

# How Much Does It Cost Delta Air Lines To Operate A Boeing 767 For 1 Hour In 2026?



≡ 0 Simple Flying



By **Antonio Di Trapani** — Sep 19, 2026, 1:00 AM EDT

▲ **Delta Air Lines** has never published a per-hour operating cost for its **Boeing 767** fleet, and it almost certainly never will. But the industry-wide data that does exist, combined with a few specific facts about how Delta actually flies the jet, is enough to build a real number, and that number is exactly why Delta has already scheduled the 767's exit.

Delta operates two 767 variants, the **Boeing 767-300ER** and the larger **Boeing 767-400ER**, the latter carrying 238 seats across a four-class cabin on transatlantic routes where the jets log 12 to 14 block hours on a typical operating day. The question is not just what a generic 767 costs to fly, but what Delta's specific, aging, densely scheduled widebody costs to fly in

2026, and why that figure, once isolated, points toward a retirement date rather than a life exten

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Airlines don't publish per-tail operating costs, but **US carriers** are required to report detailed cost data to the Department of Transportation on Form 41, and the [FAA's own methodology for aircraft operating costs](#) lays out exactly what that reporting bundles into a single hourly rate: fuel burn, maintenance reserves, crew payroll, depreciation, insurance, and airport and navigation charges, all combined into what the industry calls a block-hour cost.

A block-hour figure is useful because it captures the **aircraft's** economics while it is in operation, but it is not the same thing as the cost of a particular passenger flight. The FAA methodology separates variable expenses from fixed costs, meaning the final hourly figure is designed primarily as a basis for comparison rather than as a Delta-specific invoice.

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If we run that method compiled by AirInsight costs roughly \$12,520 favored 767-400ER run reported in How Much Does It Cost To Operate The Boeing 767?, those

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**IATA** and Cirium, as Boeing 767-300ER the larger, Delta-flying has previously

figures sit squarely in line with what a twin-aisle jet of this age and size should cost against newer widebodies, which makes the 767 look, at first glance, like a perfectly reasonable aircraft to keep flying. The important qualification is that the \$13,350 figure is an industry benchmark while Delta's actual result can move above or below it depending on fuel, maintenance, utilization, aircraft condition, and the accounting assumptions used to construct the underlying estimate.

## What Delta's 767-400ER Actually Costs Per Seat

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Per-hour cost only tells half the story because it says nothing about how many passengers are splitting that bill. AirInsight's Form 41 analysis puts the 767-400ER at \$22.91 per seat-hour, compared with \$21.43 for the **Airbus A330-300** and just \$19.54 for the **Boeing 787-10**, a 17.2% disadvantage for the 767 relative to the **Dreamliner** benchmark.

That difference matters because the comparison is already on a per-seat basis. The 767-400ER's  an the 787-10's \$19.54, meaning the older  her cost burden for each seat-hour in the  a comparison is illustrative rather than  the aircraft have different capacities, m  zation patterns.

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As Simple Flying's own widebody cost comparison has laid out in [Analysis: What Are The Operating Costs of Boeing 767-400ER Aircraft Families?](#), this is the kind of cost difference that is increasingly attractive as replacement aircraft are introduced against the 787-10 is no exception, particularly when a new aircraft offers other operational advantages.

That \$22.91 figure, though, is an industry benchmark built around a generic 767-400ER configuration. Delta's current jets don't fly with a generic cabin, and that difference directly affects the airline's per-seat economics.

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## Why Delta's Real Number Diverges From The Industry Benchmark

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According to Delta Air Lines Boeing 767-400ER seat map and configuration, Delta's 767-400ERs are configured with 238 seats across four cabins: Delta One **suites**, **Premium Select**, Comfort+, and Main Cabin. That is a notably premium-oriented **cabin layout**, and every additional amount of cabin

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space devoted to premium seating is space that cannot be used to maximize the aircraft's

Delta's configuration a not be interpreted in isolation. The airline a Delta One, 20 to Premium Select, and a 156 in Main Cabin. The strategy gives Delta several opportunities to earn premium revenue from the same aircraft, potentially offsetting some of the disadvantage created by its relatively limited seat count.

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So, it is not appropriate to take the \$13,350 industry block-hour estimate and simply divide it by Delta's 238 seats to produce a Delta-specific seat-hour cost. The two figures come from different methodologies and cannot be combined that way. The 238-seat configuration shows that Delta operates the 767-400ER with a relatively low-density cabin, making the aircraft's economics particularly dependent on revenue from premium seating.

