

1932 Air Orient: Arrival in Jodhpur of the Fokker VII b.3m Gouache by Albert Brenet 1990



# *Air France: Fifty years in Delhi*



Air France's long-haul network in 1947

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Jean-Cyril Spinetta



*Jean-Cyril Spinetta,  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
of Air France-KLM*

*As we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the launch of Air France service to New Delhi in 1955, it is my great pleasure to highlight the special ties between the Indian Union and France and to emphasize the decisive role that India has played in the development of Air France in Asia.*

*I could hardly find a more eminent figure to illustrate the friendly links between our two countries than former Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, a fluent French speaker, who spoke these words at her reception by General de Gaulle during an international trip shortly after she was elected to power:*

*“In the past, India has played a similar role in Asia to that of France in Europe, while Indian culture and society have influenced thinking and events in France. Similarly, in modern times, French writers and philosophers have influenced the minds of our own leaders. Our national independence movement was inspired by your ideas of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, which have become our watchwords. We therefore have a very special place in our hearts for France.”*

*Mutual respect and admiration have always prevailed between our two nations and I am very pleased to note that our cultural and economic exchanges are constantly advancing, partly as a result of the active presence of Air France.*

*Our aviation ties go back many years, and India played a decisive role in the development of Air France in Asia.*

*The world’s first ever airmail service was flown on 18 February 1911 by a French pilot, Henri Piquet, who carried a 15 kg mailbag containing 6,000 letters and cards aboard a Sommer biplane between Allahabad and Naini. Subsequently, in February 1930, Maurice Nogues, on behalf of Air Union Lignes d’Orient, one of the Air France founding airlines, scouted an air route to East Asia stopping at Jodhpur, Allahabad and Calcutta. This route, known as the “India Route” and then the “Nogues Route”, became a scheduled route in August of that same year, 1930.*

*The enthusiastic support of the Indian Civil Aviation Authorities and of important figures like the Maharajah of Jodhpur helped consolidate the operation and development of our routes to Asia.*

*Air France felt duty bound to serve the capital of the Indian Union as soon as possible after its independence was proclaimed on 15 August 1947, with France being among the first countries to recognize it.*

*On being granted the necessary traffic rights, an Air France Constellation landed at New Delhi on 14 November 1955.*

*Since then, we have made enormous strides. Currently, Air France operates a daily service to New Delhi with a direct flight from Paris in less than 8 hours.*

*To keep pace with the tremendous expansion of the Indian economy, in addition to its daily flights from New Delhi and Mumbai and its many all-cargo flights, Air France launched services to Bangalore at the end of October. It also serves Chennai under a code-share agreement with Delta Airlines, and Hyderabad under a code share with its sister airline, KLM.*

*As a result, I would today like to thank everyone involved in the air transport industry: the Government Authorities, the Aviation and Airport Authorities, the network of travel agents and cargo forwarding agents, as well as all our passengers, the overwhelming majority of whom are today business men and women, whose trust and support have placed Air France up among the very best airlines operating to and from India.*

*My thoughts also go to all Air France people in India, be they Indian or expatriates, who for over half a century have adjusted to changes in our products and have convinced their Indian compatriots to fly with Air France.*

*My most heartfelt thanks therefore go to all of you. You may rest assured that we are doing everything in our power to continue satisfying you and contributing to the development of trade between India and the rest of the world.*



प्रफुल पटेल  
PRAFUL PATEL

महान् विमान सेवा मंत्री (स्वतंत्र प्रभुत्व) भारत, नवीन दिल्ली 110022  
MINISTER OF STATE FOR CIVIL AVIATION (INDEPENDENT CHARGE)  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, RAJY GANDHI BHAVAN, NEW DELHI - 110 022

November, 2005

**MESSAGE**

I am pleased to learn that Air France is bringing out a brochure on its history on completion of 50 years operation in India.

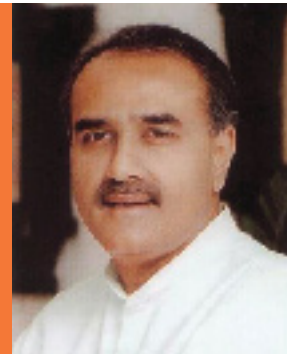
The opening of the Indian economy and the new liberalization of air rights have allowed the airlines, including Air France, to strengthen its presence in India. Air France has played a very important role in the development of the Indo-French relationships and has demonstrated an exemplary involvement by increasing its frequencies regularly, thus reasserting its will to be present on the whole Indian Sub-Continent in order to serve Indian clientele better.

Air France's contribution goes beyond the development of Indo-French relationships as the company provided vital link to other parts of European Union and furthermore to the Continents of Africa and America.

I would like to thank Air France and its personnel and I wish that in the future, Air France will continue to progress on the path of success and excellence.

**(PRAFUL PATEL)**

*Praful Patel*





Patrick Alexandre  
Executive Vice President International  
Commercial Affairs

## Air France in Asia and India

### Message from Patrick Alexandre and Dominique Gass

Asia has always been a major continent for Air France, hence making it one of its key development areas.

In response to the growing demand, Air France is now operating **202 non-stop weekly flights** to **13 Asian countries** covering **28 destinations**.

India offers a brilliant perspective in this development, as traffic is expected to double by the year 2010, making a total of some 100 million passengers.

In 2005 Air France operates out of **five hubs in India**. Air France offers **daily service** from **Delhi** and **Mumbai**; a daily flight from **Chennai** to Paris (operated on a code-share basis with our partner Delta Airlines) since May 10, 2005, five weekly flights between Karnataka's capital **Bangalore** and Paris since October 31, 2005; finally at the end of November there will be non-stop service from Andhra Pradesh's largest metropolitan city and capital **Hyderabad** to Europe with 2 flights per week.

This significant development is due to the long and constructive presence of Air France in India. However, even as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our presence in Delhi, we must not forget that **Air Orient**, one of the five founding airlines of Air France, was already operating two flights a month from Paris to Saigon, transiting in Jodhpur, Allahabad and Calcutta in India, in the year **1930**. After its foundation, Air France naturally took over this route.

This commemorative booklet takes a look at the "pioneering period" before retracing the history of Air France in Delhi.

The evolution of air transport has been spectacular: in 1930 it took seven days to fly from India to Paris. In 1955 the journey from Delhi to Paris took 25 hours with three stopovers. Today the Air France non-stop flight departs from Delhi and arrives at Paris-Charles de Gaulle in only 8 hours and 30 minutes.

**New Delhi** has moved on from being an intermediary stop on a multi-sector flight to a **major turnaround station** for the Air France Asia network.

Our activity as an airline operating out of India has undergone major changes. For a long time, Air France has offered its Indian customers many intermediary stops on its westbound flights including Teheran, Tel Aviv and Rome, with Bangkok, Saigon, Hong Kong, Manila and Tokyo on its eastbound flights. Today we offer our Indian customers **17,900 weekly connections** to all of Europe, Africa, and the Americas via our **Paris-Charles de Gaulle hub**.

Along with **KLM**, Air France is a member of the **SkyTeam Alliance**, operating out of India with seven of the nine members.

Cooperation between Air France and KLM dates back to the 1930s when we used the same kind of aircraft, the Fokker 7. We also shared the same spare parts depot in the airports of Jodhpur, Allahabad and Calcutta.

Today, the sales forces of Air France and KLM and the airport staff have joined forces in India to be able to serve their customers better. Air France also offers a joint frequent flyer program, **Flying Blue**, thus offering the frequent Indian customer a wide choice of services and Miles, enabling them to attain **Elite** status even faster. Customers therefore benefit from many privileges before, during and after the flight.

Air France credits its success and all the fundamentals of its development to the different players in the aviation industry in India: the Civil Aviation Authorities, the Airport Authorities of India, the immigration and customs services, the tourism board of India, the travel agency network, the cargo agents and naturally its customers.

We would also like to pay homage to the men and women of Air France who have learnt to adapt to our changing products and to successfully retain the loyalty of Indian customers by proposing a wide spectrum of products and services.

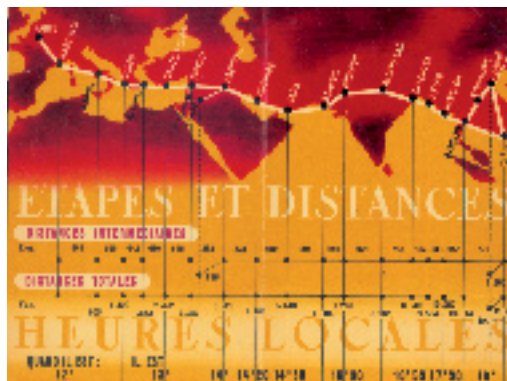
Our thanks go to all of them, and they may be sure that we will do our utmost to deserve their confidence.



Dominique Gass,  
Air France General Manager for India  
with Jean-Louis Pinson,  
Senior Vice President Asia-Pacific

Calcutta-Paris service  
and as from 1955,  
Delhi-Paris

Year	Flights/week	Aircraft	Take-off weight (kg)	Cruising speed	Number of stopovers	Duration of travel
1938	1	Dewoitine 338	11,500	290	12	5 Days
1953	1	Constellation	47,630	470	3	27h35
1957	2	Super Constellation	62,300	530	4	24h20
1963	2	Boeing 707	146,000	900	3	14h35
1975	3	Boeing 747 - 200	310,000	900	2	12h50
2005	7	Boeing 747 - 400	396,800	912	0	8h30



Brochure on services to Eastern Europe and the Far East



Lockheed L.749 Constellation (1946-1962)



Far East poster by Ray-Bret-Koch, printed in 1938, showing the "India Route"

## Key dates in the history of Air France in India

### The Pioneers

1

#### April 1924

First France-India flight operated with the **Caudron G4** on an air rally from Paris to Tokyo in 47 days.

