

# Profile on Norwegian Airlines pilot Captain Richard Allison

Captain Richard Allison is in charge of the Edinburgh base for Norwegian Airlines.

An Edinburgh native he is now happy to be back home, even though he leaves the capital behind him en route to the States several times a month! Norwegian Airlines have recently begun flying to three destinations on the East Coast, with some flights costing as little as £138 each way (and sometimes less!).



Captain Richard Allison at the recent launch of Norwegian Airlines flights across the Atlantic

Richard explained his job : “I am base captain of Norwegian Airlines’ Edinburgh base running the Edinburgh operation and in charge of all the pilots. I fly as well as managing the base making sure we are doing what we are meant to be doing!

“I have meetings with the airport, although we have scheduling people who arrange who flies where and when. I don’t get involved in those details, but I am in the front line if we have staff here in Edinburgh who have problems to be sorted out. I try and resolve them or point them in the right direction.

“I have been flying now for about 20 years. I first did a few flights here in Scotland on a little Cessna 152 as most of us start off, and then in 1998 I then booked a full time course with British Aerospace Flight Training which at that time was in Prestwick.

“They have a sister school in Adelaide and I went to South

Australia for 14 months to train and become a commercial pilot. That was a self-funded course and I came back to the UK to do my instrument rating.

“Nowadays the job opportunities for young pilots coming through their training are quite good with the low cost airlines, but there was nothing like that when I trained.

“I was lucky, as I got a job with Scot Airways here in Edinburgh who flew from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee to London City. It was a business only airline which went for years and years.

“I enjoy every minute of being a pilot. I did a short time at Flybe, then Cityjet for a few years, then did a stint with Sun Express and Turkish Airlines until 2012. In 2013 I moved to Norwegian. I was based in Alicante for a time but am glad to be based back home now.

*“It is great to be home. I have much more time to devote to running the base now that I am living back in Edinburgh. I don't have as much commuting to do since I pretty much fly myself home most times. As a line checker I am sometimes in the jump seat too to do the annual checks on our pilots. We go the simulator every six months but we are tested on the flight deck every twelve months too.*

The flights to the US are new this year for Norwegian Airlines and they are a bit longer than most of the flights they have offered till now. We asked if that was a challenge.



Richard responded : “Westbound is fairly easy as we leave here in the evening, but coming back is always more challenging as we start late in the evening and fly all night. These are not especially long flights. It takes about the same time to fly from the Canaries to the north of Norway which is one of the routes I have been used to flying. You don't have

the problem of the time zones but flying time is roughly the same.

“Flying across the Atlantic with our current routings takes us farther north and up over Greenland the scenery when it is clear is stunning. You see frozen glaciers there although the rest of it is more or less over water. I took some photos over Greenland one of the last times I was in the cockpit. It is really spectacular.

“We keep looking out for whales and the like, but it has been a bit cloudy recently!

“Going to the US at the moment, as we are still building our crew members we do what we call a ‘bullet’. This means we fly over one evening and then stop over for just about 22 hours having some rest before flying home again. We are just resting and then coming back, but with more staff we will have more time off which will be better for all of the staff having a full day off in between. Then our staff will be able to visit Boston and New York in future.

“There are not too many countries that I haven’t been yet, and of course Norwegian is planning to go to the west coast of the USA in the longer term.

“I am born and bred in Edinburgh and while I was brought up in Trinity, although I live at the seaside now.

“I went to school and college in Edinburgh and I was first of all an engineer working with British Gas and Blue Circle before going off to change careers and do my flight training.

“This is a career I would heartily recommend. I always like to encourage youngsters onto the flight deck ahead of the flight taking off.”



**TIME FOR SCOTS ON THE TAIL FINS?**

As for the tail fins which make along with the red nose cones make the Norwegian Airlines planes so distinctive, Richard likes these very much but agreed with us that he would like to see some Scottish representation there. " I would really like somebody like Alexander Graham Bell to be featured . After all, the planes all have wifi on board so it would be good to highlight the communication possibilities when flying with Norwegian Airlines."

*Norwegian offers Scotland's cheapest daily flights to the USA with fares from £138 one-way in brand-new Boeing 737 aircraft from Edinburgh to Stewart (New York), Providence (Boston) and Hartford, Connecticut. Each destination offers good access to the greater New York, Boston and New England areas.*