

# ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS





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## Episode #243

### The Rise and Fall of Concorde

#### 8th Mar, 2022

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:12] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:22] I'm Alastair Budge, and today we are going to be talking about Concorde, the [supersonic<sup>1</sup>](#) passenger jet.

[00:00:30] It was an aeroplane that could get you across the Atlantic Ocean, from London to New York, in a [mere<sup>2</sup>](#) 3.5 hours — less than half the time it would take in a regular plane— and it captured the imaginations of much of the world during the just under thirty years it was in operation.

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<sup>1</sup> going faster than the speed of sound

<sup>2</sup> only, just

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:00:50] We're going to learn about how the Concorde got built, what it was like to fly on it, who actually flew on it, and how it met its [eventual](#)<sup>3</sup> — and tragic — [downfall](#)<sup>4</sup>.

[00:01:04] OK then, let's get started.

[00:01:07] Now, we've spoken about the history of air travel in a previous episode, episode 213, where we talked about how the experience and mechanics of air travel have changed since the first aeroplane was built.

[00:01:23] To briefly [recap](#)<sup>5</sup> that episode, in the decades after commercial passenger flight got started in the 1920s — which was nearly two decades after the Wright Brothers flew the first ever powered aeroplane — air travel was [accessible](#)<sup>6</sup> only to the richest people in society.

[00:01:43] Back then, the few airline carriers in existence — now known as '[legacy carriers](#)<sup>7</sup>' — offered something of a luxury experience for travellers.

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<sup>3</sup> happening at the end

<sup>4</sup> failure

<sup>5</sup> repeat the main points of, summarise

<sup>6</sup> able to be used, available

<sup>7</sup> airlines that have a long history that usually originates at some point in the first half of the 20th century

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:01:55] In the 1920s and 30s, the [privileged](#)<sup>8</sup> few who could afford a seat on one of these flights were treated to the kind of service — the [in-flight](#)<sup>9</sup> meals, [free-flowing](#)<sup>10</sup> alcohol — that one might expect in an [upscale](#)<sup>11</sup> restaurant.

[00:02:12] Now, the experience wasn't perfect, of course: these early planes flew at a much lower [altitude](#)<sup>12</sup> than today's planes, and so the [turbulence](#)<sup>13</sup> would have been considerably more noticeable to passengers.

[00:02:28] Thankfully, planes — and the experience of flying in general — improved [vastly](#)<sup>14</sup> as technology improved. Flight distances increased, and cabins became far more comfortable.

[00:02:43] Eventually, the [deregulation](#)<sup>15</sup> of air travel, as well as the launch of low-cost air carriers, such as Ryanair, made air travel [accessible](#) to the average person: someone like you or me, who can't afford to spend thousands of dollars on a single trip.

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<sup>8</sup> having certain advantages

<sup>9</sup> available during flight

<sup>10</sup> served non-stop

<sup>11</sup> very high quality

<sup>12</sup> height above sea level

<sup>13</sup> violent or unsteady movement

<sup>14</sup> to a very great extent or degree

<sup>15</sup> the removal of national control from a business or activity

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:03:02] Air travel was changing rapidly. And yet, there was something else around the corner — something that would, people hoped, revolutionise the world of air travel altogether.

[00:03:15] That something was, of course, the Concorde.

[00:03:19] It could travel across the entire Atlantic Ocean in an incredible 3.5 hours.

[00:03:25] It accomplished such an impressive [feat<sup>16</sup>](#) of speed using something called [supersonic](#) technology, which allowed it to travel at twice the speed of sound. The Concorde flew so fast that it broke the sound barrier.

[00:03:41] This miracle of aeronautical engineering had a maximum speed of Mach 2.04, which is almost 2,500 kilometres an hour.

[00:03:53] Perhaps even more surprisingly, the Concorde could [accommodate<sup>17</sup>](#) up to 128 passengers, and not just comfortably; passengers were treated to multi-course meals, champagne, and all other luxuries, all of which really [emphasised<sup>18</sup>](#) the fact that everything about the Concorde — its speed, its design, and, of course, its cost — was [exceptional<sup>19</sup>](#).

