TRISTAR 500 - THE TECHNOLOGY OF TOMORROW

Dawn breaks radiantly over the desert in Palmdale, California. The morning silence is broken by a Lockheed L-1011 jet TriStar, on a runway that would normally be deserted. The great tri-jet gains speed and rises smoothly into the air, makes a perfect turn and disappears in the direction of the rising sun.

Less than five hours later the same aircraft begins its descent to Washington, on the opposite side of the American continent. The perfect approach to the runway if followed by an equally perfect landing, and the aircraft rolls to a halt at Dulles International Airport.

Nothing extraordinary, the reader will think. Just another of the typically smooth L-1011 flights. Yes, of course! But with one difference: from the time the aircraft took up position on the runway at Palmdale, the pilot did not once touch the controls! The Tristar's advanced automatic systems did all the work! The members of the Lockheed test flight team were practically passengers while the aircraft piloted itself, from take-off until landing, 4000 km away. This was the first fully automatic coast to coast flight to be made in America. The date: 25th May 1972, less than a month after the first Tristar entered service with commercial airlines.

However, the reader must not believe that fully automatic flights are the rule. In fact, you may be sure that on your next flight the pilot will be at the controls.

What really happened on that flight in 1972 was merely a demonstration of the capacities of the L-1011's standard equipment. This was one more example of how Lockheed provides today - and always - the technology of tomorrow.

Since then Lockheed has developed that technology in the L-1011, setting new standards of comfort and confidence, anda taking first place among all wide cabin aircraft.

The Tristar 500, in the green and red colours of TAP Air Portugal, embodies all that is most recent and more advanced in the L-1011 family. At the service of airlines since 1979, the L-1011 Tristar 500 complements other Tristars, having great range and flexibility for cargo, and providing optimum service on long distance routes and for TAP Air Portugal's average load factors.

With a maximum take-off weight of 228 600 kg the appearance of the L-1011-500 is similar to that of other members of the Tristar family, except that it has a shorter fuselage and a large cargo door with a fully mechanised system to accommodate pallets and containers in its three ample cargo holds.

The interior fo the L-1011 has a new dimension in terms of comfort. On board the Tristar the double width doors on each side of the fuselage provide easier and faster entry and exit, the wider aisles allow passengers greater freedom of movement. Comfortable seating, with a selection of lights for reading, stereophonic music and a film sound channel afford the passenger a very agreeable journey. Food and drinks served from special trolleys provide efficient and individual service to all passengers.

The luxury and space aboard the L-1011 result from well proportioned and divided compartments. A cabin of approximately 5.8 metres wide, with a high ceiling, provides ample space, and passengers may stand in any part of the aircraft.

TAP Air Portugal's Tristar 500 can carry 242 passengers, including 12 in 1st class. A very special 1st class with extra-large reclinable sleeper armchairs - with room and to spare between every chair and each row of seats. There are catering units at cabin level, 8 toilets and abundant room for coats and cabin luggage.

Powered by advanced Rolls-Royce engines, with 50 000 lbs impulse, of the RB.211-524B series, the aircraft will operate efficiently over distances of 900 to 10 000 km. TAP Air Portugal will fly with the Tristar 500 to the following destinations: Brazzavile, Caracas, Harare Kinshasa, Johannesburg, Lisbon, Luanda, Maputo, Montreal, New York, Paris, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, São Paulo and Terceira.

Source: Atlantis Magazine