

AVSIM Commercial Aircraft Review

Lockheed Constellation L-749



Rating Guide

Publisher: [Abacus Publishing](#)

Description: Add-on for Flight Simulator 2004

Download Size: 22.6	Format: Download	Simulation Type: FS 2004
Reviewed by: Gene Davis AVSIM Staff Reviewer		

Introduction

Newly introduced over at Abacus Publishing is the "Platinum Aircraft Collection" and their flagship product is none other than a Lockheed L-749 Constellation, otherwise known as the Connie! It was with some hesitancy that I approached this product as I have always been quite happy with the freeware Connie that is currently available out on the web. So, after watching some of the forums about public opinion, I noticed that the Abacus product had come up for review here at Avsim and decided to take the plunge!

Test System

P4 3.0 800 FSB
2GB Of Corsair Ram
ATI 9800 PRO 256
CH Flight Yoke & Peddles
Saitek Cyborg Gold Stick
Track IR 3 W/ Vector EXP

Flying Time:
11 hours

Installation and Documentation

The installation is simple, download it and run the self installer! The plus side to this plane is that you can try it for 7 days before you decide to buy it, that way if you find that the aircraft isn't what you thought it would be, you can just uninstall it and you aren't out any money.

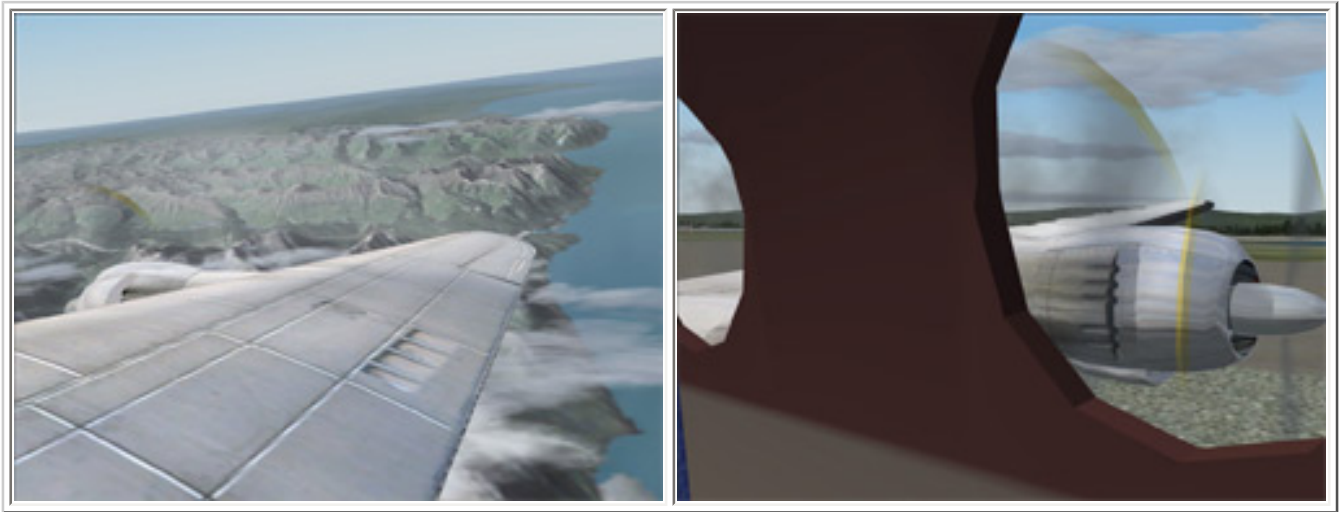
The documentation that is included in this package comes in the form of WORD documents and they make reference to an adequate manual explaining just about everything you need to know about the aircraft, as well as a detailed checklist and an L-749 reference document.

Lockheed L-749A Constellation

The first time I experienced the Connie was with MSFS, which version I don't recall, and I remember looking everywhere I could for a new Connie every time a new Flight Simulator was released. I have never seen a Connie in real life, except from what pictures I have found in books and a story that was told to me by my Grandma when she flew from Seattle to Anchorage Alaska back in the day. We have come so far in aviation in such a short period of time, that it is almost scary to think what could be in the near future, but for now we will look at an old classic. A classic that has earned a place in history and a place in our virtual hangers in MSFS, as well as our hearts.