#### March 29, 1927

Creation of "Air Union Lignes d'Orient"

#### February 12 to March 10, 1930

Air Union Lignes d'Orient operates a test flight Paris-Saigon-Hanoi via India with a **Farman 190** aircraft.

#### August 30, 1930

**Air Orient** inaugurates a regular twice-monthly France-Indochina service (for passengers and mail). **Jodhpur, Allahabad and Calcutta** are among the 18 stops between Paris and Saigon.



(1) Douglas DC4

(2) Dewoitine 338 (1936-1947)

(3) Lockheed L.749 "Constellation" (1946-1962)

### May 5, 1932

The France-Indochina service becomes weekly. **India has one flight a week.**

### August 1933

**Air Orient** is one of the 5 airlines to merge to form **Air France**. **Air France continues to operate from Paris to Saigon** with the same 3 intermediary stops in India.

### August 4, 1938

The France-Indochina route is extended to Hong Kong, using the **Dewoitine 338**.

### September 2, 1939

Air France suspends all its services.

### November 16, 1944

Air France resumes activity on January 2, 1946. Certain long-haul flights are operated for military purposes only. The RLAF\* operates one weekly flight between France and Indochina with stops in Delhi and Calcutta.

\*Reseau des lignes aeriennes francaises (French air route network)

### June 11, 1946

Air France resumes its flights to India with a **weekly DC4** service to Saigon with a stopover in **Calcutta**.

### Summer, 1947

6 flights a month to Calcutta on the Paris-Saigon route.

### Summer, 1948

Calcutta benefits from a weekly service with the DC4.

### Summer, 1950

Air France increases its service to **Calcutta** with **5 weekly flights**, including one operated with the new four-engined **Lockheed Constellation**.

### Winter, 1950-51

**UAT**, a private French airline, which became UTA in 1962 and was to be taken over by Air France in 1992, operates one flight to **Delhi** and Calcutta with the **DC4**.

### Summer, 1952

Air France offers five flights a week to Calcutta on its Indochina route, all using the **Constellation**.

### Summer, 1953

The Calcutta service is reduced to three weekly Constellation flights, before being restored to four flights a week in the summer of 1954.

### Summer, 1954

Air France flights transiting in Calcutta are reduced to three flights a week with effect from winter 1954-55.

Air France Boeing 707 Intercontinental in flight (1965)

## Flying from New Delhi 1955-2005



### November 14, 1955

Air France launches a **new weekly Paris-Delhi** service using the Constellation. Calcutta continues to be served twice weekly with the **Super Constellation**.

### April 1958

The three Air France weekly flights transiting in India are operated with the Super Constellation: **two** with stopovers in **New Delhi** and one in Calcutta when flying east-bound, and two stops in Calcutta and one in Delhi when flying westbound.

### Summer, 1959

Air France flights transiting in India serve Delhi twice-weekly and Calcutta once-weekly.

### November 1960

The Super Constellation is replaced by a new four-engined jet, the **Boeing 707**, operating three times weekly to India.

### Winter, 1961

The **New Delhi** flights increase from two to **three times a week** and Calcutta continues to be served once weekly.

### 1967

Opening of the **Mumbai** route (one flight a week) replacing the Calcutta service.

### April 1969

**Mumbai** is served twice a week and Delhi three times.

### April 1972

Introduction of the long-haul wide bodied **Boeing 747.100**, which operates three of the five weekly flights of Air France to India.

### April 1973

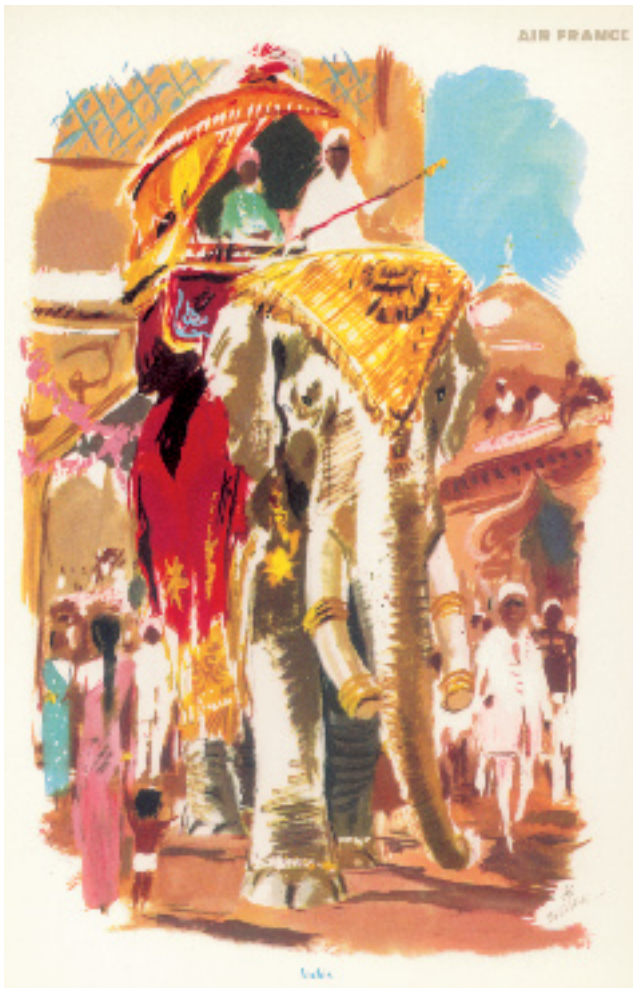
Flights to Mumbai increase from two to three a week.



Brochure promoting the Super Constellation (1953)



Pilots and cabin crew of the Air France Boeing 707 on the Asia route (1965)



Front cover of a First Class menu - 1959



Take-off of an Airbus A340.400

### November 1, 1974

All flights from India land in Paris at the new **Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport** situated north of the French capital.

### 1977

**Boeing 747.100** operated on all six weekly Air France flights departing from India.

### Summer, 1979

First **Super Pelican 747** weekly freighter service from Delhi.

### Summer, 1980

Flights to **Delhi** increase from three to **four a week**.

### Summer, 1981

Two of the three flights from Mumbai to Paris are non-stop.

### Summer, 1982

**First non-stop flight between Delhi and Paris.** Transfers of all flights to India to the new Air France private terminal, **Paris-Charles de Gaulle 2.**

### Autumn, 1983

Opening of the **Hotel Méridien** in New Delhi.

### Summer, 1984

Introduction of the **Boeing 747 Combi**, offering 176 seats and a cargo capacity of 30 tonnes.

### Summer, 1987

One daily Air France flight from India (four from Delhi and three from Mumbai).

### May 1989

**All Air France flights** departing from India to Paris-Charles de Gaulle are **non-stop**.

### 1991

Second Boeing 747 freighter flight from Mumbai.

### Summer, 1995

**Delhi and Mumbai** become **turnaround stations**.

### Autumn, 1995

Introduction of the **A340.300** with the new inflight service, **Espace180, Espace127** and **Tempo**.

### Summer, 1998

Increase in Air France service from India from seven to nine weekly flights.

### Summer, 2000

Air France daily flight from Delhi lands at the new Terminal 2F of Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport.

### December 2000

Six Air France flights to Mumbai.

### Summer, 2002

**Two daily Air France flights from India:** one from **New Delhi** and one from **Mumbai** in cooperation with Skyteam partner Delta.

### May 10, 2005

Introduction of a new service to **Chennai**.

### October 30, 2005

Introduction of a new service to **Bangalore**.

### November 2005

Introduction of a new service to **Hyderabad**.



Poster printed in 1939 showing the Nogue's Route, designed by N. Gerale



## The pioneers: 1911-1954, the Nogue's Route

The history of fifty years of Air France service to New Delhi owes a great deal to the pioneers of this route who worked relentlessly to establish a regular service, thus paving the way for today's operations.

Henri Piquet carried the world's first official mail by plane on February 18, 1911. A postal bag weighing fifteen kilos containing six thousand letters and cards were transported on board a Sommer biplane (50hp Gnome engine) between Allahabad and Naini Fort, thus flying a distance of thirty kms. Henri Piquet put this aircraft together in India (it had arrived in a wooden crate by boat from Paris), and took off from a polo pitch. He wore a watch on his right wrist and strapped an altimeter to his left knee. The commemorative stamp printed to mark this occasion strangely shows the aircraft flying over mountains, whereas the flight actually took place over the Yamuna river.

The end of the First World War freed up thousands of aircrafts and pilots. Many flights were launched as early as 1919 with Poulet and Benoit, who, taking off from



Air France route to the Far East (winter 1935-1936)



*Air France ticket office in Calcutta during the 1950s*



*Maurice Nogues*

Issy-les-Moulineaux, on October 14 on board the timeworn **Caudron G4**, arrived in Rangoon 47 days later. **Pelletier Doisy**, who took off from Villacoublay on April 24, 1924, on board a **Breguet 19**, reached India and then Tokyo on June 9, 1924.

One man particularly influenced this period: **Maurice Nogues**. Former chief pilot of CIDNA, he joined the “Compagnies des Messageries Transaériennes”. He took off on August 30, 1926 in a small seaplane named “Schreck” from Argenteuil in France, and flew south for a reconnaissance flight with his engineer and teammate Morin.

The flights to the Far East heralded a new era, which was synonymous with Maurice Nogues.

