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Supersonic flights are making a comeback (Concorde 2.0)

August 19, 2022 0

Friday **newsletters** always feature luxury travel **contests**, **tips**, **series**, or **news**.

Today: Supersonic flights are making a comeback (Concorde 2.0)

American Airlines – the world’s largest airline – announced this week that it will purchase up to 20 supersonic aircraft – manufactured by Denver-based aerospace company **Boom Supersonic** – with an option for an additional 40. American has paid a non-refundable deposit on the initial 20 aircraft, and is the third airline to purchase the new supersonic jet. Last year, United Airlines – the world’s third largest airline – already purchased 15 of Boom’s supersonic aircraft with an option for an additional 35 aircraft. And in 2017, it was announced that Japan Airlines made a strategic investment of \$10 million USD, with an option to purchase up to 20 Boom aircraft through a pre-order arrangement.

With an order book standing at 130 aircraft (purchases and options from American Airlines, United Airlines, and Japan Airlines), it now looks as if supersonic travel will finally come back by the end of this decade (after it was discontinued in 2003 with the retirement of the Concorde fleet). There’s one condition though as under the terms of the agreement with all three airlines, Boom must meet industry-standard operating, performance and safety requirements before delivery of any jet. But that hasn’t stopped many aviation geeks from calling the new Boom

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supersonic aircraft Concorde 2.0, although the plane will officially be known under the name 'Overture'.



Boom Supersonic's Overture plane is slated to roll out in 2025, fly in 2026 and expected to carry passengers by 2029. Capable of flying at speeds of Mach 1.7 – twice the speed of today's fastest airliners – Overture will be able to connect more than 500 destinations in nearly half the time. Among the many future supersonic flight routes are New York to London in just three, Miami to London in five hours, and San Francisco to Tokyo in just six hours. The Overture aircraft will be designed to carry 65 to 80 passengers with a range of 4,250 nautical miles (6839 km), and it will be equipped with features such as in-seat entertainment screens, ample personal space, and contactless technology.

Once operational, Overture is also expected to be the first large commercial aircraft to be net-zero carbon from day one, optimized to run on 100% sustainable aviation fuel. Overture is also designed with the latest noise-reducing technologies, ensuring no increase to existing noise contours. The overall impact of Overture on airport communities will be similar to the long-haul aircraft it replaces. Sonic Boom Overture will only fly at supersonic speeds over the ocean, eliminating community exposure to sonic booms. Suppliers and partners collaborating with Boom on the Overture program include Collins Aerospace, Eaton, Safran Landing Systems, Rolls-Royce, the United States Air Force, American Express, Climeworks, and AWS.

Boom has released the following video demonstrating the Overture's refined design.

The price for flying onboard the Overture looks set to be high, with Boom anticipating a \$5,000 USD price tag per seat, although both American and United Airlines have reportedly said it's too early to come up with a price. Nevertheless, it is likely that – like its predecessor Concorde – the Boom Overture is aimed at the luxury market and beyond the reach of most of us. It is likely to be frequented only by those lucky few who currently travel via private jet, or by environmentally conscious travelers who may be enticed by Overture's sustainable design.

While Boom is working on its Overture supersonic jet, NASA and Lockheed are trying to get there with their own joint project (which does not get the same amount of attention by the world press). In 2021, both companies assembled the X-59 Quiet SuperSonic Technology aircraft (QueSST) at Lockheed Martin's Skunk Works in California. Early 2022,

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the X-59 was moved to Texas for critical ground testing to ensure the aircraft can withstand the loads and stresses that typically occur during flight. The X-59 is designed to reduce the loudness of the sonic boom, which occurs when an aircraft flies faster than the speed of sound, to a gentle, quiet sonic “thump”. The X-plane will demonstrate this in flights over communities around the U.S. starting in 2024, as NASA collects data that could open the future to commercial supersonic flights over land.

The video below explains NASA’s QueSST project in a simplified way.

Prior to 2003, supersonic flights were a reality onboard the legendary Concorde aircraft. In total, 20 Concorde were built: two prototypes, two development aircraft and 16 production aircraft (equally divided among Air France and British Airways). The Concorde’s first flight took off in 1969 and its only competitor was the Russia built Tupolev Tu-144, which carried passengers from 1977 until a May 1978 crash. Unfortunately, the Concorde had become financially unworkable after a high-profile crash in 2000, combined with excessive ticket prices, high fuel consumption, and increasingly high maintenance costs, and all Concorde aircraft were retired in 2003 after 27 years of commercial operations.



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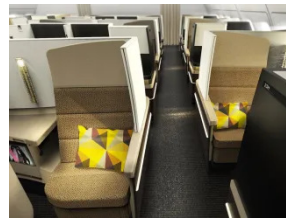
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