

# THE FIRST ISSUES OF AIRMAIL STAMPS

## 1917 - 1925

Danie van Zyl



1921. CHINA. Five Airmail stamps were issued on 1st July 1921.  
The basic airmail rate was 15c in addition to the normal postal rate.  
Some 400 pieces of mail, including newspapers, were flown on the first flight.  
These stamps are rare.

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# FIRST ISSUES OF AIRMAIL STAMPS 1917-1925

As the conveyance of mail by air became more widespread, some countries issued airmail stamps to cater for the new postal rates. This exhibit identifies those countries and records the first airmail stamps they issued. The aim of the exhibit is to be comprehensive and to show all the countries that issued such stamps, either as surcharge or definitives, for the period 1917, the initial issue by Italy, to 1925 when South Africa issued a set of surcharge airmail stamps.

Most early airmail issues were limited in number and consequently range from scarce to very scarce today. After 1925 airmail stamps were issued in far greater number by many more countries and consequently are more easily obtainable. The entry of the Far East, notably China, into the philatelic market has seen the market prices of early first issue stamps far exceed the catalogue prices, especially of first Chinese and Japanese sets.

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## THE WORLD'S FIRST OFFICIAL AIRMAIL STAMPS

Merely 14 years after the first flight of a flying machine, the airmail industry had grown sufficiently for special stamps to be issued for mail destined to be carried on an aeroplane.

### Italy: The First Country in the World to Issue an Airmail Stamp - 20 May 1917



The Special Delivery stamp shown above (as issued and as used) was overprinted on an Inland Express Letter 25c stamp which had been issued on 1 June 1903. The overprinted stamp was issued during May 1917 for the first Experimental round-trip Airmail Flight from Turin to Rome.

The overprint reads: ESPERIMENTO POSTA AEREA / MAGGIO 1917 / TORINO-ROMA - ROMA-TORINO.

These stamps were only sold at post offices in Turin and Rome.

The pilot was Lieutenant Mario de Bernardi, flying a Pamilio PC1 biplane. On May 20, 1917, the plane took off from Turin, carrying 400 pounds of mail, and it successfully completed the 400 mile flight to Rome in four hours and eleven minutes. The return flight was scheduled for later that day, but it was delayed until May 27, 1917, due to bad weather.

It is said that part of the motivation for this experimental flight was the danger created by German U-boats on the sea route during the 1914-1918 war.

## The United States of America Legitimises Airmail

With few people willing to brave the very real dangers of early air travel, and few military contracts between the world wars, aviation in the U.S.A. was supported by postal funds. For the first time, the postal system built the frame-work of a new transportation industry. Since only the military was using aircraft on a regular, large-scale basis in the U.S, postal officials turned to the Army to man and operate the first regularly scheduled airmail flights.

The first official American airmail delivery was made on September 23, 1911, by pilot Earle Ovington under the authority of the United States Post Office Department. In August 1918 the Post Office Department took control of all aspects of airmail Service and set out to ensure the service would become a fundamental part of American life. Because of the financial advantages of ever speedier mail service, banks and businesses were the first to recognize the potential of airmail Service. By financing the postal service's development of airmail routes, aviation advocates in Congress worked with postal officials to create an infrastructure within which the private aviation industry could grow and flourish.

### The USA Issues the First Specially Designed Airmail Stamp in 1918

Although Italy issued the first experimental airmail stamp it was the United States that took the lead by issuing the first set of stamps for airmail use only, thereby expressing its serious intent to develop the airmail sector of postal services. The original airmail letter rate per ounce between any two points on the route when service began was 24 cents per ounce for which the first special purpose U.S. airmail stamp was issued on May 13, 1918. The red and blue stamp's vignette depicted Army JN-4 #38262 ("Jenny" bi-plane), the aircraft that made the first airmail flight from Washington two days later. The 24 cent fee it represented was apportioned at two cents for postage, 12 cents for air service, and 10 cents for Special Delivery. The stamp as used is shown.



On July 15 the rate was dropped to 16 cents for the first ounce and 6 cents for each additional ounce and an appropriate 16c stamp was issued. The stamp as used is shown.



On December 15 the rate was dropped again to 6 cents per ounce when Special Delivery was made optional and again an appropriate 6c stamp was issued. The stamp as used is shown.



