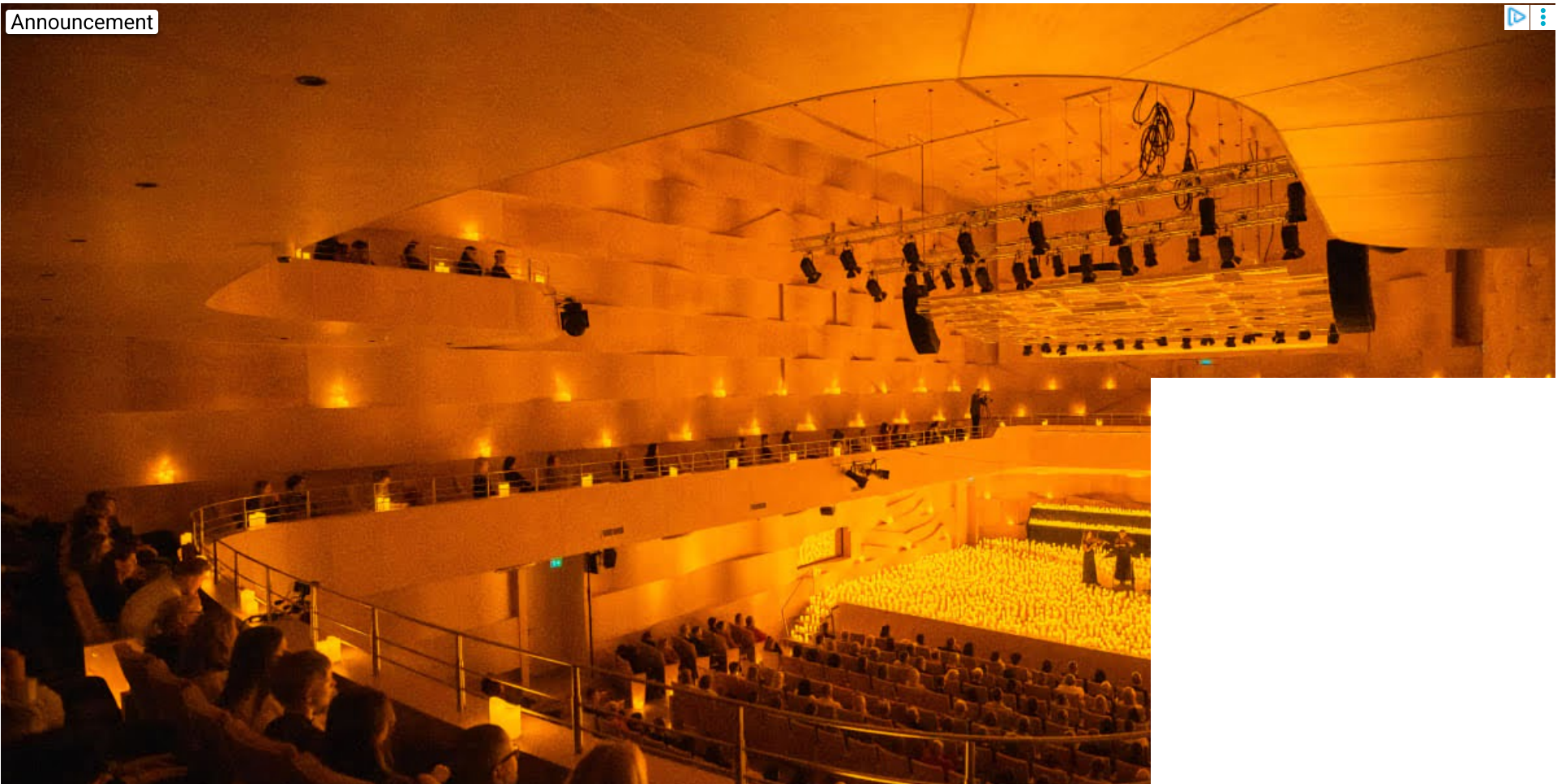
“ *The A350, a constantly evolving aircraft family!* ”

Range and long-haul capability

The A350 has sufficient range to cover transcontinental distances non-stop. Thanks to its efficiency and range, it opens up possibilities for distant European, American, and Asian destinations. For IndiGo, this means connecting India to markets previously inaccessible with its narrowbody aircraft, and establishing its credibility as an international carrier.



