

Charles Lindbergh's First Nonstop Flight

1927



Charles Lindbergh was a pilot from the United States. He was most famous for the first nonstop solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927. The *Orteig Prize* of \$25,000 was being offered as a prize for any pilot who would be able to make a nonstop flight from New York City to Paris, France, or vice versa. This prize was first offered in 1919, with many pilots contemplating making the journey. The journey was first attempted by French pilots Charles Nungesser and Raymond Coli. After spending eight years preparing for the trip, they left on May 8, 1927 from Paris on their plane, the *L'Oiseau Blanc*. The duo was only able to make it to Ireland. Other men such as Noel Davis, Stanton H. Wooster, and Jacob Isaroff attempted to make the trip. Each tragically died during their trips.

Lindbergh then made his historic attempt at the journey. His plane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*, had been designed specifically to make the trip. The design was the conception of Donald Hall. The Ryan Aeronautical Company of California was the company that led the construction of the aircraft. Lindbergh left from Roosevelt Airfield, which was located in Garden City, New York, on May 20, 1927. Bad weather conditions had delayed the flight for several days. As Lindbergh flew over Nova Scotia and Cape Cod later that day, the sky began to get dark. Fog became dense in the area, forcing Lindbergh to fly above the storm clouds in order to maintain good vision. At one point, Lindbergh flew into one of the rain clouds and a significant amount of sleet collected on his plane. Lindbergh was forced to turn the plane around and find a better path in which to maintain good visibility. During some parts of his journey Lindbergh would only be flying ten feet over the Atlantic Ocean. He continued to try and find his way around the fog that seemingly would not go away. As he approached Ireland, he saw fishing boats, which meant that he was very close to land.

Lindbergh then flew over England at an altitude of only 1,500 feet. He began heading toward the coast of France. By this time, the weather had cleared and Lindbergh had exceptional visibility. He safely arrived at the Le Bourget Airport in the city of Cherbourg, Paris, on May 21. This was just thirty-three-and-a-half hours later. The *Spirit of St. Louis*, which was a single engine aircraft, was successfully able to make the journey. Once he landed, he was met by a tremendous, cheering crowd. He was lifted onto the shoulders of people in the crowd. Lindbergh spoke from the balcony of the American Embassy the next morning, thanking the people of France for their support.

Lindbergh was bestowed with several awards, most notably coming from France and the United States. French President Gaston Doumergue gave him the *Legion d'honneur* award. United States President Calvin Coolidge gave him the Distinguished Flying Cross

Award.

Lindbergh was also greeted with much fanfare when he returned to the United States. He was escorted by the United States Navy while aboard the USS *Memphis*. The city of New York gave him a ticker-tape parade for his accomplishments. The parade is still regarded as one of the biggest in the history of the city.

Lindbergh's accomplishment made him the foremost pilot in the world. He was easily recognized by the public. His status led to him becoming a prominent speaker at many aviation engagements. He talked about the benefits of flying throughout the world. He became an important member of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. His hard work and effort helped the aviation business in the United States reach new heights. Many of those who were skeptical about flying now gained faith in the business. Lindbergh helped convince them that in a matter of years it would be the easiest way to travel long distances.

Lindbergh continued to help the field of aviation, producing navigation routes that would help pilots maneuver around areas in the Arctic. He would go on to help with the development of aircraft by companies such as the Ford Motor Company in 1942. Ford designed Willow Run B-24s for American pilots in World War II.



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Discussion Questions:

1. What was the significance of the *Orteig Prize*?
2. What were some of the failed attempts by pilots trying to make it across the Atlantic Ocean?
3. Where did Lindbergh leave from, and where did he arrive at on his flight? How long did it take him to make the journey?
4. What was the name of Lindbergh's plane? What were some of the plane's most useful features for Lindbergh's flight?

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1. What was the significance of the *Orteig Prize*?

The Orteig Prize was being offered as a reward for any pilot who could make a nonstop flight from New York City to Paris, France, or vice versa. A prize of \$25,000 was offered to the pilot who could complete the flight.

2. What were some of the failed attempts of pilots trying to make it across the Atlantic Ocean?

*The journey was first attempted by French pilots Charles Nungesser and Raymond Coli. After spending eight years preparing for the trip, they first left on May 8, 1927 from Paris on their plane, the *L'Oiseau Blanc*. However, the duo was only able to make it to Ireland. Other men such as Noel Davis, Stanton H. Wooster, and Jacob Isaroff attempted to make the trip. Each was killed in the process.*

3. Where did Lindbergh leave from, and where did he arrive at? How long did it take him to make the journey?

He left from Roosevelt Airfield in Garden City, New York, on May 20, 1927. He arrived at the Le Bourget Airport in Paris on May 21. It took Lindbergh just thirty-three-and-a-half hours for the flight.

4. What was the name of Lindbergh's plane? What were some of the plane's most useful features for Lindbergh's flight?

*The plane was called the *Spirit of St. Louis*. The *Spirit of St. Louis* had been designed specifically to make the trip. The design was the conception of Donald Hall. The Ryan Aeronautical Company of California was the company that led the construction of the aircraft. It was a single-engine aircraft capable of flying at extremely low altitude as well as flying above the weather.*

5. What awards was Lindbergh given by France and the United States?

*French President Gaston Doumergue gave Lindbergh the *Legion d'honneur* award. United States President Calvin Coolidge gave him the *Distinguished Flying Cross Award*.*

6. How was Lindbergh effective as a speaker after he made his historic flight?

He talked about the benefits of flying throughout the entire world. He became an important member of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. Thanks to his hard work and effort, the aviation business in the United States reached new heights. Those who had doubts about flying now had much more faith in the business, as they believed in a matter of years it would be the easier way to travel long distances.

7. How did Lindbergh aid companies that were making planes for World War II?
He would go on to help with the development of aircraft by other companies, such as the Ford Motor Company in 1942. For was designing Willow Run B-24s for the American pilots in World War II. He also was involved in the technical design of planes, showing the engineers how to construct more durable aircraft.

8. Why do you feel that Lindbergh's nonstop, solo trip across the Atlantic Ocean was significant to American history?
Answers will vary.