In October 1927, Nogues carried out the first test flight to the Far East: Marseilles/La Ciotat - Naples - Corfou - Athens - Castel Rosso - Famagouste - Beirut on behalf of **Air Union Lignes d’Orient** which took over from Compagnies des Messageries Transaériennes in March 1927.

From February 12 to March 9, 1930, **Nogues** performed a test flight lasting 23 days on a Farman 190 between Paris and Indochina with stopovers in **Jodhpur, Allahabad and Calcutta**.

**Jean Hennequin**, a future chief pilot of Air Orient describes the **conditions of the journey**:

“We would leave early morning at two or three o’clock and would land in the evening after having flown 10 to 13 hours. The flights were carried out in conditions where the two main factors were altitude and wind, which depended on the weather.

The speed of the aircraft would oscillate between 130 and 150 kms an hour. With wind speeds of 30 to 40 kms per hour, we had to “hedgehop” and keep within an altitude range of 300-400 meters. At these altitudes and even much higher, the continuous turbulence would aggravate the flight conditions. We would fly as long as 9-13 hours per day.

The en-route stations could not provide any technical assistance. Therefore all maintenance of the aircraft had to be done by the flight engineer, helped by the pilot and radio operator. A small quantity of spare parts was all that was available on board. For important parts an agreement was reached with KLM, which had the same aircraft and engines, under which we would have a common depot of spare parts at each station. The technicians of both companies had the keys to the chest, which would be replenished by the next incoming aircraft.”

**Air Orient**, a new airline created by the merger between Air Union Lignes d’Orient and Air Asie on August 30, 1930, started operations on the **Marseille - Saigon** route on **January 17, 1931**.

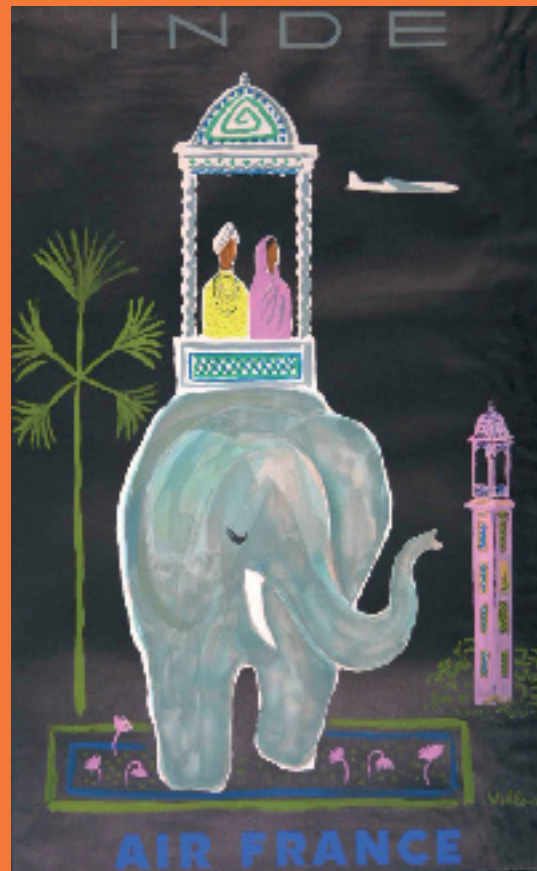
Passengers from Paris travelled by train to Avignon, where a bus drove them to Marseille-Marignane. A twin-engined seaplane, the CAMS-53, was operated between Marseille and Beirut for postal services, and a single-engined FARMAN F190 for passengers with a seating capacity for four. The successive stops were Naples, Corfu, Athens and Castel Rosso. The Damascus-Beirut route was then by road.

The triple-engined Fokker VII was used on flights going beyond Damascus due to the difficult conditions of travel and to ensure maximum security in desert regions. The stopovers comprised Baghdad, Bouchir, Djask, Karachi, **Jodhpur, Allahabad, Calcutta**, Akyab, Rangoon, and Bangkok, before arriving at Saigon, the final destination.

This service was **twice-monthly** before becoming **weekly on April 23, 1932**.

The “**India Route**” spanning over 12,000 kms including eight rivers, eleven seas, thirteen mountains and three deserts, was covered in ten days.

The flights mainly took place during the day and wherever possible, any sea overflying was over the coastline. During stopovers at night, passengers and crew stayed at the same hotel, in the State Hotel in Jodhpur and at the Great Eastern Hotel in Calcutta.



Poster designed by Bernard Villermot printed in 1956

Meal on board the Super Constellation



Repos à bord

August 1933: Air Orient is one of the five French companies which merged to form **Air France**. Air France resumed the France-Indochina route and for the first time flew to India with a once-weekly flight.

The Air France winter 1933-34 flight schedule promoted flights to the Far East as follows:

“The cabins are equipped with comfortable seats and have a toilet and a washbasin. The speed of our aircraft has reduced the flight time, thus avoiding unnecessary fatigue to our customers and giving them plenty of time to visit the interesting sights along the route (Naples, Athens, Rangoon, Bangkok, Angkor, as an option).”

Air France was represented by the Sanghi Brothers in Jodhpur, by Steel and Co. in Allahabad and by Messageries Maritimes in Calcutta.

The technical progress offered by the new types of aircraft, the operational expertise of the pilots and the technicians and the introduction of ground services all contributed to improving travel conditions: flight time between Calcutta and Paris was reduced from seven days in 1931 to five days in 1938.

August 4, 1938 the France-Indochina route was further extended to **Hong Kong** with a stop at Bayard Fort. This flight was operated with a new triple-engined **Dewoitine 338**, with a cruising speed of 260 km/h and an operating range of 1,950 kms. This aircraft had twelve seats and could ferry 400 kilos of cargo. The flights from France to India took five days.

September 2, 1939: Air France suspended all its flights, including those to the Far East, on the first day of the outbreak of World War II.

June 11, 1946: **Air France resumed its flights** to the Far East, initially with a **DC3** and later with a **DC4**. The weekly Paris-Saigon flight stopped in Tunis, Cairo, Bassora, Karachi and finally Calcutta. Air France long-haul flights left Paris from the new **Orly** airport south of Paris.

Flights to Calcutta increased to six a month in summer 1947, two per week in summer 1948, then five per week in summer 1950. One of the aircraft used for the five flights was the **Lockheed L749 Constellation**, the most efficient aircraft of its time, with a speed of 480 kms/hr, a cruising altitude of 6,000 meters and a pressurized cabin. Calcutta was then less than 28hr 50min from Paris compared to seven days in 1931! The Constellation had two classes; a first class equipped with reclining seats and the tourist class.

In November 1950, the private French airline UAT, later to become **UTA** in 1962, started up weekly operations by DC4 between Paris-Le Bourget and Saigon with a stopover at Palam Airport in Delhi and Calcutta. These services were suspended in October 1952.

Once again Air France upped its service to Calcutta. In summer 1952, five flights were operated with the Constellation. However, they were progressively reduced to three weekly Constellation flights in summer 1955.

Air France moved its offices in Calcutta from Ezra Mansions in Waterloo Street to Victoria House, Chowringhee Square.

Sleeper compartments on board the Super Constellation  
(Air France brochure)



# AIR FRA

## Flying from New Delhi: 3 1955-2005



Leaflet promoting the Super Constellation

**Indian Independence on August 15, 1947** and the proclamation of the Indian Union on **January 26, 1950** confirmed the importance of Delhi, its capital. French authorities and Air France immediately started negotiations to operate flights to New Delhi in addition to Calcutta. It was only in autumn 1955 that Air France finally succeeded in operating flights to the capital of India.

On **November 14, 1955** an Air France **Constellation** landed at Palam Airport for the first time, on a weekly flight. The stops on the westbound flight were Karachi, Beirut, Nice and Orly Paris, and Saigon and Hong Kong on the eastbound flight. One of the two aircraft operated to Calcutta was a **Lockheed L1049 Super Constellation or Super G**. This aircraft was faster (530 kms/hr instead of 480 kms/hr) and larger (maximum capacity of 92 passengers instead of 62). Its inflight product was even more comfortable. The first class was equipped with seat-beds, and one of the new features was a compartment with berths. The cities served by the westbound flights were Karachi (two flights), Baghdad (1), Damascus (1), Beirut (1), Rome (1), Frankfurt (1), Nice (1) and Paris Orly (2) and by the eastbound flights, Saigon (2), Manila (1) and Tokyo (1).

One of the main features of flights to the Far East via India was the large number of cities served on either eastbound and westbound flights, depending on the range of the aircraft



Inauguration of Air France's ticket office in Scindia House (1957)



Poster for Asia by Andre Golven, printed in 1950

used (increasingly longer operating range), the potential of passenger and cargo traffic (still increasing and contingent on the development of economic and touristic exchanges) and on the traffic rights granted by the Civil Aviation Authorities of the countries concerned. In the case of India, the authorities adopted a liberal approach to the development of international air transport. On the commercial front, the sales network, customers and Air France personnel showed initiative in adapting to the constantly changing schedules, and contributed to the route economy by making full use of the potential of the flights offered from India.

In summer 1956 until summer 1957, a special service that supplemented the "Champs Elysees" product was put in place - the "Eastern Epicurean" service - on one of the two flights to Calcutta.

In April 1957, Air France New Delhi offices which were situated on the premises of Escort, in the Pratan Building in Connaught Place, moved to **Scindia House** on Connaught Circus. In 1964, the Vice President of the Indian Republic, Mr. Zakir Husain inaugurated the brand new Air France ticket office. It is in this same building that the Air France Regional Management grouped all its services, with its ticket office on the first floor where it still is today.

June 04, 1957: The **Super Constellation** aircraft operated the weekly flight transiting in New Delhi.