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<sup>16</sup> something that is difficult to achieve

<sup>17</sup> provide enough space for

<sup>18</sup> stressed, gave importance to

<sup>19</sup> extraordinary, superior

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:04:20] First, let's [back up](#)<sup>20</sup> to the moment the idea of the Concorde was [conceived](#)<sup>21</sup>.

[00:04:26] The idea for a [supersonic](#) plane existed years before there was even a [blueprint](#)<sup>22</sup> for the Concorde, before, even, it was certain that such a thing was technically possible.

[00:04:39] British engineers had been discussing the idea for a [supersonic](#) aeroplane since the late 1940s.

[00:04:48] In 1947, the Americans became the first to achieve exactly the thing these British engineers were dreaming of: they became the first to design and successfully fly a [supersonic](#) aeroplane.

[00:05:03] However, this plane was never actually used in commercial flight.

[00:05:09] It was actually the great enemy of the Americans, the USSR, which was the first country to successfully launch a [supersonic](#) commercial flight, in 1968, with the [launch](#)<sup>23</sup> of a [supersonic](#) plane called the Tupolev TU 144.

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<sup>20</sup> move backwards

<sup>21</sup> formed, thought up

<sup>22</sup> early plan

<sup>23</sup> the act of sending the aeroplane on its course

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:05:26] But this plane suffered from performance issues and only flew 103 flights in its lifetime.

[00:05:34] It was to be the British — together with the French — that actually managed to accomplish the goal of building a highly functional, [supersonic](#) aeroplane that could be used for commercial passenger flight.

[00:05:49] There was a [snag](#)<sup>24</sup>, however, a problem; the costs of actually building such a plane were, as you might imagine, enormous.

[00:06:00] It would cost an estimated 100 million pounds — that's over five billion Euros in today's money — although it actually ended up costing significantly more, at well over a billion pounds, fifty billion Euros in today's money.

[00:06:18] At the time work started on this project, World War II had just ended, and Britain was [bankrupt](#)<sup>25</sup>; people were still buying food with [ration books](#)<sup>26</sup> and the economy was [struggling](#)<sup>27</sup>.

[00:06:33] As a result, the British would need to find a new way to finance this ambitious project.

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<sup>24</sup> problem

<sup>25</sup> was in a state that it couldn't pay its debts

<sup>26</sup> official documents that allowed them to receive food

<sup>27</sup> in a difficult situation

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:06:41] At the same time that British engineers were [drawing up](#)<sup>28</sup> the plans for this amazing aircraft, France was working on a design for a plane that looked [remarkably](#)<sup>29</sup> similar.

[00:06:54] So, instead of [competing](#)<sup>30</sup> with each other, in a rare moment of [collaboration](#)<sup>31</sup>, France and Britain realised that they would have more success if they worked together. They decided to put their designs together, and to share both the work and the costs.

[00:07:14] In 1963, shortly after the French and the British revealed their plans, air carriers around the world rushed to place their orders for the Concorde — including several in the United States.

[00:07:29] [Infuriated](#)<sup>32</sup> by this news, President John F. Kennedy announced that America would build its own [supersonic](#) plane, which would [rival](#)<sup>33</sup> the Concorde.

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<sup>28</sup> preparing

<sup>29</sup> to a surprising degree

<sup>30</sup> trying to be more successful than the other

<sup>31</sup> working together

<sup>32</sup> made extremely angry

<sup>33</sup> be equal or comparable to



## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:07:41] But, due to a number of [constraints](#)<sup>34</sup>— many of them financial — this American [supersonic](#) aeroplane was never completed.

[00:07:50] Meanwhile, the French and British [collaboration](#) proved successful, save for a few minor disagreements, and the first [prototype](#)<sup>35</sup>, Concorde 001, took its [maiden](#)<sup>36</sup> — its first — flight on March 2nd, 1969, from Toulouse in France.

[00:08:11] It was piloted by former air force major André Turcat, and was a huge success.

[00:08:19] It was then followed by an equally successful [voyage](#)<sup>37</sup> by British pilot Brian Trubshaw, a former World War II [bomber](#)<sup>38</sup> pilot, who flew Concorde 002 out of Filton Airport in Bristol, England.

