

100  
YEARS OF  
COMMERCIAL  
FLIGHT

Small world:  
**big future**

1



A 23-minute flight over Tampa Bay, Florida, on 1 January 1914 changed the world. It marked the beginning of commercial aviation, the brainchild of three visionaries:

- Percival Fansler, an entrepreneur who saw commercial opportunity in the technology of flight
- Thomas Benoist, who built the aircraft
- Tony Jannus, who piloted the plane to its destination

But it was a fourth person who made their vision a reality—by purchasing a ticket. Abram Pheil paid \$400, the equivalent of \$9,500 today, in an auction for the privilege of being the sole passenger on the first commercial flight.

Not long after, however, one-way tickets regularly went on sale for \$5. It took only slightly longer for the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line to cease operations, highlighting a challenge that the aviation business continues to face to the present day.

There was, however, no turning back. Air travel was off and flying as a business and from a single aircraft, a solitary route, and a lone passenger has grown into an industry that transports 3.5 billion passengers every year on more than 50,000 routes; boasts a global economic footprint of \$2.4 trillion annually; ships \$6.8 trillion worth of air cargo yearly; and supports 58 million jobs worldwide.

In the past 100 years, more than 65 billion passengers have traveled by air. And the world has benefited from the advent and advance of commercial aviation. Economies have thrived, cultures have been experienced and exchanged, families and friends have been reunited—all thanks to air connectivity.

That, really, is what the story of commercial aviation's first century is all about: the opportunities that flying has made possible for people.

Accordingly, IATA marked the centenary by engaging people, directly and through the media, in conversations about the impact that aviation has had on their lives. Their comments testify to a century during which the barriers of geography and time were diminished by an industry that has made our once big world small and that has a yet bigger role to play in the world's future.

## Leadership comments

I see airlines as a force for unity and co-operation among nations. Extending our horizons physically and intellectually, whilst always aware of their responsibilities to our environment. They will surely shape the future as they've shaped my working life.

**Michael Palin, Actor and travel documentary maker**

I recall the thrill of my very first flight in 1954 aged ten.... The memory includes a very close-by church steeple and gripping my mother. As an international lecturer, I use [planes] worldwide and very often on a weekly basis.

**Sir Ranulph Fiennes, Explorer**

Each time I step into a commercial aircraft, I think of my family and how much fun it would be

to see them travel the great distances in comfort to places that they have read about—places that I saw from space and now enjoy exploring from a closer perspective. For as the world evolves, so will the view out the window. It should not be missed.

**Roberta L. Bondar, Canada's first female astronaut**



To this day I still marvel at the machines that fly. Getting the right plane with the right passengers, crew, food and luggage and doing it hundreds of times a day to near perfection: magic.

**Richard Quest, Anchor, CNN**

[I remember] flying on the new Boeing 707 in the 1970s to university in America. That was when I discovered the splendid, meditative solitude of looking at clouds for hours on end. It was the beginning of my love story with

commercial flying: it opened up the romance of travel for me as a young person.

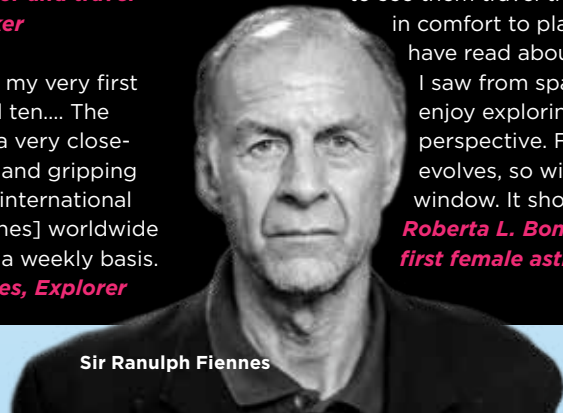
**Ho Kwon Ping, Executive Chairman, Banyan Tree Holdings**

Aviation is not just about the airline business, it contributes significantly to the economic development and prosperity of the cities involved. It is thus vital for the cities—and their countries—to recognize that and ensure their policies support and facilitate the development of aviation, in an open and fair environment.

**Philip Chen, Managing Director, Hang Lung Properties Ltd.**



Ho Kwon Ping



Sir Ranulph Fiennes

**T**hroughout the year of aviation's 100th anniversary, IATA invited people to comment online about what aviation means to them. A number of world leaders also took the time to express their thoughts on the importance of commercial flight (see appendix A).

The first time for me was 2005 when I traveled with Qatar airways from Sudan to Malaysia through Doha. It's awesome.

**Badreldin**

Every time I take a plane, I remember how human beings are capable of doing the impossible. I am not going to share my first experience, as every time is a first experience to me.

**Tareq**

## Sparking a friendship

When I look at my Facebook Newsfeed I see friends' faces from all over the world; people I never would have had the chance to meet had we not boarded a flight and taken a chance to explore a new place.

**Kate**

My first flight was around 2002, from Nanjing to Guangzhou. At that time, people still used paper tickets to check in.

