



PIONEERING FEATS AND RECORDS

Madrid's Air Museum hosts the official presentation
of the Centenary of the Great Flights of
Spanish Aviation (1926-1935)



The Plus Ultra flying boat (below)
inaugurated the Great Flights in
1926, while nine years later the
Santander light aircraft (above)
brought them to a close.



General José Luis Figuero, head of SHYCEA, was in charge of announcing the commemoration of the raids during a ceremony that featured an air show with four historical aircraft: three Bückers and a Comper Swift like the one used in the 1933 flight from Getafe to Manila.

THE commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Great Flights of Spanish Aviation (1926–1935) took off with the same enthusiasm and determination that led pilots, aircrews, logistics, industry, etc., to fly “higher, further, and faster” to show the world the professionalism, resources and capability of Spanish aviation at that time.

The opening ceremony was held on 25 September 2025 at the Museum of Aeronautics and Astronautics in Madrid –also called the Air Museum– located at Cuatro Vientos air base. Major General José Luis Figuero, head of the Spanish Air and Space Force’s Historical and Cultural Service (SHYCEA), introduced the event, expressing his admiration for what had been accomplished and his resolute goal to disseminate these feats.

He pointed out that there were many projects back then, not all of which came to fruition or were successful, and that this type of flight, generally of a sporting nature, had its

heyday internationally after the First World War (1914–1918).

Due to Spain’s involvement in the North African wars of the early decades of the 20th century, Spanish aviation had to wait to take off.

MUCH MORE THAN JUST A SPORT

The Spanish raid aircraft following the Al Hoceima landing in 1925 also served other purposes, including gaining international recognition and enhancing relations with the former

Pilots and aircrews showed great courage, and the nascent Spanish aviation industry toiled to help them achieve their goals

overseas territories. Furthermore, the aim was always to demonstrate the professionalism, courage and scientific and technical expertise of those involved in each flight.

“Pilots were the main protagonists, but they were not alone. They actually flew without a radio on some of those aircraft to be able to travel with a mechanic”, said General Figuero.

He also stressed that these challenges enjoyed the support of Spain’s nascent aviation industry, including companies such as aviation pioneer CASA and engine manufacturer Hispano Suiza.

NEW ROUTES

These achievements earned the airmen the recognition they sought and the success they deserved, although much has faded with time.

Some of the technological developments in the wake of those flights were equally successful, paving the way for what was to come, like the air routes that are so ubiquitous today. The commemoration, which aims to capture



all of this history, is already taking place, and the centenary of the Plus Ultra's pioneer flight —from Palos de la Frontera (Huelva) to Buenos Aires (Argentina)— will be celebrated in January 2026.

An exhibition has already been organised in Huelva which, with just a few changes, will be travelling to other locations related to the commemoration.

Additionally, a committee has been set up to monitor activities and launch new projects, as the Spanish Air and Space Force also wishes to open up this celebration to the various sectors it is associated with, such as aviation, science, history, industry, etc.

Another goal is to visit cities that were important in the routes covered back then, such as Madrid, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Melilla and Seville.

CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

An international conference on Great Flights was held from 14 to 16 October 2025 at the famous Real Alcázar in Seville, set in the era of these events and featuring a dozen presentations by military and civilian experts in this field.

The palace also welcomed the commemorative exhibition that made its debut in Palos de la Frontera, albeit with some modifications.

A new venue is scheduled to take place next year in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria to commemorate the Plus Ultra flight, as the flying boat made a stopover there before venturing into the Atlantic sky.

In addition to the exhibition, SHYCEA plans to feature the ASPA Air and Space Force helicopter aerobatic team and host musical evenings and conferences. The possibility of the aforementioned unit, as well as the flying boat piloted by Commander Ramón Franco, travelling to Buenos Aires, is also being considered. Another project that could take shape is a meeting to highlight the technological developments that made great

«HIGHER, FURT

From 1926 to 1935, Spanish airmen completed a number of flights demonstrated their professionalism as well as the capabilities



> PLUS ULTRA Palos de la Frontera - Buenos Aires

January-February 1926

In a Dornier Wal flying boat, the crew, consisting of Commander R. Franco, Captain J. Ruiz de Alda, and Lieutenant J.M. Durán, performed the first major Spanish transatlantic flight and one of the first intercontinental flights in the world.