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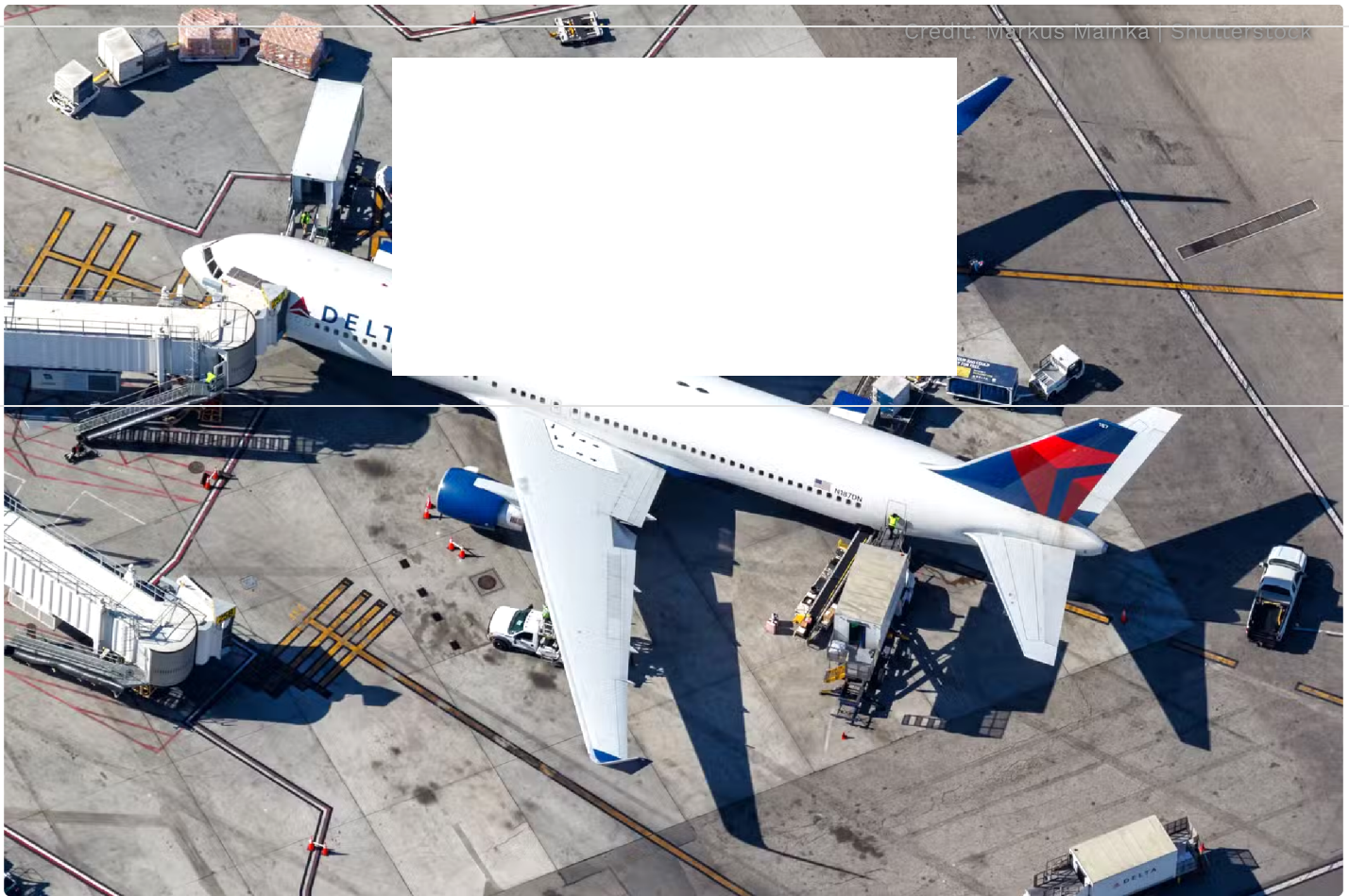
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ePlaneAI's separate look at widebody costs reaches a similar conclusion from a different data set: on a cost-per-seat basis, older and lower-density widebodies consistently lose to newer, denser ones, regardless of which airline is flying them. Cabin layout is only one half of Delta's specific 767 math. The other half is how old these jets are and how intensively Delta uses them, and those factors do not necessarily pull the number in the same direction.

## **How Fleet Age And Daily Utilization Pull The Number In Opposite Directions**



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Delta's 767 fleet averages close to 30 years old, and aircraft utilization data from aerodata.ai shows why that cuts two ways in a block-hour calculation. On one hand, an older jet carries a heavier maintenance-reserve burden: heavy checks, engine overhauls, and structural inspections become more

— frequent and more expensive as an airframe ages, pushing the per-hour figure up relative to th

On the other hand, Depreciated, meaning the capital depreciatic fewer aircraft's block-hour cost is close to z the number back down. That creates a maintenance-versus-capital-cost paradox. Replacing an aging 767 with a new widebody reduces maintenance exposure but introduces the enormous capital cost of acquiring, financing, and depreciating a newer aircraft. For Delta, the relevant question is whether its growing maintenance burden has become greater than the economic advantage of continuing to fly an already-paid-for jet.