[00:08:35] Now, in order to have a plane that travels at the speed of sound, engineers couldn't just use the same old aircraft designs. They actually had to make some rather large [innovations](#)<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> limitations, restrictions

<sup>35</sup> the first version of the plane

<sup>36</sup> first

<sup>37</sup> journey

<sup>38</sup> a war aeroplane that dropped bombs

<sup>39</sup> introductions of new ideas or methods

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:08:51] One of the most [notable](#)<sup>40</sup> was the plane's nose, the bit at the front of the plane. Whereas a regular, [non-supersonic](#)<sup>41</sup> aeroplane has a straight nose, the Concorde [boasts](#)<sup>42</sup> something called a "droop snoot", or "droop nose" design.

[00:09:14] If you think this nose, this front of the airplane, looks a bit [odd](#)<sup>43</sup>, a bit strange, well, you probably aren't alone. When it's lowered, it looks almost like a broken bird's [beak](#)<sup>44</sup> — not quite the smooth, rounded nose that you might think of when you imagine an aeroplane.

[00:09:35] However, the "droop snoot" was actually quite necessary to flying the Concorde. Because of its [unique](#)<sup>45</sup> design, the Concorde flew at a [steep](#)<sup>46</sup> angle during takeoff and landing, and so the pilot would adjust the plane's nose so that it was [tilting](#)<sup>47</sup> downward.

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<sup>40</sup> important, worthy of attention

<sup>41</sup> not able to go faster than the speed of sound

<sup>42</sup> uses it as an object to be proud of

<sup>43</sup> strange

<sup>44</sup> the hard, pointed part of a bird's mouth

<sup>45</sup> only one of its type

<sup>46</sup> rising and falling at a sharp angle, almost vertically

<sup>47</sup> moving in an angled position

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:09:57] This made it so that the nose of the plane, which was longer and more [needle-like](#)<sup>48</sup> than that of a typical plane, was out of the pilot's [line of sight](#)<sup>49</sup>.

Otherwise, it would be much harder for the pilot to see where they were going.

[00:10:15] The Concorde also had a triangle-shaped [wing](#)<sup>50</sup>, called a Delta [Wing](#), as opposed to the rectangular [wing](#) shape of a typical aeroplane. It also had a [narrower](#)<sup>51</sup> body than that of a typical aeroplane, it was much thinner.

[00:10:33] Both of these helped the Concorde lift off the ground during takeoff, and [minimised](#)<sup>52</sup> the amount of [drag](#)<sup>53</sup> — or the force that makes it harder for an aeroplane or other object to travel forward.

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<sup>48</sup> looking like a needle

<sup>49</sup> an imaginary line from their eyes to the point they were looking at

<sup>50</sup> one of the long and flat parts on either side of a aeroplane that make it able to fly

<sup>51</sup> having a smaller distance from one side to the other, thinner

<sup>52</sup> reduced it to the smallest possible amount

<sup>53</sup> the force that makes it harder for an aeroplane or other object to travel forward

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:10:47] Of course, the Concorde **boasted**<sup>54</sup> incredibly powerful turbojet engines, and this combination of **slim**<sup>55</sup> design and **absurd**<sup>56</sup> amounts of power allowed it to **sustain**<sup>57</sup> its incredible speed of Mach 2 — almost 2,500 km an hour.

[00:11:07] The Concorde also flew so high that passengers could look out the window and see the earth's **curve**<sup>58</sup>.

[00:11:16] It flew this high because the higher you go up, the lower the air pressure becomes, so there would be less **drag**, less resistance, and the plane could go faster while using less fuel.

[00:11:31] This also reduced the amount of noise heard by people standing on the ground — this is something we'll explore in depth a bit later on in the episode.

[00:11:42] But, you're probably wondering: just who, exactly, had the **privilege**<sup>59</sup> of getting to fly on board this **miraculous**<sup>60</sup> piece of machinery?