## The Early Adopters - Overprints on Previously Issued Stamps

The countries that first followed Italy and the USA in issuing airmail stamps did it by overprinting stamps already issued with appropriate wording and values.

### HUNGARY - 1918

After Italy and the USA, Hungary was the third country to issue airmail stamps. The stamps were issued on 4 July 1918. The values were overprinted "REPULO POSTA 1 K 50 f" on a 75f turquoise blue stamp and "REPULO POSTA 4 K 50 f" on a 2k bistre-brown stamp. The 75f and 2k stamps had been issued previously on 1 November 1916. Both the 1918 overprinted airmail stamps are shown.



The 10k magenta stamp, also from the November 1916 set, sometimes confused with the first issue, was overprinted "LEGI POSTA 3K, 8K and 12K" as three different airmail stamps in 1920. These stamps are shown on the cover below.



Airmail cover used in Hungary in 1924

## Austria - 1918

Austrian Postal Authorities issued the first airmail stamps on March 30, and the proportion of civilian mail was expected to help finance this undertaking. However, this part of the venture did not generate much revenue. On the other hand, these stamps, just like the numerous mammoth stamp issues for Feldpost, Serbia, Italy, Rumania, Bosnia, Hungarian War Issues, etc were also primarily a means of financing military objectives by selling to stamp collectors, at that time a highly speculative activity.

The Vienne-Kracow-Lemberg Airmail line functioned flawlessly until October 15 1918, although several planes had been lost for further service or had to be abandoned after making emergency landings in the Carpathian mountains. Altogether the civilian mail items transported were as follows: Vienna-Kracow 6488; Kracow-Vienna 8333; Vienna-Lemberg (Lvov) 9428; Lemberg (Lvov)-Vienna 11038; Vienna-Budapest 2411. Exact numbers for the very minute traffic between Kracow and Lemberg are not known. Although the flights continued to Kiev, civilian mail was not flown between Lemberg and Kiev; only official mail necessary for trade matters was allowed to be flown into the Ukraine. Airmail postage on the Airmail Line was 2.50 K for which a stamp overprinted "FLUGPOST 2.50 K 2.50" was issued.



On July 5, two additional daily flights were added for the Vienna-Budapest-Vienna line, for which the Hungarian Postal Administration issued two stamps, "FLUGPOST 1.50 K 1.50" overprint on a 3K stamp and "FLUGPOST" overprint on a 4K stamp. Admissible for airmail flights were letters and postcards addressed to any provincial capital in Austria, and to 24 cities in Hungary. Technical and political problems between Austria and Hungary led to the cancellation of the airmail service between Vienna and Budapest on July 24, only 19 days after its introduction.



## Czechoslovakia - 1919

Czechoslovakia was founded in October 1918, as one of the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of World War I and as part of the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. It consisted of the present day territories of Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia. Its territory included some of the most industrialized regions of the former Austria-Hungary.

On 12 December 1919 she issued her first airmail stamps by overprinting the three Austrian airmail stamps with the words "POSTA CESHOSLOVENSKA 1919". The three stamps had values of 1.5k, 2.5k and 4k. The standard airmail postage was 2.50 K. The airmail stamps were sold only at the philatelic counter post office, Praha 1, Jindriska street, Bratislava. This stamp is shown.



## Switzerland - 1919

A landlocked mountainous country in Europe. She issued two airmail stamps in 1919/20. The first, a 50c denomination Seated Helvetia with Sword definitive stamp, was overprinted on April 30, 1919 with a red propeller with wings. The stamps were used on the Zurich - Bern - Lausanne Air Mail Route. 500,000 of these first airmail stamps were printed. The second, a 30c denomination Seated Helvetia with Sword definitive stamp was overprinted on November 14, 1920 with a red propeller with wings. The stamps were used on the Basel - Frankfurt-am-Main Air Mail Route. Only 180,000 of them were printed.



## Tunisia - 1919

A French Protectorate in North Africa. In November 1919 she issued her first airmail stamps by overprinting two 1906 stamps, a 30c and a 35c stamp depicting Hadrian's Aqueduct. The 30c was overprinted "Poste Aérienne" in red while the 35c stamp was overprinted in red with a new value of "30c" and the words "Poste Aérienne". Both stamps carried the same value but differed in colour, the one brown and green and the other blue and olive.



