

Is It True That The Boeing 777-300ER Has A Wider Cabin Than The 787 Dreamliner?



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By **Jacob Johnson** — Feb 12, 2026, 9:00 PM EST

Is it true that the **Boeing 777-300ER** has a wider cabin than the **Boeing 787** Dreamliner? It is a question often asked when referring to modern aviation, where passengers and airlines alike weigh the benefits of raw space against high-tech efficiency. The answer becomes even more relevant considering a few inches can be the difference between a spacious 9-abreast layout and a cramped 10-abreast configuration on a 15-hour flight across the Atlantic or Pacific, where both types are often used.



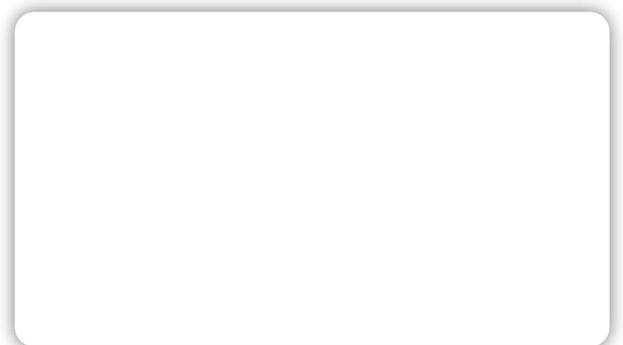


the future would be broader as well. However, the engineering blueprints tell a more complex story. This article will explore the specific interior measurements of both jets, clarify how airlines exploit that width, and examine the technical trade-offs that define the passenger experience.

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A Big Difference

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The Boeing 777-300ER possesses a significantly wider cabin than the 787 Dreamliner. Measuring in at a massive 5.87 meters or 19 feet 3 inches across, the 777's interior is roughly 38 centimeters or 15 inches broader than the 787's 5.49-meter or 18-foot cabin. This margin may sound small in a warehouse setting, but inside an aircraft itself, it is the difference between an industry-leading luxury experience and a tight fit.

This extra width allows for vastly different seating configurations that define comfort during a flight. For example, many airlines utilize the 777's breadth to fit 10 seats across in a 3-4-3 layout, while the 787 is almost exclusively limited to a 9-abreast, 3-3-3 configuration. Even with more passengers packed in, the 777-300ER often features a wider fuselage diameter of 6.19 meters, compared to the 787's 5.64 meters.