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Delta's fleet strategy increasingly points toward that broader replacement calculation. The **airline** has repeatedly emphasized fleet renewal as a way to improve **fuel efficiency**, and its own **sustainability** reporting says that newer aircraft have been substantially more fuel efficient per seat mile

than the aircraft Delta has retired. That does not establish a precise hourly maintenance premium show why the economics of an aging depreciation alone.

### Should Delta Order The

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None of those offsetting factors change the central issue for Delta's fleet planners: how the 767 compares with the aircraft replacing it. That comparison is especially relevant for the 767-300ER, whose retirement timetable Delta has publicly discussed, while the younger 767-400ER does not have the same publicly announced 2030 retirement deadline. There is also an important boundary around the estimate. A block-hour operating cost should not be confused with the total cost of selling a ticket or running a passenger flight, since airline economics can include corporate overhead, distribution, passenger services, airport-specific expenses, financing, and other costs outside the aircraft-level calculation. The figure here is specifically about the economics of keeping the aircraft operating.

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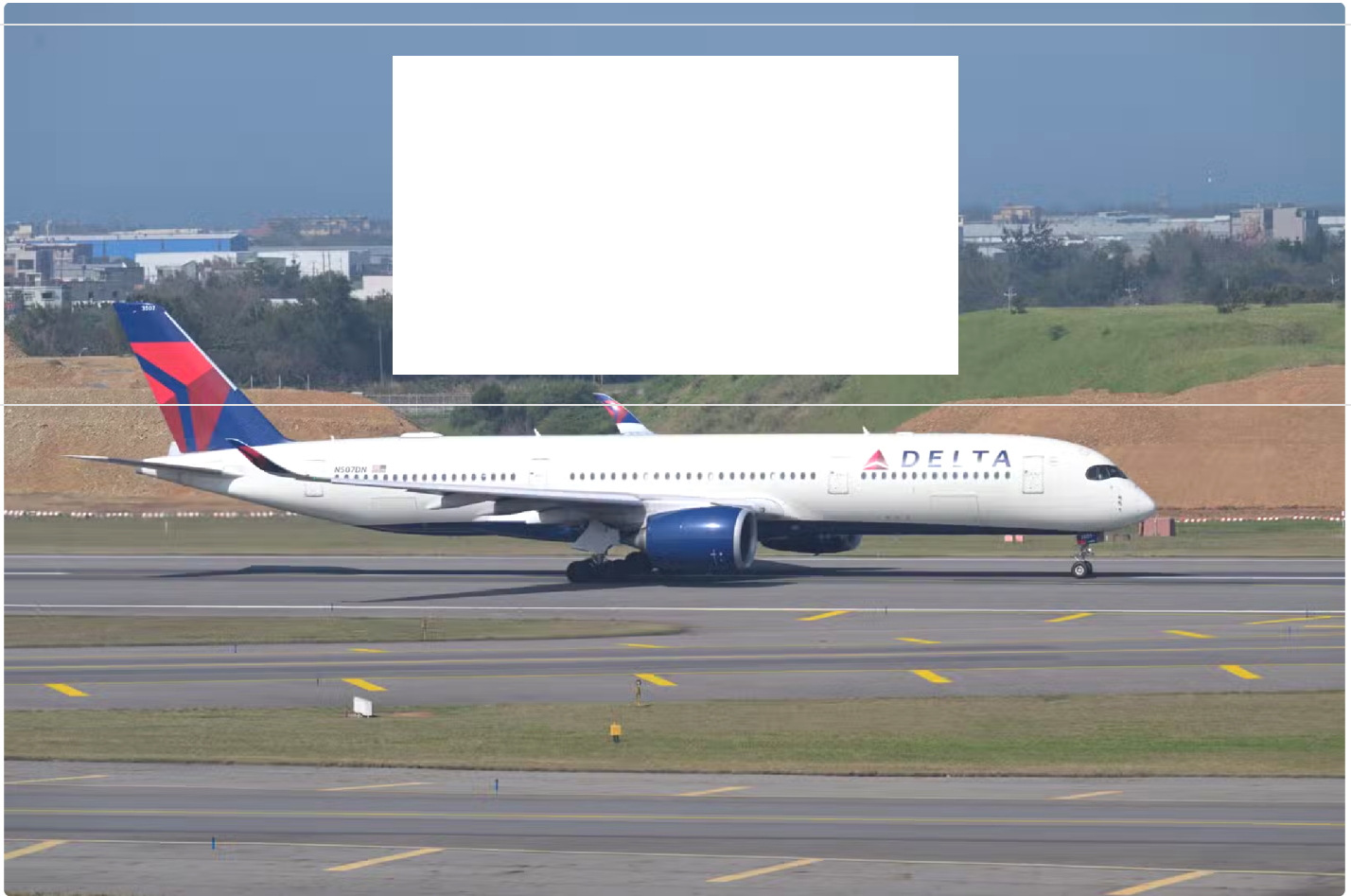
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# Efficiency Vs. Age: The Modern Widebody Squeeze

