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The first of four plastic-free flights departed Portugal on Boxing Day in a bid by an aircraft leasing company to banish the material from its planes by the end of 2019.

Hi Fly said the first trial trip left Lisbon, Portugal for Natal, Brazil, on Wednesday without a single-use plastic item on board.

Among the innovations presented to passengers were bamboo cutlery, new paper packaging and containers that can be easily composted.

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Items replaced on the journey include cups, spoons, sick bags, dishes, butter pots, soft drink bottles and toothbrushes.

"This historic Hi Fly flight underlines our commitment to making Hi Fly the world's first plastics-free airline within 12 months," Hi Fly president Paulo Mirpuri confirmed to CTVNews.ca in a statement.

"Our corporate mission is based around sustainability and we work hand in glove with the Mirpuri Foundation to make sure that our corporate practices match our wider responsibilities to the planet."

PHOTOS



Mirpuri is also president of the Lisbon-based Mirpuri Foundation, a non-profit organization focused on environmental sustainability.

MIRPURI FOUNDATION

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Cabin crew on an Airbus aircraft for a plastic-free flight from Portugal to Brazil. (Hi Fly)



An Airbus A380 leased by Lisbon-based Hi Fly (Hi Fly)



A promotional image from Hi Fly's first plastic free flight from Lisbon, Portugal to Natal, Brazil. (Hi Fly)

"The test flights will help us trial the many substitute items we have developed and introduced, in a real-world environment," Mirpuri said.

"We know we may encounter some initial teething problems, but we are confident of addressing these over the coming months."

Hi Fly aims to make its entire fleet plastic-free by the end of 2019. The firm's has already removed plastics from its offices, providing employees with water stations throughout its headquarters and distributing water bottles to staff.

The leasing company announced its intention to go plastic-free by 2019 back in March. The firm said the change will require investment.

"Human beings have believed the ocean is an inexhaustible source of food and pleasure as well as a limitless garbage dump," Mirpuri said.

"We can no longer ignore the impact plastic contamination has on ecosystems, as well as on human health. We know, too, from the feedback we have

received from client airlines and passengers, that it's the right thing for the airline to be doing."

Portuguese Minister of Environment João Pedro Matos Fernandes has said the state will cease the use of all single-use plastics by January 2019.

Irish airline Ryanair, the largest carrier in Europe by passenger numbers, has also promised to eliminate non-recyclable plastics from its operations by 2023.

It will also introduce a voluntary carbon offset payment for customers when booking.

Air New Zealand has also pledged to remove single-use plastic items from its flights.