**Hongmei**

My first flight was in 1990 to Paris on a Soviet Aeroflot TU154. I will remember it all my life...especially the smell of freedom in Charles De Gaulle airport! I'll never ever forget that amazing smell mixed with French perfume.

**Vytis**

My first flying experience was at the age of 11 in a brand new 747 owned by Sabena, Belgium's airline. The flight brought us from Brussels to New York. I can still feel the excitement when I saw the New York skyline coming closer and closer... an image I will never forget.

**Carine**

## Memories of a first flight

When I was 16 years old in 1975 I took my first flight ever, Dublin to Shannon on board an Aer Lingus 747—the true and original Jumbo Jet. It is true what they say—we do not remember days, we remember moments.

**Patrick**

The first flight experience that I can recall was when I was about seven. I can't remember the flight itself, but I do remember the feeling I had of boarding an airplane on a cold winter day in Russia, and next day arriving to a hot summer day in Zimbabwe.

**Mila**

My best, most beautiful flight was December 1970. It was my first from Argentina to Paris in France. Only three or four passengers were flying. Since then I've visited a lot of different places around the world. Flying is the best thing that can happen to you.

**Nancy**

The 100th anniversary of commercial flight attracted extensive media coverage from around the world.



To conclude the campaign, children were invited to submit their ideas on what flying will be like in 100 years' time

I didn't realize that everyone going to work on my summer camp was also on the same flight, and we'd actually been put in seats next to each other! Twelve years later I'm still friends with some of them.

**Richard**

Connecting with friends overseas is a wonderful privilege that aviation has afforded us in recent decades.

**Chris**

Children today are able to see, smell, and taste food that comes from all over the world. This surely is something to celebrate. I believe it brings us closer to cultural diversity and through that a greater understanding and appreciation of the world as a community. I celebrate the chicken tikka sandwich.

**Rosebud**

A number of airports displayed information on the anniversary. Geneva airport branded an entire bus!



As a child of an army officer who was often stationed abroad, I went to boarding school and had to travel for a number of years as an unaccompanied minor. With hours before flights spent in a holding lounge trying to be grown-up and highly sophisticated, you often struck up friendships with your fellow "Dilbert-badge" wearers. One of those friendships has lasted over 25 years and was absolutely born from a mutual thrill of flying without parents and the love of air travel.

**Abby**

## ***Favorite food from around the world***

It's amazing what sort of food we can access the world over thanks to air cargo. I wouldn't be able to make my favorite Corsican dish without Brocciu [cheese]. Don't even get me started on the list of wines to go with the cheese, another truly global commodity!

**Victoria**

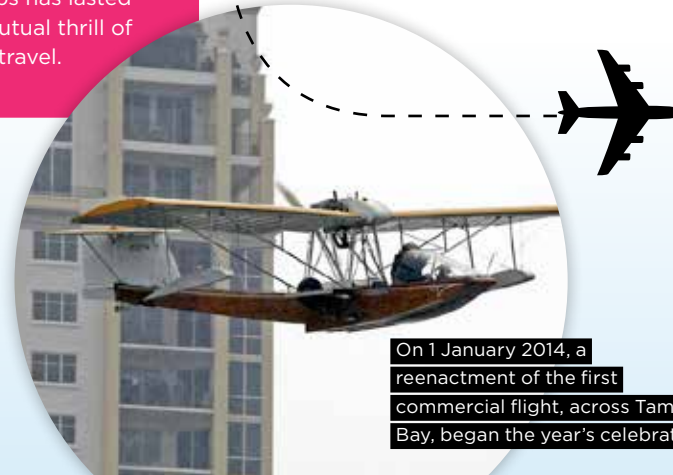
## ***Family flights with special memories***

One of my fave memories was taking my niece for her first flight on a girls' holiday with my mom and sister to see our grandparents. She was quite little at the time and was surprisingly easy to travel with. She was very happy and very fascinated by the sights and sounds and all the people in the airport and in the plane. It is a sweet memory.

**Kate**

When I was 8 years old, in 1960, I flew with my parents on a Lockheed Electra II from Dallas to Washington, D.C. I remember the stewardess (as they were then called) let me open the passenger door when we arrived. It was one of the formative experiences leading me to become a pilot myself.

**Ed**



On 1 January 2014, a reenactment of the first commercial flight, across Tampa Bay, began the year's celebrations.

It was only in my second year of working that I managed to sponsor the whole family for a trip. It was a memorable moment for me to see them getting excited, and they couldn't stop looking out of the window. "This plane...it seems like it's not moving," dad tells his backseat passenger. I just chuckled with mum, glad that there wasn't turbulence to freak them out.

**Ain**



## Appendix A: Letters from Leaders

Letter from Celso Amorim,  
Minister of Defense, Brazil

I first boarded an airplane in 1953 from Florianopolis to Rio de Janeiro. At the time, I could hardly imagine the revolutionary impact flying would have on my profession.

