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## Top 10 airlines still flying the Boeing 747

🕒 March 2, 2020 💬 2

Monday [newsletters](#) always feature [top 10 travel lists](#) to inspire.

### Today (March 2, 2020): Top 10 airlines still flying the Boeing 747.

IMHO, the Boeing 747 is the most beautiful and elegant airplane ever designed. The wide body, four-engine jet features a distinctive upper deck shape, which has earned it the nickname "Jumbo Jet". It has been 50 years since the first Boeing 747 was delivered to Pan Am, and more than 1500 of the iconic aircraft have been built since then. Its ability to carry more than 500 passengers on longhaul routes truly opened the age of modern jet travel, bringing with it new possibilities and destinations. Unfortunately though, the Boeing 747 is a dying breed since airlines are now choosing for more fuel-efficient and cost-effective widebody aircraft, so the clock is ticking for folks looking to travel on a Boeing 747. Here are 10 airlines (in alphabetic order) that still operate Boeing 747 passenger flights.

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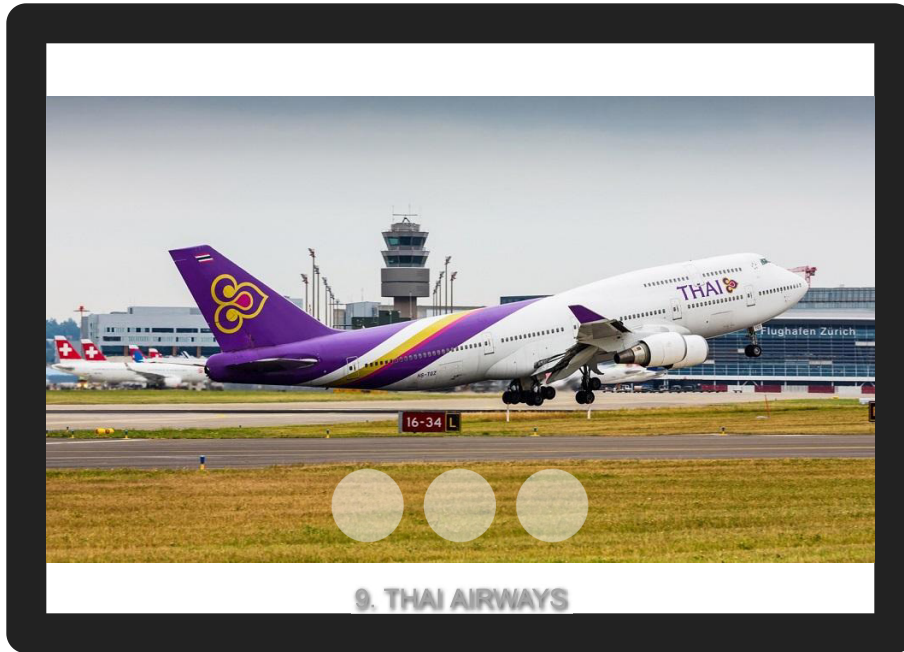
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There is more information (with review & YouTube clips) below the slideshow. Have you ever flown onboard the Boeing 747? If so, what was your experience. Leave a **comment**.



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## 1. AIR CHINA

Air China is the flag carrier and largest airline of the People's Republic of China. Last year, the airline carried more than 100 million domestic and international passengers with an average load factor of 81% (although there is little doubt that the current Coronavirus crisis will negatively affect Air China's business performance in 2020). The carrier operates a fleet of 434 aircraft, including 12 Boeing 747-400s and 747-800s. On these aircraft, Business Class is located in the nose of the aircraft and on the upper deck, with the cabin featuring a painted collage of the Summer Palace, which symbolizes good luck in China. The seats are arranged in a 2-2-2 configuration at the back, with 2-2 rows continuing to the front and on the upper deck.

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## 6. LUFTHANSA

Germany's flagship carrier Lufthansa is the second-largest commercial operator of the Boeing 747. It has 32 Boeing 747s in its fleet and – unlike British Airways – predominantly uses the 747-8 model. In fact, it is the world's largest operator of the model and was the first to receive the aircraft back in 2012. The new 747-8 has been stretched to make it 5.6 m (18 ft) longer than its immediate predecessor, the 747-400. That qualifies it for the title of the world's longest passenger aircraft. It seats 362 passengers but still consumes significantly less fuel per passenger than the 747-400. This is made possible by its updated General Electric engines and its new, more efficient wing design.

## 7. QANTAS

Australia's flagship carrier Qantas – widely regarded as the **world's safest airline** – has just five Boeing 747-400s left in its fleet. Qantas originally began flying the Boeing 747 in 1971, with early models sporting a rather groovy lounge on the upper deck. Dubbed the Captain Cook lounge, the 15-seat lounge managed to combine a nautical theme honoring the nation's foremost European discoverer with a then-chic color scheme of orange, checks and woodgrains. The carrier will retire its historic jumbo jets by the end of 2020 in favor of the advanced and fuel-efficient Boeing 787 Dreamliner. Qantas plans to celebrate its Boeing 747 retirement with a run of points plane flights to mark the end of the model that has carried tens of millions of travelers around the world.

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## 8. ROSSIYA AIRLINES

Rossiya Airlines is a Russian airline headquartered in Saint Petersburg with its hub at Pulkovo Airport and an additional hub at Vnukovo International Airport in Moscow. Rossiya is majority (75%) owned by Aeroflot. Rossiya operates nine Boeing 747, and all superjumbos previously flew with now-defunct Transaero. The airline's B747s are fitted with 522 seats, with 12 in Business Class and 510 in Economy Class. Rossiya's B747s feature a stunning livery, resembling turbine blades. One particular 747 has been painted into an unusual livery, with the image of a tiger's face on the aircraft's nose. The project was carried out in cooperation with the Amur Tiger Center, a research and conservation organization founded in 2013 by the initiative of President Vladimir Putin.

