



PRESS KIT  
2024

**LIVE AND LEARN**  
**ABOUT THE AIR AND SPACE**  
**WITH UNIQUE COLLECTIONS**

MUSÉE  
**AIR +**  
**ESPACE**  
AÉROPORT PARIS – LE BOURGET

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## 1. CENTURY-OLD COLLECTIONS ON A HISTORICAL SITE



Located at Paris-Le Bourget Airport – Europe’s number one airport for business flights – the National Air and Space Museum of France is one of the world’s foremost aeronautical museums, in terms of both age and the wealth of its collections. Founded in 1919, it showcases an extraordinary range of historical artefacts and memorabilia spanning the three branches of flight: ballooning, aviation and space. Today, the museum is a public institution under the supervision of the Ministry for the Armed Forces, with “musée de France” (Museum of France) certification.

It was here, on this airfield opened in 1914 to defend Paris, that commercial flights began operating to Brussels and London as far back as 1919 – making Le Bourget one of the world’s earliest airports. Steeped in legend, the site bears witness to the history of aviation. In the interwar period, Le Bourget played host to the departure or arrival of some one hundred incredible aeronautical exploits. In 1927, the airport was where Nungesser and Coli took off in their Levasseur PL8 aircraft named *L’Oiseau Blanc* (The White Bird), bound for New York. The landing gear of this mythical plane forms part of the museum’s collections. A week later, crowds of well-wishers flocked to Le Bourget’s runway to hail Lindbergh’s successful transatlantic crossing from New York to Paris, at the controls of his Ryan NYP *Spirit of St. Louis* – the museum has kept pieces of fabrics once covered the plane. Costes and Bellonte’s Breguet 19 TF, named *Point d’Interrogation* (Question Mark) made the first flight from to New York from Le Bourget in 1930. Two years later, aboard the Couzinet 33 *Biarritz*, Charles de Verneilh, René Couzinet and Max Dévé pulled off an astounding achievement, by flying all the way from Paris-Le Bourget to Nouméa, in New Caledonia – the most remote destination ever reached at that time.



## THE MUSEUM IN 10 KEY DATES

**1919:** an aeronautical preservation association is founded in a hangar in Issy-les-Moulineaux, following the proposal of Albert Caquot, a pioneering civil engineer in this speciality. It is called "Collections de l'aéronautique" (aeronautical collections).

**1920-1921:** the collections are moved to the Chalais-Meudon establishment of military aeronautics after flooding.

**1936:** with space running low at Chalais-Meudon, part of the collections are moved to Paris, Boulevard Victor (15th arrondissement). The name "Musée de l'Air" (Air Museum) is adopted.

**1939:** the museum closes to the public and the exhibition gallery at Boulevard Victor is partly destroyed by bombing. The Chalais-Meudon collections do not reopen to the public until 1960.

**1973 onwards:** the collections are gradually united at the mythical Le Bourget airport and the new Air Museum is inaugurated on 27 May 1975.

**1981:** commercial flights cease, and Le Bourget airport is henceforth reserved for business aviation.

**1983:** the Air Museum unveils its "Space" gallery going back over the conquest of space, and becomes the "Musée de l'Air et de l'Espace" (Air and Space Museum).

**1994:** the terminal is listed on the additional inventory of historical monuments.

**2019:** on 9 December the museum turns 100 and unveil its new "Grande Galerie", located in the Labro's air terminal. Permanent exhibitions dedicated to pioneers and Great War are featured in a new scenography.

**2020:** restored to its 1953 architecture, the control tower in activity until 1993, reopens its doors.



## 2. A HISTORICAL AIR TERMINAL WITNESS TO ART DECO ARCHITECTURE

### THE BIRTH OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S EARLIEST AIRPORTS

In 1914, an airfield was created for the Paris military camp, between Le Bourget and Dugny, with the aim of protecting the capital from German aerial bombing. As the war drew to a close, freight aircraft and postal carriers took off from Le Bourget's airfield and, from 1919, the site began operating the first ever passenger flights between Paris and London. By 1920, there were five commercial aviation flights between Paris and major European cities.