Connie's were used for a long time. Conceived in 1939 the first Connie, the L-049, flew in 1943 and the first L-749 went into production in 1947. Then there was the Super Connie and the Starliner and many of these aircraft were in service well into the late sixties and early 70's. There is a certain love and beauty attached to these aircraft as they represent by gone era, an era when commercial aviation had a certain romance to it, when people saw it as an experience rather than an inconvenience, when looking out the window rather

then watching a movie or playing a video game was the "experience".



The first time you look at this airplane you will see that a lot of care went into the design of the exterior portion of this package; it incorporates all of the traditional moving parts and looks really nice. In my opinion I found that the model alone is worth the cost of this add-on. The only portion of the exterior that I didn't really care for was the lack of any real lighting. The traditional beacon lights, landing lights etc. are there, but there is nothing that really makes the aircraft stand out in the dark, as I also found the interior lighting to be a little on the weak side. I really liked the views out over the wings, minus the look of the cabin windows; it really shows that extra exterior care.

Once installed you will find three variations of the Connie and they are; Comet Airlines, MATS, and Meridian Airlines. Though I would have liked to have seen more in the way of liveries, it is my guess that liveries will start popping up on the net very soon.

Flying the Connie

Initially, I wasn't expecting a lot when it came to the flight model of this aircraft, but I found that flying this particular Connie is a dream; it handles extremely well and at times almost flies itself. The one thing you have to remember is that the Connie had a crew of three, the pilot, copilot and the engineer, so realistically there was a lot more going on in the real cockpit of a L-749. So when you compare the functionality of the Abacus Connie to that of a real world Connie, you are limited to what the sim allows you to do in the pilots seat.

The aircraft does have a certain heavy feeling to it and when you are putting the plane through its paces, you can definitely feel it. It is important to note that I spent many of my flights flying without the autopilot and for those long haul flights it really didn't need a lot of baby sitting. Landing the Connie was as sweet as I thought it would be, the plane seems to just do what the pilot wants it to do with little or no effort, this aircraft was just built to fly!



If I had to make comparisons, the only plane that I can compare it is the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress, as I spend a lot of time flying that aircraft. Though designed as a commercial airliner, the Connie does have a lot of the same tendencies the B-17 has, and that is mainly noticeable when dealing with the engine management portions of the Connie and the landing and takeoff phases of your flight. Of course, the heavier you are the harder the plane is to fly, so you might want to take that into consideration when going on your virtual flights.



Several of my test flights included simulating multi-engine failures just to see how the aircraft would respond and to my surprise I found it very difficult to fly on two engines. That really says a lot for the flight model as it appears to be pretty realistic in many different aspects. Now, throw in the engine failures and a hydraulic failure and you have a real challenge on your hands.

The Flight Deck "Office"

Climbing into the cockpit doesn't really give off a sense of realism, though the 2D panel is nicely rendered, the virtual is a little on the basic. This is not a bad thing as it opens up the simulation to better performance. Frankly, the more I fly the Connie, the more I enjoy the Virtual Cockpit. It doesn't re-render itself when switching views.





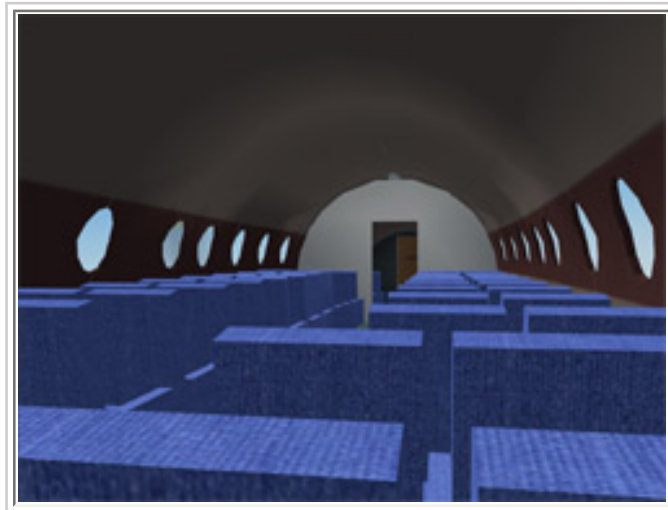
The 2D panel doesn't give off any real sense of flying an aged aircraft, it still represents the plane well and gets the job done. Included are all of your traditional gauges that you would expect to accompany an aircraft of this type, as well as a nicely rendered engineer's station that is accessible via the main 2D panel click spot. It is important to mention that most of the systems on the 2D engineer's panel are also functional and can be manipulated via the 2D panels or the virtual cockpit. Another 2D panel worth mentioning is the NAV radio panel, this one does show the age of this aircraft as it uses the old style instrumentation of an aircraft of this type.