## Japan - 1919

An Empire of East Asia, consisting of numerous islands - a geography that cries out for communication by air. Airmail was a part of the Japanese aviation industry as early as 1919, when the Imperial Aeronautical Association staged airmail contests between flyers. The flyer who could fly to a certain destination the quickest and deliver their load could win a prize often in money. These contests were largely held for one purpose: to establish airmail hubs across Japan. Airmail stamps have been a part of Japan's airmail service since 1919. In 1922 the first regular airmail route was established between the towns of Tokushima and Sakai, which are in Osaka Prefecture. The first official airmail flight in 1919 took place between Tokya and Osaka.

In 1919 two Tazawa watermarked stamps, first issued in 1914, were overprinted as airmail stamps: a 1½ sen stamp, overprinted with a red aeroplane and a 3 sen stamp overprinted with a black aeroplane. These stamps are regarded as rare. Both values are shown used.



## Cilicie (O.M.F.) - 1919

Cilicia is a large region in the southeastern part of Turkey, known as Adana Vilayet by the Ottomans. For centuries, it had a large Armenian Christian population until the onslaught of the Armenian Genocide, beginning in 1915. Initially, after the surrender of the Ottomans in the Great War, the British occupied parts of Cilicia, however on Feb 1st, 1919, control was transferred to the French Occupational Forces. The French established their headquarters in Adana and Mersin and deployed troops as far west as Maras. To enhance communication the French prepared airmail stamps but officially they were never issued as the occupation ended. However, these stamps were apparently issued by the Cilician authority after occupation ended. The overprint is a blocked "POSTE PAR AVION". These stamps are very scarce. Both mint and used shown.



## Spain - 1920

A kingdom of South West Europe. Spain's neutrality in World War I allowed it to become a supplier of material for both sides to its great advantage, prompting an economic boom in Spain, which in turn promoted the use of airmail. The first airmail stamps were issued on April 4, 1920. Five definitive Spanish stamps of 1909 with values of 5c, 10c, 25c, 50c and 1p were overprinted "CORREO AEREO". All five values are shown.



## Syria 1920

A country at the East end of the Mediterranean Sea, formerly Turkish territory. It was under French Mandate from 1919 to 1941. She issued her first airmail stamps in 1920. These were stamps of France surcharged 0.M.F. and overprinted "POSTE PER AVION".



## Danzig 1920

Following the defeat of Germany in World War 1, the Allied powers decided to create the Free City of Danzig (under a commissioner appointed by the League of Nations). Since the population of the city was predominantly German, it was not placed under Polish sovereignty, but as a semi-autonomous state under the protection of the League of Nations. The residents of the Free City governed its own internal affairs, but external affairs were put under Poland, which included a binding customs union which assured Poland an access to the sea. Danzig had its own constitution, national anthem, parliament and government. It issued its own stamps and currency.

The first stamps of the Free State issued in 1920, consisted of German stamps overprinted "Danzig". On September 29, 1920, the Freistadt Danzig issued their first airmail stamps by overprinting the 40pf with values 40pf and a blue plane, 60pf and a red plane and 1m with black wings. While mint stamps are fairly common used stamps are scarce. All three stamps used are shown.





# Sweden - 1920

A kingdom of Northern Europe. In 1912, mail was carried by airplane for the very first time in Sweden. Gradually the aircraft became more dependable, and the Swedish Post Office decided to offer airmail service between Malmo, in the very south of Sweden, and Berlin, via Warnemunde on Germany's Baltic coast. It all started on Aug 11, 1920, when a plane left Berlin for Malmo. The return flight took place the following day. According to the agreement between Sweden and Germany, this mail flight was to be a daily service, thus considerably speeding up communications between the two countries. Most classes of mail (including regular and registered letters, postcards and printed matter) could be forwarded by air by paying a special airmail fee in addition to the regular postal rate. The airmail fee was 10 ore for postcards, and 20o or 50o for letters and printed matter. The sender was required to clearly write the word "Luftpost" (airmail) in the upper left corner of the cover. The post office staff then added an airmail label. When the service started in August 1920, no specific airmail stamps were available and regular postage stamps were used.