To cater to the growth in traffic, between 1920 and 1924 five enormous hangars were built alongside the runways as the first airport-style facilities, heralding the future airport. The adventurous passengers of the first commercial flights flocked to Le Bourget Airport to try out this new means of transport which, though risky and an uncomfortable ride, was so thrilling and modern!



Le Bourget in 1937

### AN "AERIAL PORT" EXEMPLIFYING 1930s ARCHITECTURE

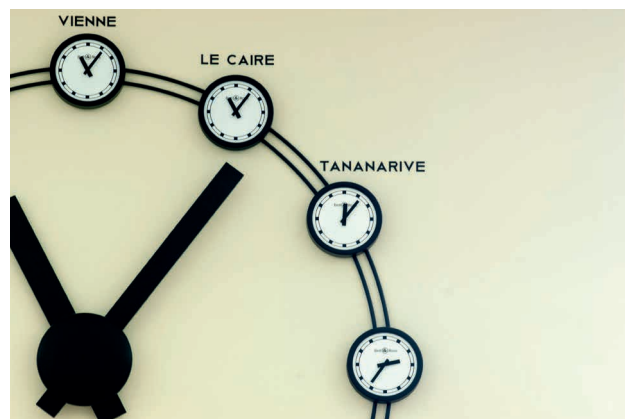
In 1935, 96,000 passengers traveled through Le Bourget airport, the Government officially named it "aéroport de Paris" (Paris Airport). This new status gave it a new profile, and a new building worthy of this new showcase for France became necessary. The architect Georges Labro was selected following the competition organized by the Air Ministry and was commissioned with designing a building that would be

exhibited at the 1937 World's Fair. He outlined an ambitious project—for a building "open to the sky and to the imagination". Modernity, luxury and comfort were the key words behind the architectural project. The building's appeal was staggering: by 1938, 140,000 passengers had passed through the terminal! The inclusion of terraced seating for spectators would prove to be a powerful aeronautical propaganda tool at a time of mounting international tensions. By giving the public this privileged view over the runways, the Air Ministry had an effective showcase for the French aeronautical industry.

### A MAJOR RENOVATION TO GO BACK IN TIME

During World War II, Le Bourget was taken over as a German base, and concrete runways were laid down. The bombings destroyed much of the original terminal, which was rebuilt almost exactly as before by Georges Labro in 1946, and completely demolished the control tower, which was rebuilt from scratch in 1953, when the Paris Air Show was hosted at Le Bourget for the first time. Amid the development of civil aviation at Orly Airport from 1946, and the opening of Roissy-Charles de Gaulle in 1974, commercial flights ceased at Le Bourget. The collections of the National Air and Space Museum of France were relocated here from 1973.

From 2012 to 2019, major restoration work gives the original volumes back to the terminal as it was 80 years ago. Visitors can now access the historical terminal like passengers used to do and board for a journey back in time.





### 3. THE TOUR OF THE MUSEUM AND ITS COLLECTIONS



#### The Hall of the Eight Pillars

As soon as the front door passed, “Arrivals” and “Departures” signs with 1930 lettering set the décor: immediate boarding to the historical terminal! The Hall of the Eight Pillars become again the main entrance. The imposing clock surrounded by its twelve mini clock faces indicates the world’s time zones, just as it did back in the day.



**Dupuy-de-Lôme airship basket**, a 19<sup>th</sup> century arm-powered airship basket

#### The Pioneers Hall

The “Pioneers of the air” exhibition offers a journey through time, from the first ascent in a balloon to aviation. Rare items, wooden and canvas aircraft, wicker airship baskets and ancestral kites bear witness to the time of trial and error and the first spectacular flights.

Beyond the technical details, the exhibition also endeavors to show how the air phenomenon captured society’s imagination at the time. Paintings, posters, decorative arts and jewelry give an idea of the sheer fascination the power of flight held in people’s minds and the extent to which it ushered in a new way of seeing and portraying the world. The very first airships in history, airplanes from the early days of aviation and the hydro-airplane – the ancestor of the seaplane – have become national treasures.