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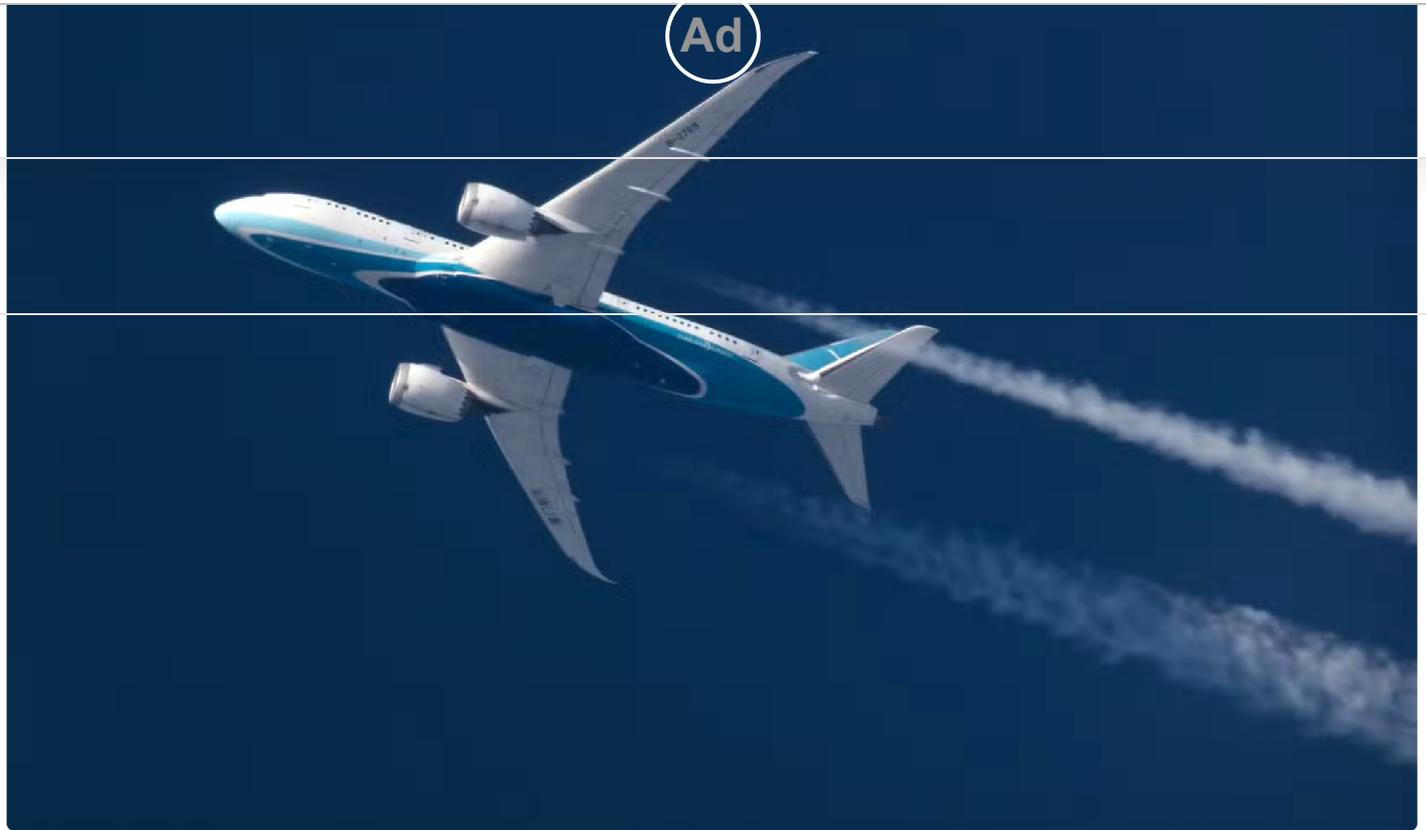
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Historically, the 777 was designed to be the world's largest twinjet, a role it has held with pride since its introduction. While the Dreamliner revolutionized efficiency with its composite materials and lower cabin altitude, it was never intended to outsize its older sibling. The 777-300ER was built to replace the **Boeing 747** on many routes, requiring a massive frame that remains the standard for wide-body interior space today.

Differences In Construction

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Several engineering choices determine why the 777-300ER maintains its lead in interior volume. Designers at [Boeing](#) had to balance the structural weight of an aluminum fuselage with the need for a massive cross-section to replace the 747 on high-demand routes. In contrast, the 787 Dreamliner was built from the ground up using carbon fiber composites, which prioritized a slightly smaller, more aerodynamic profile that could achieve incredible fuel efficiency on thinner, long-haul flights.

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300ER measures 6.2 meters across compared to the 5.77 meters of the 787. Another variable is wall thickness, as composite materials on the Dreamliner allow for thinner structural ribs and larger windows. These cannot overcome the 43-centimeter advantage in raw external width held by the 777. Finally, the curvature of the fuselage walls plays a role in how that space is perceived at shoulder height, which is where passengers feel the most restriction during a long flight.

Feature	Boeing 777-300ER	Boeing 787-10
External Fuselage Width	6.20 meters	5.77 meters
Internal Cabin Width	5.87 meters	5.49 meters
Standard Economy Layout	10-abreast (3-4-3)	9-abreast (3-3-3)
Typical Seat Width	17 to 17.5 inches	17 to 17.3 inches

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unviable without reducing the aisle to an unusable width, effectively forcing airlines to stick with a 9-abreast configuration.

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Aviation experts and airline executives often view the 777-300ER and the 787 Dreamliner as two different solutions to the same problem of how to move hundreds of people across oceans profitably. For years, industry analysts have pointed out that while the 777 was designed for a spacious 9-abreast economy layout, the financial reality of the 21st century pushed most carriers toward a 10-abreast configuration. According to analysts at AirInsight, the move to a 3-4-3 layout on the 777 was a strategic decision to lower seat-mile costs, even if it meant sacrificing the 18.5-inch seat width that once made the aircraft a passenger favorite.

Japan Airlines remains the most prominent holdout in this space, with its executives choosing comfort over density to differentiate their brand. While a typical Emirates 777-300ER carries 10 seats per row with a width of about 17 inches, JAL maintains a 9-abreast configuration with Sky Wider seats that offer a massive 19 inches of width. The cabin philosophy is centered around ensuring that comfort is achieved by prioritizing an efficient use of space. This stark contrast shows that while the 777 is capable of being the roomiest in the sky, its cabin width is dependent on the airline's business model.