On Sept. 19, 1920, a new connection linking Malmo with Copenhagen, Hamburg, Bremen, Amsterdam and, finally, London was opened. To coincide with this important development, the Swedish Post Office issued a set of three airmail stamps on Sept. 18, 1920. The *Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* states that the new stamps were issued Sept. 17. They were, in fact, distributed to the post offices on Sept. 17, but went on sale the following day.

Sweden's postal authority had large remainders of service stamps (Officials) because their usage had ceased on July 1, 1920. The 2o, 3o and 4o Official stamps of the 1910-19 series were used to produce the new airmail stamps.

The former Officials were overprinted with the word "LUFTPOST" and the new ore denominations of 10, 20 or 50. The quantities overprinted ranged from 570,000 to 604,000 for the various denominations. All three mint values are shown.



# Memel - 1921

A seaport and district on the Baltic Sea and formerly part of Germany. After WWI, Germany had to pay enormous compensations to the Allied and Associated Powers as a result of losing the war. Major land concessions were forced upon Germany with the loss of all her colonies and several territories in Europe, including the Memel / Klaipeda region, an area roughly the size of Luxemburg. On January 10, 1920, the Treaty of Versailles, the peace settlement signed after WWI, was ratified and the Memel region was given the status of *Territoire de Memel* under the administration of the Council of Ambassadors. On February 5, 1920 it was announced that the occupying power in the Territory would be French. The official transfer of the Territory took place on February 10; the withdrawal of German troops was completed on February 12. The following day, first infantry units of the French army (*21e Bataillon de Chasseurs à Pied*) landed in Memel. The temporary administration of the Memel territory was entrusted to the Allied High Commissioner, General Dominique-Joseph Odry, supported by a battalion of Alpine Hunters. All local administrative and judicial officials who had not been hostile to the Allies were allowed to retain their offices.

In 1921 the Memel authority issued air stamps overprinted "FLUGPOST" in double lined letters on surcharged stamps of France. A set of mint stamps is shown.

The 60Pf stamp had two forms, one where the "P" of Pfenning was a capital letter and another where the "p" was a small letter.



## Uruguay - 1921

A republic in South America bordering on the Atlantic Ocean. Issued air stamps in 1921. The first permanent settlement on the territory of present-day Uruguay was founded by the Spanish Jesuits in 1624 at Villa Soriano on the Río Negro, where they tried to establish a Misiones Orientales system for the Charruas. José Batlle y Ordóñez, President from 1903 to 1907 and again from 1911 to 1915, set the pattern for Uruguay's modern political development and dominated the political scene until his death in 1929.

In 1921 she issued her first airmail stamps, the 1900 25C Figure of Justice definitives overprinted with blue, red and green words "CORREO AEREO". All three stamps mint are shown.



## Russia - 1922

Records mention a system of messengers in the 10th century. Early letters were carried in the form of a roll, with a wax or lead seal; the earliest known of these seals dates from 1079, and mentions a governor Ratibor of Tmutarakan. The earliest surviving cover was sent in 1391 from La Tana (now Azov) to Venice.

Russian Post is a founding member of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) created in 1874. In 1902 Chief Postal Service was made part of the Internal Affairs Ministry and in 1917 under the Provisional Government it became part of Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs.

The first airmail USSR stamps were issued in November 1922, at the time the RSFSR was transitioning into the USSR. The RSFSR October Revolution commemorative stamp was overprinted with a red airplane on November 8, 1922. These first airmail stamps were only sold at the Moscow General Post Office.

Only 100,000 of these airmail stamps were produced, and the ones that have survived are probably only a tiny fraction of that number. They were printed by typography with Litho overprint of a red stylised airplane. The stamp was black and green with a value of 45r. Both mint and used are shown.



## Lebanon - 1924

A territory North of Palestine. A republic under French Mandate until 1944. Lebanon issued airmail stamps in 1924, being surcharged stamps of France overprinted "Poste par Avion". Four stamps with values 2, 3, 5 and 10 pi. on 40c, 60c, 1 f and 2f respectively.



## The Specially Designed Airmail Stamps: First Official Issues

### Germany (Weimar Republic) - 1919

The Weimar Republic is an unofficial, historical designation for the German state during the years 1919 to 1933. The name derives from the city of Weimar, where its constitutional assembly first took place. The official name of the state remained Deutsches Reich, unchanged since 1871. In English, the country was usually known simply as Germany.

