

Luigi Vallero travels to Toulouse to visit one of the biggest aircraft collections in France.

Aeroscopia

The French city of Toulouse has long been considered one of Europe's most important and influential aeronautical hubs. Its flirtation with aviation started in 1890 when Clément Ader took to the air for the first time in his steam-powered Éole flying machine in the southern suburb of

Muret. La Ville Rose (the Pink City, so named on account of its many terracotta brickwork buildings) was subsequently the birthplace for such classic airliners as the Sud Aviation SE 210 Caravelle and Aerospatiale/BAC Concorde and, more recently, the Airbus A350 XWB and A380 super jumbo. It is also home to Pan-European aerospace giant Airbus and Franco Italian turboprop manufacturer ATR, with an estimated 80,000 people in the wider Midi-Pyrénées region now directly employed by the aviation industry.

It is somewhat fitting, therefore, that the city has what it dubs 'one of the richest [aircraft] collections in France' – Aeroscopia.

Introducing Aeroscopia

In 1980, the Ailes Anciennes Toulouse association was launched with the aim of preserving aeronautical heritage, along with fostering an aviation culture among younger generations. Initial work focused on predominantly military and General Aviation types, with the first jet airliner, former Air Toulouse Caravelle 12, F-GHMU (c/n 249), arriving in 1995. The collection

Aeroscopia lies on the northeastern corner of Toulouse-Blagnac Airport and is the result of more than two decades of planning.
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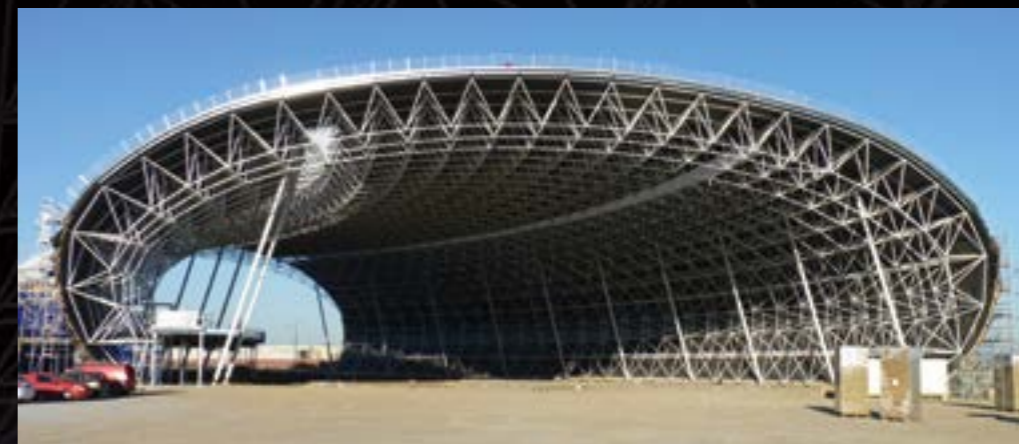
The imposing swing-nose Super Guppy dominates one half of Aeroscopia's main exhibition hall.
ALL PHOTOS AUTHOR UNLESS STATED

has since grown substantially, aided by Airbus and ATR along with local and regional councils. It was the association's partnership with fellow Toulouse-based aerospace museum L' Aérothèque – under the umbrella Terre d'Envol (Earth Flight) – which led to the creation of Aeroscopia, a dedicated facility at the city's Blagnac airport. The foundation stone for the new museum was laid on June 16, 2011 and construction was completed late last year.

However, it wasn't all plain sailing – the official opening on January 15, 2015 marked the culmination of more than two decades of work and several

false starts, driven largely by difficulties in finding both the financial support for the project (estimated to be around €21.2 million) and a suitable site on which to build the museum.

Land was eventually identified on the northeastern edge of Blagnac airport, adjacent to the Aéroconstellation urban development zone and just 0.2 miles (0.3km) from the Jean-Luc Lagardère plant, which houses the A380 final assembly line. This location makes it possible to pool the museum's ticketing service with those for the A380 and Airbus factory tours, while the Ailes Anciennes collection is also nearby. >>



Since opening its doors in January, **Aerospécia** has played host to a variety of aviation-themed events, including the Red Bull Paper Wings contest.

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BELOW RIGHT • **The Archéologie Aéronautique** island features artefacts uncovered by aviation historian Gilles Collaveri and his team.

