



HYDROPLANE ENTERS SERVICE IN DENMARK

Nordic Seaplanes operates a de Havilland Canada Twin Otter DHC-6 between Aarhus and Copenhagen since May
/TIM TIMOLEON photo

IT HAS BEEN twenty-three years since there was last a waterborne service operating between Denmark's two largest cities, Copenhagen and Aarhus. Admittedly, this time the craft used spends most of the time travelling at 150 knots in the air and only a fraction of the journey on water. But the service is certainly unique in the area and quite interesting.

The craft is a de Havilland Canada Twin Otter DHC-6 hydroplane, also known as a seaplane and floatplane.

Replacing the single-engine DHC-3 Otter, the first Twin Otter appeared in the mid-1960s. Six prototypes were built followed by three production runs, Series 100–300, manufactured between 1965 and 1988 when production was terminated. It was however resumed twenty years later, with Series 400 in 2008. Some 900 Twin Otter aircraft have been delivered to date, with around 600 currently in service worldwide.

Prior to entering service in Denmark with Nordic Seaplanes, the craft was overhauled and refurbished throughout by Zimex Aviation in Switzerland. Improvements included a new cockpit with up to date digitalized instrumentation, new cabin interior featuring leather seating and new amphibious floats. The craft seats up to 17 passengers – provided all are children, or very light weight adults. Normal load is 12–15 passengers; the maximum takeoff weight is 5,670 kg.

The service was introduced on May 25 with four trips in each direction, with the first departure from Aarhus at 0700 and the last leaving Copenhagen at 2030. Scheduled air time is 35–45 minutes, depending mainly on wind directions, to which is added approximately 5 minutes of operation on the floats in the harbours. Terminals are fairly centrally located at both ends.

Initially, a regular one way was priced at DKK 1800, an amount reflecting the nature of the service which is primarily aimed at and attracting business travellers.

However, various special offers have since been introduced on certain days and departures. For instance, if you happen to be in the area on October 31, you can book a Halloween special at only DKK 666, one way. A figure not lacking a dash of the famous Danish black humour. The company also offers an out-and-back on the returning flight ticket at DKK 1950.

The current timetable, effective to October 28, comprises six roundtrips Monday–Friday, leaving Aarhus

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The sole Westamarin Foilcat 2900 built was briefly operated on the Aarhus–Copenhagen route in 1992–93 / TIM TIMOLEON photo



at 0815, 1130 and 1530 and Copenhagen at 0945, 1300 and 1700. From October 31 to November 25 these times are brought forward somewhat, and between November 27 and December 23 the number of services is cut down to four departures; from Aarhus at 0900 and 1330 and from Copenhagen at 1030 and 1500.

FOIL ASSISTED CATAMARAN

Last you could travel over water between Aarhus and Copenhagen – admittedly at a much lower altitude – was for a few months in 1992–93 when long-time Danish ferry operator DSØ tested a leased foil assisted catamaran on the route.

Originally intended for operation in Norway, what was to prove the sole of the type built, the Foilcat 2900 was completed by Westamarin West in 1992. Due to late delivery the Norwegian contract was cancelled in mid-1991 following which Westamarin finalized the vessel as a private venture.

Named *Flyvefisken*, DSØ introduced the spectacular hybrid on the 120-nautical mile route on November 30, 1992. Two return services were operated on Monday–Friday and one on the weekend. A journey time of 2 hours 30 minutes was scheduled.

When the service was suspended at the end of March 1993, DSØ reported that the primary reason for its decision to close the new route after only four months was mechanical unreliability of the vessel. These problems had resulted in too many trips being cancelled and thus bad publicity and as a consequence reluctance by prospective customers to choose the Foilcat over the air services, with which the company was primarily competing. A subsequent report issued by Westamarin West gave a more detailed picture.

The following year the vessel was shipped to Southeast Asia and entered service across the Strait of Malacca between Indonesia and Malaysia. It was later transferred to eastern Indonesia and operated on a route between the islands of Bali and Lombok.

In 1997 the Foilcat was acquired by Pacific Marine & Supply in Hawaii. A refit programme was carried out and the vessel was certified by the U.S. Coast Guard before entering service on various trial routes in Hawaii in October 1999. These services ended in December 2000 upon which the Foilcat was laid up. **cff**



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