In April 1958, all three flights were operated with Super Constellations. Out went the seat beds! Two eastbound flights transited in Delhi and one transited in Calcutta. Westbound, one flight transited in Delhi and two transited in Calcutta.

In April 1959, service to India remained stable; **New Delhi** was served **twice weekly** and Calcutta once weekly.

In autumn 1959, the Air France timetable incorporated Alitalia and Lufthansa flights. These airlines were in talks with Air France and Sabena in an aborted bid to create an Air Union association. Air France was the sales agent for these three partner companies, and the sales office at the Ashoka Hotel sported all three signs. Japan Airlines later joined the same association.

The Air France flights had a double designation **Air France-TAI** (AF/TI). **TAI** (Transports Aériens Intercontinentaux), another French international airline, merged in 1962 with a third French airline, UAT (Union Aéronautique de Transport) later to become UTA (Union de Transports Aériens) before being taken over by Air France in 1992.

In November 1960, a major new feature appeared on the Air France route to India: the arrival of a four-engined jet, the **Boeing 707 "Intercontinental"**. Its speed (900 kms/hr), its cruising altitude (10,000 m) and its seating capacity (189 passengers) changed the face of air transport.

The Air France Boeing 707s were equipped with two classes: First class with 24 seats in six rows of four, and Economy (new name for the tourist class) in 20 rows of three by three with an aisle in the middle (120 passengers).



Hostesses of the Air France ticket office in Scindia House during the 1960s  
From left to right: Nalini Mitra, Rina Charan Singh, Romala Nazareth,  
Clemence Goubert in 1965



Poster designed by Georges Mathieu,  
printed in 1967

## The 1960s

Starting in winter 1960, the three Air France flights to India - two to Delhi and one to Calcutta - were operated by Boeing 707s. The westbound flight served Rome (2 flights weekly), Athens (1), Tel Aviv (1), Teheran (3) and Karachi (1) and the eastbound flight Bangkok (3) and Tokyo (3).

In summer 1961, the success of the **New Delhi** flights encouraged Air France to increase its frequencies from two to **three flights** a week, naturally by Boeing 707. Calcutta also benefited from one weekly flight. The schedule remained stable until 1967, when Air France replaced Calcutta by **Mumbai** as its second Indian destination. In fact the spectacular economic development of Mumbai, coupled with the difficulties in obtaining an additional frequency in India, were the main reasons for this choice. The westbound flight served Karachi, Cairo, Nice and Paris Orly and the eastbound flight Bangkok and Manila.

The second frequency introduced in April 1969 was a direct result of the successful Air France service to Mumbai. At that time, Air France served New Delhi three times a week. The westbound service stopped in Teheran (3 flights) Tel Aviv (3) Rome (2) and Paris Orly (3) and the eastbound service stopped in Bangkok (3 flights) Pnom Penh (1) Manila (1), Hong Kong (2) and Tokyo (3). The two weekly flights to Mumbai stopped

in Karachi (2 flights) Dhahran (1) Beirut (1) Athens (2) and Paris Orly (2) when westbound and Bangkok (2 flights) Saigon

(2) Manila (1) Hong Kong (1) and Tokyo (2) when eastbound. The stopover in Calcutta was suspended in 1968.

## Sales drive in India

### 1/During the early decades

Besides the specificity of being a stop on a multi-leg route, a situation shared by all the Air France stations on the Far East route, the new Air France destination of Delhi presented two characteristics which the Air France sales force had to cope with:

- On the one hand, the limited potential of the economic and cultural Franco-Indian relationship, as India was mainly focused on Great Britain in Europe, Canada and the United States for the rest of the world,
- On the other hand, a very severe currency exchange control as Indian nationals had to obtain authorization, backed up by the purchase of a plane ticket, the famous "P. form", and the strict limitation in buying foreign currency.

The Air France sales force in India were able to convert these two major handicaps into assets by proposing to pay for the accommodation expenses of Indian customers at the intermediary stops before reaching their final destination.

Complying with the very strict IATA (International Air Transport Association) rules, Air France was able to pay for the

accommodation expenses (for a maximum of 24 hours) of its Indian transit passengers, mainly businessmen and students, who were thus able to fulfil their desire to discover other countries without using up their meagre allocation of foreign currency. The most sought-after stops were Rome and Paris. These facilities quickly led to a considerable flow of Indian travellers, in addition to foreign residents, businessmen and diplomats who were able to travel freely.

The final destinations of the Indian clientele were usually beyond Paris, all over Europe, the Americas and Africa, not forgetting all the stops en route.

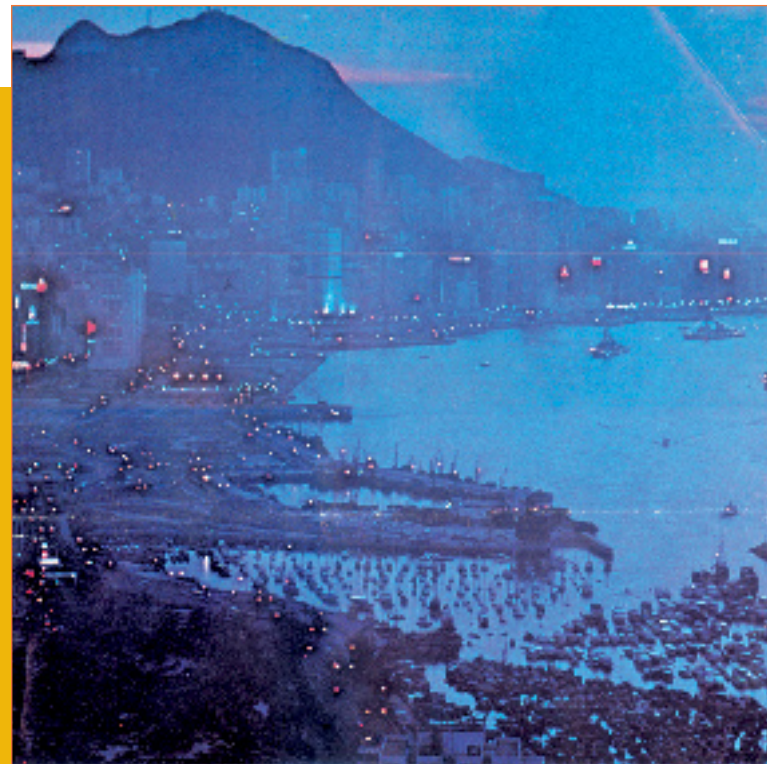
Air France has always gone beyond the simple bilateral Franco-Indian relationships, even if the relationships between the two countries had constantly grown.

### 2/Today

Today, most of the Air France passengers departing from India are businessmen, attracted by the quality of the inflight service, the 17,900 weekly connections available at the Paris-Charles de Gaulle hub and the joint frequent flyer program of Air France/KLM, Flying Blue.



Departure of His Majesty Mahendra, King of Nepal, greeted by the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, AF flight 193, August 27, 1970, New Delhi-Paris



**ENJOY FLYING FRENCH TO WHERE EAST MEETS WEST.**

**AIR FRANCE** //  
FOR BANGKOK, MUMBAI, HONGKONG.

Air France advertisement published in the South Asia Travel Review in December 1982

In April 1972, the introduction of the new jumbo jet, the **Boeing 747**, by Air France added a new dimension to air transport. This new aircraft, **the first long-haul wide bodied jet**, had several new features: two decks, main cabins with two aisles, unprecedented ceiling heights allowing for roomy overhead luggage compartments, spacious washrooms and galleys, offering unparalleled comfort to the Air France passengers. The aircraft was configured for 24 First Class seats and over 350 Economy Class seats. Its cargo capacity, in addition to the luggage holds, was impressive too: 22 tonnes, the three holds being four times bigger than those of the 707 (173 m3 compared to 41 m3). The arrival of an aircraft of this size raised difficulties at Palam Airport.

At this time, three Air France weekly flights to India (2 to New Delhi and 1 to Mumbai) were operated with the Boeing 747.100, the remaining two frequencies by Boeing 707 (1 to New Delhi and 2 to Mumbai).

In April 1973, a third weekly frequency operated by Boeing 707 was launched to Mumbai, which then boasted two flights by Boeing 707 and one by Boeing 747. In summer 1974, the traffic growth in Mumbai was such that the proportion was reversed: two 747.100 flights and one Boeing 707 flight to the Maharashtra capital.

November 1, 1974, all flights to the Far East, including the Southern Route transiting in India, were transferred to Paris to the new Air France site, **Charles de Gaulle Airport** in the north of Paris.

This marked the beginning of the construction of the Air France connections network because, for the Indian market, Air France was not only selling France and the stops along the route but also all the European, African and American destinations.

In summer 1977, each of the three weekly services to Mumbai was operated by Boeing 747. Flights from New Delhi were also operated by Boeing 747 in winter 1977.

In summer 1979, the **Boeing 747 Super Pelican freighter**, with a payload of 120 tonnes of cargo, supplemented the 22 tonnes of cargo carried by Air France to India on each of the six weekly frequencies in the standard Boeing 747: Delhi was served once weekly. At the same time, the stopovers of the six flights showed the acceleration of routes transiting in India: on flights to Delhi, the only westbound stop was Dubai for one flight and Teheran for two flights; on the eastbound service, the three flights ended in Hong Kong after a stop in Bangkok. For the three flights to Mumbai, two transited in Dubai and one in Teheran before arriving in Paris on the westbound route; eastbound, all the flights stopped in Bangkok, one stopped in Ho-Chi-Minh City and Hanoi and the two others ended in Manila after a stop in Bangkok.