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> ELCANO PATROL Madrid - Manila

April-May 1926

From Cuatro Vientos airfield (Madrid), powered by 450 hp Lorraine engines, three Breguet 19 aircraft set course for the Philippines. The one piloted by Captain González-Gallardo reached its destination to strengthen ties with a territory that had once been part of the Spanish overseas empire.



> HAYA AND RODRÍGUEZ Seville - Spanish Guinea

December 1931

Aboard a Breguet 19 Gran Raid, the Jesús del Gran Poder, military pilots Rodríguez and Haya took off from Tablada airfield (Seville) bound for the Sahara Desert with the aim of reaching Bata (Spanish Guinea). They covered 4,312 kilometres in 27 hours and 11 minutes.



> CIUDAD DE MANILA Getafe - Philippines

March 1933

Rein Loring, a civilian pilot, took off from Getafe airfield (Madrid) in a Comper Swift single-seat aircraft bound for Manila (Philippines). After landing in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Pakistan, India, Cambodia, Vietnam and southern China, he reached his destination.

HER, FASTER»

that made history and earned them international recognition. They and resources of Spanish aviation, and gave wings to the future



> ATLÁNTIDA PATROL Melilla - Guinea

December 1926

Three Dornier Wal flying boats, commanded by Rafael Llorente, set off for Guinea with a threefold purpose: military, political and scientific. The journey ranks among the great feats of flying in formation and is also renowned for the outstanding logistics and engineering applied during the flight.



> JESÚS DEL GRAN PODER Seville - Ibero-America

March 1929

This aircraft, one of the Breguet 19 Gran Raid variants, manufactured by the pioneering Spanish aviation company CASA, took off from Tablada airfield in Seville to make history. In 43 hours and 50 minutes, it landed in Camassary (Brazil) and later visited several Spanish American capitals.



> CUATRO VIENTOS Seville - Cuba

June 1933

Adjusted for the flight, this Breguet 19 Gran Raid, led by military airmen Barberán and Collar, took off on 10 June 1933 from Tablada airfield bound for Havana. It arrived at its destination 7,895 km and 39 hours and 55 minutes later, but then disappeared without a trace on its way to Mexico.



> SANTANDER Santander - Mexico

May-September 1935

Juan I. Pombo, a civilian pilot, departed from Santander on 12 May 1935 bound for Mexico in a British Klemm Eagle 2 single-engine aircraft. He flew to Seville and Cape Verde, crossed the Atlantic to Brazil, went up to Dutch Guiana and landed in Mexico on 16 September 1935, covering 15,970 km.

flights a reality, which would be held in León, home to the Air and Space Force Non-Commissioned Academy.

AIR MUSEUM

Following General Figuero's opening address, Colonel Félix Manjón, presentation host and Air Museum director, took the floor. From the open area of the museum, the public watched a brief exhibition of historical aircraft from the neighbouring Infante de Orleans Foundation.

First, a patrol of three Bückers, the aircraft used by the Spanish Air Force from late 1936 to 1984, flew over the area. They were followed by a Comper Swift aircraft, a single-seat model used in one of the flights featured in this commemoration, which travelled from Getafe airfield to Manila (Philippines) in 1933.

The presentation was rounded off with a visit to the museum's Great Flights section, which featured all of the main protagonists together. There was an exact replica of the pioneering Plus Ultra flying boat, as the original is currently on display in Luján (Argentina); information on the Elcano patrol, which travelled from Cuatro Vientos airfield to Manila (Philippines); and the Atlántida patrol, which flew in formation from Melilla to the Spanish Guinea.

Also on display was the original Breguet 19 Gran Raid, the Jesús del Gran Poder (Seville-Ibero-America, 1929) —the model flown by Haya and Rodríguez from Seville to Bata (Spanish Guinea) in 1931—, the Ciudad de Manila —the single-seat aircraft flown from Getafe to Manila in 1933—, and the ill-fated Cuatro Vientos, which departed from Seville to cross the Atlantic to Cuba, where it managed to arrive before disappearing without a trace en route to Mexico.

Finally, the Santander, which took off from Santander in 1935, piloted by Ignacio Pombo, brought the commemoration to a close.

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