The virtual cockpit is pretty decent, though it looks a little on the dated side compared to other add-ons out on the market, as it doesn't offer a lot of depth or immersion to it. On the plus side though, the VC is fully functional and can be flown strictly from the virtual cockpit. As I did most of my flying from the VC using my Track IR 3 and the overall performance was simply outstanding. When I flew over areas like Georender's Alaska I didn't suffer any blurriness. I guess it's a trade off here, performance vs. a highly detailed virtual cockpit environment. It is important to note that if you are going to fly the plane from the VC, you should make sure to turn the aircraft virtual cockpit detail to high, otherwise gauges will show up as a blurry mess.



The virtual cabin is the programs biggest eyesore; it lacks any real detail and really takes away from the quality of the overall package. I almost think it would have been better to leave out the virtual cabin and put more effort into the virtual cockpit. Although one doesn't spend a lot of time in the cabin, it was just really disappointing. I almost think a 2D picture of a window overlooking the wing or a 2D picture looking backwards into the cabin of the real thing would have been much better.



Performance

Frame rates with this particular product are not an issue; it performs very well and will run great on lower end systems. The virtual cockpit and cabin are at best very basic and will allow the user to make full use of third party peripherals like the Track IR and FsPassengers without losing any real system performance

Sounds

I have read that some are not too impressed with the sound package that accompanies this package, but I have to say that I like it. The external sounds are pretty good and go a long way into making this a good add-on for the price! The external engines have a nice rumble to them as you glide through the sky and isn't overwhelming. Your traditional gear and flaps sounds have also been incorporated, and they are muffled like you would hear them from inside the plane, rather than standing outside next to them.

What I would have liked to have seen was a better cockpit environment, there are no alarms or callouts to really give you an audible picture of what is going on with the plane. It would have been nice to have had the copilot at least say "gear up, flaps 10" etc.

In the End...

Do I think this is a good aircraft? Yes. Given that there are only one or two other models out there on the net. This add-on is a good representation of the Connie. I think this is only a sign of things to come from the world of Abacus and I am really anxious to see what is next on the Platinum Series list.

It is important to remember that this is a "basic" model, so going into it you can't expect to have the level of detail and realism that you get with other higher priced add-ons! For the price this package is well worth the money and time, though you will need to make that decision on your own.

Ultimately in the end, you have nothing to lose, the program comes with a risk free 7 day trial and if you decide you like it, you can buy it after you have used it for those seven days. If you don't it just quits working. Priced at \$19.00 this is a very good deal and will allow you to rediscover an age of flight that is long gone!

What I Like About The Lockheed Constellation

- Exterior model is beautiful!
- Performance
- Performance and functionality with other 3rd party add-ons
- Basic flight deck and ease of use, its just fun!
- External Sound is pretty good.

What I Don't Like About The Lockheed Constellation

- The virtual cabin is bad!
- Lack of extra lighting for night flights
- Lack of audible systems in the cockpit

Printing

If you wish to print this review or read it offline at your leisure, right click on the link below, and select "save as"

[Lockheed Constellation](#)

[\(adobe acrobat required\)](#)

Standard Disclaimer

The review above is a subjective assessment of the product by the author. There is no connection between the producer and the reviewer, and we feel this review is unbiased and truly reflects the performance of the product in the simming environment. This disclaimer is posted here in order provide you with background information on the reviewer and connections that may exist between him/her and the contributing party.

[Tell A Friend About this Review!](#)

**© 2006 - AVSIM Online
All Rights Reserved**