

Tupolev Tu-104



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First Soviet Union Jetliner

Tupolev Tu-104 appeared in the West for the first time on March 22nd 1956 when the first prototype landed at Heathrow in London. It's appearance was a complete surprise for the western countries. Until then the Soviet Union air services had relied on old propellers like the Li-2 (The Soviet DC-3, [read more on the DC-3](#), Il-12 and Il-14.

The need for better and faster air connections within the Soviet Union was very much evident. The journey by air from Moscow to the city of Vladivostok on the Pacific coast of Russia took over 33 hours and included seven stops.



Egyptian Air Force bomber Tu-16 "Badger"

The task of creating a new jet powered aircraft for passenger transport was given to the well known aircraft design bureau of Tupolev with its chief designer Andrei Tupolev, the originator of several legendary aircrafts in the Soviet Union.

The design was built on the Tu-16 bomber, (NATO designation Badger) and was called the Tu-104. The aircraft made its first flight on June 16th 1955. (Tu-104 actually was given a NATO designation as well - the Camel)



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After testing and route proving it was put into service on September 15th on the Moscow-Omsk-Irkutsk route. The flight time was now only 7 hours compared to before when it was over 17 hours.

The aircraft had a pressurized cabin for 50 passengers, a crew of 5 and flying at a speed of 500 knots (560 mph)

For a period of two years between 1956 and 1958 it was the only jetliner in operation in the world after the grounding of the Comet 1 ([read more on the Comet](#)) and before Comet 4 and the Boeing 707 came into operation.

Eventually there was built larger versions, Tu-104A for 70 passengers and Tu-104B for 100 passengers. Over 250 Tu-104s were built and were in operation well into the 1980s.

Tu-124 was a scaled-down version for 40 passengers built on the Tu-104.

Andrei Tupolev at the age of 81 at Sheremetyevo Airport in Moscow on May 21st as a guest of honour for the first public appearance of the supersonic jetliner Tu-144, a creation by the Tupolev design bureau under his son Alexei Tupolev



A Tupolev 1888-1972

Tupolev Tu-104 Specifications



Engines: Two Mikulin AM-3M-500 turbojets, thrust 21,300 lb

Wing span: 113 ft

Length: 127 ft

Gross weight: 156,000 lb

Max cruising speed: 500 knots (560 mph)

Max altitude: 33,000 ft

Max range: 1,650 miles

Passengers: 50

More on Tupolev: A complete list of all aviation creations by Tupolev at www.aviation.ru/Tu

Picture of the Month: [Tupolev Tu-104](#)

(2000-Mar)