

Tri-Motor Travels

The mid-1920s marked a revolutionary time in the airline travel industry: the United States' airmail system was delivering millions of packages and letters a year, the Air Mail Act of 1925 allowed for the privatization of airlines, and aviation's future looked promising as Charles A. Lindbergh became the first pilot to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927.

These early commercial airline brochures from 1929 (center), 1930 (right), and 1931 (left) capture the excitement and certitude of flying in the Fokker Tri-Motor and the Ford Tri-Motor 4-AT, two pioneering planes of commercial flight. Inside, a large map of the United States showed passengers their route and displayed departure

and arrival times. As this was the first time many people flew, the text emphasized the safety and fun of flying and told the skeptical that, "This surely is the way to travel!"

The Ford Motor Company went on to build 199 Tri-Motors from 1926 through 1933. EAA's model 4-AT-E was number 146 off Ford's innovative assembly line, and it first flew on August 21, 1929. The airplane was fully restored by EAA over a span of a decade and first flown again in the mid-1980s.

For information on EAA's historic plane, visit www.FlytheFord.org. For more details about early airline timetables, check out www.AirTimes.com and click on Carrier Index or visit www.TimetableImages.com.

-Dana Heimoss

