



Perceval, Paris, 1948



*Air France: Seventy years  
in Hong Kong*



Artwork by Hervé Baille, 1938

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**Acknowledgements**

Norman Lo



*Mr Norman LO Shung-man, A.E., J.P.,  
The Director-General of Civil Aviation  
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region*

*Air France has been an integral part of the Hong Kong aviation community since the first flight to Kai Tak in 1938. For seven decades, your professional and dedicated service has played a vital role in supporting the growth of the aviation industry in Hong Kong, shaping Hong Kong into a premier international aviation centre and making significant contribution to the prosperity of Hong Kong.*

*In order to further enhance the competitiveness and service excellence in Hong Kong's air transport system, my Civil Aviation Department will continue to make every effort to facilitate the aviation development in Hong Kong. But our efforts alone cannot lead to the accomplishment of this goal - collaboration with all the stakeholders in our aviation community is crucial. Over the years, I am glad to have established a close partnership with Air France to build a safe and efficient air transport system in Hong Kong. And I am sure that I can continue to count on your support in this regard in future.*

*On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of your air transport link to Hong Kong, I wish to extend, on behalf of the aviation community here, the warmest thanks to your dedicated workforce for your continual contribution to the aviation industry in Hong Kong. And I look forward to seeing the high spirit of your workforce to carry on and lead on to further success as Air France spreads its wings over the world.*

*The Civil Aviation Department of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is committed to a safe and efficient air transport system. It is responsible for exercising safety oversight on civil aviation activities in Hong Kong, providing air traffic control service within the Hong Kong Flight Information Region, and effecting schedule coordination for the Hong Kong International Airport.*

*Air France 747 with World Cup livery at Kai Tak in 1997*



James Tien



*James Tien ,  
Chairman Hong Kong Tourism Board*

*Warm congratulations to Air France on this significant milestone in its long connection with Hong Kong. When the airline's first flight from Paris touched down at the old Kai Tak Airport on 10 August 1938, it did more than bridge our two great cities. Air France helped open Hong Kong to the wider world and over the years has played a significant part in contributing to the growth of its tourism industry.*

*From a weekly flight seventy years ago to the current twice-daily service, Air France has developed into one of the world's biggest airlines bringing valued visitors to Hong Kong from throughout Europe as well as France. The Hong*

*Kong Tourism Board has long recognised France as one of its key source markets in Europe. Last year, arrivals from the country increased by more than 15% to 231,100. But it is certainly not just one-way traffic; the allure of France with its renowned food, wine and culture is attracting substantial numbers of Hong Kong people to discover the joys of visiting France.*

*The Hong Kong Tourism Board looks forward to strengthened ties with Air France, and we take this opportunity to wish all our friends at the airline a very happy anniversary and extend our hopes for continuing growth and prosperity over the years to come.*

Hong Kong Skyline





*One century ago, in 1908, the French Consul General in Hong Kong residence, Old Peak Road*

*Jean-Pierre Thébault*



*Jean-Pierre **Thébault**,  
Consul-General of France in Hong Kong*

*In 2008, we celebrate 160 years of Franco-Hong Kong relations. In 1848, indeed France established its first consular representation in Hong Kong. This was the start of a close relation whereby leading French companies played an important role in the interest of both communities.*

*2008 marks for the 70th anniversary of the first Air France commercial flight from France to Hong Kong. And this early presence corresponds to the pioneering role France has been playing in aviation in Europe and Asia for over 100 years. On 18 March 1911, a French pilot, Charles Van den Born, made the first ever powered flight in China operated with a French Farman IV bi-plane. You can admire its replica in Hong Kong International Airport, hanging from the ceiling of the departures area. In the early 1920's, the first aircraft sold in Hong Kong and China were French-built Bleriot's. In 1923, Charles Ricou launched a regular seaplane*

*service between Macau and Repulse Bay. And, on 4 August 1938, a Dewoitine 338, the favourite tri-motor plane of the then fledging Air France, made the first commercial flight from France to Hong Kong.*

*Seventy years later, Air France is operating two daily direct flights and serves more than 300 000 passengers between France and Hong Kong. The route's astonishing success demonstrates the strong links between France and Hong Kong, an Asian city that hosts the largest French community.*

*In a few years, the new Airbus A380 will be flying in Hong Kong, bearing the proud colours of Air France. The company will so continue to actively contribute to Hong Kong's prosperity and work as a bridge for increased human links between our communities.*

*HAPPY BIRTHDAY AIR FRANCE!*



Jean-Cyril Spinetta



*Jean-Cyril Spinetta,  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of AIR FRANCE KLM*

*On 4 August 1938, Air France extended its weekly service between France and Indochina to Hong Kong. This year, we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of this service.*

*In 2008 we will also be celebrating two other important events: the opening of the French Consulate in Hong Kong 160 years ago, and the founding of Air France in 1933.*

*The 160th anniversary of the official relations between France and Hong Kong demonstrates the interest and history of the ties between our country and that which has now become the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. What better reason could there be for Hong Kong to become one of the first Asian destinations to be served by Air France in 1938, only five years after its inception.*

*Since then, Hong Kong has played a significant role in the development of our Asian network: first, from 1938 to 1996, as an intermediary stop on our routes between Paris and the Far East, then as a destination and origin.*

*This booklet retraces the history of this route and pays homage to all those who have contributed to what Air France is today: 14 weekly non-stop services between Paris and Hong Kong. May I remind you that our partner KLM operates one daily service between Amsterdam and Hong Kong.*

*I would like to briefly recall the flight schedule offered by the Air France KLM Group and its Chinese partners on departure from mainland China. Air France offers two daily flights from Beijing to Paris-Charles de Gaulle in addition to KLM's two daily flights (one of which is operated by our partner China Southern). Air France provides two daily flights out of Shanghai, together with a third daily flight which is code-shared with our partner China Eastern. Our sister airline KLM operates one daily flight out of Shanghai. KLM also operates two weekly flights to Amsterdam from Chengdu. Finally Air France flies three times weekly from Guangzhou, as does our partner China Southern, and all six flights arrive in Paris-Charles de Gaulle.*

*I take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to our success in Hong Kong: the Transport and Housing Bureau, the Civil Aviation Authorities, airport management, the travel agent network, freight forwarders, all the Air France staff in Hong Kong, whether local or expatriate, and last but not least, our customers in Hong Kong who have played a significant part in our expansion through their loyalty and custom.*

*I can assure you all that Air France will continue its efforts to deserve your loyalty and confidence, thus serving the social, economic and cultural development of Hong Kong.*



Frank Legré and Jean-Louis Pinson

## Air France in Asia and Hong Kong

### Message from Jean-Louis Pinson

Senior Vice President  
International & Netherlands Division

### and Frank Legré

General Manager China

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

*In response to the growing demand, Air France and its sister airline KLM are now operating more than 200 weekly non-stop flights to 13 Asian countries, covering 23 destinations.*

*Hong Kong offers brilliant prospects for this development, as traffic has nearly doubled from 27.2 million passengers in 1998 to 46.3 million in 2007.*

*To meet this demand, Air France has steadily increased its offer of flights out of Hong Kong, adding one more flight in 2008 so as to operate two daily non-stop flights to Paris-Charles de Gaulle.*

*This significant growth is logical in view of the long and constructive presence of Air France in Hong Kong. However, even as we celebrate the 70th anniversary of our presence in Hong Kong, 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 in 1930. After its creation, Air France naturally took over that route, before serving Hong Kong in 1938.*

*This commemorative booklet takes a look at that "pioneering period" before retracing the history of Air France in Hong Kong.*

*The evolution of air transport has been spectacular: in 1938, it took seven days to fly from Hong Kong to Paris with 16 intermediary stops. In 1953, the journey from Hong Kong to Paris took 55 hours with six stopovers. Today, the Air France non-stop flight departs from Hong Kong and arrives at Paris-Charles de Gaulle in only 12 hours and 50 minutes.*

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

*Our operations out of Hong Kong have undergone major changes.*

*For a long time, Air France has offered its customers many intermediary stops on its westbound flights including Saigon, Bangkok,*

*New Delhi, Tehran, Tel Aviv and Rome, with Manila and Tokyo on its eastbound flights. Today we offer our Hong Kong customers more than 20,000 weekly connections through out Europe, Africa, and the Americas via our Paris-Charles de Gaulle hub.*

*Our efforts in Hong Kong do not mean that we have forgotten our other routes out of China, where the Air France-KLM group operates, in addition to Hong Kong:*

*departing from Beijing, with 2 daily flights for both airlines (including, for KLM, a daily flight operated on a code-share basis by our partner China Southern); departing from Shanghai, for Air France, 2 daily flights plus 1 operated by our second Chinese partner, China Eastern, with KLM operating 12 weekly flights, departing from Chengdu KLM offers 2 weekly flights and finally on departure from Canton, Air France offers 3 flights and our partner China Southern 3 flights a week to Paris-Charles de Gaulle.*

*Between 2005 and 2008, Air France-KLM has increased its number of flights by 14 additional frequencies to provide a total on departure from China (including the autonomous region of Hong Kong) of 73 flights per week, to which we should add the 10 weekly flights operated on a code-share basis by our partner China Eastern and 7 flights by China Southern.*

*In addition to these non-stop flights departing from China to Paris-Charles de Gaulle and Amsterdam, Air France-KLM has concluded code-share agreements to 33 destinations in China, with China Eastern, China Southern and Sichuan Airlines, not forgetting the agree-*

*ment with Qantas from Hong Kong to 5 destinations in Australia.*

*Along with KLM, Air France is a member of the SkyTeam Alliance, with ten members operating out of Hong Kong.*

*Today, the sales forces of Air France and KLM and the airport staff are combining their efforts in Hong Kong to be able to serve their customers better. Air France also offers a joint frequent flyer program, Flying Blue, giving the loyal Hong Kong clientele a wide choice of services and Miles, enabling them to attain Elite status even faster. With Flying Blue, customers benefit from innumerable privileges before, during and after the flight.*