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Airline	Aircraft	Economy Layout	Seat Width
Japan Airlines	Boeing 777-300ER	9-abreast (3-3-3)	19.0 inches
Emirates	Boeing 777-300ER	10-abreast (3-4-3)	17.0 inches
United Airlines	Boeing 787-9	9-abreast (3-3-3)	17.3 inches
Japan Airlines	Boeing 787-9	8-abreast (2-4-2)	18.9 inches

The 777-300ER wins on potential space, but the 787 Dreamliner often provides a more consistent, albeit snug, experience. Critically, the 787 cabin is physically unable to fit 10 seats across without violating safety regulations for aisle width. As a result, passengers are almost guaranteed a 9-abreast layout. On the other hand, flying a 777 is more mixed; you might find yourself in a spacious 9-abreast cabin on a premium Asian carrier or squeezed into a 10-abreast high-density configuration on a major US or European airline. This ongoing battle for inches continues to define the industry, as airlines weigh the extra revenue from high-density configurations against the long-term loyalty of comfortable passengers.





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The Challenge From Airbus



While the 777-300ER and 787 define the Boeing



superiority over the Dreamliner, but it still falls nearly 26 centimeters short of the 777-300ER's massive frame.

For those seeking the ultimate in cabin width, the leader remains the Airbus A380. With a main deck width of 6.58 meters, it offers a level of spaciousness that no twin-engine jet can currently match. However, as 4-engine aircraft are phased out progressively, the industry is looking toward the upcoming **Boeing 777X** to set the new standard. By utilizing thinner, high-tech sidewall insulation, Boeing has managed to increase the internal width of the 777X to 5.96 meters, making it the roomiest twin-jet cabin ever designed.

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This comparison highlights a significant trade-off between raw space versus atmospheric comfort that has become incredibly prominent in today's airline industry. While the 777-300ER wins on width, the 787 and A350 offer advanced composite fuselages that allow for higher humidity and lower cabin altitudes. Passengers on a 787 might feel more cramped in their 17-inch seats, but they often arrive feeling less dehydrated and jet-lagged than those on an aluminum-bodied 777. Ultimately, the best option depends on whether a traveler prioritizes shoulder room or the biological benefits of a high-tech cabin environment.

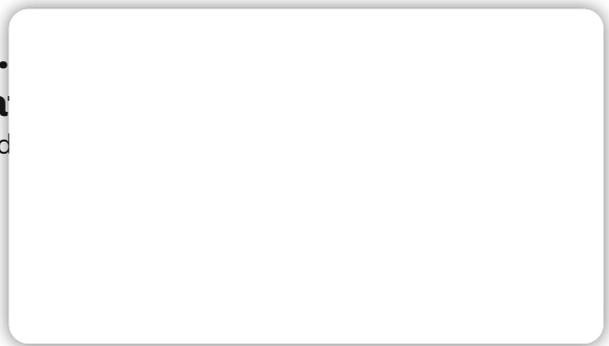
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feet, which can sometimes lead to headaches and fatigue. In contrast, the 787's composite fuselage allows for a cabin altitude of just 6,000 feet and humidity levels of 15% to 20%, significantly higher than the 10% found on the 777. For a traveler, this means that even though the 787 might feel 15 inches narrower, you are likely to step off the plane feeling more hydrated and less jet-lagged.

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Another significant risk for passengers is the 10-abreast trap on the 777-300ER. The cabin is very wide, meaning that airlines have the option to install a 3-4-3 layout. When this happens, seat width often drops to a cramped 17 inches. This creates a paradox where the widest cabin in the Boeing fleet actually offers some of the narrowest seats in the industry. The 787 faces a similar issue with its 9-abreast layout, but because its fuselage is 43 centimeters narrower to begin with, the sensation of being squeezed can feel more pronounced for passengers with