**Oil on canvas Voisin brother's workshop in Billancourt**, François Alaux, 1908, a painting depicting aviation's Belle Époque



**Santos-Dumont Demoiselle**, one of the first mass-produced airplanes



**Charles and Robert Balloon “Charlière” clock**, an example of “balloon mania” at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

## The Great War Hall

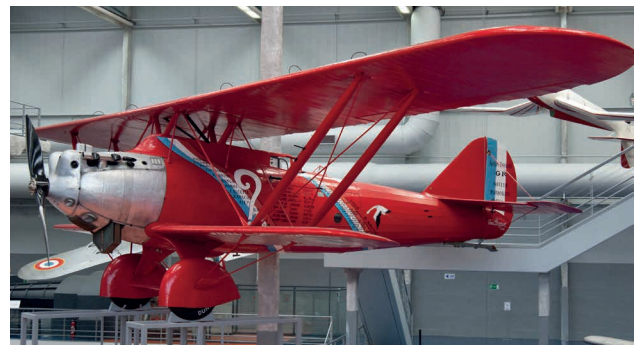
Pre-1914, aviation was regarded as a spectacularly elegant motorsport that appealed to the masses. From 1910, the French army began purchasing aircraft, training aviators and getting them to take part in its annual exercises. It was still a long way from adopting Clément Ader's prediction that "whosoever is master of the air will be master of the world" though, only assigning an as-yet minor role to aviation. But as the start of the Battle of Verdun in 1916, it became clear that without air superiority, there is no hope for significant advantage on the ground. From that moment, airplane established itself as a unique weapon, transforming the war, modifying doctrines, organization and fighting methods. This second part of the exhibition goes back over the main chapters in this revolution – shedding light on the growing significance and role of aviation and aeronauts.



**Nieuport Type XI bébé**, an aircraft emblematic of the World War I fighters

## Interwar Hall

Aircraft in the Interwar Hall tell the history of the great long-distance aviation challenges. Costes and Bellonte's bright red plane *Question mark*, which they flew from Paris to New York, is an eye-catcher. The landing gear of Nungesser and Coli's plane, *The White Bird*, which was lost at sea, gives a moving reminder of just how dangerous these adventures were... Another unique showpiece, the fuselage of a Farman F-60 Goliath provides a glimpse of the very basic comfort of the first airliners in history – back in the 1920s.



**Bréguet XIX TF Super Bidon Point d'Interrogation**, the first aircraft to fly east-west from Paris to New York



**Douglas C-47 Skytrain**, one of the most produced aircraft in history

## World War II Hall

This overview of World War II fighter aircraft presents the famous Supermarine Spitfire, a symbolic combat airplane of the Royal Air Force, can be seen alongside the equally famous Douglas C-47A Skytrain also known as Dakota. Visitors climbing aboard the C-47, which was deployed extensively during the Normandy Landings, will be immersed in the uncannily realistic atmosphere of the Allied parachutists back in the day – noise, stress and all.





### Normandie Niemen Hall

Rounding off the World War II collection, the permanent exhibition on show in the Normandie-Niemen space delves into the incredible history of a unit of the Free French Air Forces, fighting alongside the Soviets against Nazism: the Normandie-Niemen fighter regiment. The Yak 3 is one of the highlights of the hall, last aircraft used on the Soviet front which landed at Le Bourget on 20 June 1945 when the regiment returned to France.