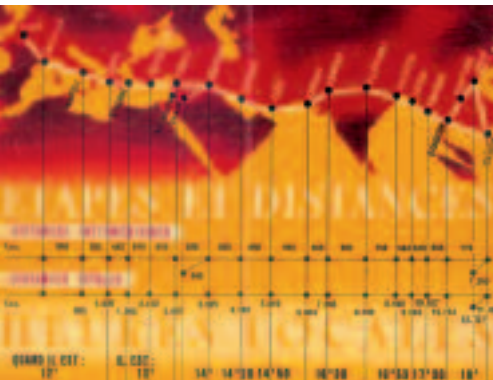
*Air France credits its success and all the fundamentals of its development to the different players in the aviation industry in Hong Kong: the Transport and Housing Bureau, the Civil Aviation Department, the Airport Authorities, the immigration and customs services, the Tourism Board of Hong Kong, the 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 Hong Kong customers by proposing a wide spectrum of products and services.*

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

## Paris-Hong Kong

Year	Flights/ week	Aircraft	Take-off weight (kg)	Cruising speed (km/h)	Flight Altitude (m)	Number of passengers	Number of stopovers	Duration of travel
1938	1	Dewoitine 338	11,500	290	3 000	12	16	7 Days
1953	1	Constellation	47,630	560	5 500	64	6	55hr 00
1967	3	Boeing 707	146,000	900	8 800 to 12 000	152	5	22hr 30
1975	3	Boeing 747 - 200	310,000	900	8 800 to 12 000	360	3	14hr 50
2008	13	Boeing 777 - 300	296,000	890	8 800 to 12 000	310	0	12hr 00



Brochure on services to Eastern Europe and the Far East, 1938.



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



Air France ticket office in the fifties

# The story of Air France in Hong Kong

## Key dates

1

**1911,**  
*René Vallon in China.*

**April 1924**  
*First France-China 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".*

**August 30, 1930**  
*Air Orient is set up through the merger between Air Union, Lignes d'Orient and Air Asie.*



1. Douglas DC4  
 2. Dewoitine 338 at Kai Tak airport in 1938  
 3. Lockheed L.749 "Constellation" (1946-1962)

**May 1932**

*Air Orient* operates a test flight between Saigon and Shanghai, with stops in Nanhing and Hong Kong.

**August 1933**

Formation of **Air France**.  
*Air Orient* is one of the 5 airlines to merge to form Air France.

**March 30, 1938**

Postal agreement on the route between Hong Kong and Paris. Air France signs an agreement for the transport of mail between Hong Kong and Paris.

**August 10, 1938**

Air France in Hong Kong.  
 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. Certain long-haul flights are operated for military purposes only. The RLAFF\* operates one weekly flight between France and Indochina.

\*Réseau des lignes aériennes françaises  
 (French air route network)

**March 23, 1947**

Reopening of the Saigon-Hong Kong service in **DC3**.

**May 14, 1948**

The **DC3** is replaced by the **DC4**.

**Summer 1950**

Air France increases its Hong Kong service with **3 weekly flights**.

**1950**

Air France launches the **Constellation** on its Paris-Saigon routes.

**April 1953**

Air France introduces a direct flight from Paris to Hong Kong, operated with the **Constellation**.

**May 14, 1954**

Paris-Hong Kong-Tokyo, "**Service Champs Elysées**".  
 Air France operates a weekly flight between Paris and Tokyo, with Hong Kong as one of the intermediary stops, using the **Constellation**, with a deluxe service named "**Champs Elysées**".

**1955**

Return of Hong Kong as a final destination.

**June 5, 1957**

The **Super Constellation** in Hong Kong  
 Air France introduces the Super Constellation on its weekly Paris-Hong Kong flight.  
 The Paris-Hong Kong flights are increased to **two weekly frequencies** in the summer of 1958 and three in the fall of 1958.

**1960**

Introduction of the **Boeing 707** in Hong Kong.  
 The new four-engine jet, the Boeing 707, replaces the Super Constellation on the **three weekly flights** to Hong Kong, all of which continue on to Tokyo as from summer 1961.

**April 1972**

The **Boeing 747** in Hong Kong.  
 Air France introduces the wide-bodied long-haul Boeing 747.100 on two of its three weekly flights from Hong Kong to Paris.

**1974**

Hong Kong becomes the **final destination** for the 3 Air France flights.



Boeing 747 landing in Kai Tak

### 1977

All flights from Paris move from Orly to the new **Charles de Gaulle airport**.

All three weekly flights between Hong Kong and Paris are operated with the Boeing 747.

### April 1982

**Shorter** Hong Kong-Paris flight.

Air France introduces a shorter flight between Hong Kong and Paris, with a single stop in Mumbai. All Hong Kong flights now depart from Air France's private **terminal 2A at Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport**.

### April 1984

Introduction of the **Boeing 747 Combi**.

### November 1986

Introduction of a **weekly freighter frequency**.

### December 1991

**Hong Kong Paris non-stop** with the Boeing 747.400.

With the introduction of the latest version of the Boeing 747 - the 747.400 - with a longer range, Air France operates three of its **six weekly flights non-stop** between Hong Kong and Paris.

### 1993

**Hong Kong-Paris daily**.

The increase in traffic boosts the Air France offer on the Hong-Kong/Paris route to once daily, operated with the Boeing 747.400.

### April 1994

All Air France flights to Hong Kong are operated **non-stop**.

### 2001

The technologically advanced **Boeing 777-200 aircraft** comes into service to provide daily non-stop flights between Paris and Hong Kong. The number of freighter flights is increased to four times a week.

### April 2005

Air France offers daily non-stop passenger service between Paris and Hong Kong, with B777-200 aircraft and six weekly freighter flights with B747-400. Two of the freighter flights are non-stop where as the others make one stop.

### January 2006

Air France offers **daily non-stop** passenger service between Paris and Hong Kong with B777-300 aircraft, and five weekly non-stop freighter flights with the B747-400.

### May 30, 2006

With three additional flights, the flight schedule on the Paris-Hong Kong route is increased to **10 weekly**, including three day flights and seven evening flights. All flights are operated by B772.

### June 2007

Starting mid-June, three more day flights are added on the Hong Kong route, taking weekly service to **13 flights**, including six day flights and seven evening flights. All flights are operated with the B772.

### April 2008

Air France operates **two daily non-stop** flights from Hong Kong to Paris-Charles de Gaulle, with the Boeing 777.300.



Poster printed in 1939 showing the Nogués Route, designed by N. Gerale



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

## The pioneers: 1911-1938, the Nogués Route

*The history of seventy years of Air France service to Hong Kong 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.*

### 1911, René Vallon en Chine

*The aviation enthusiast, 15 May:  
"The French aviator René Vallon, who was in China carrying out a series of public aviation experiments and who had piloted flights to Shanghai, died in a fatal accident on May 6. He was flying over Shanghai racecourse when his biplane got caught in winds, veered dramatically, then hit the ground plunging from a height of 200 metres. The pilot was found lying dead under the debris of his aircraft.*

*René Vallon, born March 2, 1880 in Paris, had obtained his licence on 21 June 1910. He had taken part in various meetings and had been in the Far East for about three months".*



Maurice Nogués

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 Issy-les-Moulineaux, on October 14 on board the timeworn **Caudron G4**, arrived in Rangoon 47 days later.

**Pelletier d'Oisy**, who took off from Villacoublay on April 24, 1924, on board a **Breguet 19**, reached Tokyo on June 9, 1924.

On May 18 he flew from Hanoi to Canton and flew the 830 Km trip in 7 hours 15 minutes, then he continued on from Canton to Shanghai on May 20 where he covered 1,240 km in 9 hours 10 minutes.

On landing in Shanghai, the aircraft broke up, landing in a ditch. The Chinese government provided him with a Breguet XIX and he resumed his journey on May 29 from Shanghai to Beijing, with stops for refuelling at Su Tchou Fou and Tsi Nan, a journey of 1,070 Km in 8 hours 50 minutes. He left Beijing on June 2 to reach Moukden after a stopover in Pei Tà Ho and a 4 and a half hour journey covering 605 Kms.

He then carried on from Moukden to Haïdjou on June 3, Haïdjou-Taïkou on June 4, Taïkou-Osaka on June 8, finally reaching Tacurusawa airport in Tokyo on June 9, 1924.

In total, Pelletier d'Oisy travelled 17,837 km as the crow flies, a real distance of 20,146 km in 120 hours, spread over 47 days, including 20 days of flight.

One man particularly influenced this period: **Maurice Nogués**. 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 Nogués.

In October 1927, **Nogués** 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, Nogués performed a test flight lasting 23 days on a Farman 190 between Paris and Indochina.

**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 "hedghop" 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 bigger 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."



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

**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-engine seaplane, the CAMS-53, was operated between Marseille and Beirut for postal services, and a single-engine 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-engine 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.

**August 1933:** Air Orient is one of the five French companies which merged to form **Air France**. Air France resumed the France-Indochina route.

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)."

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.



Arrival in Hong Kong  
of the Dewoitine D338 F-AQBF  
on August 10, 1938

# 3

## Pre-war years: 1938-1940

On **15 July 1938**, Air France carried out a **reconnaissance flight** from Hanoi to Hong Kong. The three-engine **Fokker VII**, piloted by Mr. Corsin, assisted by first officer Mr. Combard, Mr. Mout, radio operator, accompanied by Mr. Pucheu, deputy director of the Hanoi area, reached Hong Kong after a 5-hour flight.

In its press release no. 29 dated 29 July 1938, Air France gave the following information:

**"Marseille - Hong Kong - 15,000 km in seven days**

As of **August 4**, the scheduled weekly mail and passenger service from France to Indochina whose inauguration dates back to January 17, 1931 - will be extended to Hong Kong, a large port and economic hub of South China.

In conjunction with French mail services:

- Departure from Hanoi: every Wednesday,
- Return from Hong Kong on Friday.

