
Jeremy's World: The Long Haul

By **Jeremy Clark** on May, 7 2018 | Jeremy's World



Some of you may have heard NASA launched a new ship, InSight, to Mars on May 5. [InSight](#) is short for "Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy, and Heat Transport." (You have to wonder how long they took to find a title to match the acronym.) It will arrive sometime on November 29, which is fairly long haul by current sub-space standards.

So all hail to CEO Alan Joyce on the turnaround at QANTAS and the success in getting an aircraft to fly from [London to Perth](#) non-stop, a flight billed as lasting 17 hours, depending on the winds, and the third longest in the world. Now the quicker of you will have already spotted the obvious flaw in my comparisons, being that in NASA's *InSight* there are no actual passengers.

The question is – how long can the human body be expected to endure long haul travel? Will the LHR-PER example really stand the test of time once the novelty has worn off?

My own prediction is that within 10 years nonstop flights from LHR-SYD or AKL will be commonplace and also that electric or hybrid powered aircraft will go a long way to making this possible. But at sub-sonic speeds, is this really what we want?

Having recently done a CX flight HKG-LHR I can tell you that the thought of having to face a further six hours of it, despite a very comfy Business Class and the renowned excellent Cathay service, would not have been my choice.

The question is, who makes these flights?

It's expats visiting relatives, backpackers and infrequent holidaymakers, and business folk. The first two groups, with the exception of the wealthy expats, will look for the cheapest fares and if that means a stop along the way, then they will take that.

I think the frequent high-spending execs will have similar feelings after a couple of times, unless the onboard experience is ramped up – and it is they who are the financial make-or-break of those routes. Aircraft must carry fewer passengers, carry more crew, more catering, less cargo and tons more fuel – all of which eats at the bottom line in a fiercely competitive fare market.

To make these super-long-haul flights acceptable, airlines are going to have to invest ever more into the passenger well being. The ability to get up and walk around, visit a lounge – and maintain the loos – are among the many challenges. Excellent IFE and food is one thing but even after 15 hours of eating and watching movies, you need to have other diversions.

Investing in service has benefits. Investing in super-long-haul technology I fear won't bring the big returns.

Emirates has almost the same journey time from LAX to DXB and Qatar Airways from Doha to AKL. When SQ tried this with A340s SIN-JFK it was quickly proven unsustainable, although it is about to make a reappearance, apparently.

So the jury is still out on this new development. Let's see how this Mars thing goes. If they can get a human up there or find a way of installing a pool or maybe a golf putting green at the back of an A380, then I'll consider it.