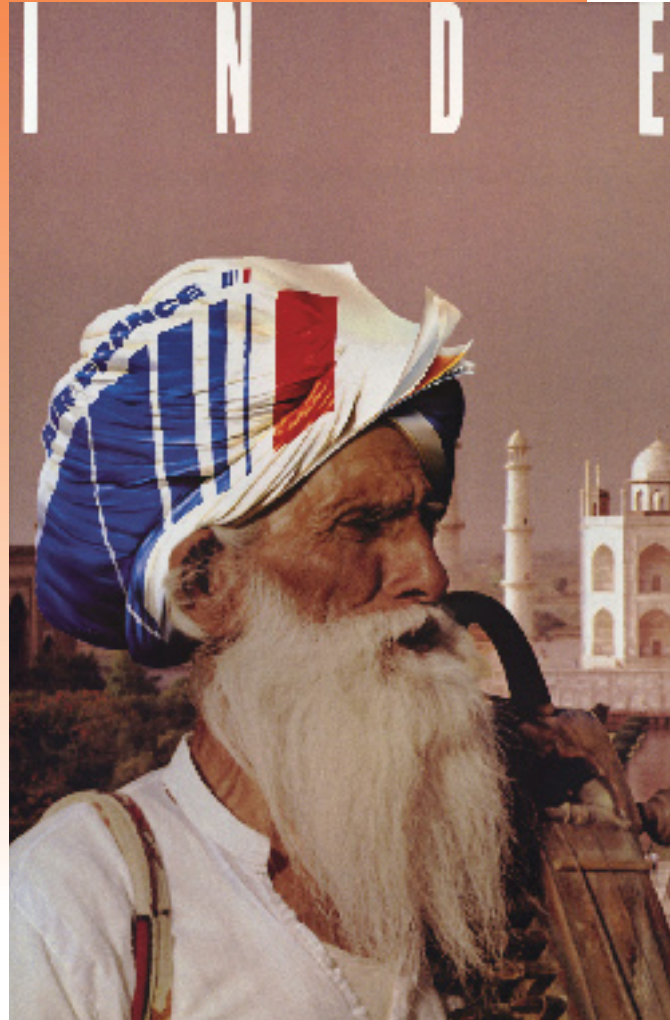
In summer 1980, **New Delhi** was served by **four weekly flights**, all operated with the Boeing 747.100. The fourth flight, called the **Hong Kong express**, continued further east to Hong Kong, with no intermediary stops. This flight was suspended in winter 1980-81.

The acceleration of flights continued in summer 1981: two out of the three weekly services from Mumbai to Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport were non-stop. A non-stop flight to Hong Kong provided the Hong Kong Express service.

During summer 1982, the **first non-stop service** (out of three weekly frequencies) was introduced between **New Delhi and Paris-Charles de Gaulle**. This acceleration carried on in winter 1982: three non-stop flights from Paris to New Delhi with no stopovers and two non-stop out of three in the other direction. That year 1982, Air France moved its long-haul service to Asia to its new private air terminal, **Paris-Charles de Gaulle, Terminal 2A**.

Air France fitted out its First Class in the Boeing 747 with seat-beds.

In summer 1983, the three weekly flights between Mumbai and Paris were also operated non-stop in both directions.



Poster from the Air France "ticket" campaign in France in 1983



Loading of an outsize shipment through the nose of the B747 freighter at Paris-CDG Airport

During **autumn 1983**, the hotel subsidiary of Air France, the **Méridien** chain, opened a 450-room hotel in New Delhi. This opening strengthened the Air France Group's commercial action conducted by its tourism subsidiary, **Sotair**, with its brands **Jumbo and Jet Tours** and by its air transport activity at the service of India's economic, touristic and cultural development.

At the same time, a new flight was launched stopping in Karachi and Delhi before flying non-stop to Beijing.

In summer 1984, Air France introduced the **Boeing 747 Combi**, with capacity for both passengers and cargo (176 seats, 13 pallets, 7 on the main deck and 6 in the belly) on flights to New Delhi and took advantage of it to increase its weekly frequencies from three to four flights as of June 26, 1985.

Two of the four flights which passed through Delhi then flew non-stop to **Beijing** and, on one of these, Air France offered the fastest service between Europe and China: Paris-Delhi-Beijing.

Until 1995, Air France offered a constantly growing number of flights by Boeing 747 Combi, as the capacity for 176 passengers was then sufficient for non-stop flights from Delhi or Bombay to Paris; on the other hand, the additional cargo capacity increased in line with the fast-growing economic development of India both in terms of export as well as import freight.

By **summer 1987**, a **daily flight** connected **Paris to India** with four frequencies to Delhi and three to Mumbai.

As from **May 31, 1989**, every flight from Paris to India was **non-stop**. Eastbound stops from Delhi were Bangkok (2 flights), Beijing (1 flight) Ho Chi Minh City (1 flight) and Hong Kong (3 flights). Eastbound stops from Mumbai were Bangkok (2 flights) and Hong Kong (3 flights).

A flight to Delhi stopped in Karachi again during winter 1989, but was suspended on June 2, 1990.

In 1991, the growth of cargo activity led Air France to double the 747 Super Pelican freighter flight from Delhi and to introduce a weekly frequency to Mumbai, in addition to the capacity of the seven weekly Boeing 747 passenger flights from India.

During summer 1992, the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War had contrasted effects: Delhi and Mumbai had two weekly frequencies each by Boeing 747 freighter and Delhi reduced its mixed passenger and cargo flights from four to three a week.

During **summer 1995**, the development of passenger traffic to and from India was such that the six non-stop weekly flights from Paris no longer needed additional traffic to the East of India: **Delhi and Mumbai** became **turnaround stations**. This made the

allocation of seats to passengers easier, whereas it had often been a tricky issue in the case of multi-leg flights, and it led to a significant improvement in comfort for Indian customers.

That summer, flights were operated with the long-haul, twin-engined **Boeing 767.300**, equipped with 24 seats in "**Espace 127**" and 184 seats in **Tempo**.

During **autumn 1995**, Air France introduced the youngest of the Airbus family, the long-haul, four-engined jet **A340.300**, on the three non-stop Paris-Delhi flights. This aircraft was equipped with the new Air France product: 16 "**Espace 180 Premiere**" flat beds, 42 "**Espace 127 Business**" reclining seats and 240 seats in **Tempo** class.

The three weekly flights from Mumbai continued to be operated with the Boeing 747 Combi.

In summer 1996, Delhi once again boasted four weekly flights, all operated by Airbus A340.300.

In summer 1997, it was Mumbai which greeted the Air France Airbus A340.300. As for Delhi, it saw the arrival of the **Boeing 767.300**.

During summer 1998, Air France capacity out of India continued to grow: the number of flights from New Delhi went up to five a week, and to four a week from Mumbai, all



Boeing 747.400

"L'Espace Affaires"  
on a long-haul flight



operated with the Boeing 767.300. This made a total of 9 weekly flights from India to Paris, operated by Air France.

In **summer 2000**, Air France introduced **daily service to Delhi**. As for the Maharashtra capital, the number of weekly flights rose from four to five. The flights to these two Indian destinations were operated by Airbus A340.300, which all arrived at the new Terminal 2F at the Paris-Charles de Gaulle 2 hub.

In **December 2000**, Mumbai increased its service from five to six weekly flights, enabling Air France to offer a total of thirteen flights from India to Paris-Charles de Gaulle, all of which were non-stop.

In **summer 2002**, Air France operated flights from Mumbai with a Boeing 747, followed by an Airbus A340. Air France offered three weekly flights and Delta 4 weekly flights, all on a code-share basis. This meant that customers benefited from daily service from Mumbai to Paris. As a result, on departure from India and in addition to the daily Delhi flight, Air France offered Indian customers **14 weekly flights** to its Paris-Charles de Gaulle hub, from where passengers had an exceptional choice of European, American and African connections.

In 2003, Air France maintained its **daily Airbus A340.300** service from Delhi. The daily service from Mumbai was operated with the Airbus A340-300 for Air France (three flights) and the Boeing 767 for Delta (four flights).

In **summer 2004**, Air France continued to operate its daily Airbus A340.300 flight from Delhi. Concerning Mumbai, Air France operated five out of the seven weekly flights by Airbus A340.300, while Delta operated the two other flights by Boeing 767. As from winter 2004, Air France finally operated a daily Airbus 340 flight, and from Delhi a daily Boeing 747.400.

In 2005 Air France operates out of **five hubs in India**. Air France offers **daily service from Delhi and Mumbai**; a daily flight from **Chennai** to Paris (operated on a code-share basis with our partner Delta Airlines) since May 10, 2005; five weekly flights between Karnataka's capital **Bangalore** and Paris since October 31, 2005; finally at the end of November there will be non-stop service from Andhra Pradesh's largest metropolitan city and capital **Hyderabad** to Europe with 2 flights per week under code-share with its sister airline KLM. From Delhi, as in winter 2004 and in order to meet the seasonal increase in passenger traffic, Air France is operating in winter 2005 the larger Boeing 747.400.



Tailfins of the member airlines of the SkyTeam Alliance.

# The SkyTeam Alliance

International airlines join forces in order to offer their passengers a wider choice of more efficient, high-quality services.

Set up in June 2000, SkyTeam is a global alliance which now includes **nine international partners**: Aeromexico, Air France, KLM, Alitalia, Continental Airlines, CSA Czech Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Korean Air and Northwest Airlines.