This innovation on the part of Air France provides France with connections to the entire Chinese air network:

- to Eastern China, via Hong Kong (CNAC)
- to Central China via Yunnan-Fou (Eurasia - has been operating since January 1938).

Finally, we must remember that Hong Kong is also the transpacific gateway for Pan American Airways, via Manila, Honolulu and San Francisco."



**THE DEWOITINE-338  
IN SECTION**

KE"

- 1 — The pilot
- 2 — Mechanic
- 3 — Wireless operator
- 4 — Forward baggage hold
- 5 — Wireless direction-finding equipment
- 6 — Crew's quarters, soundproofed, ventilated and heated
- 7 — The pantry
- 8 — Refrigerator
- 9 — Check room
- 10 — The cabin, ventilated, soundproofed and heated, for 12 passengers, of whom 11 are furnished with chairs-longues
- 11 — Closets-luggage
- 12 — Separate table
- 13 — Bridge or tea table
- 14 — Hand baggage rack
- 15 — Fixed windows, with sun curtains
- 16 — Door and service leading to cabin
- 17 — Toilet accommodation
- 18 — Rear baggage hold
- 19 — Three 450 H.P. 9-V Hispano-Suiza engines
- 20 — Nozzle exit
- 21 — Exhaust collector
- 22 — Air intake for cabin heating
- 23 — Engine nacelle
- 24 — Wheel half-retracted into the engine nacelle
- 25 — Withdrawal pipe for movable antenna
- 26 — Aerial mast
- 27 — Fixed aerial
- 28 — Tail wheel
- 29 — Running lights
- 30 — Individual reading lamp
- 31 — Adjustable fresh air intake for each passenger
- 32 — The fin
- 33 — The rudder
- 34 — Tail plane and elevator

This new route was made possible by the introduction of a new three-engine **Dewoitine 338**, and presented as follows in a brochure of the time:

"Air France's development of her services towards the East has conditions which are quite peculiar to it. Her object is to provide a gain in time as compared with other modes of transport so that the Levantine States, India, Indo-China and China may be able to participate in the modern rhythm of European life. The line has united, in a practical way, these parts of the world whose terminals are 8,750 miles apart.

A further endeavour has been to make this short link even shorter and more pleasant, maintaining all the charm of a cruise, in short, to provide regular services, with rest and amusement at each port of call.

The Dewoitine 338, with its 12 Pullman seats, its comfort, its high cruising speed —175 miles per hour— and its long flying range —1,242 miles— has made it possible to meet these requirements. It has also helped to further simplify the operation of the service by obviating the necessity of flying-boats from Marseilles to Lebanon, the first section of the line, and to add safety and regularity by using the North African route —Tunis, Tripoli, Benghazi, Cairo— with more uniform climate.

The Dewoitine 338 is a land monoplane, made entirely of metal, and with the following characteristics :  
The cantilever wing, of the thick leading edge type, is well-proportioned, reminding one of the foresail of a fine sailing-ship. The long, wide fuselage carries well at the centre of the wing, and two windows running the length of the cabin flood it with light. The cross-shaped form of the machine, seen in the sky, gives it the appearance of a seagull, its two feet —the retractable undercarriage— delicately folded in order to increase the speed.

**The line from  
EUROPE to the FAR EAST  
unites...**



Artwork by Dufau, 1938



The equipment of the Dewoitine 338 has been planned to fulfil the duties which have already been defined, and account has been taken of the very different climatic conditions along the route of the earth. It will have to fly over very hot countries, where the air is dry and burning ; over others with heavy evaporation, causing violent and sudden atmospheric disturbances... It will have to fly over the fine gold sand of the desert which the wind tosses and scatters ; to conquer the brutal rains of the Indo-China monsoons, and the mists and sudden nights.

Separated from the pilot's cockpit, the cabin is a calm and peaceful island, where life, after farewells made at the airport, takes on the rhythm of a sea passage. First, the business of settling down... the choice of the seat, adjusting the back of the chair, arranging the luggage carrier so that the book, handbag or document may be at hand ; arranging the curtain, settling the amount of air to be admitted by the individual ventilator ; the minute examination of the light switch, the bell... details to bring comfort to the air traveller.

Before lunch or teatime, a cheerful homely sound arises, accompanied by the swift movements of the steward as a meal is served.

The **Dewoitine 338** long-distance mail plane is the equivalent of former Eastern mail boats, which with outspread sails, connected ancient Europe with the lands of the sun. But times are changed, weeks of travel have become days, only a few days, during which the wonderful spectacle of the cradle of civilization is unfolded before one's eyes.

This journey involves no fatigue, no sacrifice of comfort or tastes, it is like a childhood dream."

The Dewoitine 338 leaves **Marseilles** on **Thursday August 4, 1938**. The route is as follows:  
**Thursday:** Marseilles-Tunis 885 km, flown in 3h30, Tunis-Tripoli (Libya) 555 km, 2h, Tripoli-Benghazi (Cyrenaïque) 685 km, 2h35, overnight at the Grande Albergo Bérénice,  
**Friday:** Benghazi-Cairo, 1005 km, 4h, Cairo-Beirut, 800 km, 0h50, Beirut-Basra (Iraq) 470 km, 1h45, overnight at the Shatt Al Arab Hotel,  
**Saturday:** Basra-Bushire (Iran) 380 km in 1h25, Bushire-Jask (Iran), 870 km in 3h15, Jask-Karachi, 990 km in 3h45, Karachi-Jodhpur, 650 km in 2h25, overnight at the State Hotel,

**Sunday:** Jodhpur-Allahabad, 920 km in 3h25, Allahabad-Calcutta, 770 km in 2h50, overnight at the Great Eastern Hotel,  
**Monday:** Calcutta-Akyab (Burma) 635 km in 2h25, Akyab-Rangoon (Burma) 545 km in 2h, Rangoon-Bangkok, 635 km in 2h20, Bangkok-Saigon, 790 km in 2h55, overnight at the Hotel Continental,  
**Tuesday:** Saigon-Hanoi, 1200 km in 4h30, overnight at the Hotel Metropole.

**Wednesday August 10, 1938 : Hanoi-Hong Kong** 920 km, flown in 3h25.

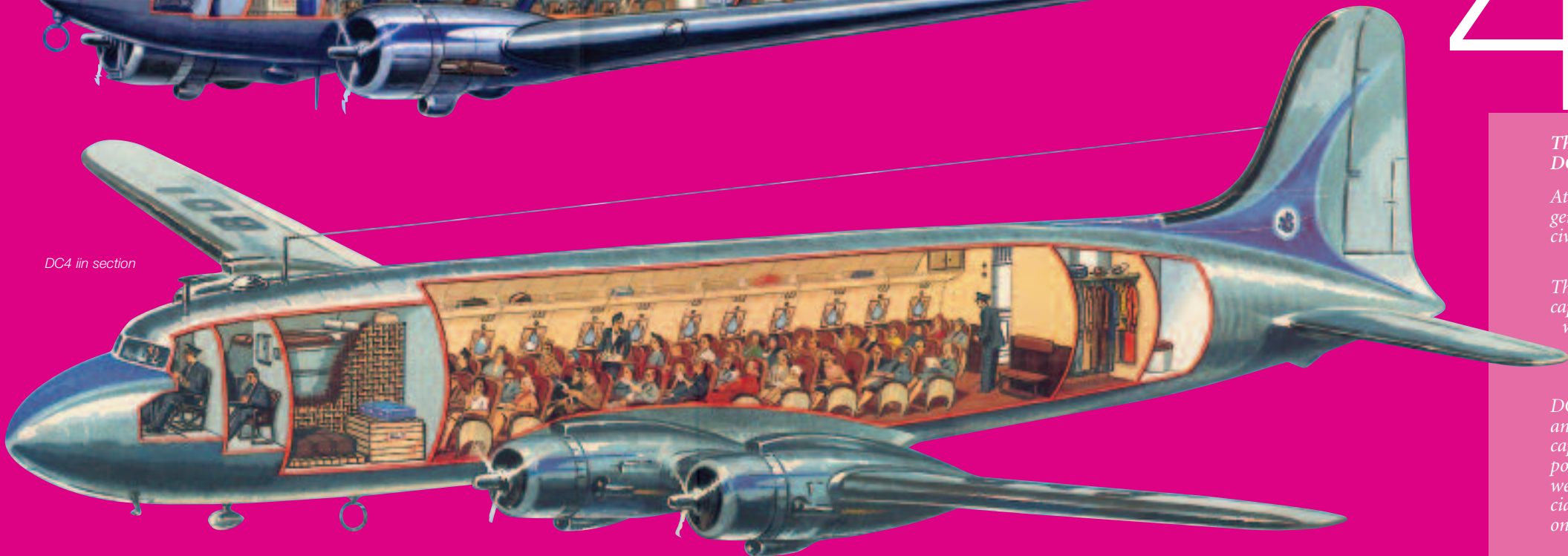
Air France takes care of the meals and accommodation at the ports of call. The departure and arrival hours were given as an indication only and could not be guaranteed. In particular, the Company and its agents decline all responsibility in the case where, because of quarantine or Customs formalities, or any other reason, the Captain of the plane is obliged to delay or postpone departure from a station, or to land at an airport other than that indicated. The return flight from Hong Kong departs on Saturday and reaches Marseille on Thursday of the following week.

The route was suspended in **June 1940**, on the signing of the Armistice.

DC3 in section



DC4 in section



# 4

## Modern times: 1947-2008

### Conventional propeller planes

The aircraft of the immediate post-war period: DC3 and DC4.

At the end of World War II, airlines had the use of resurgent military aircraft, in Air France's case an upgraded civil version of the Douglas DC3 and DC4.

The twin-engine DC3 was the oldest. For a maximum capacity of 32 passengers, its maximum take-off weight was 12,700 kg, its maximum commercial operating range was 2,340 Km at a cruising speed of 285km / h. Its average cruising altitude of 3,000m was similar to that of its big brother (in size), the four-engine DC4. The DC4 was faster, 340km / h at cruising speed, and heavier at take-off, with 28,800 kg and a maximum capacity of 68 passengers on a 3000 km trip. Other points in common between these two types of aircraft were that the cabins were not pressurized and commercial facilities were sparse, limiting the quality of service on board.