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<sup>54</sup> used them as something to be proud of

<sup>55</sup> thin

<sup>56</sup> crazy, ridiculous

<sup>57</sup> keep, maintain

<sup>58</sup> a line that turns continuously and has no straight parts

<sup>59</sup> advantage only few people have because they are rich

<sup>60</sup> amazing, incredible

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:11:52] These days, you can buy plane tickets on low-cost airlines for 10 Euros or even less. People of almost every level of income can afford to fly in one way or another.

[00:12:06] The Concorde, however, was a different kind of flight experience entirely.

[00:12:12] In 1977, flights from New York to London began. A one-way ticket cost 431 pounds — that's around three and a half thousand Euros in today's money.

[00:12:26] On board, passengers were treated to champagne before the flight had even taken off. They ordered from a menu of [delicacies](#)<sup>61</sup> like [lobster](#)<sup>62</sup>, fillet steak, and [caviar](#)<sup>63</sup>, as well as a full wine list.

[00:12:42] Flying the Concorde were people like corporate CEOs and movie stars, many of whom could afford to fly on the Concorde multiple times in a single week. If you managed to [drum up](#)<sup>64</sup> the cash needed for a ticket, you may have found yourself [brushing elbows](#)<sup>65</sup> with [the likes of](#)<sup>66</sup> Mick Jagger and Sir Paul McCartney.

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<sup>61</sup> expensive food

<sup>62</sup> an animal that lives in the sea and has a body with a hard covering

<sup>63</sup> the eggs of fish eaten as food

<sup>64</sup> get, obtain

<sup>65</sup> being next to

<sup>66</sup> someone like



## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:13:05] But, you might wondering, what did it actually feel like to ride in one of these planes?

[00:13:13] Despite the incredible drama of the Concorde taking off, passengers [detected](#)<sup>67</sup> surprisingly little, [apparently](#)<sup>68</sup>. There was the initial [burst](#)<sup>69</sup> of speed when the plane took off — but once they reached [cruising](#)<sup>70</sup> [altitude](#), the flight was as smooth as glass.

[00:13:34] One need only imagine [sipping](#)<sup>71</sup> champagne and eating [oyster](#)<sup>72</sup>, while watching the [curve](#) of the earth below, to understand just how [exceptional](#) the Concorde was.

[00:13:47] For all of the wonders of the Concorde — the [intrigue](#)<sup>73</sup>, the [glamour](#)<sup>74</sup>, the [convenience](#)<sup>75</sup>— it was not without its [drawbacks](#)<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> noticed, felt

<sup>68</sup> as far as we know or obviously

<sup>69</sup> a sudden and great increase of an action

<sup>70</sup> travelling at a fixed, steady speed

<sup>71</sup> drinking by taking small amounts

<sup>72</sup> a flat sea creature that lives in a shell

<sup>73</sup> interesting because of being strange and exciting

<sup>74</sup> excitement and luxury (great and expensive comfort)

<sup>75</sup> usefulness and comfort

<sup>76</sup> disadvantages

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:13:56] For one, an object like the Concorde cannot break the sound barrier without creating quite a lot of noise.

[00:14:04] This noise is actually referred to as a [sonic boom](#)<sup>77</sup>, and is so loud that it can be heard by people standing on the ground, even when the Concorde was flying almost 20km above the Earth's surface.

[00:14:20] Considering the fact that most of the people [subjected](#)<sup>78</sup> to this [racket](#)<sup>79</sup>, to this loud noise, were those who would never be able to afford to fly on the Concorde, it was a bit like [adding insult to injury](#)<sup>80</sup>.

[00:14:34] Many countries felt that the [sonic boom](#) was so [disruptive](#)<sup>81</sup> that they banned the Concorde from travelling over them entirely. The noise problem even inspired protests, with people showing up to takeoff and landing sites holding signs with slogans like "Ban the [Boom](#)<sup>82</sup>."

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<sup>77</sup> the loud noise caused by an aircraft that travels faster than the speed of sound

<sup>78</sup> caused to experience something not pleasant, put through

<sup>79</sup> loud not pleasant noise

<sup>80</sup> making a bad situation even worse

<sup>81</sup> causing trouble

<sup>82</sup> very loud noise

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:14:58] Partly because of this, the Concorde mainly flew over the Atlantic Ocean, And rarely over land, where it would be much too [disturbing](#)<sup>83</sup> to people on the ground.

