

# Emirates' retrofit program from the inside out

This is a special feature from *PAX International's* 2022 [Middle East, Asia and Africa Regional Wrap-Up issue](#) on [page 10](#).



An Emirates Engineer checking the finer details of the retrofit plan

After months of meticulous research and planning, [Emirates](#) has officially begun the extensive retrofit program that will upgrade the full cabin interior of 120 A380 and 777 aircraft.

Upon completing flight EK928 from Cairo to Dubai in early November, the first A380 was steered to Hanger E at the Emirates Engineering Centre in Dubai. There, a team of specialized engineers began working around the clock to meet monthly targets. The retrofit program will see a total refresh of 120 Emirates aircraft — nearly half of the current fleet of A380s and 777s. By March 2025, the airline aims to have all retrofitted aircraft back in service. “No other airline has handled a retrofit of this magnitude in-house,” an Emirates representative tells PAX International in November. “There’s no blueprint for such an undertaking.”

## Readying for retrofit

Emirates has recruited 190 additional staff for the project and engaged 62 key partners and suppliers who have, in turn, hired hundreds of skilled workers for the program.



Engineers on the Emirates retrofit team

Trials began on an A380 in July. At the Emirates Engineering Centre, purpose-built workshops have been set up and stocked with parts and equipment for the project.

During this stage, engineers took stock and requested 2,200 parts. From removing seats and paneling to undoing bolts and screws, every action was tested, timed and mapped out. Then, Emirates' procurement team filed 12,600 purchase orders for the initial phase of retrofits.

Emirates Engineering teams have established and streamlined processes to identify and address potential snags as the program ramps up. Emirates is committed to investing in high-quality protective equipment to ensure workers feel and remain safe during the refurbishment, the airline explains. All processes are designed to the highest of health and safety standards — no detail is too small to review.

### **Refreshed passenger experience**

The retrofit program will bring a modern look and a more comfortable passenger experience to the cabin with an expanded cabin class offering, an updated color scheme and freshly upholstered seats.

"Our onboard enhancements are all part of our strategy to elevate the customer experience," says the Emirates representative. "The refreshed look and feel of our retrofitted A380 will be felt throughout the aircraft, with new carpeting, seat upholstery, refreshed Onboard Lounge, Shower Spa and more." Besides the refurbishment of the aircraft, the most significant change is the addition of Premium Economy seats which will essentially add a fourth cabin for passengers to choose from.



### A look inside Premium Economy Class

For each aircraft, trained teams first remove the window seats in Economy Class to free up space for another team to remove the side panels the cabin. These panels go straight to one of three purpose-built workshops to be laminated with Emirates' color tones.

To make room for 56 of the airline's new Premium Economy Class seats, 88 Economy seats at the front of the main deck will be removed.

On the upper deck, Business and First Class seats are dismantled and loaded onto a modified catering truck to lower them to the ground where other vehicles will shuttle them to bespoke workshops. Business Class seats will be repainted and reupholstered with new leather at Emirates Engineering, while First Class seats will be sent to a specialist at Dubai World Central (DWC) for refurbishing.

All carpets and floorings will be replaced and design motifs featuring the ghaf tree will be incorporated in the cabin interior design. Ghaf trees are native to the UAE and symbolic of Emirates' home base.

Once the refit work is completed, the aircraft will be inspected and certified by aviation authorities before it re-enters service.

### **Expanded cabin class offering**

The new [Emirates Premium Economy](#) cabin features a higher level of comfort and relaxation for passengers with premium dining, more living space and a sophisticated cabin interior. The price point sits between Economy Class and Business Class, encouraging leisure travelers to opt for an elevated experience.



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The dining experience includes generous servings of regional meals with an appetizer and dessert. There are extra snacks available on longer flights. With meals, passengers get China tableware and silverware wrapped in linen.

The Premium Economy cabin is currently flying between Dubai, Paris Charles de Gaulle, London Heathrow and Sydney, and retrofitted aircraft will soon operate to New York JFK, Auckland, Melbourne, San Francisco, Singapore and Christchurch.