

BIOGRAPHY



Outstanding aviation pioneer of the 20th Century

Claude Dornier – a life inspired by aviation

Claude Dornier was born as Claude Honoré Desiré Dornier, on the 14th May 1884, in Kempten to Franco-German parents. After completing his university entrance qualification, he studied engineering at the Technical University of Munich. In 1910, Claude Dornier started his career as a design engineer employed by the 'Luftschiffbau Zeppelin GmbH' where he soon showed his visionary strengths at a young age. His first success was the development of a 'rotary airship shed' which he had patented on the 29th of September 1912.

The 'Do. Department' marks the origination of the Dornier Company

Graf Zeppelin soon recognised Claude Dornier's construction talents, and placed him in charge of his own department, the 'Do. Department'. From this moment on, Claude Dornier devoted himself to technical design and sampling, and soon became an expert in metals used for aircrafts. From 1917 until 1932, the 'Do. Department' acted as Zeppelin-Werk Lindau GmbH, and later as Dornier Metallbauten GmbH with a base in Friedrichshafen-Manzell as a subsidiary company. After 1932 it finally became an independent company under the management of Claude Dornier.

Dornier achieves worldwide fame with his revolutionary aircraft models

In the 20's, Claude Dornier completed a multitude of technically revolutionary aircraft projects, resulting in aeroplanes which were almost entirely constructed of metal. The 'Wal' gained a legendary reputation and popularity. This seaplane helped to develop many routes, with its outstanding seaworthiness, and achieved twenty world records. The polar explorer Roald Amundsen reached the 88th latitude in the 'Wal', just 220 km away from the North Pole in 1925. Furthermore, Wolfgang von Gronau piloted a 'Wal' across

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the Atlantic Ocean and made the first round-the-world trip in such a flying boat. However this success was far from being enough for Claude Dornier. He planned a giant seaplane to cross the Atlantic. The Do. X was created with this vision in mind, and was, at that time, the largest seaplane of its kind in aviation history. The Komet I, II and III received worldwide attention, and made aviation history with their robust and efficient machinery. The conversion of the Komet III to the Merkur I and II, improved his aviation achievements even more. The Merkur flew its way into the world record books seven times. Two particularly noteworthy expeditions took place in 1926; the first crossing over the Caucasus Mountains with passengers and luggage, and the expedition to Africa over 14.000 km from Switzerland to Capetown. Internationally, the Dornier Company has also been recognized for its innovative designs. Adding to this fact, a large number of the 'Wal', the Do 24 as well as the Do 17 K type aircrafts were produced abroad under license from the Dornier Company.

Cutting edge pioneering achievements, during and after the war

In 1932 Claude Dornier became the sole share holder of Dornier Metallbauten GmbH, which mainly worked on military projects during the 30s and 40s. The Do 17, which was produced in large numbers, and the Do 335, one of the fastest propeller-driven aircraft, were some of the most important developments of their time. Following the destruction caused by the war, and the Allied ban on building aircrafts, Claude Dornier established himself in Germany from 1955 on as a designer and manufacturer of STOL aircrafts (short takeoff and landing aircrafts) as well as vertical-take-off planes. The first plane to be developed in that period was the Do 27, which later became famous for the flights made to Africa by the animal researcher Dr. Bernhard Grzimek. The researchers Do 27 D-ENTE was covered in an iconic zebra pattern. Claude Dornier's achievements in aviation construction were acknowledged in 1955, when he was elected as president of the German Federal association of Air and Space Travel.

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Claude Dornier's vision and lateral thinking, which is seen today as a great attribute of business philosophy, made technological advances possible in other areas as well. Claude Dornier made a significant contribution to the medical world with the kidney lithotripter. This instrument breaks kidney stones with shock-waves. In 1962, Claude Dornier relinquished control of the Dornier Company to his sons. Claude Dornier died on the 5th of December 1969 in Zug (Switzerland) at the age of 85.

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