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# List of Major Air India Disasters

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Fact-checked by The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

Last Updated: Jun 18, 2025 • Article History

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**Air India flight 171 crash in Ahmedabad, 2025** Investigators examine the site of the Air India flight 171 crash on June 12, 2025. (more)

**News** • Air India faces disruptions as crash prompts deeper checks and flight delays • June 18, 2025, 6:55 PM ET (AP)

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[Air India](#), the [flag carrier](#) of [India](#), spawned civil [aviation](#) in the country when its first [flight](#) took to the skies in 1932. Since then the airline has expanded its operations to various destinations across the globe, including [Europe](#), [Australia](#), [Asia](#), the [United States](#), and [Canada](#).

Although its [legacy](#) includes milestones in Indian aviation, its history has been marked by a number of tragic air disasters. This list outlines the major disasters involving Air India over the decades, examining their causes—including technical failures, human error, and [terrorism](#)—and their broader significance.

## Air India flight 171 crash

- **Date:** June 12, 2025
- **Location:** [Ahmedabad](#), [Gujarat](#), India
- **Aircraft:** [Boeing](#) 787-8 Dreamliner
- **Fatalities:** 241 of 242 on board (does not include deaths on the ground)

Headed for [London](#), the flight reportedly lost altitude moments after taking off from Ahmedabad and crashed into a medical college hostel nearby, causing an explosion. Air India confirmed that 241 of the 242 people on board had died, and a sole survivor escaped the wreckage. Deaths and injuries on the ground were also reported at the crash site. Officials could not immediately determine the cause of the crash. It is the first fatal crash involving a Boeing 787, though a number of safety issues related to the aircraft had been previously reported [worldwide](#). The incident was also Air India's first crash since the [Tata Group](#), one of India's largest conglomerates, acquired the airline in 2022.

## Air India Express flight 1344 crash

- **Date:** August 7, 2020
- **Location:** [Kozhikode](#), [Kerala](#), India
- **Aircraft:** Boeing 737-800
- **Fatalities:** 21 of 190 on board

The crash involved a flight operated by Air India Express, a subsidiary of Air India. Amid torrential monsoon rains, strong tailwinds, and low visibility at the hilly airport in Kozhikode, the pilot reportedly aborted landing twice before touching down too far along the runway on the third attempt. The plane skidded and overran the wet runway, hurtled into a [valley](#), and split in two. The final death [toll](#) stood at 21, including the two pilots.

## Air India Express flight 812 crash

- **Date:** May 22, 2010
- **Location:** Mangalore (now [Mangaluru](#)), [Karnataka](#), India
- **Aircraft:** Boeing 737-800
- **Fatalities:** 158 of 166 on board

Attempting to land at the hilltop airport in Mangalore (now Mangaluru), the flight, coming from Dubai, overshot the runway, caught fire, and plunged into a gorge. The



captain had reportedly ignored warnings from the copilot to abort the landing attempt and continued on a faulty landing trajectory that resulted in the accident. Only eight passengers survived.

## Air India flight 182 (*Emperor Kanishka*) bombing

- **Date:** June 23, 1985
- **Location:** [Atlantic Ocean](#), off the coast of [Ireland](#)
- **Aircraft:** Boeing 747-237B
- **Fatalities:** 329 (all on board)

The passenger jet *Emperor Kanishka* was on the [Montreal](#)-London leg of its journey to Bombay (now [Mumbai](#)) when a bomb hidden in the plane's [cargo](#) exploded mid-flight off the coast of Ireland. The bombing was attributed to [Sikh](#) extremists amid political unrest in India. It remains the deadliest aviation [disaster](#) in Air India's history and was the most lethal act of aviation terrorism before the [attacks of September 11, 2001](#), in the United States.



**Air India Express flight 812 crash, Mangalore, 2010** Rescue personnel search the wreckage of an Air India Express E..[\(more\)](#)



**Air India flight 182 wreckage** Irish sailors unload debris from Air India flight 182 at a navy base in Cork, Ireland, on June 25..[\(more\)](#)

## Air India flight 403 (*Gauri Shankar*) crash

- **Date:** June 21, 1982
- **Location:** Bombay, India
- **Aircraft:** [Boeing 707](#)
- **Fatalities:** 17 of 111 on board (does not include deaths on the ground)

In the wee hours of the night, the Bombay-bound flight, coming from [Kuala Lumpur](#), Malaysia, flew into heavy rainfall and strong winds, leading to reduced visibility. In the rough landing, the plane bounced on the tarmac and careered off the runway. The body of the plane [sustained](#) severe damage before it crashed into a wall and split into three pieces. The crash may have resulted from aerodynamic instability owing to the rainstorm, equipment malfunction, or the pilot misjudging the landing spot. Of the 111 people on board, 15 passengers and 2 crew members died. Fatalities on the ground added 41 people to the death toll. *Gauri Shankar* was the first Boeing jet aircraft Air India purchased, in 1960.



