

TU-144 The First Flying SST

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On December 31, 1968 the first supersonic transport flew for the first time. This plane was the Russian designed Tupolev 144 (TU-144).

The TU-144 took to the air 2 months before the Anglo/French Concorde and on June 5, 1969 it broke the sound period for the first time. Only a month and ten days later the TU-144 became the first commercial aircraft to travel more than twice the speed of sound.



Similar in appearance to the Concorde the TU-144 was designed and built by the Tupolev Design Bureau. While still undergoing development a TU-144 crashed at the Paris Airshow in 1973. Finally introduced into passenger service on November 1, 1977 the airliner suffered another blow when another TU-144 crashed while being delivered. After only 55 scheduled flights the TU-144 as a passenger fleet was grounded.



In use as a cargo plane until 1983 the TU-144 completed only 102 commercial flights. The aircraft continued in use as a test bed for both the Soviet and American space agencies until 1999. In all there were 17 aircraft constructed in 6 variations of the TU-144 and its only 2 operators were the Soviet Ministry of Aviation Production and Aeroflot.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tupolev_Tu-144

<http://www.tu144sst.com/>