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The 767's problem is not simply that it is old. Delta can keep operating an older aircraft when its lower capital costs and established network role offset its disadvantages. The bigger issue is that newer widebodies address several of those disadvantages at once, combining better fuel efficiency with newer engines, modern systems, and higher passenger appeal. That makes the comparison increasingly difficult for an aging 767, even when the older aircraft has little depreciation exposure left.

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The difference is partially due to replacing the 767 with a single aircraft like the **Boeing 787-9** and **Airbus A350-900**, which are part of the airline's future plans.

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is not replacing the 767 with a single aircraft like the **Airbus A330-300** and **Airbus A350-900**, which are also becoming part of the airline's future plans. : have different

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capacities and operating profiles, so no single replacement cost applies directly to every 767 flight. What they share is the potential to deliver more efficient seat capacity per block hour, particularly on longer international missions.

That helps explain why the 767-300ER has a clearer retirement path than the 767-400ER. Delta can remove the oldest aircraft first while retaining the younger -400ERs where their capacity and premium cabin configuration still make commercial sense. The question eventually becomes whether the newer fleet can provide the same capacity and revenue opportunities at a sufficiently lower operating cost to make keeping the 767-400ERs worthwhile, rather than whether the 767 is technically capable of continuing to fly.

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## So What Does it Actually Cost Delta To Fly A 767 For One Hour In 2026?



Putting the pieces together, the best defensible starting point for Delta's 767-400ER is the roughly \$13,350 industry benchmark per block hour. The actual figure could be higher because of the aircraft's age and maintenance requirements, but there isn't enough publicly available data to calculate a precise Delta-specific premium. The \$13,350 figure should be treated as a working estimate rather than an official Delta cost; the airline's actual

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number could potentially move above or below the industry benchmark depending on fuel, maintenance, and other operating assumptions.

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The per-seat comparison adds another important dimension. The industry benchmark puts the 767-400ER at \$22.91 per seat-hour, compared with \$19.54 for the 787-10, a difference of 17.2%. That gap does not translate directly into Delta's savings from replacing one aircraft with another, because the airline's 238-seat configuration, premium-cabin mix, routes, fuel prices, maintenance practices, and utilization all affect the final result. Still, it shows why the 767 becomes increasingly difficult to justify against newer widebodies when you account for the cost of producing each available seat. The real question, then, is not whether Delta can still make money with a 767-400ER, but whether it can make more money using the aircraft that will eventually replace it.

Delta's broader fleet strategy provides the clearest evidence that this question is already shaping its long-term decisions. The airline has publicly committed to retiring its 767-300ER fleet on a timetable that reflects the shift toward newer, more fuel-efficient widebodies, while the younger 767-400ER has no equivalent publicly announced retirement date for 2028 or 2030. Delta's fleet still includes both variants, meaning their futures should not be treated as identical. The eventual replacement of the 767-400ER will

— instead depend on when enough newer widebody capacity becomes available and whether g-cost advantages of those aircraft outweigh established, aging fleet in service.

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### Question 1 of 5

**What does an aircraft's block-hour operating cost represent in commercial aviation economics?**

- A** A block-hour cost is a fixed annual fee airlines pay to the FAA based on fleet size and aircraft age.
- B** A block-hour cost bundles fuel, maintenance, crew, depreciation, insurance, and navigation and airport charges into one operating figure per hour.
- C** A block-hour cost measures only the fuel and crew expenses during the time an aircraft is physically in the air.
- D** A block-hour cost reflects only the ticket revenue earned per hour on a specific passenger flight.

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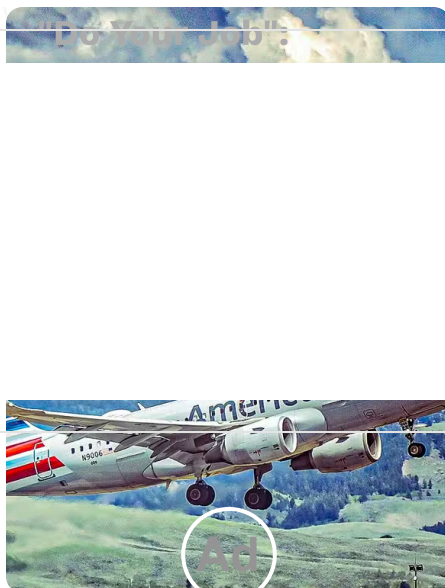
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