The Alliance enables the coordination of each airline's networks and hubs, and offers high-quality services to all its customers. The SkyTeam alliance has more than **3,200 aircraft in operation**, including those of subsidiaries, and almost thirty large hubs. It offers its **343 million passengers** each

year more than **15,000 daily flights** to almost **700 destinations** in more than **130 countries**.

The benefits which SkyTeam offers its customers are numerous and highly appreciated:

- **Frequent flyers** programs on all SkyTeam flights which allow members to earn Miles and obtain awards (free tickets, etc.) as well as faster access to "Elite" membership status.
- **391 lounges** worldwide.
- A wider choice of ticket prices to more destinations for passengers residing in India and traveling on a transatlantic, transpacific or intercontinental flight, on one of the nine airlines:

\* In Europe, the "SkyTeam Europe Pass" launched at the end of 2002 enables passengers to buy flight coupons on the Alliance's intra-European flights at very competitive fares.

\* In America, the "SkyTeam America Pass" enables passengers to choose 3 to 10 flights between 300 cities in all the American states, from Alaska to South America, at very advantageous price conditions and for a maximum duration of 60 days,

• One-stop check-in for passengers traveling on connecting flights of Alliance members.

• Easier connections thanks to a high-quality international network.

• The guarantee of service quality on all the member airlines of the Alliance, while preserving the cultural identities and specificities of each airline:

\* On every long-haul flight, the possibility of communicating with the cabin crew in English and in the languages of the originating and destination countries of the flight.

\* Varied choice of meals to suit religious, medical or dietary needs.

• **2,000 SkyTeam agencies** all over the world to plan the passenger's trip and obtain information.

Consequently, SkyTeam ranked first among international companies in the "airlines" category of the American magazine Global Finance in its November 2002 issue.

**SkyTeam Cargo**, set up in September 2000, currently includes Aeromexico Cargo, Air France Cargo, Alitalia cargo, CSA Czech Airlines Cargo, Delta Air logistics, KLM Cargo and Korean Air Cargo.

SkyTeam Cargo is the first, biggest and most extensive air cargo alliance in the world.

The strength of this Alliance is at the service of the Indian economy in terms of import and export cargo and contributes to its development.

Aerial view  
of the terminals  
2A, 2B, 2C and 2D  
and of the  
Paris-CDG 2  
train station



## The Roissy-Charles-de-Gaulle 2 Hub

The Paris-Charles de Gaulle 2 hub is one of Air France's main assets.

Indeed, since summer 1995, Air France has offered passengers some **18,000 weekly connections** in under two hours between the medium and long-haul networks, which is more than in Frankfurt, Amsterdam or Heathrow.

Flights are organized in six connecting banks, with a wave of arrivals and a wave of departures which allow for a maximum of connections in the shortest possible time. There are more than **800 daily flights** carrying more than **97,000 passengers** going

through Paris-CDG 2 (arrivals and departures), of whom almost 55% have connecting flights (summer 2004).

In addition to the high-quality services provided by Air France and its SkyTeam partners, the Paris-CDG hub enjoys a privileged position thanks to the development potential of the airport infrastructure: opening of a third runway in 1999, a fourth in 2003, opening of Satellite 3 in 2007, reopening of the boarding pier of Terminal 2E at the beginning of 2008 and the installation of new baggage sorting systems.



Terminal 2F of Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport

On the basis of these developments, Air France aims to build a coherent network comprised of Terminals 2E and 2F and Satellite 3, geared to making the handling of passengers and their baggage more efficient. This combined network will form the core of the Air France hub.

Air France also benefits from air/rail connecting traffic thanks to the location of the TGV station at the heart of its Paris-CDG hub. Opened in 1994, passengers have access to the French “Reseau Express Regional” (suburban rail network) and the high-speed Thalys train (Brussels-CDG connection). The Thalys international service, combining speed and comfort, guarantees excellent connections at Paris-CDG. In 2004, Air France, the SNCF and Thalys carried more than 200,000 passengers using the combined modes of transport.

Today at the Paris-Charles de Gaulle hub, Chinese, Korean, Indian, Japanese, Thai and Vietnamese passengers can request the assistance of our **26 Asian welcome agents** who work under the supervision of a manager and two supervisors. **Four agents** are dedicated to **Indian flights**: Komal Dhillon, Jean Irani, Samira Nathho and Vish Sethi. One of the two supervisors is also a former employee in India, Sunanda Achar.

All these agents not only provide linguistic and commercial assistance to our customers, but are also involved in various other activities.

For instance, they regularly organize information sessions aimed at increasing the awareness of their colleagues, passenger service agents at CDG, of the culture and expectations of our Indian customers.

Moreover, to help further improve the service quality relationship prior to take-off, these agents complete a document known as “flight crew/ground staff synergy” which they submit to the Chief Purser. The cabin crew use this document to identify the Indian passengers on board to meet their needs more efficiently.



Poster from the Air France "ticket" campaign in France in 1983

*Personal  
Experiences*

*Air France  
and the development  
of tourism  
in India*

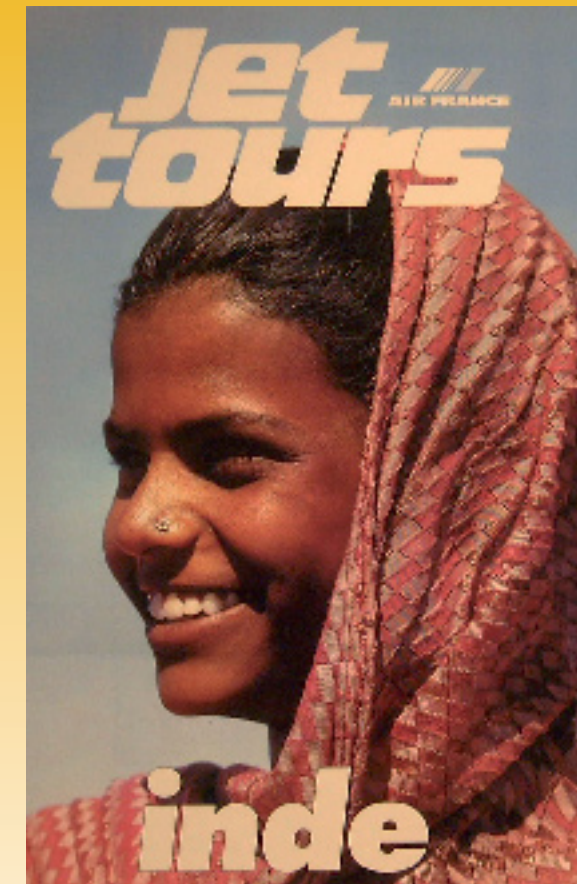
*Rekha Khosla*

*Tourism is an important sector of the Indian economy. India with its rich and varied culture and heritage and the diversity and hospitality of its people is one of the fastest growing favoured destinations in the world. The incredible India brand is now firmly established and has positioned India in a highly competitive market in a strong position. France finds itself at the forth position with 133,445 tourist arrivals in 2004 and this is steadily growing.*

*Air France contributes to the development of our tourism industry through its flights with frequencies and exemplary quality of service. It promotes our destinations in France and in Europe and helps to achieve healthy growth in terms of tourism.*

*On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Delhi flights I would like to express my thanks to Air France and to its continued cooperation in promoting India as a major destination and I wish them all success in their future endeavours.*

*Rekha Khosla  
Director  
Indiatourism Paris*



JET TOURS poster printed in 1987

*Personal  
Experiences*



Arun Nanda

*Loading of pallets  
by the nose door  
of the "Super Pelican"*



*February 26, 1980: delivery of a 19-tonne machine to IPC  
by a Boeing 747 Super Pelican freighter*

*Economic  
exchanges  
between India  
and France*

*For every country in this era of globalisation, that seeks to have its place in the sun, the creation of infrastructure is the key to success. Within the sphere of infrastructure, one of the key elements is linkages by air.*

*Economic relations between France and India have grown substantially over the past two decades and a half. Indian exports have registered a strong growth, resulting in a favorable balance of trade for the sub-continent. Despite a substantial amount of business, the volumes need to grow further and to this end, both countries have to work together to see how they can match their needs and requirements from each other.*

*Presently, there are close to 250 French firms established in India and the number is growing everyday. Success is not merely a matter for big players. Success is largely measured when small and medium companies are ready to establish themselves in another country and are confident and comfortable with the systems and processes involved in doing so.*

*In terms of Foreign Direct Investment, France is the 9th largest investor in India. During the past 15 years, more than 860 economic and financial collaborations have been approved.*

*An organization such as Air France, has a more than valuable role to play in this scheme of things. The frequency of flights and the quality of service have undergone a sea change since Air France started out in India in 1933. The increase in number of direct flights to new destinations in India has also played a large and influencing role in decisions of investment.*

*The IFCCI is proud of the achievements of Air France and its staff and personnel in India and we congratulate them on their 50th Anniversary of establishment in Delhi and wish them even greater success in the future.*

*Arun Nanda  
President  
of the Indo-French Chamber  
of Commerce and Industry*

Sheela Mehta



# The Air France Staff in India

Personal Experiences

The Air France team in New Delhi in 2005



The sales team of Air France New Delhi in 1966, from left to right: V.S. Jain next to Jean Signoret, Regional Manager for Northern India, Ms. France Carter, Mr. And Mrs. Felix Damette, Sales Manager, Kulrag Singh, Mr. And Mrs. Awasti and Vinay Mohindra



November 14, 1955: already half a century ago, the first Air France flight landed at Palam Airport after stopping in Nice, Beirut and Karachi, on its way to Saigon. How far we have flown since!