The airplane has changed forever the speed of diplomacy.

When it comes to building trust and negotiating agreements, there is no substitute for human interaction on the international scale.

Diplomatic mediation requires much coming and going with ideas and proposals.

In my tenure as Foreign Minister of Brazil under President Lula, there were a number of times when I thought a particular mission would not be possible. But the airplane made it happen. I once visited 10 countries in the Middle East in 10 days!

More than 50 years later, every time I board an airplane, I can't help looking at the future of aviation with excitement.

The relation between man and the air machine, demonstrated by the first time in Paris, in 1906, by my fellow compatriot Santos Dumont, might just be in its beginning, and a new future of speed, of safety, of comfort, and of range of travel might just be ahead of us.

Fly us there!

Letter from Benigno S. Aquino III,  
President of the Philippines

My warmest greetings to the International Air Transport Association as you celebrate International Civil Aviation Day.

Human ingenuity has allowed us to rapidly reach new horizons and transcend our limitations. It has been 100 years since the first commercial passenger flight took to the skies, marking the beginning of a revolution in transport. Since then, our nations, economies, and societies have become permanently less distant. Without the tireless work of the engineers and designers who dared to imagine and consistently pushed the envelope of this field forward, travel by air would have remained an unpredictable and expensive endeavor.

Civil aviation has likewise played an integral part in bringing equitable progress to the Philippines. It has allowed us to convey a greater message that we are a growing market ripe for investment, and that our locales are among the best destinations in the world for people to discover.

I am confident that your industry will remain vital partners in ensuring that our agenda of inclusive growth is realized. May you continue to innovate and allow your breakthroughs to connect us even more intricately in the name of advancement and prosperity.

I wish you a happy and meaningful celebration.

Letter from Anthony R. Foxx,  
US Secretary of Transportation

Thank you for your letter asking me to share my thoughts on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the first commercial airline flight.

Commercial aviation has contributed greatly to the economic and social development of our Nation. It has redefined opportunity and geography for our citizens. From traveling home for the holidays to the overnight delivery of time-sensitive goods, commercial aviation is an integral part of everyday life and commerce. It links businesses worldwide, accounting for \$1.5 trillion of economic activity and almost 12 million U.S. jobs.

The first 100 years of commercial flight moved 65 billion passengers across the globe. Predictions are that an additional 65 billion passengers will fly in the next two decades. To meet this challenge, we must modernize our air traffic system to ensure industry-leading standards for both capability and performance. That's why we are committed to working with industry to deliver the Next Generation Air Transportation System, or Next Gen. We also must continue to use risk management principles to improve safety by better targeting our efforts and resources.

And all stakeholders must strive to provide leadership globally to foster collaborative, cost effective efforts to enhance the safety, efficiency, and sustainability of commercial aviation.

## Letter from Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada

I am pleased to mark the 100th anniversary of the first commercial airline flight.

Commercial aviation has changed our world for the better. Destinations once weeks of travel apart can now be reached in hours. For a country as vast as Canada, this has been of enormous significance, as previously isolated regions are now accessible year round. Commercial flights have also played a vital role in shaping our prosperity by enabling trade and tourism in a truly global marketplace.

The next century of commercial aviation will bring new technologies, new destinations and new possibilities. Canada is proud to play a leadership role in this essential industry. I extend my best wishes to all involved in commercial aviation from ground crews to pilots to the passengers en route to every corner of our globe.

## Letter from Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, to Flight 2014, Inc., the organizing body of the centennial reenactment ceremony on 1 January 2014

I am pleased to join all those celebrating the 100th anniversary of commercial flight. America has always been a nation that empowers visionaries and entrepreneurs, and for generations daring men and women have pushed our boundaries and kept America on the cutting edge of innovation. One century ago a pilot and a passenger aboard a small plane carried this tradition forward by successfully completing a flight on the world's first airline. This short trip from St Petersburg to Tampa ignited an industry that changed the way we travel, and helped lead to today's interconnected world.

As we celebrate this remarkable achievement in the history of aviation and the life of our nation, let it inspire us to continue the important work of testing the limits of our times. While we cannot predict where innovation will take us, this milestone serves as a reminder that when bold ideas unite with a spirit of discovery, the sky is no limit.

## Letter from Lee Kuan Yew (1923-2015), First Prime Minister of Singapore

I congratulate the aviation community for reaching this milestone of 100 years of commercial flight.

I remember fondly the Singapore Airlines Concorde flights that allowed one to have a late breakfast in Singapore and lunch in London on the same day. But we have yet to overcome the sonic boom that so greatly affected the economics of supersonic flights so air travel today remains subsonic.

Air travel has catalysed and transformed the world we live in. It has allowed businesses and markets to become more integrated, fostering innovation and economic development. By exposing more people to the world, it has broadened our horizons and improved our wellbeing and quality of life. As Asian economies develop and mature, more people will take to the skies for the first time. I am confident that air travel will continue to bring people closer together and enable countries to grow and prosper.