



# FRESH FACE FOR NOK AIR

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## AIR TRAVEL

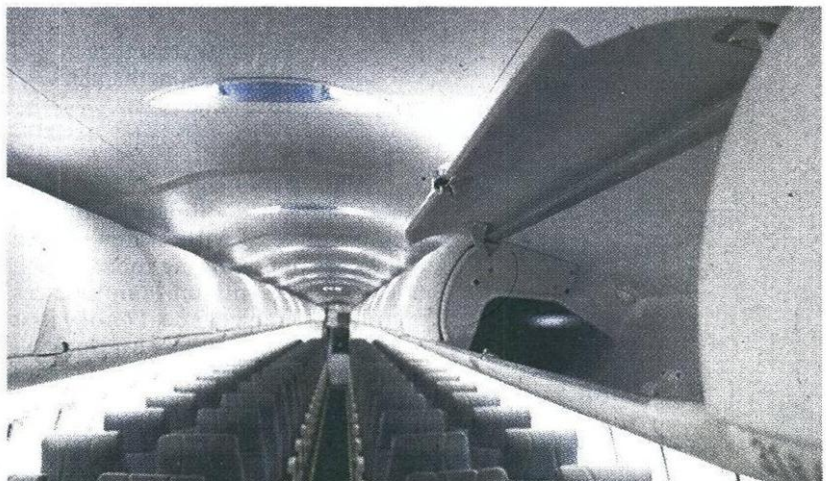
# The bird from BOMBARDIER

NOK AIR PURCHASES SIX TURBOPROP PLANES FOR ITS DOMESTIC SERVICE

**PHOOWADON DUANGMEE**  
THE NATION  
TORONTO

NOK AIR, Thailand's very own low-cost carrier, will shortly be offering domestic flights on brand new Bombardier Q400 NextGen aircraft. The Canadian-made turboprop, which is making its Southeast Asian debut with Nok Air, promises a fast and comfortable ride between Thailand's smaller towns.

"The Q400 NextGen is a large, fast and fuel-efficient aircraft. It's one of the finest turboprops," Suriyapa Bunnag, Nok Air's vice president for Communications, tells *The Nation* during the Q400 NextGen's delivery event at the Bombardier Assembly



The Q400 NextGen offers a jet-like flight experience with comfortable seats, windows offering a great view and larger overhead storage bins.





The Kao Neaw, Nok Air's second Bombardier Q400 NextGen, at an airport in southern England during its long flight from Toronto, Canada, to Bangkok.

Plant in Toronto, Canada.

"The aircraft doesn't need a long runway for takeoff and landing, and it can seat up to 86 passengers.

"We plan to operate Q400 NextGen in small provinces whose airports cannot accommodate our jetliners."

Nok Air has placed an order for six Bombardier Q400 NextGen. Two of them – the "Anna" and the "Kao Neaw" – have now been delivered and another two are expected to go into service before the end of this year. The remaining aircraft are scheduled to join the fleet next year.

Nok Air's second Q400 NewGen – the "Kao Neaw" – was on show at Bombardier's Delivery Centre. It's a sleek and attractive plane with a yellow nose painted like the beak of an "Angry Bird" in happy mode and a long and slender fuselage.

To the inexperienced eye, the Bombardier Q400 NextGen is not unlike Nok Air's ATR72-500 – the French-Italian-made airliner currently used on the Bangkok-Nan service. Both are propeller aircraft, after all. But get up close and cosy with Q400 NextGen and it's easy to spot the differences.

First the Q400 NextGen has a longer fuselage than the ATR72-500 and second, it can seat 86 passengers as opposed to 66. The landing gear of Q400 NextGen is beneath its wings

and engine compartments while ATR72-500 has it beneath the fuselage.

From a profit-making perspective, Nok Air has probably made the right move by purchasing Q400 NextGen. While the Canadian aircraft consumes a little more gas but has a high speed than its European cousin, the airline can offset and manage the cost of enhanced fuel consumption from the 20 extra seats.

It also offers a pleasant flight experience with light and comfortable seats, windows offering a greater view of magnificent terrain, larger overhead stowage into which trolley bags can fit and a cabin that's quieter than the older jetliners.

Nok Air's Q400 NextGen is designed for a single class with maximum of 86 seats at 29-inch seat pitch. Two passenger doors are available at the front and back of the fuselage. And while 86 seats and 29-inch pitch might sound like a cattle-car experience and don't compare to the award-winning Singapore Airlines' Business

Class, flights on the Q400 NextGen are short and the fare is considerably lower.

At Bombardier's Delivery Centre in Toronto, the press is invited to try out the 86 seats and while they are definitely comfortable, it won't be until we actually fly that we'll get an

idea of how tight the 29-inch pitch seat actually is.

That chance comes the following day when we board a Bombardier Q400 (a less sophisticated than Nok Air's "NextGen" edition) for a flight from Toronto to Montreal. It's a shuttle flight, with sandwich and coffee, and is used regularly by Bombardier's employees commuting between the two cities.

The Q400, with two PW150A turboprops and two Dowty Propellers on the wings, arrives at its cruising altitude of 25,000 feet within 16 minutes and the 272-nautical mile (506 kilometres) trip takes about an hour. Thank to the fast cruising speed we land at Montreal I time to enjoy coffee and croissants and at a French-style Bistro.

The rest of the day is spent visiting Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal, the Notre-Dame Basilica and Old Montreal and after a late lunch of Vietnamese noodles in Chinatown, we are back on board the Bombardier Q400. The flight starts its descent to Toronto on a sun-drenched evening and just as I'm thinking about Tapas and Tempranillo at Cava, a Spanish restaurant where we're scheduled to have dinner, the captain announces the Q400 cannot approach the airport. Poor visibility from low cloud, we're told and we circle for what seems like an age before landing,



safe and sound and not too late for dinner.

The Q400 flight is a fine experience and the Q400 NextGen could well be even better.

With sophisticated and quiet engines, the Bombardier Q400 NextGen will make Nok Air flights more environmentally friendly and the lower operation costs could even translate into lower fares.

Let's see what Nok Air can deliver.

## ABOUT THE BOMBARDIER Q400 NEXTGEN

**Passenger capacity:** 86 seats

**Flight crew:** Two

**Cabin crew:** Two

**Engines:**

Two of Pratt & Whitney  
Canada PW150A Turboprops

**Thrust:**

5,071 shp maximum takeoff

4,580 shp normal takeoff

**Takeoff Field:** 1.3kms

**Landing Field:** 1.2kms

**Maximum Cruise Speed:** 360

knots (667 kilometres/hour)

**High Speed Cruise:** 349 knots

(646 kilometres/hour)

**Range:** 699 Nautical Miles (1,295 kilometres)



The Kao Neaw is a "happy Angry Bird".