

Alexandre de Juniac is Chairman and CEO of Air France-KLM. Since 2013, he has launched a major plan to build a profitable group, strengthening its partnership with Delta Air Lines.

Together they operate the largest transatlantic joint venture, exemplifying the vibrant business ties between France and the U.S.

## PILIER D'OR 2015 ALEXANDRE DE JUNIAC

Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, Air France-KLM

### THE ART OF TRAVELING Paris-New York, the legendary Air France Route

By Jean-Christian Agid

On the route between the city of lights and the lights of the Manhattan skyline, Air France has had a long tradition of creating elegance, glamor, and an experience to remember. "A true art of traveling," explains Air France-KLM Chairman and CEO, **Alexandre de Juniac**.

#### Is there an art of traveling?

Of course. It has always been one of the core ambitions of Air France, which embodies a French-style art of travel. Both on board and on the ground, the travel experience that Air France offers its customers is a reflection of French know-how.



It is through these precise qualities and a caring attitude that the company's unique personality is brought to the fore.

**At a time when most airlines try to limit their work to actually flying their customers without creating an experience to remember, is it a necessity for Air France to be different?**

I would even go as far as saying that it's our duty. The exceptional diversity of our historic and cultural heritage makes it necessary.

For close to a century, Air France has been an ambassador for French values including the art of living, creativity, and hospitality. These values set us apart and we will continue to cultivate this quality.

**Air France has a long tradition of working with contemporary artists. Roger Bezombes—whose lithographs are currently being exhibited at FIAF—but also Jeff Koons, Nikki de Saint Phalle, Keith Haring, and Pierre Soulages to name a few. Why has an airline decided to associate itself with contemporary art?**

Air France has always called upon great artists to use avant-garde works to represent both the company's audacity and sense of refinement.



**Where are these art works exhibited?**

At Paris-CDG, the *La Première* lounge has been designed by the architect Didier Lefort as a genuine collector's home where Air France exhibits art each quarter.

The large paintings of Zao Wou-Ki adorn the walls of the flight crews' departure lounge at Paris-CDG. Even on board—Air France offers a digital art gallery on the A380!

**Once again, Air France has decided to work with New York street artist JonOne. What will he create this time?**

For our second collaboration, we have entrusted JonOne with the task of redesigning Air France's precious emblem—the famous accent that characterizes the company's logo.

In line with its tradition of making bold artistic choices and permanently seeking modern inspiration, Air France has decided to share this original creation with its passengers by displaying it as a sticker on one of its aircrafts. A Boeing 777 will crisscross the skies for a year sporting this supersized accent that measures close to 4 by 7 meters.

For JonOne, this new work symbolizes the French flag, portraying the value of freedom around the world.

**Which city will be the first to welcome this Boeing 777?**

The first destination served by this aircraft will be New York, the artist's city of origin and a legendary and historic route for Air France.

**Why has the Paris-New York route been so important in the worldwide network of Air France destinations since its launch on July 1, 1946?**

Air France has made this leading destination a showcase for all its innovations since its pioneering role in the launch of the route in the 1950s. The Boeing 747 taking off in 1970, the Concorde in 1977, and the introduction of the A380 in 2009 are just a few of the many milestones that have marked Air France's history in New York.

Last year, Air France chose New York as the first destination on which to offer its customers the comfort of its latest cabins.

In December, Air France also inaugurated its fully redesigned lounge at the heart of JFK airport's terminal 1.

A way of reminding us—72 years after the first landing on American soil—that it's still the star of the show, with seven daily flights in each direction, including two on a code-share basis with Delta.

#### **How many seats do you offer to and from New York everyday?**

Paris-New York is the company's leading route in terms of capacity. This season, Air France has over 4,000 seats available on this route every day.

#### **Take us back to the first flights between Paris and New York operated on a DC-4 and then a Lockheed Constellation.**

Imagine the 1st of July 1946. It's noon in New York when the Air France Douglas DC-4 from Paris-Orly landed at La Guardia airport. A historic flight of 23 hours and 45 minutes with two technical stop-overs—in Shannon, Ireland and Gander, Newfoundland, Canada. At last, the two cities were officially connected in less than 24 hours. Air France achieved this feat with 33 passengers on board.

The liberation and reconstruction effort brought together the United States and France, and the booming relations between the two countries led Air France to increase the frequency of its services (two weekly flights in 1946; one daily flight in 1954) and to ensure this "star ribbon" route paved the way for every possibility of refinement and innovation.

For over ten years, a fleet of Lockheed Constellations, equipped like palaces, ruled the Atlantic. Starting in 1953, every Thursday evening, a luxury Parisian special service departed on an L-1049 "Super Constellation", which featured sleeper compartments, lounges, and a bar. This was the golden age of propeller aviation. Air France bridged the gap between Europe and the new world, creating a path between the Eiffel Tower and the Manhattan skyline which fueled economic, political, and cultural exchange between two of the western world's most influential cities.