Aerospécia Exhibits
Main Hall
Aero Spacelines Super Guppy SGT 201*
Aérospatiale SN-601 Corvette*
Aérospatiale Westland SA 340 Gazelle
Airbus A300B
Best Off Sky Ranger
Blériot XI replica
Cessna 337 Super Skymaster*
Dassault Falcon 10*
Dassault Mirage IIIC*
Lockheed F104 G Starfighter*
Messerschmitt Bf 109 G-2
Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-15Bis*
Morane-Saulnier MS760 Paris IR*
Nord 1101 Noralpha*
Potez-Air Fouga CM 170 Magister*
Sepecat Jaguar A*
Sncase Alouette II
Aérospatiale/BAC Concorde 201
Swearingen SA226-AT Merlin IVA*
VJ 01 Gringo
Vought F-8E (FN) Crusader*
Wassmer WA28 Espadon
Outside
Aérospatiale/BAC Concorde 101
Sud-aviation SE 210 Caravelle 12
Under Restoration
Republic F-84G Thunderjet
Saab J35 OE Draken
*On loan from Ailes Anciennes Toulouse

Tailor-made

One of the most eye-catching elements of Aerospécia is its architecture. The 161,500sq ft (15,000m²) site includes a striking zinc grey main exhibit hall designed by the Cardete Huet architect agency (which was also responsible for the neighbouring Lagardère plant). The modular building is 328ft (100m) long and currently spans 86,111 sq ft (8,000m²), but could be expanded by a further 69,965sq ft (6,500m²) should finances allow.

In addition to the museum exhibit hall, Aerospécia also includes the adjacent La Ferme de Pinot, an 18th century U-shaped farmhouse. The building is being refurbished and, once completed early next year, will incorporate an auditorium, restaurants, a documentation centre, educational activity rooms and offices. Inside the facility, the history of aviation in Toulouse is represented through more than 30 large-scale models, ranging from the 1920s-vintage Dewoitine D.1 C1 single-seat fighter and long-haul Latécoère 28 mail plane to the Caravelle, the Airbus family of airliners and ATR's regional turboprops. The models are accompanied by five interactive 'exposition islands', which provide in-depth information on various aspects of the collection.

One such display – the Archaeology Aéronautique (aeronautical archaeology) island – showcases the fascinating work of aviation historian Gilles Collaveri and his team, who devote much of their time to finding the remains of aircraft that have crashed in the region.

On the upper level of the main hall, a 190ft-long (58m) mural retraces the history of French aviation from Clément Ader's first flight through to the present day, while photography



from the Jean Dieuzaide collection offers an unusual glimpse behind the scenes at Sud-Aviation and Aérospatiale.

The ground floor houses 23 different airframes, engines and various assorted memorabilia, much of which is drawn from the Ailes Anciennes collection. Many of the types on display are military, including a Fouga Magister, a Dassault Mirage IIIC, a Lockheed F-104 Starfighter and a Vought F-8N Crusader. However, Aerospécia also contains a variety of civil aircraft, such as Concorde development test-bed F-WTSB (c/n 201), which retains its brown leather 'Presidential' cabin fit, and a former Pan American World Airways A300B4, which has been repainted in the original white, orange and yellow livery of the first prototype example F-WUAB. Both aircraft are open to the public, with the latter featuring a specially modified cabin, complete with transparent glazing to highlight various elements of the airframe structure. The A300 also incorporates a variety of seating and cabin layouts, reflecting the many configurations and options available to Airbus customers.

Also present in the main exhibition hall is Aero Spacelines Super Guppy F-BPPA (c/n 0002) wearing the livery



Inside the facility, the history of aviation in Toulouse is represented through more than 30 large-scale models

TOP • Both the Airbus A300 and the Aérospatiale/BAC Concorde are open to the public.

ABOVE AND LEFT • Displays at Aerospécia include a 190ft-long (58m) mural retracing the history of French aviation, and a selection of models showing some of the country's most important aircraft types.

ABOVE RIGHT • The main exhibition hall contains 23 airframes, including a Super Guppy and an Airbus A300.

Outdoor displays currently feature a Concorde and a Caravelle, though Aerospécia is expecting to acquire an A400M military transporter imminently. AEROSCOPIA



of Airbus Skylink. Its cavernous open cabin incorporates a projection screen which is used to show the aircraft's crucial contribution to the production of the A300, ferrying major components between the manufacturer's plants across Europe. Some of the more unusual exhibits at Aerospécia include the heavily modified former Météo-France Swearingen SA-226AT Merlin IVA, F-GMTO (c/n AT-031); Falcon 10 prototype F-ZACB (c/n 02), which served as an airborne test-bed for the SNECMA Turbomeca Larzac turbofan engine; and SN-601 Corvette F-GKGA (c/n 11), which spent its final years flying as a corporate shuttle for Airbus.

Two more aircraft are displayed on the museum forecourt – Air France Concorde F-BVFC (c/n 209) and the former Air Toulouse Caravelle, which now wears the livery of Air Inter. These will soon be joined by an A400M military transporter, while Aerospécia is also optimistic it will eventually acquire an A380. **AVIATION**

The author would like to thank Jean Claude Cathala, Chargé de Mission, Ailes Anciennes Toulouse for his hospitality and support in writing this article.



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Opening hours: every day 9:30am to 6:00pm (9:00am to 7:00pm during school holidays)
Entry fee: €11.50 for adults, €9.50 for children

