

KLM: The World's First Airline

In 1919, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines was founded. KLM is Dutch for Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij (literally: Royal Aviation Company). KLM is the oldest airline in the world. It also gives its name to the oldest international scheduled service operated by any airline under the same name. In 1920, made its first scheduled flights between Amsterdam and London - service that it continues to provide to the very present.

In that first year - when flying was still very special - KLM transported 345 passengers and 25,000 kilos of mail and cargo. That is very different today. On a single Boeing 747 flight, KLM can carry more than 400 passengers and 20,000 kilos of cargo (including mail). Also, for the sake of comparison, in 2007, KLM carried 22 million passengers and 650 million kilos of cargo.

From the very start, KLM spread its wings and grew rapidly. In 1924, the first KLM plane departed for Indonesia (which was a Dutch colony) and to its capital, Batavia - now called Jakarta. Unlike now, it was an adventurous trip which took weeks to complete. These days, the trip takes about 15 hours! The Amsterdam-Batavia route became part of KLM's regular scheduled service in 1929. In 1934, KLM crossed the Atlantic Ocean for the first time, to Curacao. Following the Second World War, in 1946, KLM was the first European airline to start scheduled service across the ocean to New York.

In 1960, KLM acquired its first jet planes. Airplanes with jet engines were no larger than earlier aircraft types with propellers, but they could fly faster, and that shortened travel times. For the first time, it was possible to go just about anywhere in the world within 24 hours. The first Boeing 747 made its appearance in 1971. It was called a "jumbo jet" because it was so much bigger and could carry so much more in the way of passengers and cargo than anything that had gone before.

Since the 1980s, cooperation between airlines has been a simple fact of life. By working together with other airlines, a carrier can offer passengers more destinations to which to travel. Since 1989, KLM has been working together with Northwest Airlines.

In 2004, we took an enormous step by merging with Air France. And, although the two companies work very closely, KLM still flies around the world under its own, familiar name. [<http://www.klm.com/corporate/en/about-klm/information-school-talks/students-history.html>]