When they asked me to give an account, on behalf of my Indian colleagues, of our activity at Air France in India, the first feeling I get is that of overwhelming humility: nothing would have been achieved without the strong sense of team spirit and enthusiasm which kept all of us going and which still strongly prevails among our young colleagues.

And then after this humility, came gratitude to all those who helped us in our tasks: the Indian Authorities, of course, travel agencies, clearing agents and the economic and cultural community of India.

Finally it's the sense of pride that strongly prevails in me:

- Pride for the distance we have covered, or as our General Manager, Mr. Dominique Gass says, we have moved on from a status of a simple stopover on Air France's Far Eastern route to that of an autonomous major station of the Air France worldwide network.
- Pride for having contributed to the economic development of India and to bringing our people closer to the rest of the world.
- Pride for having known how to adapt to the continuous changes of the Air France product (aircraft types, airport services, frequencies, etc.) and to the serving of our customers and the Company.

Naturally as in every family, we have had our differences but we have known how to overcome these difficulties in the interest of the passengers from the international Indian air transport and of Air France.

I would like to thank and congratulate all my colleagues and partners, Indians and expatriates. My wish is that Air France continues to follow the path of excellence and success in its services in India, thus bringing India closer to France and the European Union.

Sheela Mehta  
President of the Air France  
Delegation Amicale in India

## Air France welcomes its Indian passengers in Paris: From the pioneer, Nalini Mitra, to today's team



Nalini Mitra

### Personal Experiences

Nalini Mitra, today Nalini de Bellaigue, was the first Indian hostess in Orly in 1971. She describes her experience:

"I joined Air France in New Delhi in 1963 working at Palam Airport and then at the ticket office in Scindia House.

Most of our Indian clients were transiting in Paris, as their final destinations were most often Great Britain, America or Canada.

The quality of transit was an important factor for this clientele as they would be welcomed in their mother tongue. The Air France General Management for India convinced Head Office to start an Indian hostess service in 1971 at Orly, which was AF's main base. Very few Indian personnel spoke French. Having studied in Europe, I was one of the few skilled agents able to speak French and this was the reason why the Company chose me for this post.

I was sent to Paris in November 1971 for a trial period which enabled me to obtain my working permit and my resi-

dent card. This new position required my presence at Orly six days a week to cover a maximum of flights from India.

The three types of Indian clientele arriving from Delhi and Mumbai (although Air France had no flight from Chennai, many of our passengers came from there) were the focus of my attention.

I made sure my compatriots received the warmest welcome. Before take-off, all those passengers received a memo presenting the reception service at Orly with a photo of me wearing a traditional sari (I was used to wearing the Air France uniform in Delhi) and, on disembarking from the aircraft on their arrival, they looked for me (sometimes I had trouble proving my identity when my hairstyle was different from the photo).

Businessmen were a minority among passengers and our sales office always informed me when they were due to arrive. They simply needed assistance with police and customs formalities.

Most of the Indian passengers were emigrants, mainly from Punjab and Gujarat, transiting in Paris before going on to London, Manchester, New York, Chicago, Montreal or Los Angeles.

I saw to their comfort during their transit, gave them their boarding card for their next flight and accompanied them to the boarding lounge. My knowledge of Hindi enabled me to talk to my Indian passengers in Punjabi (Punjab) and in Marathi (Gujarat).

But for some languages like Tamil, we resorted to the international language of signs.

Other types of Indian passengers flying with Air France were students and professors in transit for 24 hours, in the hope of discovering as much of Paris as possible.

To go over the limit of 8 dollars imposed by the Indian currency control, Air France paid for the accommodation of passengers during their 24-hour stay in Paris in compliance with the strict IATA conditions. The Delhi

and Bombay sales offices gave them an accommodation voucher, mainly for the Astra hotel with which we had signed an agreement and which knew their expectations well. As for me, I gave them Air France bus tickets from Orly to the city center (the air terminal at Invalides).

Our passengers and the Indian travel agent network quickly got to know about this welcome service. It effectively contributed to filling up our Boeing 747s, recently introduced in India. Vegetarian food or "Hindu-meals" served to Indian nationals departing from Paris was also a big improvement. When I left Air France in May 1973, after getting married, processes were running smoothly and the reception service for passengers arriving from India was continued. A colleague from Mumbai replaced me...

... Today, at the Paris-Charles de Gaulle hub, there is an Asian reception service with twenty-six agents working under a manager and two supervisors, offering assistance to our Chinese, Korean, Indian, Japanese, Thai and Vietnamese customers. Four agents are dedicated to the India

route flights: Komal Dhillon, Jean Irani, Samira Nathoo and Vish Sethi. One of the supervisors is also a former Air France India agent, Sunanda Achar. All of them are carrying on the tradition by offering linguistic and commercial assistance to our customers. They have since branched out into a number of other activities too, playing an important role in increasing other colleagues' awareness of the culture and expectations of our Indian customers. To this end, they made contributions to a booklet entitled "Namaste, win the preference of our Indian clientele" which summarizes Indian history and culture, and lists the best practices to adopt for these customers.

Years go by, but the personalized reception of our Indian customers still remains..."

Nalini Mitra

First Indian hostess in Paris

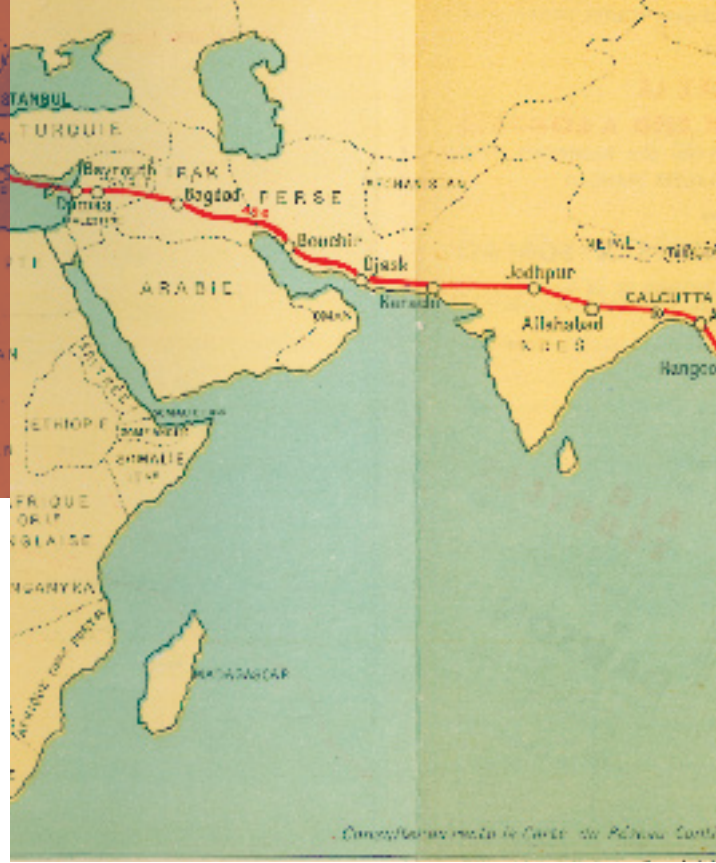


The Indian welcome team at Paris-CDG 2: Messrs Jean Irani, Samira Nathoo, Sunanda Achar (Lead Agents Reception Asia), Komal Dhillon and Vishawjeet Sethi.



*Personal Experiences*

The Air France route map for the Far East (summer 1937)



*From the three-engined Dewoitine 338 (1938) to the four-engined Boeing 707 (1969)  
Pierre CAN,  
30 years of service to Air France's passengers*

*Pierre CAN is an eminent figure in French air transport: hired as a barman in 1938 at the service of passengers of the Dewoitine 338 (the profession then came to be known as steward after the war), he became a steward and subsequently a chief purser, on board the DC4, the Languedoc, the Constellation, the Super Constellation and finally, the first four-engined Boeing 707, ending his career in 1969.*

*Here are some of his memories of Air France's South East Asia Route:*

*"I was hired by Air France in Hanoi in 1938 to look after passengers on board the Dewoitine 338 linking Marseille to Hanoi via India.*

*The Dewoitine 338 was a highly-efficient three-engined aircraft for those days (speed: 260 km/h, range: 1950 km, cruising altitude: 3,000 m) but it could only hold a little load (2,700 kg). For the twelve passengers it transported on the Far East routes, all the barman had was a cool box, 5kg of ice, drinks and some tinned food, amounting to a total weight of 80 kg! This weight excluded all European barmen of an average weight of 65 to 75 kg. Consequently, it was partly because of our weight of 50 kg that eight Vietnamese colleagues and I were selected to provide the service on the Far East route departing from Tunis (my French colleagues provided the in-flight service between Marseille and Tunis).*



Boarding on the Dewoitine 338



Service on board the Dewoitine 338

Service on board the Constellation



In 1938, the trip took seven days, with six overnight stopovers: the first in Tunis, the second in Alexandria after stops in Tripoli and Benghazi, the third in Baghdad after stops in Beirut and Aleph, the fourth in Karachi after stops in Bouchir and Djask, the fifth in Calcutta after Jodhpur and Allahabad, finally the sixth in Rangoon after a stop in Akyab. The seventh day, the flight reached Hanoi after a stopover in Bangkok before carrying on to Hong Kong with a stop at Bayard Fort.

In order to limit the already very long flight time, the barman obliged the passengers to board during the starting-up and heating of the engines (the piston engines of those times needed ten to twenty minutes to warm up ready for the engine run-up and take-off) and just a few meters from the exhaust pipes: they were totally immersed in the aeronautical atmosphere of the pioneers amidst noise, air, smoke, and dust!

