

American Airlines Flies Airbus A321's To Cancun Without Life Rafts

American Airlines is flying an Airbus A321 to Cancun, Mexico, without any life rafts onboard. This route would typically fly over the ocean directly, but as they do not have the required safety equipment on board, the specific A321s are forced to hug the Mexican coastline. Flying on American Airlines from Dallas Fort-Worth to Cancun on one of their six daily flights you might notice something odd. The flight times vary up to an hour depending on the flight, despite listing the same operational aircraft, an Airbus A321.

This is because several of these Airbus A321's are from the older US Airways fleet and never flew over bodies of water, thus never packed life rafts, as discovered by View From The Wing. Not only is this a waste of time for passengers onboard the aircraft, it is also a massive waste of fuel. Having life rafts onboard would seriously not be a lot of weight (they are just inflatables after all) and yet, without them, the aircraft have to fly for approximately 15% longer.

These non-sea flight routes are perfectly safe without the life rafts (the aircraft never goes out of range of land) but if I was onboard it seems like American Airlines is taking penny-pinching to the extreme.

These aircraft are due to be densified and upgraded to the new American Airlines interior so hopefully, they will include life rafts as part of the refresh.

As View From The Wing pointed out, American Airlines is striving to be more environmentally conscious and show their passengers that they care about the environment, yet blatantly burn through fuel in a bid to avoid paying for safety features (again, which they take great care to not need through route selection, this route is perfectly safe).

Perhaps they are choosing not to upgrade these aircraft just yet as they have a new fleet of Airbus A321XLR's on the way. They may deploy these aircraft on this new route thanks to their better fuel efficiency and other interior improvements. These new aircraft may also have a new premium economy cabin that will be perfect for the tourist market.

American Airlines configures its Airbus A321 fleet in a three-class layout. There are 16 recliner seats in first class in a 2-2 configuration. They have 38 inches of pitch but are not flatbeds. Following this is 'main cabin extra' which has standard economy seats with extra legroom. There are 36 seats in a 3-3 configuration and each has 35 inches of pitch. Lastly, there are 129 standard coach seats with 31 inches of pitch.

I. Read the text and answer the questions.

1. Why aren't the A321s equipped with life rafts?
2. Are American Airlines genuinely environmentally friendly?
3. What is the main criterion for the division into three different classes on board of the new fleet?

II. Complete the gaps with words from the text. Use one word for each gap.

1. American And JetBlue Roll Out _____ Aircraft With Tighter Legroom And Tiny Bathrooms.
2. The airline plans to _____ the aircraft domestically and to US destinations including Seattle, New York, and San Jose, California.
3. The pilots were accused of _____ breaching the separation minima rules.
4. Aircraft crashed through fence and into bushes after pilot's _____ to avoid birds.
5. They reduce the size of bags allowed as hand luggage by the odd centimetre , reduce the hold luggage bag allowance to 15 kg for the same price that most others air lines allow 20kg. Always a feeling of _____ in the air.
6. Why do some private jet charter flights _____ the coast?
7. The distance between two flying commercial aircraft may _____ at different flight phases and at a different altitude.

III. Read some of the ditching techniques. Try to fill in the gaps with appropriate words. Use one word for each gap.

Reduce Aircraft Weight.

Again, if there is a choice, a lighter aircraft allows a lower approach speed and will probably remain _____ higher in the water and for longer thus _____ occupant evacuation. Burning off or dumping fuel also has the advantage of increasing _____ in some aircraft types by creating a larger air mass _____ within the fuel tanks.

Configuration - Flap.

Most manufacturers recommend the maximum _____ of available slats/flaps is desirable to minimise approach speed. However, _____ is required in this _____ since an intermediate flap setting is likely to improve forward visibility and reduce the amount of _____ required to flare in return for some increase in airspeed. Without some or all engines functioning, there may be limited _____ power.

Direction of Ditching.

Determine the best direction for ditching. In a _____ space such as a river, there will be no choice other than the _____ of the river; the direction with the _____ headwind component should be chosen **unless** there is a compelling reason otherwise. In _____ water, the determination of optimum ditching heading becomes more complex.

High Wing Aircraft Escape Hatches

Aircraft such as the BAe146 / Avro RJ or ATR42 will _____ lower in the water after ditching than a _____ wing aircraft so that more of the fuselage will be _____ and evacuation potentially more difficult. _____ some checklists call for the removal of roof escape hatches **prior** to a forced landing because impact forces may distort the aircraft _____ and make them difficult to open, this should not be done prior to a ditching to _____ the risk of additional water _____.

IV. Find an example of a grammar structure which is used for emphasis in the text.

V. Correct the following sentences.

1. Little they imagined that they would encounter such chop.

2. Not only they had to divert, but they also had to make a flapless landing.

3. Seldom we have seen such a mess during handling.

4. Not until we began the descend we realized that there was smoke coming from the aft lavatory.

5. Only by deploying the RAT we managed to restart the system.

6. Not once we landed here without problems.

Speaking – production and interaction

Complete the sentences so that they are true for you.

1. Under no circumstances would I ever ...
2. Not only do I ... , but I also ...
3. Little did I know ...
4. Only by ...
5. Not until I ...
6. At no time did I ...

Discuss your sentences in pairs.