[00:15:10] Another problem was the possible environmental effects of The Concorde. Because it flew so much higher than other planes, scientists believed that the Concordes [exhaust](#)<sup>84</sup> would be far more damaging to the [ozone layer](#)<sup>85</sup>.

[00:15:26] Although this fear was justified, there were so few Concordes ever built that this never made a significant impact.

[00:15:35] And because the Concorde could only successfully really fly two routes from either London or Paris to New York and back, and because it could only seat 128 passengers, the plane proved to be far from profitable, it simply didn't make much money.

[00:15:56] The luxury services provided, as well as the fact that the plane could only be flown by the most [elite](#)<sup>86</sup> crew, only [worsened](#)<sup>87</sup> this problem.

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<sup>83</sup> causing problems, worrying

<sup>84</sup> waste gases

<sup>85</sup> the layer of the upper atmosphere where ozone (a form of oxygen) protects the earth from harmful light from the sun

<sup>86</sup> richest

<sup>87</sup> made it worse

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:16:06] In fact, by 1981, after just five years in service, British Airways and Air France had recorded losses in the tens of millions of pounds.

[00:16:19] As wonderful as the Concorde might have been, it was still, of course, a commercial aeroplane. And in order to keep operating, it would need to start turning a profit.

[00:16:31] So, what did they think the solution was?

[00:16:35] [Crank up](#)<sup>88</sup> prices even more, increase the prices even higher.

[00:16:41] British Airways put up the cost of tickets to nearly double the cost of first class tickets on its other, regular flights. It also started allowing anyone who could afford it to [charter](#)<sup>89</sup> entire flights on a Concorde to any destination they pleased.

[00:17:00] And in the mid-1980s, Concorde finally began to turn a profit.

[00:17:06] To much of the world, it seemed as though the Concorde was just the beginning of a new age of [supersonic](#) travel. The possibilities seemed endless.

[00:17:17] Yet the Concorde, as glorious as it was, would soon meet a [devastating](#)<sup>90</sup> end.

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<sup>88</sup> increase

<sup>89</sup> hire, rent

<sup>90</sup> destructive, damaging

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:17:24] On July 25th, in the year 2000, Air France Flight 4590 took off from Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris, destined for JFK airport in New York.

[00:17:37] Upon landing, the passengers — mainly German tourists — would have boarded a cruise ship [bound for](#)<sup>91</sup> South America, it was to be the trip of a lifetime.

[00:17:50] That flight, of course, never made it to JFK. Shortly after taking off, the plane lost [altitude](#), crashing to the ground just six kilometres from the airport where it had taken off.

[00:18:05] The crash killed 113 people, including all 109 passengers on board and four people on the ground.

[00:18:15] The crash, which shocked and horrified the world, [turned out](#)<sup>92</sup> to be the result of a [chain](#)<sup>93</sup> of small but [fatal](#)<sup>94</sup> errors. The first of these errors took place before the flight even took off.

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<sup>91</sup> on the way to, headed for

<sup>92</sup> proved

<sup>93</sup> a series of related things

<sup>94</sup> causing death



## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:18:31] To start with, the plane was over its maximum **structural**<sup>95</sup> weight. Not only had the plane been **overfueled**<sup>96</sup>, there was too much fuel put in it, but more items of baggage were placed in the **hold**<sup>97</sup> than were planned for.

[00:18:49] Put simply, the plane was too heavy.

[00:18:53] The next part sounds a little bit like a **freak accident**<sup>98</sup>. Just after Flight 4590 had begun **taxiing**<sup>99</sup> down the runway, a short **strip**<sup>100</sup> of metal **fell off**<sup>101</sup> of the engine of another plane travelling down the same runway.

[00:19:10] The **strip** hit one of the Concorde's **tyres**<sup>102</sup>, which **burst**<sup>103</sup>, **shooting off**<sup>104</sup> a piece of **rubber**<sup>105</sup> that then broke, it **ruptured**<sup>106</sup> the plane's fuel tank.