These daytime flights mostly followed the coastline routes. This could be very difficult, particularly during the monsoon (cloudy fronts rose up to 9,000 m whereas the ceiling of the Dewoitine 338 was limited to 3,000 m). The 260 km/h cruising speed left raindrops running down the windows.

For the meal, the barman ordered meal boxes for cold meals at the stopovers and served them once the aircraft had reached its cruising altitude. His jump seat hid the gar-

bage can! In the evening, the passengers and crew had dinner at the hotel. The barman made sure that passengers had the luggage they needed for the night, after having disembarked them by means of the aircraft stairs. In Calcutta, we used to stay at the Great Eastern Hotel.

World War II caught us while we were in Tunis. We were transferred to Algiers and then to Marseille. We then provided flights in the Dewoitine 338 equipped with 24 seats and in the Bloch 220 departing from Marseille and Algiers to Tunis, Oran and Casablanca.

The resumption of Air France operations took us back to the Far East Route.

The Constellation (Lockheed L749) used on the route transiting in Calcutta as from 1954, brought huge improvements: the speed of 480 km/h, the capacity (from 34 berth-seats to 68 tourist seats), and a flying altitude of 6,000m with a pressurized cabin. For the passengers' comfort, the cabin crew (usually two stewards and a hostess) had a closet containing prepared meals with starters, cheese and dessert. The hot dishes, in small baking dishes inside thermos boxes were warmed up on electric hotplates. We had to wait for the Lockheed L.1049 Super Constellation equipped with electric ovens to be able to cook food properly and offer meals worthy of good restaurants: numerous starters (caviar, salmon, foie gras), piece of meat cut in front of the passenger and of

course cheese and dessert, the whole served with a selection of vintage wines. At the back of the cabin, these flights offered six berths - two berths for two at floor level and two berths for one above. Making the beds didn't take more than five minutes. Passengers could stay in their berths during daytime stopovers.

New improvements in the service appeared with the Boeing 707 in 1960 and the inflight service reached a new peak with the introduction of Boeing 747. These four-engined aircraft offered the passengers three other advantages: speed - 900 km/h, cruising altitude - more than 10,000 m above the monsoon clouds, and finally the range, superior to 10,000 km, allowing accelerated or non-stop flights, for example between Delhi and Paris.

What a difference between the flights when I started - 5 days between Calcutta and Paris, with thirteen stops in comparison to a current flight operated with a Boeing 747.400, which links Delhi to Paris non-stop in only 8hr 30 min, and in the opposite direction, with dominant winds, in less than 8 hours!"

Flight AF 196 from Delhi to Tokyo on April 3, 1972

From 1972, the phasing in of the Boeing B747 on the Southern Route provided the eight main Air France stations with capacity to...



Flight AF 195 from Mumbai to Teheran on April 6, 1972

... meet the demands of mass air traffic on some of the routes including Teheran-Mumbai and Delhi-Saigon, indispensable...



Flight AF 197 from Delhi to Tel Aviv on April 4, 1972

... for the sales force, as they were key segments for travellers to these destinations. On the Southern Route, India was a must.



## The city becomes a stake

Between two Empires India was subjected to the Afghan invasions, the Muslim power, the non-Muslim States, Franco-British rivalry (1761) and the birth of the Indian Empire (1818); a very tormented period and rich in historical events. The English took Delhi in 1803 and made it the heart of their military operations against the mutinous North West provinces. During the Sepoys' revolt in 1857, the mutineers occupied the city from May 11 to October 20.

## Expansion

From 1912, the British built New Delhi in the South of the old city and on a grandiose plan. It became the capital of the Indian Empire and owed its growth to a strategic crossroads of rail and road routes. It juxtaposed the old historic city in typical Indian style with narrow streets and sprawling bazaars, its monuments marked by centuries of Muslim domination, and the new city, with its extended suburbs, lawns, parks, big official buildings, embassies, 4-star hotels: a mixture of neo-classical design reminiscent of Mogul architecture. Center of trade, tourism, and intellectual life, Delhi represents a self-governing territory of about 1,500 km<sup>2</sup>.

## Personal Experiences

# Aerophilatelic Association of Air France (A.A.D.A.F.)

## Delhi, capital of the East

## Intrusive neighbours

In the first thousand years B.C, a first city, Hastinapura, occupied the site of Dhillika, another city founded during the 11th century A.D., invaded by the Sultan **Muhammad** of Ghor in 1193. Called Firuzabad during the 14th century (Firuz Shah Tughlug), capital of the Great Moguls, it was founded on a former Hindu site, was destroyed and rebuilt several times on the shores of the Jamuna river (Yamuna). From 1206 to 1526, it became the capital of a sultanate representing the first Muslim power of India. **Timur Lang** (Tamerlan) plundered it in 1398. After a short reign from Agra, the Moguls restored

the city to its capital status when in 1648 **Shah Djahan** transferred his court to the city which he had just built and to which he gave his name. This city, Chahdjanabad, became what is known as Old Delhi. The Persian Emperor **Madir Chah** and the Afghan **Ahmad Chah** pillaged it, in 1739 and in 1761 respectively.

Following fighting between the Moguls and Afghans, which went on for thirty years, came the time of the Mogul Empire (1556) until it fell in 1739, with the collapse of **Madir Chah**.

## History revealed in the stone

Old Delhi boasts some beautiful monuments of the times when Delhi was a sultanate and the city of the Great Moguls. In seven successive sites, it offers a unique group of buildings harking back to the end of the 12th century and the middle of the 13th. Among these:

- **Qutb Minar** (1199), a minaret which has been restored several times, it's amazing blend of red stones, next to **Quwwat Al-Islam** (1192) and **Alai Darwaza** (1311), which complete the whole.
- The first Indian mausoleum: the **Itumish** tomb (1231)
- The austere art of the **Tughluqs** (1325)
- Mausoleums raised on a square or octagonal base, opened in hemispherical domes and often surrounded by porticos under the **Sayyids** and the **Lodis**
- The most prestigious buildings dating from the Mogul times include:
  - The Red Fort (1639-1647), a succession of sandstone or white marble pavilions surrounded by a wall,
  - The Great Mosque (1644-1648), **Humayun's** tomb (circa 1564),
  - The Pearl Mosque (circa 1660), the **Jantar Mantar** observatory (circa 1754),
  - The Mausoleum of **Safdarjung** (circa 1754), which announced the decline of the Empire.



French Prime Minister Laurent Fabius flew on board the Concorde on November 11, 1980 to pay a last homage to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Indian Head of State.

## Trading

As always, India has been the crossroads of populations, religious movements, civilizations and trade. A glance at a map shows this.

At the beginning of the 16th century, two external forces imposed themselves on India and changed the face of modern history in Asia: the arrival of the Europeans and the birth of the Mogul Empire.

India has always been the heart of a maritime trade system that links the Middle East and beyond, the Mediterranean world to the Far East, creating a new system parallel to the famous Northern one called "the Silk Route". This system has never undergone decline; it has gone through an intensely dynamic period and multiple changes. Indian merchants from Gujarat were principally in command, at the Arabians' expense, who had dominated it during the

previous centuries. From Aden to Malacca, the hegemony of the **Gujaratis**, who were not exclusively converted to Islam, became more assertive. **Vasco de Gama** and the Portuguese sailors thus found a powerful and well-organized trade network in the Indian Ocean at the end of the 15th century. Gujarat's power on the maritime trade routes didn't indicate any political domination over the whole subcontinent. This thriving and strong sultanate was just one among the vast number of those who had sprung from the Turk-Afghan conquests, with Muslim sovereigns at their heads whereas their population, in the majority, remained loyal to Hinduism except for Sind and Kashmir.

At the start of the winter schedule on November 1, 1994, Air France introduced the first European long-haul aircraft, the Airbus A340-300, on the route to Delhi, thereby implementing a new strategy...



... of developing non-stop service to Asia and the Far East. The technical stamp below shows the main characteristics of the flight.



Drawing by Joseph de Joux, air transport painter

## Modern Times

As the last capital of the Indian Empire, Delhi became the capital of India in 1947. Federal capital, administrative and political headquarters of the Indian Union, Delhi with its 6 million inhabitants, has very active food and chemical industries and is very dynamic in paper mills and textiles (silk).

On November 14, 1955, Air France opened the Delhi station with one weekly flight operated by a Lockheed Constellation. The transition to two frequencies took place in April 1958, and then rose to three frequencies in winter 1961 for the first time with the Boeing B.707.

During summer 1979, the Boeing B.747 "Super Pelican" freighter was the one which provided a weekly flight to Delhi, whereas the following year, passenger services rose from three to four weekly frequencies.

The first non-stop flight departing from Delhi was launched in summer 1982, the same year as the transfer to the new Air France private terminal at Paris-Charles de Gaulle (CDG2).

On November 2, 1984 former French Prime Minister Laurent Fabius flew by Concorde, to the funeral of the Indian Head of State, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, to pay her a last homage.

In 1994, Delhi became a terminal station, with the flight of the first European long-haul aircraft, the Airbus A.340-300 on November 1st: Flight AF178, captain Y. Bigeard, OPL R. Valette and OPL F. Renaud, registration number of the aircraft: F-GNID.

From summer 2000, service to Delhi became daily.

In February 2005, French and Indian Authorities signed an amendment to their 55-year bilateral agreement, which will allow the French airline to develop capacity in India, giving it permission to fly to Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad in addition to Mumbai and Delhi.

The importance of the **fiftieth** anniversary of Air France's presence in New Delhi demonstrates its success in this city and around the country, where the quiet tourist of today has taken the place of the belligerent invaders of the past.

Bernard Abouchar  
A.A.D.A.F.

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