In 1919, the Weimar Republic began issuing airmail stamps, that is, definitive postage stamps, designed to be used specifically for mail carried on airplanes or airships. Of course, regular definitive postage stamps could be used to make up airmail rates, as airmail stamps could be used to make up surface letter rates.

The new airmail stamps though, had designs emblematic of the new technology of aviation. The first official German airmail stamps were issued on November 10, 1919. There were two airmail stamps. The values were 10pf orange and 40pf green. The 10 pf design shows a winged posthorn, and the the 40 pf design shows an early biplane. Both values are shown mint and used.



Below: A flight cover with the appropriate airmail stamps affixed. Note that an airmail label was also available.



## Estonia - 1920

A district on the South Coast of the Gulf of Finland.

Estonia as a unified political entity first emerged after the Russian February Revolution of 1917. With the collapse of the Russian Empire in World War I, Russia's Provisional Government granted national autonomy to a unified Estonia in April. In February, after the collapse of the peace talks between Soviet Russia and the German Empire, mainland Estonia was occupied by the Germans. Bolshevik forces retreated to Russia. Between the Russian Red Army's retreat and the arrival of advancing German troops, the Salvation Committee of the Estonian National Council Maapäev issued the Estonian Declaration of Independence in Pärnu on 23 February 1918.

On 2 February 1920, the Treaty of Tartu was signed by the Republic of Estonia and the Russian SFSR. The terms of the treaty stated that Russia renounced in perpetuity all rights to the territory of Estonia. The first Constitution of Estonia was adopted on 15 June 1920. The Republic of Estonia obtained international recognition and became a member of the League of Nations in 1921.

A special triangular stamp issue was prepared for the prepayment of the air fee required of 5m for the mail carried by the emergency flights to Helsinki in February and March 1920. Ordinary definitive issue stamps had to be used for the required regular postage. The airmail stamp was invalid for regular postage. According to official information, the stamp was issued on March 13, 1920. Due to its late arrival, the legitimate use of the stamp was restricted to one flight only - March 15, 1920. The stamps were invalidated on December 31, 1923.

The stamps were printed by the typography process by Joh. & Alma Paalmann in Tallinn in sheets of 200 - two panes of 100 each, separated by gutter. There was only one printing, of which 238,315 were sold. The rest of the printing was used for the 1923 surcharges.



## Belgian Congo - 1920

Colonial rule in the Congo began in the late 19th century. King Leopold II of Belgium attempted to persuade the Belgian government to support colonial expansion around the then-largely unexplored Congo Basin. Their ambivalence resulted in Leopold's creating a colony himself. With support from a number of Western countries, Leopold achieved international recognition for a personal colony, the Congo Free State, in 1885. By the turn of the century, however, the violence used by Free State officials against indigenous Congolese and a ruthless system of economic exploitation led to intense diplomatic pressure on Belgium to take official control of the country, which it did by creating the Belgian Congo in 1908.

In 1920 it issued 4 airmail stamps each with a different centre piece picture: values of 50c Congo Wharf, 1f District Stores, 2f Native Canoes on Beach and 5f Provincial Prison. All shown mint.



## Latvia - 1921

A country on the Baltic Sea. The First Latvian National Awakening began in the 1850s and continued to bear fruit after World War I when, after two years of struggle in the Latvian War of Independence, Latvia finally won sovereign independence, as recognised by Soviet Russia in 1920 and by the international community in 1921. Latvia proclaimed its independence on 18 November 1918, and issued its first stamps on 18 December. On 30 July, 1921 she issued a set of two triangular airmail stamps. There was allegedly a Postal Administration order that these stamps were to be used only on airmail letters and postcards, but this order was obviously not observed for a long time, as soon afterwards the stamps were used on all items of mail, even on money orders although no air mail existed for this service. The stamps were valid for postage until December 1st, 1928.

All issues are of identical design: A Bleriot monoplane over the towers of Riga. The stamps were printed in 10 horizontal rows, with 12 stamps per row = 120 stamps per pane. Quantities: 10R Perf 110,404 and Imperf 15,000, 20R Perf 329,796 and Imperf 15,000.