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## 9. THAI AIRWAYS

Thai Airways has a subfleet of 10 Boeing 747-400 with an average age of more than 20 years. These iconic birds are predominantly used on



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### 2. AIR INDIA

Air India – a member of Star Alliance – is the flag carrier airline of India, headquartered at New Delhi. The carrier received its first Boeing 747 in April 1971. Air India has since operated 30 of these Boeing 747 aircraft. Currently, Air India still has 4 Boeing 747-400s (VT-ESO/P, VT-EVA/B) in its fleet. They are very old aircraft, with an average age of more than 22 years. Each 747 has 12 First Class seats, 26 Business Class seats and 385 Economy Class seats. First Class is in the nose of the aircraft on the lower deck in a 2-2 configuration. Business Class occupies the entire upper deck, again in a 2-2 configuration. Economy Class seats, in a 3-4-3 layout, are also on the lower deck behind the First Class cabin. Air India's 747s regularly operate on routes between Mumbai, Hyderabad, Jeddah, and Kochi.



### 3. BRITISH AIRWAYS

British Airways is the world's largest operator of the Boeing 747, as the UK's flag carrier has 36 Boeing 747-400s in its fleet. The 747-400 is

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375 Economy Class seats in the remainder of the aircraft. Virgin Atlantic will retire its entire B747 fleet in 2021.

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## 2 COMMENTS

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**Francis Bagbey** says:

MARCH 2, 2020 AT 5:57 PM

Yes, flew a BA 747 first class to Heathrow from JFK in June 1985. Up in The Hump. Loved it. Got invited to the cockpit, which I had never seen on any commercial airliner. "Look. Ma, no hands!" On autopilot,

a proven performer with high reliability and incorporates major aerodynamic improvements over earlier 747 models, including the addition of a 6 ft (1.8-m) longer wing with a winglet angled upward and slightly outward. The wingtip extension and winglet offer a fuel mileage improvement of about 3 percent, which during the life span of an airplane amounts to considerable savings. British Airways will retire its Boeing 747 fleet by February 2024. The carrier plans to phase out these iconic aircraft in stages, with half of their B747s being phased out by 2021.

- **Review:** [British Airways B747 Business Class from London to San Francisco](#)

### British Airways Boeing 747 business class (upper



## 4. KLM ROYAL DUTCH AIRLINES

KLM Royal Dutch Airline is a proud operator of the Boeing 747. All KLM's Boeing 747-400s are named after famous worldwide cities, such as Guayaguil, Lima, Nairobi, Hongkong, Jakarta and Johannesburg. KLM also operates a special version of the 747 – the Boeing 747-400 Combi – which has a seating capacity of 268 passengers and a huge cargo transport deck. This type of Boeing transports all kinds of cargo: from small packages to large animals, like elephants or horses. KLM has been flying with this type of aircraft since 1989, so that's about 30 year. The carrier has 5 of them in its

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fleet, and flies them to cities like Mexico City, Chicago or Hong Kong (keep in mind that these destinations may differ per season).



## 5. KOREAN AIR

Korean Air – a member of the SkyTeam airline alliance – is South Korea's largest airline and flag carrier, based on fleet size, international destinations and international flights. Korean Air has a fleet of 23 Boeing 747s, which includes a mix of the older Boeing 747-400 version and the newer Boeing 747-800 version, making it one of only a handful of passenger airlines operating the Boeing 747-8 on passenger flights (together with Lufthansa and Air China). With a range of 7,730 nautical miles (14,310 km), the 747-8 Intercontinental offers 16 per cent savings in fuel consumption and emissions over its predecessor, the 747-400, while generating 30 per cent less noise. In Korean Air's service it is configured with 368 seats including a the brand new First Class cabin featuring the Kosmo Suite 2.0, which includes a sliding door and higher partitions to provide added privacy for premium passengers.

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Thai Airways' international routes from Bangkok to Tokyo, Sydney, Frankfurt, Mumbai and Zürich, although the carrier also rosters the jumbo on the short domestic Bangkok to Phuket route. About half of these planes were refurbished since delivery, while the other half still features the old design (which feels very vintage these days). Thai Airways has decided to delay the retirement of its B747-400s until 2022 to mitigate the capacity shortages caused by Dreamliner's groundings and the postponement of fleet renewal decision. According to the current schedule, Thai Airways plans to phase out one in 2020, and the remaining B747 aircraft in 2022.

- **Review:** [Thai Airways B747 First Class from Bangkok to Munich](#)

## Thai Airways Boeing 747 from Phuket to Bangkok



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## 10. VIRGIN ATLANTIC

Sir Richard Branson's airline Virgin Atlantic still operates 7 Boeing 747-400 aircraft, which were given the sexy names of Tinker Belle (G-VBIG), Ladybird (G-VAST), Ruby Tuesday (G-VXLG), English Rose (G-VROS), Hot Lips (G-VLIP), Barbarella (G-VROM), Pretty Woman (G-VROY) and Jersey Girl (G-VGAL). Virgin Atlantic's B747s have an average age of 19 years, with the oldest being 23 years old and the youngest 17 years old. The cabin is configured with 14 Upper Class seats in the nose of the aircraft and 66 Economy Plus seats behind Upper Class, as well as at the front of the top deck. Finally, there are