



AUCKLAND WELCOMES WORLD RECORD PASSENGER FLIGHT

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Welcome aboard Emirates EK448 and congratulations, you're on the world's longest passenger flight.

Weary but happy passengers at Auckland International Airport on Wednesday said they found out at the last minute they were on the world's first 16 hour-plus flight, from Dubai.

Palmerston North expat New Zealander Cameron White said he got a message from his brother breaking the news he was on Emirates' 14,000 kilometre debut.

Emirates flew its flagship A380 double-decker super jumbo to Auckland to celebrate its first direct flight from Dubai.

JOHN SELKIRK/FAIRFAX NZ

Emirates flew its flagship A380 double-decker super jumbo to Auckland to celebrate its first direct flight from Dubai. (File photo)

"It was long but comfortable, it's a modern plane with wi-fi so it makes it a lot easier," he said.

Emirates' regular jumbo on the Dubai-Auckland route will be a long range 777, but to celebrate its inaugural flight, the airline went large and used its flagship A380 double-decker super jumbo.

Auckland Airport provided a fire truck water cannon guard of honour welcoming through the A380.

An Emirates spokesman said "clever technology" and planning has enabled the airline to offer the longest-haul service.

Emirates operations support vice president Geoff Hounsell said preparing for the 14,000km flight took "an enormous amount of planning".

Flying on the "big bird" was no trouble for UK traveller James Patrick, who would "definitely" fly it again.

"We didn't find out until we were aboard it was going to be such a long flight until we were in the air. It was great, service was fantastic, lovely aircraft."

Passenger Christine Willis had a pre-flight scare. The elderly UK jetsetter transferred at Dubai and had to rush, almost missing the Auckland leg of her journey.

Once aboard she "couldn't fault" the service and appreciated the new direct journey.

"I've always preferred to have short a stopover and get here as quickly as possible."

However, the Auckland-Dubai route will only hold a fleeting record: Emirates' Dubai-Panama route, scheduled to begin at the end of March, will last an eyewatering 17 hours and 35 minutes.

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