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## Air India flight 224 (*Kamet*) hijacking

- **Date:** November 25, 1981
- **Location:** [Mahé Island](#), Seychelles
- **Aircraft:** Boeing 707
- **Fatalities:** none

En route from [Zambia](#) to Bombay, the flight was refueling on Mahé when it was hijacked by 47 armed militants from Swaziland (now [Eswatini](#)), who took 65 passengers and 13 crew members hostage. The hijackers demanded the pilot fly them to [Durban](#), [South Africa](#). There, following lengthy negotiations, the hijackers [surrendered](#), and all [hostages](#) were freed. This was the first hijacking of an Indian aircraft on foreign soil.

## Air India flight 855 (*Emperor Ashoka*) crash

- **Date:** January 1, 1978
- **Location:** [Arabian Sea](#), near Bombay, India
- **Aircraft:** Boeing 747

- **Fatalities:** 213 (all on board)

Nicknamed the *Emperor Ashoka*, it was the first Boeing jumbo jet Air India had purchased, in 1970. It took wing from Bombay at night on [New Year's Day](#). Set to fly to [Dubai](#), the pilot banked right following takeoff, and the wings were leveled thereafter. However, an instrumentation failure indicated that the aircraft was still banking to the right, and this led the pilot to keep banking left, thinking that he was still leveling the aircraft, causing the plane to nosedive into the sea, just off the Bombay coast. There were no survivors.

## Air India flight 101 (*Kanchenjunga*) crash

- **Date:** January 24, 1966
- **Location:** [Mont Blanc](#), [France](#)
- **Aircraft:** Boeing 707
- **Fatalities:** 117 (all on board)

Flying from Bombay to [New York](#) via [Beirut](#), [Geneva](#), and [London](#), the *Kanchenjunga* was carrying 106 passengers, including physicist [Homi Bhabha](#), the progenitor of India's [nuclear energy](#) program, and a crew of 11. Reports from the time suggested that the captain may have mistakenly [presumed](#) that the plane had already passed Mont Blanc, partly owing to a faulty radio navigation system, and begun its descent to Geneva, crashing into the side of the mountain instead—not far from where the *Malabar Princess* had crashed 16 years before. All passengers and crew were killed.

## Air India flight 300 (*Kashmir Princess*) bombing

- **Date:** April 11, 1955
- **Location:** [South China Sea](#), near Natuna Islands, [Indonesia](#)
- **Aircraft:** [Lockheed](#) L-749A Constellation
- **Fatalities:** 16 of 19 on board

The flight had been chartered to fly Chinese Premier [Zhou Enlai](#) and other officials from [Hong Kong](#) to Djakarta (now [Jakarta](#)), where they were to attend a

conference. However, having possibly been informed of an attempt on his life, Zhou did not board the flight. Only junior staff and international journalists were on board when a [bomb](#) exploded mid-flight, and the plane caught fire. The *Kashmir Princess* crashed into the South China Sea, killing all on board, except three crew members.

## Air India flight 245 (*Malabar Princess*) crash

- **Date:** November 3, 1950
- **Location:** Mont Blanc, France
- **Aircraft:** Lockheed L-749 [Constellation](#)
- **Fatalities:** 48 (all on board)

The *Malabar Princess* was scheduled to travel from Bombay to [London](#), with stopovers in [Cairo](#) and [Geneva](#). During its descent to Geneva, the aircraft crashed into Mont Blanc in a [storm](#). All 48 people on board—40 passengers and 8 crew members—died. A rescue mission discovered the wreckage two days later.

## 1947 Korangi Creek crash

- **Date:** December 27, 1947
- **Location:** Near [Karachi](#), [Pakistan](#)
- **Aircraft:** Douglas C-48C (DC-3)
- **Fatalities:** 23 (all on board)

The incident was the first documented plane crash of an Indian flight. The aircraft, operated by Air-India Limited, was headed from Karachi, Pakistan, to Bombay. It crashed shortly after takeoff, possibly as a result of instrument failure and poor visibility. All 19 passengers and 4 crew members died.

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**C-47**  
aircraft



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Also known as: *Dakota*, *Douglas C-47*, *Skytrain*

Written by [John F. Guilmartin](#)

Fact-checked by [The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica](#)

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**C-47**, U.S. military transport aircraft that served in all theatres during [World War II](#) and continued in service long afterward. It was used to haul cargo, transport troops, drop paratroops, tow gliders, and as a flying ambulance.

The C-47 was a military [adaptation](#) of the Douglas [DC-3](#), a twin-engined low-wing [monoplane](#) with retractable landing gear that quickly dominated the infant commercial airline industry from its first appearance in 1935. With war clouds gathering over Europe, the Army Air Forces ordered military versions of the DC-3 in 1939, and the first of these, the C-53 Skytrooper, entered production in October 1941; some 250 were produced. The definitive military version was the C-47, with a reinforced [fuselage](#), stronger cabin floors for heavy loads, large doors in the rear fuselage for loading cargo and dropping paratroops, and more-powerful engines. The C-47 entered production in January 1942, and more than 10,000 were manufactured before production [ceased](#) in the summer of 1945. Powered by two 1,200-horsepower Pratt & Whitney radial engines, the C-47 had a wingspan of 95 feet (29 metres), a length of 64 feet 5 inches (19.6 metres), and a crew of three (pilot, copilot, and loadmaster or navigator). It had a cruise speed of 155 miles (250 km) per hour and a range of 1,600 miles (2,600 km). The C-47, designated R4D by the U.S. Navy and Dakota by the British [Royal Air Force](#) and other English-speaking forces, was produced in many versions. Some were VIP transports, and a few had sleeping accommodations, but the [vast](#) majority were fitted with metal bench seats for 28 fully armed troops. The normal payload was 5,000 pounds (2,300 kg), but the C-47 could carry as much as 6,000 pounds



**Republic 4D, a version of the C-47** U.S. Navy R4D, the navy's version of the C-47 military transport aircraft, on an ice runway.