**1944-16 November:** the end of the second world war enabled Air France to **resume operations**. Certain long haul flights were operated for military purposes. The R.L.A.F. (Réseau des Lignes Aériennes Françaises, French air route network) operated **one weekly flight** between France and **Indochina**.

**1946 :** Air France was so anxious to immediately resume operations to the Far East, that it started using the first available aircraft: the small and robust **DC3**.

**Saigon** was served **once a week** depending on the route Paris / Marseille / Tunis / Benghazi / Cairo / Beirut / Shaibah / Sharjah / Karachi / New Delhi / Calcutta / Rangoon / Saigon. The duration of the journey was to 118h45min.

**12 June 1946 :** the route was resumed using the **DC4** depending on the itinerary: Paris / Marseille / Cairo / Basra / Shaibah / Karachi / Calcutta / Saigon. The journey took **67 hours**.



Lockheed L 1049 "Super G"  
at Kai Tak airport, 1958

A local network started taking shape out of Saigon, serving cities such as Bangkok, Hanoi, Haiphong and Phnom Penh. Hong Kong was planned for 1947.

**10 January 1947:** a study flight for the opening of the Shanghai route stopped off at Hong Kong. The DC4 F-BBDE was piloted by Mr. Hennequin, with first officer Mr. Gréard and the stopover in Hong Kong went off without a hitch.

**23 March 1947: reopening of the Saigon - Hong Kong route.**

The reconnaissance trip made on March 23 aimed to examine the conditions under which Air France could resume operations of the Saigon - Hong Kong route interrupted during the war from 1939 to 1945.

The DC3 Air France, piloted by Mr. Guibert, with Mr. Moulis, radio operator and Mr. Redon, first officer, led a delegation led by Colonel Laffon, Director of Civil Aviation in Indochina, with Mr. Chadelaud, Head of the Far East Division, and Mr. Hogue, Head of Communications, both from Air France, accompanied by the Consul General of Great Britain and his wife. They reached Hong Kong after a 7hour 45minute flight.

The delegation was received at 4 p.m. by the Director of Civil Aviation of Hong Kong. Even before it had explained the purpose of its visit, the director said that the Anglo-French agreement provided for the operation of this route by both parties and that Air France could operate the route whenever it liked.

As the operation of this route by Air France had been scheduled for a long time, the delegation reopened the scheduled route and confirmed that the next service would operate on Thursday of the following week. The official inauguration took place on May 14, 1947. After paying for exchanging messages between the two radio stations in Hong Kong and Saigon, guests popped the champagne corks 20 minutes after the start of the meeting, a record for concluding such an agreement.

A cocktail reception hosted on March 24 by Air France's General Manager in Hong Kong and Mr Petit from Messageries Maritimes, brought together over 300 guests.

The return trip was made on March 25 in 6 hours 15 minutes (the pilot of the inbound flight used the blind flying procedure to recognize the runway at Kai Tak, explaining the flight time of 7 hours 45 minutes) with the same passengers, and the US Consul General.

**In 1947, a weekly service by DC3** operated the flight from Saigon to Hong Kong via Tourane every Friday, returning from Hong Kong to Saigon, also via Tourane.

The route from Paris to Saigon was faster, with only 5 stops, in Tunis, Cairo, Basra, Karachi and Calcutta, with two nights at a hotel in Cairo and Karachi.

**In 1948, the weekly flight from Saigon to Hong Kong, which still connected with the flight from Paris, was operated by DC4 and extended to Shanghai.**

**In winter 1950, the Lockheed "Constellation"** was put into service on one of three weekly frequencies between Paris and Saigon, reducing flight time to 33 hours. The Air France DC4 provided three flights between Hong Kong and Saigon, two non-stop (Monday and Friday) and one on Wednesday, with stopovers in Hanoi and Haiphong.

**In summer 1951, the three Paris Saigon flights, connecting to Hong Kong, were all operated by Constellations, making all routes between Hong Kong and France faster.**

**In 1952, Air France started working with Air Vietnam, which operated two of the three flights between Saigon and Hong Kong by DC4.**

**In 1953, Air France introduced a weekly direct flight** without a change of aircraft or a night stop between Hong Kong and Paris, by Constellation. The route stopped in Saigon, Calcutta, Karachi, Baghdad, Damascus and Rome.

Three connections, two operated by Air Vietnam and one by Air France, provided flights to Hong Kong from Saigon.

"Super G" landing at Kai Tak, 1958



## The Lockheed family on the route to the Far East

Aircraft	Maximum take-off weight in Kg	Power	Cruising speed km/h	Maximum operating range (km)	Passenger capacity	Average altitude in m.
L 749 Constellation	48,535	10,000 CV	430	3,000	64	5,500
L 1049 G Super G	62,380	13,400 CV	511	6,700	81	7,600
L 1649 A Super Star	70,760	13,600 CV	570	8,500	81	7,700

After the war, Lockheed was the main American constructor manufacturing four-engine aircraft designed for long-haul civil aviation. During the fifties and sixties it produced a high-performing range, the L.749 Constellation, the L.1049 G Super G. and finally the L.1649 A Super Star.

Over and above the greater speed and operating range, making flights longer and faster, the higher cruising altitude limiting turbulence, especially during the monsoon season, the cabin was pressurized and onboard equipment, including ovens for reheating, refrigerators and generous storage space, significantly improved service to passengers.

**On 15 May 1954**, the direct flight from Paris to Hong Kong by Constellation, was **extended to Tokyo**. The aircraft, equipped with sleeper seats, offered a luxury "Champs Elysees" service.

**In summer 1955**, the direct flight from Paris to Hong Kong stopped once again at Kai Tak. The Constellation was equipped with a first class and a new tourist class.

**In summer 1956**, the Paris flight to Hong Kong followed a new route, via Prague, Beirut, Karachi, New Delhi, Bangkok and Saigon.

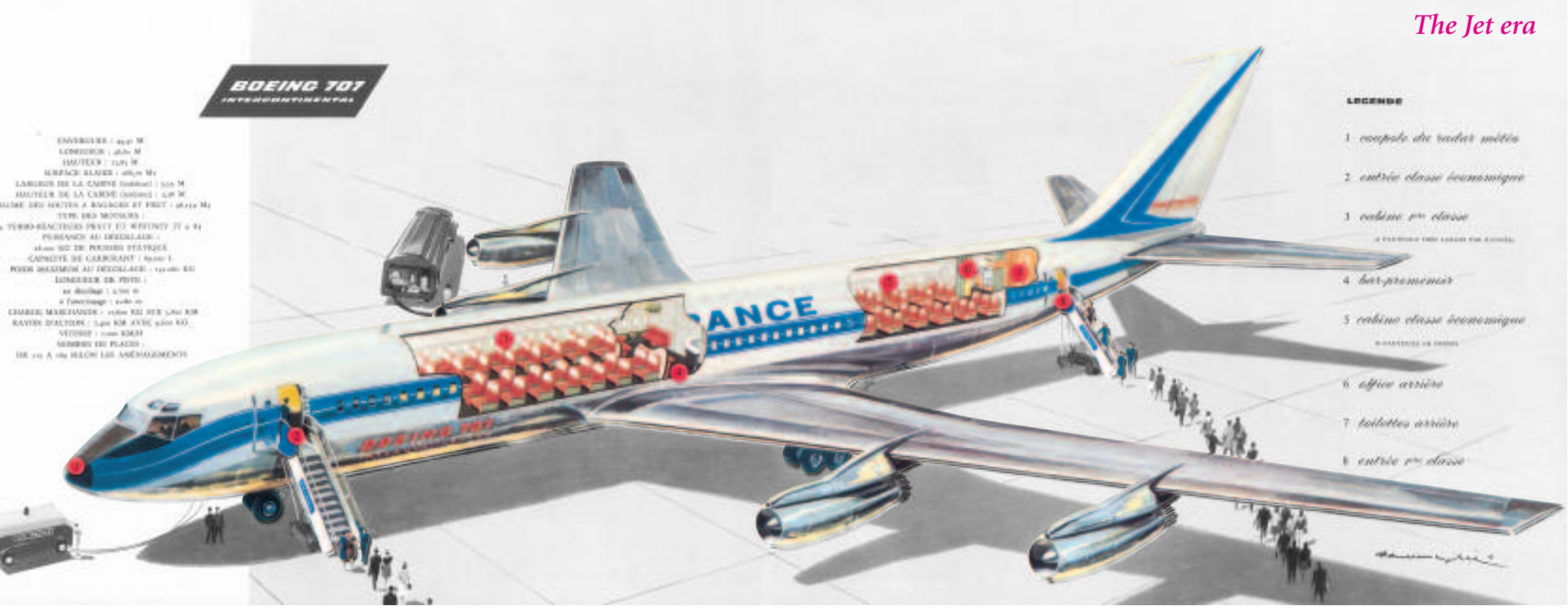
**On June 4, 1957** (arriving in Hong Kong on June 5), Air France launched a **Super Constellation** service between Paris and Hong Kong. This saved two hours flight time.

**In summer 1958**, traffic growth gave rise to a **second direct flight** between Paris and Hong Kong. The additional flight was extended to Tokyo and the two flights were operated by Super G Constellation. The flight terminating in Hong Kong stopped over in Frankfurt, Istanbul, Tehran, Karachi, Calcutta, Bangkok and Saigon.

This increase in capacity continued in autumn 1958, with the launch of a **third** Hong Kong flight, operated in partnership

with Royal Air Cambodia, between Phnom Penh and Hong Kong, with stops in Rome, Tehran, Karachi and Rangoon.

**In winter 1959** Air France joined forces with the French airline TAI to offer **four flights** between Paris and Hong Kong, two Hong Kong terminus flights including one in partnership with Air Vietnam between Saigon and Hong Kong and two continuing on to Tokyo.