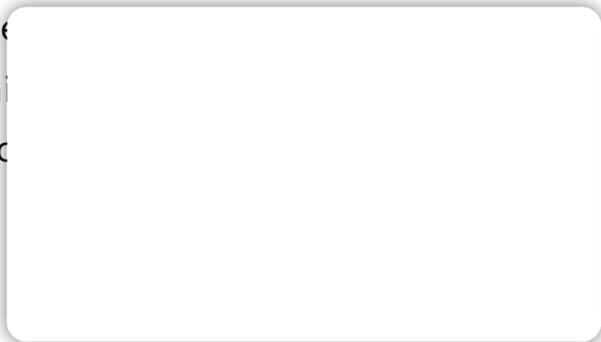


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From a technical standpoint, the 777-300ER also faces operational drawbacks compared to the Dreamliner. Its massive GE90-115B engines are engineering marvels, but they consume significantly more fuel, roughly 2.9 liters per 100 kilometers per seat compared to the 787's 2.27 liters. Additionally, the 777-300ER requires longer runways, often needing 10,600 feet of runway to take off at max weight, whereas the Dreamliner can operate at a wide range of airports with 9,200-foot runways. This limits the 777-300ER to major hubs, whereas the 787 can connect smaller cities.



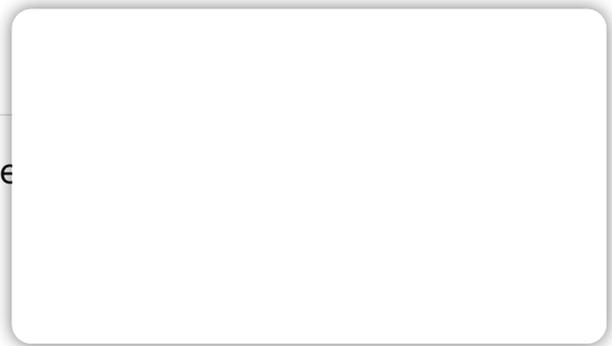
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The 777-300ER remains the reigning heavywe



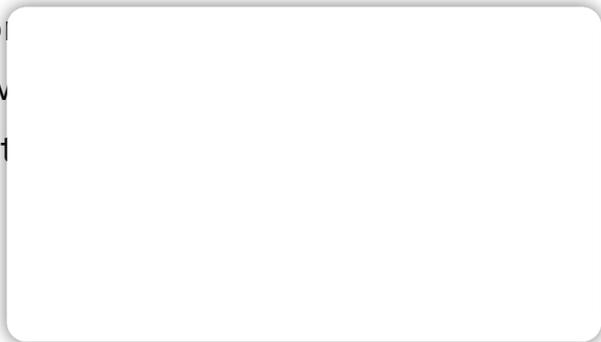


airlines to push the limits of passenger density, making it a critical asset for high-volume routes where every seat counts toward the bottom line.

In reality, width is only one part of the comfort equation. If you value shoulder room and have the chance to fly on a rare 9-abreast 777-300ER, you will experience the most spacious economy experience available. However, on most modern routes, the choice is between a tight 10-abreast 777 and a snug 9-abreast 787. In these cases, the 787 often wins because its advanced air filtration and 6,000-foot cabin altitude help you arrive feeling significantly better, even if your seat is slightly more intimate with your neighbor.

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The gap in cabin width is only set to grow as the Boeing 777-9 enters widespread service. By carving out even more interior space from the same external fuselage, Boeing is doubling down on the 777 for the world's busiest hubs. While the 787 wins on long-range, thin routes, the 777-300ER and its





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Aircraft 777-300ER Cabin

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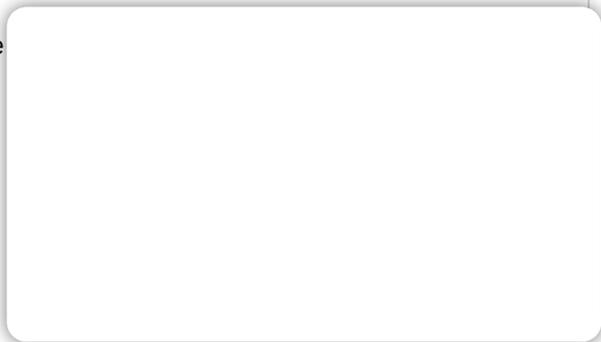


LiamCol

2026-02-13 06:44:06

I've been on both and wished the 787 sized windows were pressure as I prefer the 777 cabin width

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I think the move is to pay a bit extra and book premium economy on a 787 in the 2-3-2 configuration. You get an actual seat, a footrest(with many airlines), lower cabin altitude, higher humidity, and those oversized windows. Think I'll pass on the 38 cm wider fuselage while still in a 17-inch-wide seat.



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