

EasyJet claims major airline first by offsetting carbon emissions from all flights

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After a year when it increased the number of available aircraft seats by over 10 per cent, easyJet says it is now the “first major airline to operate net-zero carbon flights”.

Around £25m per year will be invested in “forestry, renewable and community-based projects”. That corresponds to about 25p per passenger. For comparison, the easyJet founder, [Stelios Haji-Ioannou](#) earns an average of 16p per passenger for use of the “easy” brand.

The carrier’s chief executive, Johan Lundgren, said: “We acknowledge that offsetting is only an interim measure until other technologies become available to radically reduce the carbon emissions of flying, but we want to take action on carbon now. People have a choice in how they travel and people are now thinking about the potential carbon impact of different types of transport. But many people still want to fly and if people choose to fly we want to be one of the best choices they can make.”

The airline has announced a partnership with Airbus to develop electric and hybrid aircraft. The environmental announcements accompanied easyJet’s full year results for the 12 months to 30 September 2019.

Headline profits fell by a quarter from £578m to £427m – representing a profit of £4.44 per passenger. The airline’s profits were flattered by pilots’ strikes at both British Airways and Ryanair, causing tens of thousands of passengers to switch to easyJet. Fares for short-notice flights are increasing – a move described by easyJet as “a focus on optimising late yields”. Following the collapse of Thomas Cook on 23 September 2019, easyJet and other airlines raised fares sharply to take advantage of the surge in demand by travellers desperate to get away.

Passenger numbers during the year rose by 8.6 per cent to 96 million, but the number of available seats rose faster (10.3 per cent) – meaning easyJet flew emptier than the previous year, at 91.5 per cent, down 1.3 per cent. On the average 186-seat Airbus A320 flight, 16 seats were unoccupied.

Environmental campaigners have criticised easyJet's announcement of flights from Birmingham to Edinburgh and Glasgow – both routes with frequent rail alternatives.

The airline has trimmed its expansion plans in the coming financial year, saying growth will be at the lower end of the 3-8 per cent range previously cited.

It is to relaunch easyJet Holidays in another bid to capitalise on the millions of passengers who fly with the airline but book accommodation elsewhere. Its rival, Jet2, has been highly successful with its holiday operation – in 10 years it has carried 15 million passengers on package holidays,



Airline is partnering with Airbus to develop hybrid aircraft (Simon Calder)