In **October 1960**, the introduction of four-engine aircraft, for Air France the **Boeing 707.328 "Intercontinental"**, revolutionized air travel, in comparison with the Super G Constellation (figures in brackets), they flew faster, 950 Km / h (540 Km / h), higher, between 8,000 and 12,000m (7.600m), with a payload of 152 passengers (81). Seat capacity, for the same number of frequencies, was almost doubled. Tourist class changed into economy class.

Air France had already reduced its number of frequencies from four to **three frequencies** to Hong Kong, operated from October 1960 by Boeing 707.

After that, Air France's schedule to Hong Kong progressed thanks to its attractive industrial, commercial and tourist prospects, which its change of status in 1997 did not detract from.

**In summer 1961**, the **three** weekly frequencies from Paris were all **extended to Tokyo**. The routes between France and Hong Kong were all three different: Rome, Athens, Tehran, Karachi, Bangkok, Saigon for one; Rome, Tehran, Delhi, Bangkok, Phnom Penh (in partnership with Royal Air Cambodia for the second ), and Tel Aviv, Tehran, Delhi, Bangkok for the third.

In winter 1963, TAI and UAT, two French private airlines, merged to become UTA, Union of Air Transport, and Air France flights were changed from AF/TI to AF/UT.

As of **1 April 1972**, Hong Kong became the final destination of one of the three weekly Air France flights. One of these frequencies was operated with the new wide-bodied long-haul Boeing, the **Boeing 747**. This was another spectacular addition to Air France capacity, the ability to transport 360 passengers (compared with 152 in the Boeing 707), holds four times larger (149m<sup>2</sup> compared with 42m<sup>2</sup>) and increased passenger comfort, with two decks, two interior aisles, and large baggage compartments in a spacious cabin.

**In November 1973**, Air France again increased capacity, operating two of its three frequencies by 747.

**In summer 1974**, Hong Kong became the terminus for the three Air France flights. On departure from Paris, flights to Hong Kong were transferred from Paris-Orly to the new airport, **Paris-Charles de Gaulle**, north of Paris.



Boeing 777.300 ER

*In 1977, Air France's **three** Hong Kong flights were operated by wide-bodied Boeing 747s.*

*In winter 1981, the **first weekly Boeing all-cargo** frequency by was launched for the winter season.*

*In summer 1982, the growth in traffic between Hong Kong and Paris helped to **accelerate flights** by reducing the number of stops between the two cities: two flights with two stopovers, Bangkok Delhi, Bombay and Bangkok, and one flight with one stop in Bombay, reducing travel time by 3 hours. The flights departed from Paris from the new private Air France terminal, **Paris-Charles de Gaulle 2**.*

*On 1 November 1983, a new Business class was introduced on flights to Asia, "**Le Club**", an intermediate class between First and economy.*

*In summer 1984, Air France introduced a new version of the Boeing 747, the **B-747 Combi**, whose capacity was shared 2/3 for passengers (281 seats including 24 First and 257 economy) and 1/3 for cargo (17 tonnes or 7 pallets of cargo). These B747 Combi were ideally suited to the Hong Kong market, a major exporter of goods, and reducing the number of seats no longer required additional passengers to board at intermediate stops, therefore allowed faster and more comfortable flights with fewer stops.*

*In summer 1985, a weekly cargo westbound flight was started for the season departing from Hong Kong.*

*In summer 1986, the **three** weekly Air France frequencies to Hong Kong were all operated by **Boeing 747 Combi**.*

*In November 1986 a regular service by Boeing 747 all-cargo freighter was made permanent. This was **doubled in November 1987** to follow the expansion of exports from Hong Kong.*

*On 31 May 1987, a **fifth weekly Combi flight** was added by **Boeing 747**.*

*In November 1988, Air France continued its expansion of services from Hong Kong. Air France operated **four** weekly frequencies by **Boeing 747 Combi** and **three** flights a week by **Boeing 747 freighter**.*

*In 1991, Air France introduced the new version of the **Boeing 747.400**, with an improved operating range, allowing **non-stop flights** which were previously unthinkable, including Paris - Hong Kong. By 1 December 1991, Air France was offering six mixed flights from Hong Kong per week including three non-stop flights and three accelerated flights. The 747.400 operating the Hong Kong route was the Combi version, equipped with 16 seats in First, 52 in Le Club and 202 in Economy, with 7 pallettes of cargo at the aft of the main deck.*

*In summer 1992, a **fourth non-stop flight** started operating from Hong Kong.*

*Finally, in summer 1993, Air France introduced a **daily flight** from Hong Kong. In Paris, these flights left from Charles de Gaulle terminal 2A and then later from terminal 2C.*

*After that, Air France continued to improve its offering on departure from Hong Kong.*

*In April 1994, all Hong Kong-Paris flights were **non-stop**.*

*1995, On board, Air France revamped its product offer by introducing **l'Espace Première** or Espace 180, **l'Espace Affaires** or Espace 127 and for economy class, the **Tempo** concept. All seats were changed, and smoking areas and buffet bars introduced.*

*2001, Introduction of the **Boeing 777.200**. The technologically Boeing 777.200 aircraft was introduced to provide daily non-stop services between Paris and Hong Kong. The number of freighters was increased to four times a week.*

*In summer 2005, Air France now offers between Paris and Hong Kong daily non-stop passenger flights with B 777.200 aircraft and six weekly freighters with B 747.400. Of the freighters, two are non-stop and others have one stop.*



1. "Tempo-Economy"

2. "L'Espace Affaires-Business"

3. "L'Espace Première-First"

**In January 2006, Introduction of the Boeing 777.300.**

Air France offers between Paris and Hong Kong **daily non-stop** passenger flights with B 777.300 aircraft and five weekly non-stop freighters with B 747.400.

**On 30 May 2006, 10 weekly flights.**

With three additional flights, the flight schedule on the Paris-Hong Kong route has increased to **10 weekly**, including three day flights and seven evening flights. All flights are operated with B777.200.

**On June 15 2007, 13 weekly flights.**

Starting mid-June, three more day flights have been added to the Hong Kong route, taking the number of weekly service to **13**, including six day services and seven evening services. All flights are operated with B777.200.

**In summer 2008**

Air France offers **2 daily flights** on the Hong Kong - Paris route, providing day and evening services every day of the week. The flights are operated by Boeing 777.200 or the latest version Boeing 777.300. They are all fitted with Air France's new and most comfortable cabin interiors.

The **Boeing 777.200** is equipped with 4 seats in l'Espace Première-First, 49 seats in l'Espace Affaires-Business and 211 seats in Tempo-Economy, while the **Boeing 777.300** is equipped with 8 seats in l'Espace Première-First, 67 seats in l'Espace Affaires-Business and 235 seats in Tempo-Economy. The main features of the 3 classes are :

- seats which convert into a 2-metre bed in **l'Espace Première**, with a real mattress and feather duvet,
- passengers enjoy an exclusively designed seat in **l'Espace Affaires** which reclines flat. The special feature of this seat is its rigid outer shell which protect the passenger's privacy when the seat in front of them is extended,
- the **Tempo** seat reclines 118° for maximum comfort. Each passenger can enjoy the selection of inflight entertainment on his or her own private screen.

**KLM**, Air France's sister airline, operates a **non-stop daily flight from Hong Kong to Amsterdam**.



## The Air France-KLM Group in Asia and Greater China

by Marnix Fruitema,  
Senior Vice President Asia-Pacific,  
Air France-KLM



*Air France-KLM, founded in May 2004, groups two airlines, Air France and KLM, around three core businesses, passenger transport, cargo transport and aircraft maintenance. The main challenge is to generate synergies between the two airlines, which retain their own identity and continue to manage their operational and commercial activities.*

*Fiscal 2007-2008 ends another successful stage in the merger of the two airlines. In four years, operating income has increased almost 3 times, reaching €1.41 billion, with a turnover of €24.1 billion and a net profit of €748 million. During the financial year, 74.8 million passengers chose to travel on the Group's network, benefiting from a wide choice of destinations, exclusive facilities and a range of services recognized for their quality. The Group employs 103,000 agents worldwide.*

*In terms of revenues, the Air France-KLM Group is now the leading global transport company thanks, notably, to the combined power of Air France and KLM networks based, respectively, at the Paris-Charles de Gaulle and Amsterdam. It is also the European leader in its main business, passenger transportation. With a fleet of 543 passenger aircraft in operation, the Group operates 2,500 daily flights to 258 destinations in 105 countries.*

*At March 31, 2008, the Group's fleet comprised 622 aircraft, of which 607 were operational. The main fleet consisted of 408 aircraft, of which 159 long-haul, 16 cargo and 233 medium-haul aircraft including 33 aircraft in the transavia.com fleet. The regional fleet comprised 214 aircraft.*

*The Air France-KLM Group is set to embark on another stage of its integration, with an organization that will enable it to achieve its ambition, and further improve its profitability for the benefit of its customers. In this respect, the Group will offer new routes and continue to upgrade its fleet, services and products.*

*The summer schedule of Air France and KLM posts a 4.6% increase in capacity for summer 2008 in terms of available seat-km (ASK) compared with summer 2007. This breaks down into 5.1% for the long-haul network and 3.2% for short and medium-haul routes.*

*Air France is continuing to expand in Asia (up 7.8% in ASK) with the move to twice-daily service to Hong Kong and Shanghai, and in Latin America (up 6.1%) with an increase in capacity to Mexico and the separation of flights to Buenos Aires and Santiago.*

*For summer 2008, Air France and KLM are offering customers 82 weekly flights between Greater China and Europe via their respective hubs in Paris-Charles de Gaulle and Amsterdam, covering six major cities in the region, namely, Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Taipei.*

*The grouping of the Air France teams (332 agents) with those of KLM (301 agents) has been completed in stations and sales offices since 2007 when a joint regional management team was created, with Frank Legré being appointed General Manager for both Air France and KLM in Greater China.*

*In the spirit of unity, partnership and mutual respect, Air France and KLM will continue to work together and expand their activities in Greater China, further upgrading their services and products for Chinese customers.*

# The SkyTeam Alliance



Aircraft tails of SkyTeam member airlines



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 **eleven international partners**: Aeroflot, Aeromexico, Air France, KLM, Alitalia, China Southern, Continental Airlines, CSA Czech Airlines, Delta Airlines, 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 **2,496 aircraft** in operation, plus **1,255** in subsidiaries, and almost **thirty** large hubs. It offers its **462 million passengers** each year **16,786 daily flights** to **905 destinations** in **169 countries** (August 2008).