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<sup>95</sup> relating to the parts of its structure or construction

<sup>96</sup> filled with too much fuel

<sup>97</sup> a large place in the lower part of the plane in which items of baggage were kept

<sup>98</sup> an accident that happens under rare or highly unlikely circumstances

<sup>99</sup> moving slowly along the ground before take-off

<sup>100</sup> a long thin piece of material

<sup>101</sup> dropped to the ground

<sup>102</sup> thick, rubber, air-filled material around the edge of the wheel of a vehicle

<sup>103</sup> broke open suddenly and violently

<sup>104</sup> sending out with great speed

<sup>105</sup> a tough flexible substance

<sup>106</sup> cracked, tore

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:19:22] The resulting fire caused two of the plane's left-side engines to [fail](#)<sup>107</sup>. [In spite of](#)<sup>108</sup> the pilots' best efforts, the plane — and all those on board — were [doomed](#)<sup>109</sup>.

[00:19:36] Many people think — rightly think — that this was the event that [put the nail in the coffin](#)<sup>110</sup> for the Concorde, but in fact, it would return to service, if only for a brief period of time.

[00:19:50] After the crash, France and Britain [grounded](#)<sup>111</sup> their aircrafts in order to make a number of — quite expensive — safety modifications.

[00:20:00] The Concorde was finally relaunched in November 2001, returning to passenger service with stronger [tyres](#) and redesigned fuel tanks, among several other changes.

[00:20:14] 2001, however, was not a great time for air travel. On September 11th, 2001 — just before the Concorde's [relaunch](#)<sup>112</sup> — two planes crashed into New York's World Trade Centre, killing close to 3,000 people.

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<sup>107</sup> stop working, break down

<sup>108</sup> without being affected by

<sup>109</sup> certain to have a bad end

<sup>110</sup> made it very likely for it to fail

<sup>111</sup> kept them on ground or inactive

<sup>112</sup> reappearance, new start

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:20:32] As a result, air travel [on the whole](#)<sup>113</sup> lost its [appeal](#)<sup>114</sup>, and the number of people taking flights into New York [dipped](#)<sup>115</sup> dramatically. The Concorde was flying with an almost completely empty [cabin](#)<sup>116</sup> — not exactly the most sustainable business model.

[00:20:51] Concorde eventually announced its retirement in April of 2003, and the plane would officially retire six months out from then.

[00:21:01] With only six months left to fly on the mighty Concorde, there was a rush to [buy up](#)<sup>117</sup> tickets. And, on October 24th, 2003, Concorde 002 left New York for the final time.

[00:21:17] It was truly the end of an era.

[00:21:21] So, where is the Concorde now?

[00:21:24] Well, you can still get on Concorde 002, though don't expect it to be going very fast; the plane now sits in one of the exhibition halls in the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Somerset, in England.

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<sup>113</sup> generally

<sup>114</sup> quality of being attractive and interesting

<sup>115</sup> dropped, decreased

<sup>116</sup> the area for passengers in an aeroplane

<sup>117</sup> buy all available tickets

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:21:40] For all those who weren't quite lucky enough to fly the Concorde before it was retired, this is, perhaps, the closest you will ever get.

[00:21:49] And you might be wondering, will the world ever see anything like the Concorde again?

[00:21:55] When the Concorde retired, it had no obvious [successor<sup>118</sup>](#); it was, perhaps, the first time in the history of aeronautical engineering that we have taken a step backwards, at least in terms of the speed of aeroplanes.

[00:22:13] The world would have to be [content<sup>119</sup>](#) with [subsonic<sup>120</sup>](#), or [non-supersonic](#), air travel.

[00:22:19] In 2021, however, United Airlines announced its plans to purchase 15 new [supersonic](#) jets from the aeroplane manufacturer Boom [Supersonic](#), which are expected to be in operation by the year 2029.

[00:22:38] A number of smaller companies have proposed private [supersonic](#) jets for use by bankers, chief executives, and others who can afford the [price tag<sup>121</sup>](#).

