



# STAMPS OF THE WORLD

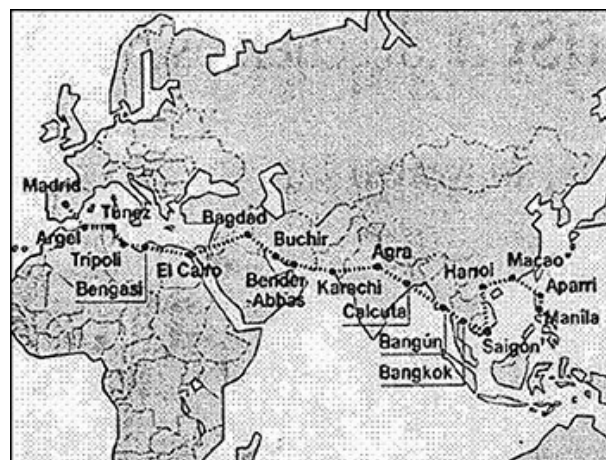


## THE 1926 MADRID-MANILA FLIGHT – A PIONEERING JOURNEY

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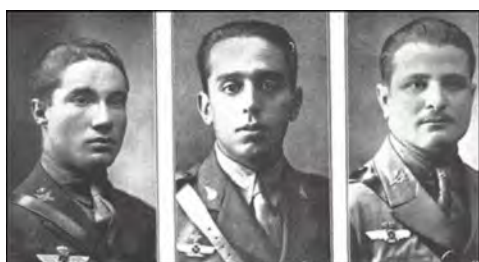
### Introduction

It was in the years following the end of the Great War and during the height of the optimistic “Roaring Twenties” that on April 5, 1926, three Spanish pilots, in three separate planes, left Madrid, Spain for the daring 17,500-kilometer flight to Manila in the former Spanish colony, the Philippines. However, only two of the men - in one battered single-engine plane – ultimately made it to their final destination.



Map of the 1926 Madrid-Manila route

### A Pioneering Journey



Left to right, Gallarza, Loriga, and Estévez.

The three intrepid Spanish aviators were Eduardo González Gallarza, Joaquín Loriga, and Rafael Martínez Estévez (*shown left*). The three captains and their mechanics formed the Elcano Squadron, consisting of three Breguet 19 model airplanes (*shown right*).



Loriga’s plane named “Magallanes”



Colonel Castejón, head of the Military Aviation, along with the 3 aviators and their mechanics just moments before leaving the Four Winds airport on Monday morning April 5.

They left at 8:10 in the morning from Aerodrome de Cuatro Vientos (Four Winds Airport) in Madrid .

After traveling through Algiers (Algeria), Tunis (Tunisia), Tripoli and Benghazi (Libya), and two flat tires on Estévez’s plane, the three had all arrived in Cairo, Egypt by April 9.

In the early morning of Sunday April 11, the three aviators left Cairo. However, because of differences of opinions, Estévez headed toward Damascus, while Gallarza and Loriga proceeded to Baghdad.

Unfortunately, Estévez encountered a hurricane and lost the route. Due to a loss of gasoline, which had leaked out because of holes in the plane’s tank, he was forced to land his plane in the Syrian desert some 100 miles from Amman, Jordan. After six days stranded in the desert, Estévez and his mechanic were found near death on Saturday April 17 by British aviators from Cairo. Despite their desire to continue the journey, they were ordered by the Spanish government to remain in Amman to rest and regain their health.

While Estévez and Calvo were recuperating in Amman, Gallarza and Loriga continued on. On April 24, they both arrived in Saigon, Vietnam. After some repairs to their planes, on April 26, they left for Hanoi. Due to engine failure, Loriga was forced to execute an emergency landing, and the crew was missing near Guangzhou in China for several days before their rescue. Fortunately, Loriga managed to reunite with Gallarza in Macao, and in the morning of May 10, the pair left together in Gallarza’s plane headed for Aparri, in the Philippines.



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The pair landed in Aparri in the afternoon of May 11, where they stayed for two days until they finally flew to Manila, landing at Nichols Camp at 11:20 in the morning on May 13 (*shown right*).



*Landing at Nichols Camp, Manila, May 13, 1926.*

In an account of their journey, the pilots wrote, "...no one would be able to find the exact words for the outcries, the fury and the frenzy of the multitude who greeted us. Wild with joy, they applauded and raised their arms and filled the air with lusty shouts of "vivas." Indeed, the two aviators were welcomed as heroes amid shouts of "Viva España," "Viva Filipinas," "Viva Loriga," and "Viva Gallarza" by the crowds gathered that day to greet the pilots.

## Stamps and Postal History



In addition to official messages of greeting from the Spanish monarchy, letters were picked up by the aviators at various points en route, including in Madrid, Calcutta, Bangkok, Macao, Aparri, and Pamanga. In total, 2,729 letters were handed over to the postal authorities on arrival at Manila on May 13, 1926. Specially prepared postmarks were applied to the covers, one showing an airplane in conjunction with the Coats of Arms of Spain, the U.S.A., and the Philippines, and inscribed "RAID MADRID-Manila" and another (also in the form of an airplane) with lettering on the plane reading, "MADRID TO MANILA FLIGHT ACCOMPLISHED BY SPANISH AVIATORS – MANILA PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, MAY 13, 1926."



*Cover flown on the 1926 Madrid-Manila flight (front & back)*

In addition, Philippine postal authorities commemorated the event by the overprinting of all values of the 1917-1927 regular issues with an overprint (in red or violet) of an airplane radiator and propeller surrounded by the words, "AIRMAIL MADRID MANILA 1926."



*Philippine airmail stamp Scott C7 with the Madrid-Manila overprint.*

condition. The series was prepared on May 12, placed on sale at the post office on the 13<sup>th</sup> and were sold out on that day.

These were the first airmail stamps of the Philippines. The stamps were affixed to the mail brought by the Spanish aviators prior to delivery and were also sold as souvenirs in mint



*Spain semi-postal stamp Scott B16 commemorating the 1926 Madrid-Manila flight.*

To further commemorate the flight, Spain issued a series of stamps showing a map of the route and a picture of a Breguet 19 airplane. The stamps were used for regular airmail on September 15-17, 1926. Subsequently the unsold stamps were given to the Spanish Red Cross Society and were sold at face value, un-canceled, but they could not be used for postage.



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## Concluding Remarks



1998 US Scott 3184m

In today's modern world of ubiquitous GPS, jet travel, and being able to travel to anywhere on the globe within 24 hours, it may be hard to believe what a pioneering and groundbreaking journey this flight was.

In fact, it should be kept in mind that this flight took place a year before Charles Lindbergh's famous first non-stop flight from New York to Paris in 1927. Gallarza and Lóriga also succeeded in their flight before both Clarence Chamberlin's non-stop flight from New York to Berlin in 1927 and Richard Byrd's famous first flight to the South Pole in 1929.



1933 US Scott 733



Clarence Chamberlin Postcard

The pioneering journey from Madrid to Manila rekindled ties between Spain and her former colony, severed in 1898. Filipino pilots reciprocated a decade later (1936) when pilots Juan Calvo (no relation to Captain Estevez' mechanic Calvo) and Antonio Arnaiz flew to Madrid...but that's another story for another time.



Cover with an almost complete set of Philippine special overprints

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