Announcement



Indian Airline Market Context and Future Challenges

Spectacular growth of the Indian market

India is often considered the fastest-growing airline market in the world. The increasing purchasing power of the middle classes, gradual liberalization, and the rise of domestic and then international tourism are fueling strong demand. In this context, Indian airlines are seeking to prevent long-haul passengers from using foreign carriers for their intercontinental connections. Airbus has already supported this dynamic for decades, notably through the distribution of A320 family aircraft in India. The arrival of the A350 in the Indian landscape marks a move upmarket in the sector. The argument is that India needs a national carrier capable of competing with the international majors.

Competition, logistics and delivery schedule

The challenge is ambitious. To succeed, IndiGo will have to overcome several challenges:

- including a delivery schedule with the first ordered A350s delivered from 2027 according to previous announcements.
- Airport infrastructure: terminals, runways, maintenance and personnel must be adapted to large aircraft.
- International network and traffic rights: Bilateral agreements and access rights to foreign airports may limit the routes envisaged.
- Training and recruitment: pilots, crews, engineers must be recruited or trained to long-haul standards.

Competition is also fierce. Air India, in particular, already has a long-haul fleet, and other Asian airlines are targeting similar markets. IndiGo will have to prove its operational capacity to prevail.

Integration into the international network: alliances and strategic alliances

Partnerships with Air France-KLM, Delta, Virgin Atlantic

Even before the firm order, IndiGo had been approaching major global carriers. A strategic agreement with Air France-KLM, Virgin Atlantic, and Delta was announced in June 2025 to strengthen connections between India, Europe, and North America. Reuters Through these alliances, IndiGo will be able to market codeshare routes on segments operated by its partners, facilitating access to global hubs such as Amsterdam and Atlanta. This synergy complements the long-haul expansion strategy without relying solely on its own aircraft.

Transition phases: Boeing 787 leasing

While awaiting A350 deliveries, IndiGo is using long-haul aircraft on dry lease. For example, the airline has leased Boeing 787-9s from Norse Atlantic Airways to serve European routes. This transitional measure allows it to test the market, refine long-haul operations, and build customer loyalty. Wikipedia +2 AirInsight +2 These aircraft will allow IndiGo to begin operating its first intercontinental routes while it builds the necessary infrastructure for the A350 fleet.



Medium and long-term outlook

Expansion scenarios and targets for 2030

IndiGo ultimately aims to become a global player by 2030, covering key destinations in Europe, the Americas, and Asia-Pacific. Supporting 60 A350s (and potentially more if options are exercised) provides a solid base to serve up to 10 to 20 long-haul destinations. Sources already mention the possibility of exercising up to 40 additional A350 options, bringing the potential capacity to 100 aircraft in this family. Another scenario would be to diversify the fleet with the A350-1000, although this model is not explicitly mentioned in IndiGo's announcements.

Economic impact and national image

Beyond simple fleet growth, this order sends a strong signal of India's national ambition to be a global aviation hub. By insourcing more long-haul flights, India is reducing its dependence on foreign carriers for international segments. It also strengthens IndiGo's position as a technological showcase and responsible operator. From an economic perspective, investing in more efficient aircraft helps lower transportation costs, encourage tourism, stimulate business partnerships, and strengthen the country's international reputation.

Critical analysis and potential dangers

Risk of capacity overload

Massive orders, gradual deliveries: If international demand fails to grow, IndiGo could find itself with underutilized aircraft. The balance between supply and demand will need to be carefully calibrated.



