

Rare Gander aircraft photo

(Robert G Pelley, 2019-06-11)

bobsganderhistory.com

Many airlines companies have used Gander for trans-Atlantic refuelling. Some of them are frequently photographed while others seem to completely absent from available personal photos, aviation reviews or postcards. It is reasonably easy to find Gander related photos of aircraft belonging to Trans World Airways, Pan American, Scandinavian, American Export, British Overseas and several others.

One that is almost impossible to find is El Al, the Israeli airline company. In fact the one I came across was found accidentally on a Pan American photo!



The El Al airplane can be seen behind this picture of a passenger, mother and son, reboarding after a stopover in Gander in 1952. Just under the tail section of this Pan American DC-6B can be seen the forward fuselage of another airplane.

On this other plane can be clearly seen a “Star of David”, indicating the Israeli connection. The photo below gives a better view of the colour scheme.



The state of Israel was proclaimed by the Jewish leader, David Ben Gurion, on May 14, 1948. EL AL was born in that year not only as an airborne bridge between the fledgling state and the world, but also as a manner to “show the flag”.

In September 1948 EL AL operated its maiden flight, bringing home Israel’s first President, Professor Chaim Weizmann, from a diplomatic visit to Geneva. As the Swiss did not allow military planes to land in its territory, El Al rushed to convert a military C-54 Skymaster into a civilian DC-4.

In October 1950 EL AL purchased the first two of its Lockheed 049 Constellations. In those early days, many passengers said that “EL AL” was really an acronym for ‘Every Landing Always Late’, and referred to the fleet as the ‘EL AL Cancellations’.

Scheduled service to New York began on 29 April 1951. A typical weekly flight schedule included two Constellation services to New York, via Gande

**U. S. A., NEWFOUNDLAND, IRELAND, ENGLAND, FRANCE, SWITZERLAND,
AUSTRIA, ITALY, GREECE, TURKEY, CYPRUS, SOUTHAFRICA, KENYA,
ISRAEL**

| EASTBOUND | | EA 112 Constellation | EA 102 Constellation | EA 122 DC4 | EA 114 Constellation | EA 124 Constellation | EA 132 DC4 |
|---------------------|-----|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| | | Saturday | Sunday | Monday | Wednesd. | Wednesd. | Wednesd |
| NEW YORK | Dp. | 23.59 | | | 10.30 | | |
| GANDER | Ar. | Sunday 06.00 | | | 16.30 | | |
| | Dp. | 07.00 | | | 17.30 | | |
| SHANNON | | ↓ | | | ↓ | | |
| LONDON | Ar. | 19.30 | | | Thursday 06.00 | | |
| | Dp. | 20.30 | | | 07.00 | | |
| PARIS | Ar. | 22.00 | | | | 10.15 | |
| | Dp. | 23.00 | | | | 12.00 | |
| ZURICH | Ar. | | | | | 13.00 | |
| | Dp. | | | | | | |
| VIENNA | Dp. | | | 18.00 | ↓ | | |
| ROME | Ar. | | | 20.45 | 11.45 | | |
| | Dp. | | | 21.45 | 12.45 | | |
| ATHENS | Ar. | Monday 06.15 | | | | | |
| | Dp. | 07.15 | | | | | |
| ISTANBUL | Dp. | | | | | 15.00 | |
| NICOSIA | Ar. | | | | | 18.00 | |
| | Dp. | | | | | 19.00 | |
| JOHANNESBURG | Dp. | | 00.30 | | | | |
| NAIROBI | Ar. | | 08.30 | | | | |
| | Dp. | | 09.30 | | | | |
| TEL AVIV | Ar. | 11.30 | 18.30 | Tuesday 06.45 | 20.15 | 23.00 | 21.15 |

East bound El Al schedule 1951

A fourth Connie (4X-AKD) was later acquired, allowing an increase in trans-Atlantic service by July 1954 to three trips weekly. (As an aside, in July 1955, one of these EL AL's Constellations was shot down by Bulgarian MiGs fighter.)

In 1955, the airline purchased two Bristol Britannia aircraft. El Al was the second airline in the world to fly this plane, after the British Overseas Airways Corporation. EL AL's first Britannia (registered 4X-AGA) was finally delivered on 5 September 1957.



Typical flying time for a Constellation had been about 14hr from New York to London, plus the time for the refuelling stop at Gander. On 8 December 1957 an EL AL Britannia direct flight from New York to London took only 8hr 3min. In 1958,

El Al ran a newspaper advertisement in the United States featuring a picture of a "shrunk" Atlantic Ocean ("Starting Dec. 23, the Atlantic Ocean will be 20% smaller") to promote its non-stop transatlantic flights. It also launched one of the most famous airline advertising campaigns of all time. Eye-catching proclamations such as 'No Goose...No Gander' told customers that the Britannia eliminated refuelling stops westbound trans-Atlantic crossings (because of headwinds) in Goose Bay or Gander.



And Gander took another hit!