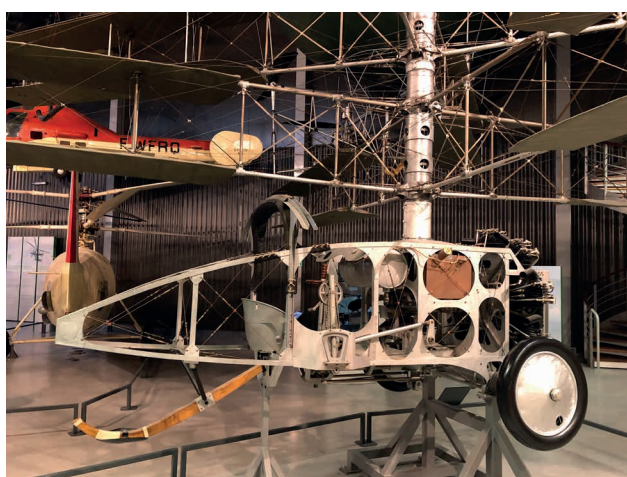
**Yakovlev Yak-3**, the last existing original aircraft of the Normandie Niemen Group

### Cocarde Hall – French military aviation

Visitors can continue their discovery of military aviation with the displays of aircraft that the French Air Force has used from the 1950s until today. One of the star exhibits is a Mirage 2000 (Dassault), a multirole fighter jet that equipped the French Army from 1984.



**Dassault Mirage 2000-01**, prototype of one of the current French Air and Space Force aircraft



**Pescara helicopter**, beginnings of helicopters

### Helicopters Hall

Spanning several eras, the hall gives pride of place to helicopters and gyrocopters, which became familiar sights in the civil and military aviation landscape. Visitors will enjoy admiring a whole host of strange machines attesting to human ingenuity: from Oehmichen's helicostat no.6, dating from 1935, to the *Cierva C8-2* – the first autogiro to have crossed the Channel – to the *Alouette III* of the high-mountain rescue squad of the French Gendarmerie, which saved countless lives.



**Dassault Mystère IV A-01**, the first French fighter to break the sound barrier



**Concorde F-WTSS et Concorde F-BTSD**, the 001 prototype of the legendary supersonic airliner and the record-breaking Concorde Sierra Delta

## Space Hall

With the Space collection, visitors are transported far beyond the Earth's atmosphere... The exhibition embraces the full history of mankind's conquest of space, taking in the sounding rockets, Ariane programme, the Apollo missions, a Soyuz T-6 capsule used by Jean-Loup Chrétien, the first Frenchman in space, as well as his original flight suit.

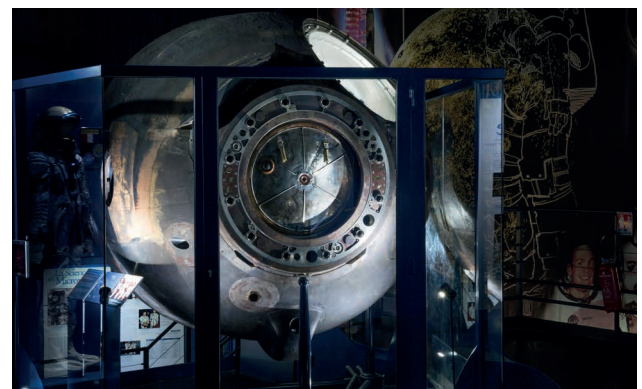


## Prototype Hall

The Prototype Hall sheds light on the technological leaps and bounds of the years immediately following World War II and the age of the jets (transition from propeller aircraft to jets). Visitors can marvel at the metal fuselages of ever more sophisticated prototypes. These include the research aircraft *Leduc 010*, designed to be released from an aircraft carrier, the *Triton*, the first French jet aircraft, and the *Mirage III-V-01*, a vertical take-off and landing prototype aircraft.

## Concorde Hall

The only place in the world to board two Concorde, the Franco-British supersonic legend. An exhibition also tells the story of the 1973 Concorde eclipse flight.



**Capsule Soyuz T-6**, a genuine spaceship and one of the few objects to return from space



## Tarmac

This outdoor space features dozens of civil and military aircraft to discover naval patrol to airliner evolutions from 1950 to today with emblematic aircraft such as Mercure 100, Boeing 747 or Airbus A380. Two full size models of Ariane 1 and 5 rockets have been erected on the tarmac by the European Space Agency (ESA), the French National Space Studies Centre (CNES) and Arianespace company for Paris Air Show in 1979 and 1995. .