Dependence on Airbus and production delays

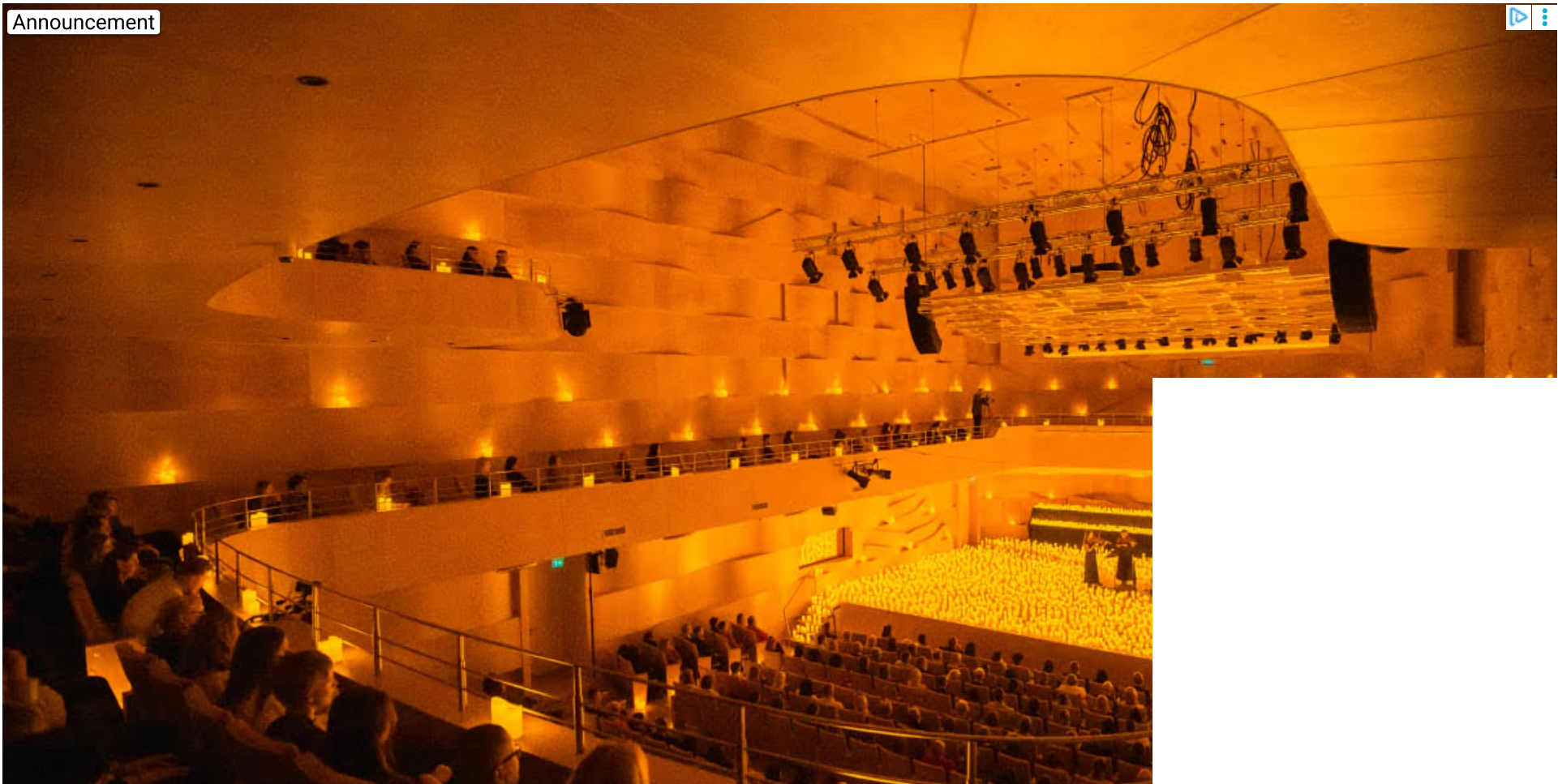
Confidence in Airbus to meet deadlines is essential. Any manufacturing or supply chain delays could delay IndiGo's long-haul expansion.

Operational complexity and transition risks

Managing a narrow-body fleet (A320/A321) and a future wide-body fleet simultaneously poses challenges in maintenance, logistics, and standardization. The airline will need to manage this transition rigorously.

Risks related to international regulation

Access to certain congested airports, overflight rights, quotas or bilateral agreements could limit certain connections, particularly to America or certain European countries.





Sources of the article

- Airbus, 30 Firm Airbus A350-900 aircraft
- Photo Rendering of the A350-900 in IndiGo livery (Copyright: Airbus)





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