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.
- **447 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 ten 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,

In Asia, the "SkyTeam Asia Pass" enables any passenger arriving in Asia with a long-haul flight of any SkyTeam member or in connection with a round-the-world ticket, to visit, within 60 days, and with 1 stop-over 3 to 6 cities of their choice within Asia.

- 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.

- **2,100 SkyTeam agencies** all over the world to plan the passenger's trip and obtain information.

Consequently, SkyTeam ranked first for the second consecutive year among international alliances in the "airlines" category of the American magazine Global Traveler in 2005.

**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 economy of Hong Kong in terms of import and export cargo and contributes to its development.

Aerial view of the new boarding satellite  
connected with Terminals 2E and 2F at Paris-CDG 2



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

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

Indeed, Air France offers passengers **21,000 weekly connections** in under two hours between the medium and long-haul networks, which is more than in Frankfurt, Amsterdam or Heathrow.

Flights are organised in six connecting banks, where a wave of arrivals coincides with a wave of departures, allowing for a maximum number of connections in the shortest possible time. More than **866 daily flights** carrying **100,000 passengers** go through Paris CDG 2 (arrivals and departures), and almost 55% of these passengers have connecting flights (summer 2008).

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 a new boarding satellite in Terminal 2E and the installation of new baggage sorting systems at the beginning of 2008.



In the new boarding satellite :  
 1. relaxation area in the boarding lounge  
 2. boarding area



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.

Passengers travelling to Hong Kong will check in at Terminal 2E, and be transferred to Satellite 3 for boarding via the automated people-mover "Lisa". In Satellite 3, they will find the largest duty-free shopping area in Europe with, of course, all the facilities they need while they are waiting.

The **first class passengers** will benefit from :

- a private check-in area
- a personal escort to the lounge
- a new First Class lounge
- a transfer to the aircraft in a private car
- a personal welcome by the crew

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 "Réseau Express Régional" (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 2006, Air France, the SNCF and Thalys car-

ried 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. Seven agents are dedicated to Hong Kong flights.

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 organise information sessions aimed at increasing the awareness of their colleagues, passenger service agents at CDG, of the culture and expectations of our Chinese 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 Chinese passengers on board to meet their needs more efficiently.

Robert Espérou  
Former Director of  
Air Transport Division  
French Civil Aviation (DGAC)

# The Rooster, the Bulldog and the Dragon

Personal  
Experiences



Mrs Anson Chan,  
Secretary for Economic Services  
and Robert Espérou,  
Chief of Air Transport Services  
Directorate General of French Civil Aviation  
at the press conference  
following the signing of the agreement  
on August 20, 1990.  
At the same occasion, Mrs Chan  
announced the project of a new  
international airport, at Chek Lap Kok.

## Traffic Rights on the Paris-Hong Kong route 1929-2008

In the age of Empires, France (the Rooster) and the United Kingdom (the Bulldog) were already concerned by air links with the faraway Crown Colony (the Dragon).

The first mention of Hong Kong in bilateral talks dates back to 7 August 1929 during a meeting at Gwydr House (Whitehall) between Lord Thompson, Secretary of State for Aviation and Laurent-Eynac, Minister of Aviation. Minutes for the meeting record that "Should the French wish to extend (their) services to China, the authorisation to fly over Hong Kong and to land there would be granted."

In fact it wasn't until 10 August 1938 that an Air France Dewoitine 338 touched down at Kai-Tak airport.

Straight after World War II, one of the first bilateral agreements signed was in London on 28 February 1946 between France and the United Kingdom by Jules Moch, Minister for Public Works and Transportation and Ivon Thomas MP, parliamentary secretary at the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The regime governing traffic rights on the neighbouring network, where destinations were limited and where capacity was split evenly between both two flag carriers, was very different to that governing long-haul routes at the time, which came under more flexible, 'Bermuda' method rules.

Consequently Air France was quick to establish itself in Hong Kong and extend its Indochina route. As early as May 1947, a service between Saigon and Hong Kong via Tourane was opened, using the DC3, which

was then replaced by the DC4. This local service was replaced by a flight with no aircraft change, operated by the Constellation in 1953, then the Super Constellation, and eventually the Boeing 707 from October 1960 onwards.

The authorities in London never presented any difficulty irrespective of whether the aircraft or flight frequencies changed, or if Hong Kong passed from being the final destination to intermediate stopover or vice versa en route to Tokyo or Manila.

It is no less true to say that in return for Air France's services to Hong Kong, no long-haul route, whether to destinations that were part of the French Empire, later the French Union, later still the Community and finally the Independent States, interested the British carriers.

However, they were very anxious to enter the French domestic market. They pressured the British authorities in such a way that the latter realised that Hong Kong was a major advantage that could be leveraged in bilateral talks. The British Authorities were not reticent in wielding this advantage, demanding and being granted concessions concerning neighbouring routes, more new destinations on the domestic French network, adding new British carriers and dispensations to the strict rules regarding evenly sharing capacity between two countries, in exchange for changes in Air France flight schedules involving Hong Kong. In an effort to avoid paying too great

a price for this piece of territory, Air France had recourse to various strategies, which were more or less subtle, including, for example, using Vietnamese or Cambodian rights in joint operations with Air Vietnam or Royal Air Cambodge. Air France even maintained the weekly service disputed with London under cover of an authorisation delivered by the Hong Kong civil aviation authorities. Needless to say this arrangement only lasted for one flight.

The French authorities were reluctantly forced to accept that they must share cross-channel traffic and succumb to market pressure rather than adhere to legal dispositions fixed thirty years earlier.

The situation changed dramatically in the sixties.

On the one hand from 1987 onwards, liberalization in Europe gradually rendered null and void the route tables and evenly shared capacity on routes within the European Union, finally removing them completely on 1 January 1993. In the end, one could say that eventually the United Kingdom succeeded in obtaining what it had been striving for, virtually on a plate.

On the other hand and in the same lapse of time, the perspective of an end to a treaty whereby China ceded Hong Kong to the British in the 19th century gradually modified the way in which negotiations concerning Hong Kong were handled. To begin with the British negotiators included consultants from the Hong Kong Civil

Aviation Authority in their delegation, then they let them conduct negotiations on the agenda concerning the territory, and then finally the British withdrew from negotiations completely.

Negotiations during the transitional phase enabled Cathay Pacific to open a route between Hong Kong and Paris at the start of the 1987 summer season, thus ensuring reciprocal flights to destinations - a better wager of stability where bilateral relations are concerned. Direct discussions between aviation authorities in France and Hong Kong led to the signing of an agreement on 20 August 1990 in Hong Kong. The unique aspect of this agreement lay in the fact that, contrary to all other previous aviation agreements signed by France, and this even holds true today, the Hong Kong agreement was signed between France and a non-governmental entity. In this agreement, the clause that normally stipulates the airline, generally speaking the flag carrier, stipulates the place where Cathay Pacific is established, i.e. Hong Kong. The territory, which in 1990 was a Crown Colony, later became a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China in July 1997.

Since then, the excellent relations between the two Executives Boards of the Civil Aviation Authorities have fostered a remarkable boost in aviation between Paris and Hong Kong that has seen the doubling of traffic over the last ten years.

# View from the cockpit

François Rude  
Former Air France Concorde Captain (now retired)



Personal  
Experiences

Air France launched its first scheduled service to China on 10 August 1938, by extending the Paris-Hanoi route. This route was punctuated with some fifteen stopovers. First, there were the Lioré et Olivier H-242 seaplanes which flew to Beirut stopping in Italy and Greece. After Beirut, aircraft took over from the seaplanes. Then on 28 November 1938, with the entry into service of the Dewoitine 338 between Damascus and Indochina, the route changed. It passed south of the Mediterranean, via Tunis, Libya and Egypt and often varied, as the crew was the same throughout the 7-day trip from London to Saigon. Both crew and passengers stayed in the same hotel, ate their meals together, and when the stopovers took place during the day, they occasionally shared the shade under the wings of the plane.

In Saigon, a crew based in Indochina took over the flight to Hong Kong, with a stop in Fort Bayard, in the French enclave of Kouang Tchéou Wan, opposite the island of Haïnan.

The aircraft used at the time was the Dewoitine 338 F-AQBF, a three-engined plane seating 12 passengers.

On 17 August, the flight was direct from Hanoi and only lasted three hours and twenty minutes, at an average speed of 260 km/h. But just a year later, on 2 September 1939, the service was suspended, only operating when needed due to the outbreak of war and the Japanese invasion in China, which was an increasing threat to Hong Kong.

British air services to Hong Kong took place in seaplanes up to Bangkok or Penang, in the Malay states, and then with a four-engined

De Havilland DH 86 seating 12 passengers. The British clientele preferred to use the Air France flight which avoided the long connection and longer journey if they had to go through Penang.

## When Air France took seven days to fly to Hong Kong

Our traveller, Gerhard Neumann, is a young engineer who has just graduated from a prestigious university specialized in the practical side of engineering, rather like our Arts et Métiers Institute. Hired by Tchang Kai Tchek, he flies with Air France to take up his post in China.

