



Crown class

Royal Jordanian was the first airline in the Middle East to order the 787 Dreamliner **By Richard J. Wood**



PHOTO: Jordan's late King Hussein, who established Royal Jordanian in 1963, was a pilot who maintained a warm relationship with Boeing. The airline operated 707, 720, 727 and 747 jetliners. It's now a customer for the 787. **ROYAL JORDANIAN**

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: BRANDON LUONG/BOEING; **AIRPLANE GRAPHIC:** BOEING; **PETRA, JORDAN, HISTORICAL SITE PHOTO:** SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Jordan has long recognized the importance of aviation as a gateway to the rest of the world.

Although the kingdom's national airline, Royal Jordanian, serves a region dominated by air carrier giants, during the leadership of King Abdullah II it has recently undergone a remarkable transformation since it was established nearly 50 years ago.

A forward-looking business strategy has transformed the formerly government-owned carrier into a modern, profitable, investor-owned company. Along the way, Royal Jordanian has scored a succession of firsts for a Middle East airline:

- First government-owned airline to be listed on a stock exchange
- First airline to become a member of a major airline alliance
- First to order the Boeing 787 Dreamliner

The late King Hussein established the airline by royal decree in 1963, stating, "I want our national carrier to be our ambassador of good will around the world and to be a bridge across which we exchange culture, civilization, trade, technology, friendship and better understanding with the rest of the world."

Today, Royal Jordanian has a fleet of 31 airplanes and fills an important niche in the Middle East air transport market, according to Hussein Dabbas, president and chief executive of Royal Jordanian.

"Our primary market focus is to connect the Levant countries to the world," Dabbas said. "One of Royal Jordanian's strengths is providing frequent and convenient service to markets that the region's large airlines can't serve economically. We concentrate on quality for the passengers, both in the air and on the ground."

In 2007, Royal Jordanian joined Oneworld, a major international airline alliance. The move increases the airline's access to long-distance markets and will help it expand intercontinental connections that currently reach four continents.

The 787 Dreamliner is an important component of Royal Jordanian's strategy. The airline boosted its 787 orders with an announcement for three Dreamliners at last month's Farnborough International Airshow. Combined with orders and leases announced in 2007, the airline will receive 11 Dreamliners. "The unique passenger appeal of the 787 will give us a competitive advantage in the markets we serve," Dabbas said.

The airline plans to upgrade and expand its fleet and open one new regional and one new long-haul destination every year through 2018.

Purchasing the 787s marked a turning point for Royal Jordanian, which has traditionally leased its airplanes. Owning the jetliners will allow Royal Jordanian to realize the full asset value of the 787, said Boeing Sales Director Ed Schachle. ■

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