

AVIATION: ALL TOURIST

International Airlines Will Gradually Expand the Service to Circle the Globe

By FREDERICK GRAHAM

A DETAILED plan which will systematically extend low-cost scheduled air tourist service until it girdles the earth by April 1, 1954, has been worked out by the International Air Transport Association. Sixty-seven airlines from fifty countries, all members of I. A. T. A., agreed unanimously on the step-by-step plan at a series of traffic conferences that ended recently in Cannes, France.

Next spring tourist air service will be flown throughout Europe by a whole network of lines, according to an announcement made last week at the New York office of I. A. T. A. at 165 Broadway.

Dennis H. Handover, who presided at the Cannes conferences, described the agreements among the lines as "almost an economic revolution in air transport—and a major accomplishment of international cooperation." He predicted that when the agreed-on services are "put fully in operation, the major portion of international air passenger traffic will be carried on tourist rather than first class flights, and the economic basis of the industry will be mass rather than de luxe transport."

It has long been the aim of many people in aviation to put air travel on a mass basis, but, with several notable exceptions, the international lines have never led the way in such matters. As a matter of record, some of the international carriers approached last year's tourist rate agreement with something less than enthusiasm.

Success of the Test

The fact that international air tourist service last summer and fall was far better than even the most hopeful had dared expect must have had its effect on the decisions to expand the service. Last spring, summer and fall saw the tourist-class service across the Atlantic grow to huge proportions and at the same time first-class service held up remarkably well and in some cases gained over the previous year.

Now the plan has been made even more ambitious. A world-wide pattern of international fares and rates, comprising more than 100,000 individual fares and rates, will go into effect next April 1. In the main, first-class fares will be unchanged in the Western Hemisphere and the Far East and over the Pacific. There will be some small increases on routes from Europe to the Middle East, usually coinciding with the introduction of tourist fares.

One of the biggest changes to be worked by the new plan in the coming year will be in tourist-rate flights within Europe and between Europe and the Middle Eastern gateways. The gateway cities that will have tourist service after April 1, next, will include Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Damascus, Lydda, serving all cities of Israel, Yafa and Nicosia.

Next, fall—starting on Oct. 1—tourist-class service will be extended from the Middle East points to India, Pakistan and Ceylon and between Europe and South Africa. By April 1, 1954, the plan calls for the extension of tourist-class service to the Far East gateways of Hong Kong, Manila and Tokyo and across the Pacific from Asia and Australia to San Francisco, Vancouver and to South America.

Another change, this one scheduled for next May 1, will be tourist-service to connect more points in the United States with Bermuda. Fares for this service will be generally about 20 to 25 per cent under present first-class rates.

Planes for the Service

"Like the North Atlantic tourist services which have provided the experimental basis for this program, the new tourist services will be carried in modern, up-to-date aircraft, with exactly the same high operational standards as first class," Mr. Handover asserted.

"The economies which permit the airlines to lower fares so drastically will be achieved by putting approximately 22 to 25 per cent more seats in each plane and by cutting down on baggage allowances," he pointed out.

According to Mr. Handover, half of the international airlines' present fleet of about 2,500 planes will eventually be converted to tourist-class service. He stated that the lines would have at least 5,000,000 more seats available in 1953 than they had in 1952.

"To fill these seats," Mr. Handover said, "we are relying on the attractiveness of the new fares and we have also decided to raise the rates of commissions hitherto paid to travel agents for sales of existing international tourist services."

Still another change agreed on at the Cannes meeting will be the serving of simple, inexpensive meals on long-distance tourist flights at no separate charge. The matter would be taken care of by adding \$5 to a \$275 ticket.