From Broadway to the Champs Elysées, movie stars including Orson Welles, Audrey Hepburn, and Alfred Hitchcock flew Air France and readily posed for the company photographers at the foot of the jetways.

#### **Then came the Boeing 707 in 1960 on which passengers were immersed in a world not only of elegance, but also of art and fashion.**

When Air France entered the jet era, the Paris-New York route was the first to feature the latest technological breakthroughs. From Orly, the Boeing 707 reactors reached Idlewild airport—redubbed John Fitzgerald Kennedy in 1963—in 8 hours and 15 minutes.

More than ever, the route embodied the company's modernity, with flight attendants dressed in Dior. The brilliant decorator Pierre Gautier Delaye—from Raymond Loewy's studio—was hired to renovate its two emblematic ticket offices on the Champs Elysées and in New York. He also planned the layout of the new Air France facilities at JFK airport to accommodate the Boeing 747 (1970) and subsequently the Concorde (1977).

#### **But with the competition of airlines from Asia and from the Gulf, how can Air France still differentiate itself?**

By embodying French-style travel, its values and ambitions. Perfectly expressed in the new advertising slogan, "France is in the Air!"

#### **Air France launched this campaign and a new cabin layout on the route between Paris and New York in 2014. How did it improve the traveler's experience?**

It is not a coincidence that Air France decided to name its new cabins "BEST." They represent all the energy that drives Air France to offer ever more exceptional products and services to each of our customers.

The *La Première* is a designer suite and the new Business cabin a genuine cocoon in the sky. Customers also benefit from the new Premium Economy cabins, with 40% additional space, and Economy which offers optimum comfort for all.

It has been one year since they were first introduced, and the company is making significant progress in terms of customer satisfaction. In June 2015, Air France received an award from Skytrax for world's most improved airline! This is a great incentive for all group employees to pursue the goal that we have all set—to be among the best in the world.

#### **So is there a French style of flying?**

Of course, and this makes up the very DNA of Air France. With a unique heritage, the company is continuing a tradition that values excellence, pleasure, comfort, and exclusivity. It expresses itself through the different aspects of the French art of living, including the art of fine dining.

Since 2009, Air France has been working with the Servair culinary studio led by Joël Robuchon to develop its menus in the *La Première* cabin, and regularly welcomes exceptional guest chefs such as Anne-Sophie Pic in August and September 2015. A highlight of any trip, every dish is created and served with passion, so that customers can discover new flavours which promote French *savoir-faire* throughout the world.

To make mealtimes truly unique, the company asked French designer Jean-Marie Massaud to create the new tableware for its *La Première* and Business cabins. In Economy and Premium Economy, the Catalan designer Eugeni Quitllet has created innovative, eco-friendly tableware.

#### **Any new features to come in the next few months?**

Since October 1, 2015 and over the next six months, the starred chef François Adamski is creating new dishes for Business Class onboard long-haul flights. These dishes will also be available for the first time on Air France's medium-haul flights departing from Paris-CDG. Air France is thus working with a new talent in the world of French gastronomic cuisine in order to delight its customers around the world.



## **ALEXANDRE DE JUNIAC**

### **KEY DATES**

**1962** Born in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France

**1981-1988** Attends l'Ecole Polytechnique de Paris and L'Ecole Nationale de l'Administration. During this time, he completes a portion of his studies at Harvard Business School

**1988** Serves as Auditor then Master of Petitions and Deputy Secretary General of the Conseil d'Etat

**1993** Serves as Technical Advisor and Assistant Director to Nicolas Sarkozy, then Minister for the Budget

**1995** Joins Thomson SA, a French electronics and defense company, as Director of Planning and Development. Thomson SA later merges with several Aerospatiale subsidiaries and is renamed Sextant Avionique

**1997** Becomes Sales Director at Sextant Avionique. In 1999, Sextant merges with Thomson-CSF

**1999** Becomes Secretary General of Thomson-CSF, which is renamed Thales Avionics in December 2000

**2004** Promoted to role of Senior Vice President, Aviation Systems Division at Thales

**2008** Promoted to role of General Manager for Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America at Thales

**2009** Leaves Thales to serve as Chief of Staff to Christine Lagarde, Minister of Economy, Industry and Employment

**2011** Becomes Chairman and CEO of Air France

**2013** Takes over as Chairman & CEO of Air-France-KLM and launches major plan to strengthen its partnership with Delta Airlines

**2015** Re-elected for second term as Chairman & CEO of Air France-KLM and focuses on accelerating the "Perform 2020" plan, stressing competitiveness and customer satisfaction