## China - 1921

The Republic of China was a sovereign state in East Asia that occupied the territories of modern China, and for part of its history Mongolia and Taiwan. It was founded in 1912, after the Qing dynasty, the last imperial dynasty, was overthrown in the Xinhai Revolution. The Republic's first president, Sun Yat-sen, served only briefly before handing over the position to Yuan Shikai, former leader of the Beiyang Army. His party, then led by Song Jiaoren, won the parliamentary election held in December 1912. Song was assassinated shortly after, and the Beiyang Army led by Yuan Shikai maintained full control of the government in Beijing.

China's vast distances, marked by mountain ranges, sweeping plains and deserts, ensured the success of airmail services in that country. What was accomplished in days of road and river navigation took just hours by plane.

Five airmail stamps were issued July 1, 1921, to be used on flights from Peking to Shanghai starting that day.

These handsome stamps are denominated 15¢, 30¢, 45¢, 60¢, and 90¢. The basic airmail rate then was 15¢ in addition to the normal postal rate. Carried by train the 450-mile distance from Shanghai to Tsinan and then 230 miles by air from Tsinan to Peking, an estimated 400 pieces of mail, including newspapers, were flown on that first flight. Only a handful of the mail was registered.

The 5 airmail stamps of 1921, identified as tail with bars, the values being 15c, 30c, 45c, 60c and 90c, are shown. These stamps are rare.



## Lithuania - 1921

A country on the Baltic Sea. In 1915 the Germans captured Lithuania-proper during the First World War. In 1917 Russia surrendered to Germany (after the war hardships led to a revolution in Russia) and renounced any claims to the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea, while the subsequent German losses in the Western Front led to a possibility to declare the independence of Lithuania on February 16th, 1918.

Pictorial Lithuania stamps, for postage on airmail letters, were first issued in 1921 for use on the Kaunas-Konigsberg Air Service route. These Lithuanian airmail stamps feature contemporary aircraft flying above landscapes and historic sites, as well as allegorical representations of flight. All Lithuanian airmail stamps are inscribed "ORO PASTAS", the Lithuanian language words for "AIR MAIL". 7 airmail stamps were issued in 1921 of values 20s, 40s, 60s, 80s, 1a (featuring a Junkers F-13 flying over Nemunas River), 2a (featuring an air squadron of three aeroplanes) and 5a (featuring an aeroplane flying over Gediminas Castle.) The four lower denominations are of the same design but in different colours. All 7 stamps mint shown.



## Netherlands - 1921

A Kingdom in the North West of Europe on the North Sea. In 1890, the king, William III, died after a long reign and was succeeded by his young daughter, Queen Wilhelmina (1880-1962). She would rule the Netherlands for 58 years.

Three airmail stamps were issued on May 1, 1921. These are the only Netherlands stamps ever produced by the woodcut-letterpress printing process. The design of these stamps features a gull flying over the ocean, with the denomination tablet in the center. The values were 10c, 15c, and 60c and valid for airmail only. These stamps were originally issued to pay the airmail fees charged by the Dutch carrier, KLM Airlines. The use of these stamps was discontinued on June 1, 1922. In February 1923, these stamps were again placed on sale for general postal use, and the existing supplies were quickly sold-out.

All three values are shown, postmarked during the airmail period.



## French Morocco - 1922

A French Protectorate in North Africa. France officially established a protectorate over Morocco with the Treaty of Fez, ending what remained of the country's de facto independence. Hubert Lyautey, the first Resident General of the protectorate, was an extraordinary personality with royalist leanings who made it his mission to develop Morocco. Unlike his compatriots, Lyautey didn't believe that France should annex Morocco like French Algeria but rather remodel and re-educate Moroccan society.

In 1922 the Protectorate issued a set of 11 airmail stamps. All were of the same design, an airplane over Casablanca in different colours. Values were 5c, 25c, 50c, 75c (Green), 75c (Blue), 80c, 1f, 1.40f, 1.90f, 2f and 3f. Most of the eleven stamps are shown.



## Mexico - 1922

A Republic of Central America. The major accomplishment of the Carranza period was the Constitution of 1917, which sought to destroy the feudalism that had existed in Mexico for 400 years. After Carranza's assassination in 1920, General Obregon ascended to the presidency. A strong individual, he was both willing and able to push through social reforms.

The Republic issued three airmail stamps in 1922, values 25c and 50c. The 25c stamps came in two colours. The image is that of a Golden Eagle flying.