In 1938/1939, between Christmas and the New Year, I went to the Chinese Embassy in Berlin. China and Germany had enjoyed excellent political and commercial relations for very many years. Germany exported modern military equipment to China, in spite of the signing of the Three-Power Pact by Hitler and Mussolini two years earlier with the Emperor Hiro Hito, the mortal enemy of the Middle Empire. It was very convenient for the Nazi regime, if only for the acquisition of foreign currency. Tchang Kai Tchek hired German engineers to train his armies. Incidentally, the Germans ran an airline in China and had built a university there. I was told at the Embassy that if I accepted the post, I would be sure to get out of my military service. I was offered a good salary, half in marks,

half in American dollars, and of course the air trip was free. Instead of seven weeks in a boat from Genoa, Air France would take me to my destination in only eight days... Once I was there, I would have to learn the language with Chinese Southwest Transport Company, the nom de guerre of the Chinese military representation in Hongkong...

I could leave from Le Bourget or from Croydon, and I chose England. I was given a brochure in French and English, which detailed all the sights on the way, and the technical characteristics of the plane I was taking: a Dewoitine 338, among the most modern three-engined planes, seating 12 Pullman seats which could be converted into beds, speed 240 km/h, maximum altitude 4500 m, retractable landing gear, and a flight deck which resembled a ship's gangway...

The crew consisted of a captain, a radio operator, a flight engineer, and a steward, whose only job was to make sure we had fastened our seatbelts and to serve drinks; all meals were eaten on the ground, and the nights were spent in the best hotels...

Our cameras, passports and baggage would not be restored to us until our final destination.

Every morning we were weighed like jockeys and we were seated according to the required centering...

We spent the first night in Marseille, where the refuelling was done by a tanker for the

last time. All other refuelling was to be by hand, using the famous barrels of 159 litres, generally halfway through the day, and the passengers rested after their meals in deckchairs under the aircraft wings. For the overnight stop, each passenger had their own taxi, which hooted all the time, the foot on the accelerator, frightening all the dogs, cows, dromedaries, goats and other pedestrians, which made me feel totally powerless...

We generally arrived sufficiently early to visit the city. Passengers and crew dined at the same table, and when the dessert arrived, the captain told us what time he wanted us to be ready the next day – around 5am – the coolest time of the day. As soon as dinner was over, we went to bed, as the days were getting shorter by one hour a day due to the fact we were travelling east-bound. A twelve-blade mechanical fan and mosquito net provided minimum comfort.

The first stopover was Tunis, the second Benghazi. There I saw four SS officers reconnoitring what would become the battlefield between Rommel and Montgomery three years later. We refuelled in Alexandria and then in Beirut. Our first take-off from Beirut did not allow us to cross the Lebanese mountain tops, and we had to turn back. Later, when it was cooler in altitude, we managed to make it to Damascus. We spent the night at Baghdad. The following stopover was Bassora, where we had lunch under the aircraft wings, then Karachi, where we disembarked in

front of the biggest hangar in the world, built for the British airship R-101, bigger than our Hindenburg, but very much lacking in engine power. The R-101 never reached India, as it crashed on the coast of Beauvais during its inaugural flight in 1930, leading to the death of all the passengers, including the Minister of Aviation.

After a night in Karachi, stopovers in Hyderabad, Allahabad, and finally Calcutta; we spent the night at the Great Eastern, which is, together with Raffles in Singapore, one of the world's best hotels! Then Bangkok, where the captain gave us back our cameras, so that we could take pictures of the Angkor Vat, over which he circled at a low altitude... Finally Saigon, then Kowloon.

This is where the German-Chinese airline EURASIA operated with its three-engined Junkers via China, which was not yet occupied by the Japanese and URSS. Other airlines serving Hong Kong were the Chinese National Aviation Company (subsidiary of Pan American) with its twin-engined DC-2s and DC-3s, which served inland China and Burma, and the weekly Sunderland airliners of British Overseas, finally the Boeing and Martin China Clipper and Yankee Clipper which flew to San Francisco via Manila, Midway and Pearl Harbour twice a week...

## Warring skies over the Far East

After the route was opened in 1938, services to Hong Kong became risky as of 1939, as the Japanese fighters were rather trigger-happy. First the British planes were attacked and damaged. On 8 November 1939, one of them was shot at and in spite of desperate efforts to escape, had no choice but to land on the Island of Weichow, occupied by the Japanese. When the plane was restored to Hong Kong on 21 December, there were 90 bullet holes in the seats and mail sacks.

After the outbreak of war in Europe, all British flights to Hong Kong were suspended.

Then on 7 July 1940, the Dewoitine 338 F-AQBA en route to Fort Bayard with a French-Japanese negotiating mission, was shot down by Japanese fighters.

A last flight to Hong Kong took place in October to bring back the French Ambassador in China to Hanoi. As soon as Pearl Harbor was attacked, Air France stopped all flights to Indochina.

## Return to peace

Flights from Indochina to Hong Kong and Shanghai resumed on 10 January 1947. During the war, the Kai Tak Airport had been a large Japanese base which was heavily bombarded by American planes based in unoccupied China. Rebuilding started up immediately after the Japanese surrender, with the extension and cementing of two runways, until the inauguration of the major 13/31 runway built on reclaimed land. The works started in 1956 and were finished on the scheduled date. The first aircraft could land there on 31 August 1958.

Its opening featured the take-off of three Venom fighters from the Royal Air Force, followed by a Cathay Pacific DC-3, Constellations from Quantas and Air India. But the first jet airliner to land there was the Comet 4 which had come straight from the Hatfield factory.

The Air France Super-Constellation followed shortly after, flying in from Saigon or Tokyo.

## The Hong Kong Kai Tak runway

If ever there was a famous airfield in the history of civil aviation, it was Kai Tak.

Its name comes from two famous people of the city:

Sir Kai Ho Kai was a doctor who graduated from the University of Aberdeen. He founded the Alice Memorial Hospital medical school in memory of his English wife who died shortly after her arrival in Hong Kong.

Au Tak was his business partner.

Together they bought some wasteland, which both men wanted to use for different projects, which never came to anything.

Then in 1925 the Hong Kong Aero Club, which was looking for a stretch of grass, decided to set up their operations there.

Over the years, what was an old airport became an immense parking lot and industrial zone for freight and aircraft maintenance. The runway was extended on reclaimed land, facing the open sea via a narrow gully which was clear of obstacles, between the island of Hong Kong and the peninsula of Kowloon, looking south-east. There were no weight restrictions for taking off in this direction as there were no obstacles.

On the other hand, taking off on runway 31 meant facing the mountain, with a sharp turn to the left immediately after the rotation. There were therefore many more restrictive limitations in this direction than in the other.

As far as landing was concerned, it was another problem!

On runway 31, the approach can be made directly in line with hills on each side. It is therefore very important to be very careful to follow the line of approach.

However on runway 13, because of the hills, the approach cannot be done directly on the centerline. You therefore need to approach the runway at an angle of about 45°, heading towards an orange and white chequered marker on a hill, very much in line with the runway centerline. Once you arrive near this marker, at an altitude of about 600 feet, you can see the runway at an angle of 45°, weather permitting. A turn to the right puts you on the centerline of the runway.

## Routes to Hong Kong

We told you that, during the 1930s, planes had to stop about fifteen times before reaching Hong Kong. Due to technical progress, the operating range increased and the destination could be covered with only three stopovers.

But overflying Russia, Eastern Europe and China was highly regulated and sometimes forbidden. We had to confine ourselves to the southern route, overflying Iran, India, Burma and Thailand before arriving in Viet Nam. In addition, when war broke out in this country, we had to bypass it, which made the trip longer.

In 1974, China opened the Karachi – Peking route by overflying Mandalay in

Burma, via Kunming and Wuan. It was not a very direct route, with wide turns. On the other hand, in 1980, the Kunming – Hong Kong route was opened to air traffic, shortening the Karachi – Hong Kong route by two hours, enabling many freighter flights to avoid the stop in Bangkok. The inauguration of the Paris-Bangkok non-stop flight in 1989 meant that Air France could operate to Hong Kong with only one stop. However, the arrival of the Boeing 747-400 was a major step forward which led to direct flights between Paris and Hong Kong. After tough negotiations with Russia and China, this service was inaugurated in 1996, offering passengers an eleven-hour flight on the outgoing flight and a twelve-hour flight on the return leg. From 1986 to 1999, Air France performed around thirty round-the-world trips with Concorde. Over half these flights stopped in Hong Kong at the express request of the organizers.

The opening of the new Chek Lap Kok Airport in 1996 greatly simplified airport operations.

Christian Desarmes  
Air France Station Manager Hong Kong  
(1993-1998)

## From Kai Tak to Chek Lap Kok

P e r s o n a l  
E x p e r i e n c e s



### Facts and figures

**Kai Tak Airport** was the international airport of Hong Kong from 1925 until 1998. On July 6, 1998, the airport was replaced by the new Hong Kong International Airport at Chek Lap Kok.

Kai Tak is located north of Kowloon Bay. The vicinity is surrounded by rugged mountains. Less than 10 km to the north and northeast is a range of hills reaching an altitude of 2,000 ft (610 m). To the east of the runway, the hills are less than 5 km away. Immediately to the south of the airport is the Victoria Harbour, and further south is Hong Kong Island with hills up to 2,100 ft (640 m).

There was only one runway at Kai Tak, numbered 13/31 oriented southeast/northwest.

The runway was made by reclaiming land from the harbour and had been extended several times since its initial construction. When the airport was closed, the length of the runway was 3,390 m.

Landing at Kai Tak was considered challenging. Depending on the landing direction, aircraft had to pass over densely populated areas in Kowloon at low altitudes. The infamous "checkerboard" approach to Runway 13 involved flying down an ILS-like "Instrument Guidance System," toward floodlit orange and white checkerboard patterns painted on a hilltop. The checkerboard served as the landmark for a sharp 47-degree right turn at about 100-meter altitude to align with the runway -- a marginal manoeuvre at best in a large, heavy jet -- often made more difficult by turbulence and strong crosswinds during the last part of final approach and at the runway.

