

(Joint Release)

September 11, 2026
Japan Airlines Co., Ltd.
Donecle

Japan's First: JAL and Donecle Launch Joint Verification for Fully Autonomous Drone Aircraft Exterior Inspections

— Enhancing maintenance efficiency, ensuring mechanic safety,
and elevating aircraft quality —

Tokyo, JAPAN – Japan Airlines Co., Ltd. (hereinafter “JAL”) and Donecle (hereinafter “Donecle”), a French manufacturer specializing in aircraft maintenance drones, announced the launch of Japan’s first joint project utilizing fully autonomous drones approved in aircraft manufacturer’s maintenance manuals for exterior aircraft inspections at JAL’s hangars. This initiative is designed to improve the safety and efficiency of aircraft maintenance operations.

The project aims to significantly reduce inspection time and enhance the safety of maintenance work by replacing traditional manual visual inspections with drone technology. Furthermore, reallocating the time saved to predictive maintenance is expected to further enhance aircraft quality.



Visual inspections of aircraft exteriors traditionally require mechanics to spend extensive time checking the massive airframes, often involving working at heights, which poses safety challenges. To address these issues, JAL is working to establish a workflow where drones capture high-resolution images of the exterior for mechanics to review and inspect. Since the end of June 2026, JAL has been conducting comparisons between conventional visual inspections and drone-captured images to verify the effectiveness of drone technology in aircraft maintenance.

The "Iris GVI" drones used in this project, developed by Donecle, are highly reliable and approved for use in aircraft manufacturers’ maintenance manuals. Equipped with obstacle detection capabilities, these drones can fly autonomously without contacting the aircraft, ensuring consistent operation independent of operator skill and capturing high-resolution images under uniform standards. Moreover, image analysis technology enables precise mapping and measurement of defect areas.

Drone Model Used: Iris GVI

Manufacturer	Donecle (France)
Dimensions	Length 855mm × Width 855mm × Height 245mm
Weight	3,700g (including battery)
Operation Mode	Fully autonomous flight


Future Outlook

While the project is currently focused on operational demonstration tests within hangars, future phases aim to expand the scope—such as minimizing flight delays through faster unscheduled lightning strike inspections and regular monitoring of aircraft paint conditions—in continued collaboration with the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), aiming for further improvements in punctuality and aircraft quality.

Through this partnership, JAL and Donecle are committed to pioneering drone integration in global aviation maintenance, driving innovation to support safe, secure, and reliable air travel.

About Japan Airlines:

Japan Airlines (JAL) was established in 1951 as Japan's first private airline. Today, as a member of the **oneworld®** Alliance, the airline operates a fleet of 234 aircraft (as of March 2026) throughout an extensive domestic and international network, serving 413 airports in 71 countries/regions together with other JAL Group and partner airlines. The airline has been the proud recipient of many accolades for its exceptional service, including recognition as a 5-Star Airline by Skytrax and "World Class" by APEX. Under its brand slogan of Soaring Together, JAL strives to awaken senses, lift spirits and inspire, and make meaningful connections for its customers and stakeholders throughout society. The airline is dedicated to ensuring the highest standards of flight safety and overall service quality, striving to be the most preferred airline by customers worldwide.

For details and to learn more, visit JAL's official website at <https://www.jal.com/en/>

About Donecle

Donecle is reshaping aircraft inspection with its fully automated drone solution, powered by advanced image analysis and supported by a cloud-based digital history. Its drones inspect aircraft exteriors of all sizes, from business jets to widebodies. This solution speeds up inspections, simplifies reporting, and improves record keeping. Donecle's drones are listed in both Airbus and Boeing aircraft maintenance manuals and are used worldwide by airlines and MROs.

For details and to learn more, visit Donecle's official website at www.donecle.com