**Boeing 747-128**, the *Jumbo Jet*, the aircraft that revolutionised air transport





## 4. WORKSHOPS AND ACTIVITIES TO COMPLETE THE VISIT

### LIFE SIZED EXPERIENCES

#### Boarding pass

Climb aboard 4 mythical aircraft! Discover the hidden sides of Boeing 747 and of the two Concorde, experience D-Day from the Dakota.

#### Planetarium (available in French only)

A journey through the starry sky, well known but mysterious. Without cloud or light pollution from the cities, visitors are comfortably seated and invited to listen to a specialist to explore universe's mysteries.

#### Control tower

Restored to its 1953 architecture and in use until 1993, it is now the first and only control tower in the world to be open permanently to visitors. On the 4<sup>th</sup> mezzanine floor, what a breathtaking sight: the panoramic view over one of the runways of Paris-Le Bourget airport for business aviation with, in the distance, the Eiffel Tower and Sacré-Coeur...



Tower control



Planetarium



### MORE AIR AND SPACE KNOWLEDGE

#### Media and games library

The media and games library invite the visitors to travel to a new world of air and space knowledge, free access included in the museum entrance fee.

#### Guided tours (available in French only)

For all ages, several guided tours are organized, during 1.5 hours, to discover the museum essentials or thematic tours.



## FOR FAMILIES

### Planète Pilote

In this area, the National Air and Space Museum of France treats kids to a thrilling experience together with their parents or supervisors. Here they can spend a whole hour imagining what it's like to be a pilot, an astronaut, a steward, a hostess or a passenger. They can venture into the cockpit of a small tourism plane or a huge Airbus A320, stow luggage away in an airliner or fill the engine with kerosene, watch an airport in action from a control tower, ride a bike in a space station to keep fit, slip into an astronaut's suit or spot the different planets in our solar system... What better way to learn about the world of aeronautics and aerospace than by experiencing it for themselves?

### The cocoon space for babies

Intended for babies (0-3 years), this place is made to offer a break to children and their parents during their visit. Breastfeeding space, games, changing room... a baby friendly experience!

### Family workshops (available in French only)

Several thematic workshops are offered to kids from 6 years old, where they craft an air balloon, a helicopter model or learn why a plane is the safest transport in the world!



Planète Pilote



Guided tour

## 5. A CENTENNIAL MUSEUM DRIVEN BY TRANSFORMATIONS

First cultural institution in Seine-Saint-Denis thanks to its visitor's number, the National Air and Space Museum is a must-see location constantly evolving to better face visitor's expectations and society's changes.

From 2025, the museum will unveil a new permanent exhibition dedicated to air navigation and air control. This unique project called NAVACA will take place in the control tower, to present the missions of air control and navigation basis. With the French Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGAC) as the main partner, new acquisitions and learning materials will be on display in June 2025.

With the subway line 17 from the Grand Paris Express project expected by the end of 2026, the museum will be ready to welcome more visitors, thanks to an easier access to the museum, who will discover a rich cultural agenda and new experiences.





## USEFUL INFORMATIONS

### MUSÉE DE L'AIR ET DE L'ESPACE

Aéroport de Paris – Le Bourget  
3, esplanade de l'Air et de l'Espace  
93350 Le Bourget

### OPENING HOURS

The museum is open every day except Mondays,  
between 10am and 5pm from 1 October to 31 March  
between 10 am and 6pm from 1 April to 30 September

### HOW TO COME

By car: 10 minutes from Paris by A1, exit 5 "Aéroport du Bourget"  
With public transportation: bus 350, or subway line 7 + bus 152, or RER B + bus 152 or bus 610

### ADMISSION FEES

Museum entrance: 17€ (Check-in + Boarding pass), free under 26 years old  
(except Boarding pass to visit the planes)

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Get access to archive pictures related to aeronautics history and figures, as well as museum collections:

[mediatheque.museeairespace.fr](http://mediatheque.museeairespace.fr)

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