The low altitude manoeuvre was so spectacular that some passengers have claimed to have witnessed the flickering of televisions through apartment windows as their aircraft approached the airport's landing strip.

The growth of Hong Kong also put a strain on the airport's capacity. The airport was designed to handle 24 million passengers per year but in 1996, Kai Tak had already handled 29.5 million passengers, plus 1.56 million tonnes of freight, making it the third busiest airport in the world in terms of passenger traffic, and first in terms of cargo.

In the late 1980s, the Hong Kong Government began searching for alternative locations for a new airport. After deliberating on a number of locations, the government decided to build the airport on the island of

Chek Lap Kok off Lantau Island.

The new airport was officially opened on 6 July 1998; and in a testament to logistical planning, all the essential airport supplies and vehicles that were left in the old airport for operation were transported to Chek Lap Kok in one early morning with a single massive move.

**Hong Kong International Airport** is colloquially known as **Chek Lap Kok Airport**, HKIA operates twenty-four hours a day, and is one of the world's busiest airports in terms of international passenger and cargo movement. In 2007, HKIA handled 47 million passengers and 3.7 million tonnes of cargo.

The airport was built on a largely artificial island reclaimed from Chek Lap Kok and Lam Chau. The two former islands that were levelled comprise about 25% of the surface area of the airport's 12.48 km<sup>2</sup> platform.

Land reclamation for the airport added nearly 1% to the entirety of Hong Kong's surface area.

Opened on 6 July 1998, it took six years and US \$20 billion to build.

For three to five months after its opening, it suffered various severe organisational, mechanical, and technical problems that almost crippled the airport. At one time, the government reopened the cargo terminal at Kai Tak Airport to handle freight traffic.

On 28 February 2007, a second terminal (check-in facility only) of the airport opened, with a new Airport Express platform opened serving the new terminal.

The airport has two parallel runways, both of which are 3800 metres in length and 60 metres wide, enabling them to cater to the next generation of aircraft.

The two runways have an ultimate capacity of over 60 aircraft movements an hour.

Terminal 1 of the HKIA is currently the second largest airport passenger terminal building of the world

Terminal 1's title as the world's largest was surrendered to Beijing Capital International Airport's Terminal 3 (986,000 m<sup>2</sup>) on 29 Feb 2008.



*Christian Desarmes and airport staff attending a Concorde flight in Hong Kong.*

### ***My personal experience***

*When I was appointed Station Manager in Hong Kong in July 1993, my predecessor handed me a small file named “Change of Airport”. Five years later, when the new airport opened, it became the world’s largest airport passenger terminal building, with a total surface area of 550,000 sq.m.*

*For five years, together with the specialised departments at the Air France headquarters, we worked with the Hong Kong Airport Authority to prepare our relocation. The change of status of Hong Kong into a Special Administrative Region of China in 1997 in no way hampered the preparation process.*

*The move from Kai Tak to Check Lap Kok was superbly organised on the night of 5th July 1998. Each airline had its own meeting point, itinerary, and means of transportation to complete its transfer between midnight and 6:00am.*

*As far as Air France was concerned, we did not have much equipment to move, mostly ramp handling equipment, spare parts and ramp vehicles, together with all our documents and manuals. All our check-in and operations terminals were new and had been installed earlier. For three weeks, we benefited from assistance from six colleagues from CDG. They helped us a great deal when all the airport systems broke down at 10:00am, in spite of earlier trial exercises. We had to go back to the old manual procedures, with paperboard sign-*

*posts! Thanks to the professionalism of our staff, all our aircraft operated with no major disruption, and, after one month, everything was back to almost normal. Since then, many awards confirm the status of HKIA as the best airport in the world. I shall only quote a few of them: Skytrax World’s Best Airport (2001-2005, 2007), Business Traveller Best Airport in China (2006-2007), Center for Asia Pacific Aviation CAPA International Airport of the year (2007) Travel Weekly Best International Airport (2007), etc.*

*I will not forget the measures taken by our General Manager at the time, Daniel Mayran, who helped us obtain optimal facilities for our customers from the Airport Authority. Daniel had set us a goal: to take advantage of this change of airport to make a leap forward in terms of quality of service for our customers in Hong Kong. For instance, the Air France Espace lounge 10 years after its completion at Check Lap Kok, is still among the favourites of our Asian passengers.*

*This goal has been achieved and I would like to thank all the Air France staff and all our partners (customs, police, handling, catering agents, etc.) who made it possible. For me, this experience is unforgettable.*



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



Pierre Can (fifth from left) with his crew under the authority of Captain Fulachier (to his right), at the far right, Joseph Lo, duty Station Manager, at Kai Tak airport in November 1968

*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 flying between Marseille and 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 small load (2,700 kg). For the twelve passengers it transported on the Far East routes, all the barman had was a cold 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 myself 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).*



Deplaning on the Boeing 707



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 Hong Kong, we used to stay at the Peninsula Hotel.

Our flights were seldom full. I remember flying once with only one passenger, an Indian maharaja. The busiest sector of the route was Jodhpur. Hong Kong, where rich Indian passengers flew for business or pleasure.

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 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 6,000 m 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 the Boeing 747. These four-engine aircraft offered 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 for shorter or non-stop flights, for example between Mumbai and Paris.

What a difference between the flights when I started - 7 days between Hong Kong and Paris, with sixteen stops in comparison to a current flight operated with a Boeing 777, which links Hong Kong to Paris non-stop in only 12 hours !"

## Air France and I

Choy Wai Ting



It is not as easy as falling off a log for me to recall something almost a half-century ago, though it plays such an important part in my life. The War had finished fifteen years ago, the general aspect of the Victoria Harbor still remained unchanged and the panoramic view of Central looked just the same as one can see on pre-war postcards which are, unfortunately, very difficult to find nowadays. The centre position of the waterfront is of course the HSBC building, which we used to call Hong Kong Bank. Today, we can still find its two giant bronze lions at the entrance of Forster's new superb architecture, in front of the tramway. Not far from the Bank, on its left, on the top of a colonial building, the sign MESSAGERIES MARITIMES in huge letters could be seen. It was the Sales Representative of Air France before its own office was established in the British Crown Colony. I joined the French National Company Air France in February of 1960 and it is the only place I have worked in my entire life

Before joining Air France, I had been 'working' in my brother's yeong-hong, a sort of trading company, without any particular job. One day, an employee of my brother's company told me excitedly, holding a newspaper in his hands, Sing Tao I think, that the French airways company would establish its own office in Hong Kong and was recruiting staff. He said to me sarcastically: "Since you have been studying in France, I am sure they will employ you. It's good news for you, isn't it?" In fact, in those days, I was interested in nothing but Western literature and painting rather than finding a job to support myself. I was completely in a fantasy world of my own. Not long before, I had published a Chinese translation of Jules Renard's *Histoires Naturelles*, with beautiful brush drawings by Pierre Bonnard. Both Jules Renard and Pierre Bonnard are my favorites. I was a Francophile and always felt easy and free with French people. Besides, as I had a strong intellectual curiosity

JF Choy and former Air France  
colleagues in Hong Kong,  
summer 2008



towards not only Western culture, but of the World as well, I made up my mind to send an application to Air France.

The employment test took place at the main hall of the University of Hong Kong in Pokfulam. A large number of candidates, sixty or even more, took part in that examination. The test contained IQ tests, followed by tests on ability in English as well as French and a simple arithmetic calculation. By the time I finished my IQ questions, a young man still put up his hand asking what and how to do with square, triangle and circle. One of the English tests I still remember is the verb after to stop takes -ing form; I found those questions quite easy to answer. As far as the French test was concerned, candidates were requested to write an article of less than

one hundred words, I wrote something on reading Camus' *l'Etranger*, the winner of the Nobel prize for literature who had just passed away not long before. A failure I had was the last test of the examination on conversion of different currencies, I calculated according to the current rates published on newspaper of the day before which I remembered by heart, when I came across the rates given below on the paper, it was too late. I explained that shortly afterwards to my French interviewer from Tokyo, he smiled and asked me simply if I knew how to use a soroban (Japanese abacus). Hearing the word, I instinctively answered him in Japanese. He just had a silly grin on his face and I realized that he did not speak the language. Not long after I joined the company, the chauffeur of the Representative of Air France, who had hel-

ped distributing questionnaires at the examination, told me that during the examination, a young man had peed on his seat due to nervous tension. I think that our young people of today can neither believe nor imagine how such a thing could happen in those ridiculous old days.

I started my Air France career, as I narrated supra, in the very beginning of the 60s, in the Company's jargon, with *la résa*, the reservations. I was transferred a few years later to the ticketing counter. As Air France had offices in both Tsim Sha Tsui and Central by that time, I was assigned first to the Hyatt Hotel AF counter, with the exotic Chungking Mansion across the street, later I was moved to the fabulous Mandarin Oriental Hotel AF counter, facing the Ice House Street. All these lasted for quite a long time. Finally I was promoted to the Promotion/Publicité department until my retirement a quarter of a century ago.

Raymond Yao and  
Florence Calla,  
Regional Manager  
Hong Kong  
and Macao



# The Staff in Hong-Kong

*P e r s o n a l   E x p e r i e n c e s*



AIR FRANCE KLM  
city office staff  
(september 2008)

August 10, 1938: more than half a century ago, the first Air France flight landed at Kai Tak Airport after seven days and eighteen stops. How far we have flown since!

When they asked me to give an account, on behalf of my colleagues, of our activity at Air France in Hong Kong, 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 Hong Kong Authorities, the French Consulate, the French Chamber of Commerce, of course, travel agencies, cargo forwarders, various airport handling agents and the economic and cultural community of the Territory. 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. Legré 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 Hong Kong 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.
- Pride for being able to go through the difficult period of the Asian financial crisis, the SARS epidemic... and keep growing together with the Hong Kong residents.

Naturally as in every family, we have had our differences but we have learnt how to overcome these difficulties in the interest of our international passengers and Air France in Hong Kong.

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

Raymond Yao  
Amicale Air France, Hong Kong.



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