

All Aboard for the *Graf Zeppelin's* Flight Around the World!

Exhibit Synopsis

This Display Class exhibit tells the remarkable story of the *Graf Zeppelin's* 1929 Around-The-World Flight in a manner intended to capture the imaginations of philatelists and non-philatelists alike, by integrating the mail from the flight with contemporaneous artifacts that lend unique color, context, and interest to the underlying story.

The flight officially began on August 7, 1929 in Lakehurst, N.J., and concluded there on August 29th of the same year, with intermediate stops at Friedrichshafen, Germany; Tokyo, Japan; and Los Angeles, California. From the alternative German perspective, the flight began in Friedrichshafen on August 15th and ended when the airship returned there on September 4th. Mail from the flight was carried across five flight legs, with dispatches picked up and delivered at each landing site. Dispatches from the United States, Germany, and Japan were carried on the flight, along with mail from six “treaty” states (Danzig, Saar, Austria, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands and Switzerland) that had postal/financial agreements with the zeppelin company.

The exhibit provides a comprehensive treatment of the mail from the flight, focusing on rates, routes, and markings. Dispatches from the Americas, Germany, Japan, and each of the “treaty” states are shown, along with examples of mail delivered from the zeppelin in both official and unofficial (“wild”) mail drops. The flown mail is complemented by newspaper headlines that trace the zeppelin’s route, by photos of passengers and crew whose mail is shown, by on-board menus from each flight leg, and by other period items that visually document the flight and help enhance viewer interest.

Treatment: The exhibit’s title is an invitation for viewers to come aboard and explore the philately and history of the *Graf Zeppelin's* Around-The-World Flight. The title page includes statements of purpose and scope that define the subject matter and an outline of the exhibit plan, which corresponds to the zeppelin’s flight path around the world. A brief introduction is also included for context and to set the stage for the exhibit’s content. The title page also alerts the viewer to red borders that have been placed around objects to signify special importance and magnifying glasses that have been co-located with items to highlight pieces discovered by the exhibitor or to denote unusual personal research.

Importance: The *Graf Zeppelin's* Around-The-World Flight was not only a triumph of aviation history, but a groundbreaking event in the development of international air mail, as it demonstrated the ability of rigid airships to deliver mail over vast distances, in record time, and at a reasonable cost. Ultimately, the flight would lay the groundwork for the development of regular airship mail service between Europe and South America (*Graf Zeppelin, 1932-37*) and Europe and North America (*Hindenburg, 1936-37*), reducing mail transit times to less than half of what had been possible with ocean-going mail.

The material in the exhibit was assembled over a period approaching thirty years. The philatelic and collateral material are sourced from dozens of dealers, auctions, and fellow collectors world-wide, both within and outside of philately. A comprehensive exhibit of this flight is extremely challenging given the modest numbers of items flown on many of the flight legs (particularly treaty and drop mail.) The elusiveness of these items is compounded by keen collector interest, which not only sharpens competition, but tends to keep rare items off the market for extended periods of time. The comprehensiveness of the exhibit, its combination of elusive and rare items (see “Rarity” below), the exceptional quality of the items shown, and the breadth of the collateral material make the exhibit nearly impossible, if not entirely impossible to duplicate.

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Welcome Aboard!

On this fascinating philatelic journey, you can travel aboard the German airship *Graf Zeppelin* during its iconic 1929 Around-The-World Flight. Throughout August and early September of that year, the giant zeppelin accomplished what no other aircraft had ever done, circumnavigating the globe. The trip would not have been possible without the financial support of stamp collectors across the world, and this exhibit highlights their contribution to the effort through a comprehensive look at their mail from the flight. For added enjoyment, meet passengers and crew who made the journey and see the postcards that they mailed while on board. Get a glimpse into the luxury of zeppelin travel by viewing on-board menus from each of the airship's five flight legs. Follow the *Graf Zeppelin's* progress through newspaper headlines that reported each new triumph as the ship made its way around the globe. Climb on board and witness, through philately, one of the most remarkable achievements in aviation history.

Purpose

The purpose of this Display Class exhibit is to provide comprehensive treatment of the mail flown on the *Graf Zeppelin's* 1929 Around-The-World Flight, with a traditional emphasis on rates, routes, and markings. To enhance viewer interest, the mail is shown with contemporaneous ephemera that adds color and context to the underlying story.

Scope

Postcards and covers from each of the five flight legs are exhibited, including dispatches from the flight's three official sponsor nations: the United States, Germany, and Japan. Among the German dispatches are scarce examples of "drop mail" delivered from the airship in small mail bags equipped with parachute streamers. Mail is also shown from each of the six "treaty states" that had postal agreements with the zeppelin company: Austria, Danzig, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Saar, and Switzerland.

Rarities, Research, and Exhibitor Discoveries


A significant number of rarities are shown. These are identified by a red border around the object. Items discovered by the exhibitor or identified through unusual research are denoted with a .

Exhibit Plan

- I. Hugo Eckener's Dream: An Around-The-World Flight by Airship
- II. Financing the Flight: Newspapers and Philatelists
- III. Destination: Friedrichshafen (First Landing)
- IV. Mail Drops on the Friedrichshafen-Tokyo Flight Leg
- V. Destination: Tokyo
- VI. Destination: Los Angeles
- VII. Destination: Lakehurst
- VIII. Mail Drops on the Second Lakehurst-Friedrichshafen Flight Leg
- IX. Destination: Friedrichshafen (Second Landing)
- X. The Legacy of the Around-The-World Flight

**Around
the World
With the
Graf Zeppelin**



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