

On location: Iberia elevates Toronto-Madrid experience with A321XLR and Spanish service



Left to right: Juan Cierco, Corporate Director at Iberia, Almudena Maíllo, Councillor for Tourism at Madrid City Council and Luis Martín Izquierdo, Vice-Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport of the Madrid Regional Government

[Iberia](#)'s Toronto-Madrid route is more than a new connection between Canada and Spain. For the airline, it reflects several pillars of Flight Plan 2030, from enhancing the passenger experience to expanding its international network and strengthening Madrid's role as a global hub.

The route links two major international markets, serving both leisure and business travelers while introducing more Canadian passengers to Madrid as a gateway to Spain and Europe.

Speaking to *PAX International* in Toronto, Juan Cierco, Corporate Director at Iberia, explained how passenger experience and connectivity remain central to the airline's growth strategy.

"The passenger is the center of our strategy," he says. "We want to provide the best service we can, because passengers have more choice than ever before when they travel. For us, delivering a great experience is not only about what happens on board, but also about the connectivity we can offer. Through Madrid, travelers can access an extensive network across Spain and Europe via a single

hub.”

The airline is operating the route with the A321XLR, a single-aisle aircraft designed to unlock long-haul opportunities with greater operational efficiency. For passengers, Iberia is positioning the aircraft as a premium experience, particularly in Business Class, which features 14 seats within a total 182-seat configuration.

Cierco says Iberia has worked to ensure that passengers enjoy a seamless long-haul experience on board the A321XLR, with the same comfort, service and premium features found across the airline’s wide body fleet.

“This aircraft has a very comfortable Business cabin, with the same level of service and the same type of seat experience passengers expect from our larger long-haul aircraft,” he says, adding, “When passengers arrive in Madrid, they also have access to the lounge, fast-track services and the premium airport experience they expect from Iberia on the ground.”

“Canada is a very attractive market for Iberia, and we are seeing growing interest from Canadian travelers in discovering new destinations across Spain and Europe,” he says. “Madrid is uniquely positioned because it combines culture, gastronomy and business opportunities with excellent connectivity, making it both a destination in its own right and a gateway to the rest of Spain and Europe.”



Juan Cierco, Corporate Director at Iberia

A taste of Madrid

Food and beverage are central to how Iberia expresses its identity on board. Cierco says Iberia is working with global airline caterer [DO & CO](#) to support the onboard dining experience.

For Iberia, the challenge is to deliver a menu that feels distinctly Spanish while appealing to a diverse international passenger mix.

“Spanish gastronomy is one of the best in the world, but we also have to remember that many of our passengers are not Spanish,” says Cierco. “We need the right balance. We want to offer Spanish products and reflect our heritage, while also giving passengers choices that meet different expectations.”

For Iberia, gastronomy is part of a broader passenger experience. The airline sees food, service and hospitality as key elements in expressing its Spanish identity and differentiating its onboard product.



For Iberia, gastronomy is central to the passenger experience, with food, service and hospitality used to express Spanish identity and differentiate its onboard product

Single-aisle aircraft, long-haul experience

Amenities is another area where consistency plays a key role. While the A321XLR is a narrow body aircraft, Iberia has aligned the experience with its long-haul product standards. It offers the same product and service standards that passengers expect from Iberia’s long-haul fleet, ensuring a consistent experience across the network.

That consistency will become even more important as Iberia approaches its 100th anniversary next year. Cierco says the airline is preparing updates to its onboard products, including amenities and menus, as part of the milestone year.

““Our centenary will be a very special moment for Iberia, our customers and our employees,” he says. “We are using this milestone as an opportunity to continue evolving our onboard experience. We will share more details in early 2027, but we are preparing some exciting developments that we believe our customers will really appreciate.”

Quality and warmth

Spanish identity also comes through in the airline’s service culture. Cierco says Iberia often refers internally to two words, “calidad” and “calidez,” meaning “quality” and “warmth.”

Together, these concepts define how the airline wants passengers to experience its service.

“For us, quality and warmth are equally important,” he explains. “It is not only about the seat, the food or the product itself. It is also about how we welcome our customers, how we listen to them and how we make them feel throughout the journey.”

Verified excellence

Recognition from *PAX International* has also become part of that narrative. Iberia was the first-ever recipient of the PAX Verified Award at the PAX Readership Awards 2026 in Hamburg, Germany in April.

“Aviation is a very complicated business, and every flight is different,” Cierco says, reflecting on the win. “You can provide an excellent experience today, but tomorrow the passenger will judge you again. That is why we say every day is a new day. Recognition like this tells us we are doing things well, but it also reminds us that we always have more to improve.”

For Iberia, the Toronto–Madrid route reflects the airline’s broader ambitions: delivering a premium passenger experience while reinforcing Madrid’s role as one of the leading hubs connecting Europe and the Americas. On location: Iberia elevates Toronto–Madrid experience with A321XLR and Spanish service



Iberia is the first-ever recipient of the PAX Verified Award, presented at th PAX Readership Awards in Hamburg, Germany in April 2026