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<sup>118</sup> something similar that would come after it

<sup>119</sup> pleased, satisfied

<sup>120</sup> slower than the speed of sound

<sup>121</sup> cost

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

[00:22:50] And reintroducing [supersonic](#) travel to the world will, of course, be expensive.

[00:22:56] Companies will also have to find a way to solve the issue of [supersonic](#) air travel's environmental impact, which is something that companies like Boom are trying to address, but there is no easy solution. While there are a number of unknowns, [supersonic](#) air travel may very well return within our lifetimes.

[00:23:18] The final barrier, however, might be beyond the [capabilities](#)<sup>122</sup> of even the smartest engineers in the world.

[00:23:26] And that's how to get rid of that [infernal](#)<sup>123</sup> [boom](#).

[00:23:34] OK then, that is it for today's episode on The Concorde [supersonic](#) jet. I hope it's been an interesting one, and that you've learnt something new.

[00:23:44] As always, I would love to know what you thought of this episode.

[00:23:48] I wonder, I just wonder, whether you might have been lucky enough to fly on a Concorde at some stage in your life? Or perhaps you can remember hearing it flying [overhead](#)<sup>124</sup>?

[00:24:00] If so, please do tell - I'd love to know.

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<sup>122</sup> power or abilities

<sup>123</sup> very annoying, damned

<sup>124</sup> above your head



**English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #243**  
**The Rise and Fall of Concorde**

[00:24:03] And even if you are in the 99.9999999% of the world's population who have never been on a Concorde, what do you think about the future of [supersonic](#) flight?

[00:24:15] Let's get this discussion started.

[00:24:17] You can head right into our community forum, which is at [community.leonardoenglish.com](http://community.leonardoenglish.com), and get chatting away to other curious minds.

[00:24:27] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:24:32] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

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## Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Supersonic	going faster than the speed of sound
Mere	only, just
Eventual	happening at the end
Downfall	failure
Recap	repeat the main points of, summarise
Accessible	able to be used, available
Legacy carriers	airlines that have a long history that usually originates at some point in the first half of the 20th century
Privileged	having certain advantages
In-flight	available during flight
Free-flowing	served non-stop
Upscale	very high quality
Altitude	height above sea level

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

<b>Turbulence</b>	violent or unsteady movement
<b>Vastly</b>	to a very great extent or degree
<b>Deregulation</b>	the removal of national control from a business or activity
<b>Feat</b>	something that is difficult to achieve
<b>Accommodate</b>	provide enough space for
<b>Emphasised</b>	stressed, gave importance to
<b>Exceptional</b>	extraordinary, superior
<b>Back up</b>	move backwards
<b>Conceived</b>	formed, thought up
<b>Blueprint</b>	early plan
<b>Launch</b>	the act of sending the aeroplane on its course
<b>Snag</b>	problem
<b>Bankrupt</b>	was in a state that it couldn't pay its debts
<b>Ration books</b>	official documents that allowed them to receive food
<b>Struggling</b>	in a difficult situation

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

<b>Drawing up</b>	preparing
<b>Remarkably</b>	to a surprising degree
<b>Competing</b>	trying to be more successful than the other
<b>Collaboration</b>	working together
<b>Infuriated</b>	made extremely angry
<b>Rival</b>	be equal or comparable to
<b>Constraints</b>	limitations, restrictions
<b>Prototype</b>	the first version of the plane
<b>Maiden</b>	first
<b>Voyage</b>	journey
<b>Bomber</b>	a war aeroplane that dropped bombs
<b>Innovations</b>	introductions of new ideas or methods
<b>Notable</b>	important, worthy of attention
<b>Non-supersonic</b>	not able to go faster than the speed of sound
<b>Boasts</b>	uses it as an object to be proud of

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

<b>Odd</b>	strange
<b>Beak</b>	the hard, pointed part of a bird's mouth
<b>Unique</b>	only one of its type
<b>Steep</b>	rising and falling at a sharp angle, almost vertically
<b>Tilting</b>	moving in an angled position
<b>Needle-like</b>	looking like a needle
<b>Line of sight</b>	an imaginary line from their eyes to the point they were looking at
<b>Wing</b>	one of the long and flat parts on either side of a aeroplane that make it able to fly
<b>Narrower</b>	having a smaller distance from one side to the other, thinner
<b>Minimised</b>	reduced it to the smallest possible amount
<b>Drag</b>	the force that makes it harder for an aeroplane or other object to travel forward
<b>Boasted</b>	used them as something to be proud of
<b>Slim</b>	thin
<b>Absurd</b>	crazy, ridiculous



## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

<b>Sustain</b>	keep, maintain
<b>Curve</b>	a line that turns continuously and has no straight parts
<b>Privilege</b>	advantage only few people have because they are rich
<b>Miraculous</b>	amazing, incredible
<b>Delicacies</b>	expensive food
<b>Lobster</b>	an animal that lives in the sea and has a body with a hard covering
<b>Caviar</b>	the eggs of fish eaten as food
<b>Drum up</b>	get, obtain
<b>Brushing elbows</b>	being next to
<b>The likes of</b>	someone like
<b>Detected</b>	noticed, felt
<b>Apparently</b>	as far as we know or obviously
<b>Burst</b>	a sudden and great increase of an action
<b>Cruising</b>	travelling at a fixed, steady speed
<b>Sipping</b>	drinking by taking small amounts

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

<b>Oyster</b>	a flat sea creature that lives in a shell
<b>Intrigue</b>	interesting because of being strange and exciting
<b>Glamour</b>	excitement and luxury (great and expensive comfort)
<b>Convenience</b>	usefulness and comfort
<b>Drawbacks</b>	disadvantages
<b>Sonic boom</b>	the loud noise caused by an aircraft that travels faster than the speed of sound
<b>Subjected</b>	caused to experience something not pleasant, put through
<b>Racket</b>	loud not pleasant noise
<b>Adding insult to injury</b>	making a bad situation even worse
<b>Disruptive</b>	causing trouble
<b>Boom</b>	very loud noise
<b>Disturbing</b>	causing problems, worrying
<b>Exhaust</b>	waste gases
<b>Ozone layer</b>	the layer of the upper atmosphere where ozone (a form of oxygen)

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

protects the earth from harmful light from the sun

**Elite** richest

**Worsened** made it worse

**Crank up** increase

**Charter** hire, rent

**Devastating** destructive, damaging

**Bound for** on the way to, headed for

**Turned out** proved

**Chain** a series of related things

**Fatal** causing death

**Structural** relating to the parts of its structure or construction

**Overfueled** filled with too much fuel

**Hold** a large place in the lower part of the plane in which items of baggage were kept

**Freak accident** an accident that happens under rare or highly unlikely circumstances

**Taxiing** moving slowly along the ground before take-off

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

<b>Strip</b>	a long thin piece of material
<b>Fell off</b>	dropped to the ground
<b>Tyres</b>	thick, rubber, air-filled material around the edge of the wheel of a vehicle
<b>Burst</b>	broke open suddenly and violently
<b>Shooting off</b>	sending out with great speed
<b>Rubber</b>	a tough flexible substance
<b>Ruptured</b>	cracked, tore
<b>Fail</b>	stop working, break down
<b>In spite of</b>	without being affected by
<b>Doomed</b>	certain to have a bad end
<b>Put the nail in the coffin</b>	made it very likely for it to fail
<b>Grounded</b>	kept them on ground or inactive
<b>Relaunch</b>	reappearance, new start
<b>On the whole</b>	generally

## The Rise and Fall of Concorde

<b>Appeal</b>	quality of being attractive and interesting
<b>Dipped</b>	dropped, decreased
<b>Cabin</b>	the area for passengers in an aeroplane
<b>Buy up</b>	buy all available tickets
<b>Successor</b>	something similar that would come after it
<b>Content</b>	pleased, satisfied
<b>Subsonic</b>	slower than the speed of sound
<b>Price tag</b>	cost
<b>Capabilities</b>	power or abilities
<b>Infernal</b>	very annoying, damned
<b>Overhead</b>	above your head

*We'd love to get your feedback on this episode.*

*What did you like? What could we do better?*

*What did you struggle to understand?*

*Let us know in the forum [community.leonardoenglish.com](https://community.leonardoenglish.com)*