This 50c. claret and blue stamp, issued in 1922, was only used for a single aerial postal attempt, which took place between Mexico and Tepic via Guadalajara on April 15, 1923. The attempt was disastrous for the covers only arrived at Tepic on April 18, being longer in transit than if they had been sent by the ordinary route. The stamp was withdrawn after this attempt.

All three stamps mint are shown.



## Siam (Thailand) - 1925

An independent kingdom in South East Asia now known as Thailand. The successor of King Chulalongkorn was King Rama VI in October 1910, better known as Vajiravudh. As the Siamese crown prince he had studied law and history in Great Britain. In his reign (1910-1925) many changes were made, which brought Siam closer to modern countries. For example, the Gregorian Calendar was introduced, all the citizens of his country had to accept a Family name, women were encouraged to wear skirts and long hair fringements and a citizenship law, Principle of the "Ius sanguinis", was adopted. In 1917 the Chulalongkorn University was founded and school education was introduced for all 7 to 14-year-olds. Thus it is not strange to find them also issuing airmail stamps.

These rather attractive airmail stamps depicting the garuda bird, engraved and recess printed by Waterlow, was first issued January 3, 1925 and continued until 1937. The values were 2s purple/yellow (April 21, 1925), 3s chocolate, 5s green, 10s orange and black, 15s carmine, 25s indigo, 50s black and orange-brown and 1b sepia and indigo.

This set issued on 3 January 1925 preceded the South African airmail issue of March 1925 by only eight weeks.



## Great Britain without an Airmail Stamp

### Airmail Stamp Essay 1923

Great Britain gave the world the first postage stamp, the Penny Black. Recognition of its world leadership position is shown in that a GB stamp displays no country name. The surprise is that GB has never issued an airmail stamp.

In 1923 a design for a set of airmail stamps was submitted to the Post Office for approval, but was not accepted.

Essays for an airmail stamp for Great Britain are shown.





## The Union of South Africa - 1925

### The Announcement

In January 1925 Mr Thomas Boydell, Minister of Posts and Telegraphs for the Union of S.A., announced that an experimental airmail service would commence on 2 March, 1925. He explained that the object of the service was to facilitate the receipt and dispatch of European mail. It would be possible for members of the public in Mossel Bay (subsequently changed to Oudtshoorn because of fog), Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban to receive their inbound mail a few hours after the mail boat berthed in Cape Town and to dispatch their outbound mail much earlier than previously possible. The reason why the service was confined to the Durban-Cape Town route was because the train connection between these coastal cities was indirect and slow.

In addition to the ordinary postage (2d per ounce) the following airmail fees had to be prepaid in stamps:

Letters Inland	3d per ounce, overseas 6d per oz.
Postcards Inland	1d each, overseas 3d
Parcels Inland	6d per lb, overseas 9d per lb.

The Post Office issued a set of stamps in denominations of 1d (red), 3d (blue), 6d (mauve) and 9d (green). The stamps were not valid for ordinary postage. A letter had to be franked with both postage and airmail stamps to be conveyed by air. There was an anomaly in the costing in that two letters, one destined for Cape Town and other destined for overseas, in spite of flying exactly the same distance by aeroplane nevertheless paid a different surcharge, 3d by the first and 6d by the latter for letters and for parcels, 6d and 9d respectively.

The printing of the stamps was done by the Cape Times Ltd, Cape Town at a cost of 3s per thousand. The stamps were printed on soft wove non-watermarked paper in sheets consisting of upper and lower panes, each pane comprising six horizontal rows of ten stamps.

### A Trio of Firsts

These were the first airmail stamps in the British Empire. They were also the first Union stamps to be printed in South Africa and the first Afrikaans stamps where Zuid was replaced by Suid.

The first flight took place from Cape Town on 2 March, 1925. The last flight took place from Durban to home base Pretoria on 17 June, 1925.

The four stamps mint are shown.



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- SAVPEX Judges' Report



# The End

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**A grateful South African Philately Club thanks**

**Danie van Zyl**

**for sharing his collection with us.**

**15/12/2020**

**If you have questions and want to contact Danie, please contact:**

**"Postmaster" <postmaster@southafricanphilatelyclub.com>**

**[www.southafricanphilatelyclub.com](http://www.southafricanphilatelyclub.com)**