**Also called:** Dakota or Skytrain

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(2,700 kg) or even 7,000 pounds (3,200 kg) in an emergency. The spacious rear-fuselage cargo doors could accommodate jeeps, light trucks, or anything else of equivalent bulk and weight, and they could be opened and closed in flight to drop troops or cargo by [parachute](#). This latter capability and its spacious cabin made the C-47 far and away the best paratroop delivery aircraft of the war. Finally, the C-47 could tow two [CG-4](#) Waco assault gliders or one of the larger British [Horsa](#) gliders. As an [aerial](#) ambulance, the C-47 could carry 18 stretcher cases and a medical crew of three.

C-47s dropped U.S. and British paratroops in [North Africa](#), Sicily, the [Normandy Invasion](#), the Arnhem operation, and the crossing of the Rhine. Of these operations, the most spectacular and significant took place on the eve of D-Day (June 6, 1944), when more than 1,000 C-47s were involved in dropping U.S. and British paratroops and towing assault gliders to areas behind the beachheads. C-47s also were used to insert British and U.S. troops behind Japanese lines in [Burma](#) (Myanmar) by [glider](#), and they were used for paratroop drops in the Pacific as well—notably on [Corregidor Island](#) in the [Philippines](#). More [mundane](#), but probably of greater importance, was the use of C-47s to haul urgently needed personnel and supplies, including fuel and munitions, in all theatres of the war, giving Allied commanders a logistical flexibility that their Axis opponents could not match. In his memoirs, General [Dwight Eisenhower](#) cited the C-47 as one of the most important instruments of victory over Nazi [Germany](#). Until the debut of the four-engined Douglas C-54, which did not enter service until 1944, the C-47 was the most capable transport aircraft of World War II. Beyond doubt it was the most [versatile](#) operationally and the most important strategically. Ironically, the most capable all-around Axis transport aircraft of the war was the Japanese navy's L2D3, a military version of the DC-3 that was manufactured under license in [Japan](#) from data purchased from Douglas Aircraft in 1938. The C-47 was a forgiving aircraft, easy to fly and easily maintained under primitive field conditions. Many aircrew and passengers owed their survival in crash landings to its rugged construction, and its resistance to battle damage was legendary.



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The C-47 was delivered in large numbers to U.S. allies under [lend-lease](#). It was built under license in the [Soviet Union](#), where it was [designated](#) the Lisunov Li-2 and remained the backbone of internal air transport well into the 1960s. The C-47 was a pillar of U.S. military airlift during the early stages of the [Cold War](#), figuring large in the 1948 Berlin Airlift and in the [Korean War](#) (1950–53). C-47s were used in the [Vietnam War](#) as [electronic warfare](#) collection aircraft and as AC-47 gunships. Many hundreds remain in [civil service](#) today.

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## Boeing 707

jetliner

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Also known as: 707

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Boeing 707

**Boeing 707**, the first successful [commercial passenger jetliner](#). The mid- to long-range narrow-body four-engine aircraft with a swept-wing design was developed and manufactured by the [Boeing Company](#). It made its first flight on December 20, 1957, and entered commercial service on October 26, 1958. It remained in production until 1991, with a total of 1,010 being built, and was credited with inaugurating the jet age in commercial travel.

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The first successful [turbojet](#)-powered aircraft, [Germany](#)'s Heinkel He 178, made its inaugural flight in 1939, and both [Britain](#) and the [United States](#) developed fighter jets during [World War II](#). In 1952 Boeing began work on a [prototype](#) jet airliner that could be used both for midair refueling of [military aircraft](#) and as a commercial airliner. It was designated Model 367-80 to give competitors the impression that it was merely a further development of the company's C-97 Stratofreighter. The 367-80, often called the Dash 80, had swept wings and,

powered by four underslung 10,000-pound-thrust turbojet engines, could reach a top speed of 600 miles (966 km) per hour. It was first flown in a demonstration flight on July 15, 1954, and the [U.S. Air Force](#) subsequently ordered 29 jet tanker [KC-135s](#) (the military model). Boeing continued developing the passenger version of the Dash 80, and in 1955 [Pan American World Airways](#) (Pan Am) ordered 20 Boeing 707s. At the same time, however, it also ordered 25 [Douglas DC-8s](#), a similar jet airliner being developed by the Douglas Aircraft Company, which already supplied airlines with most of their piston-engine passenger planes. However, the Boeing 707 was faster than the DC-8, and Boeing was willing to [customize](#) the aircraft to meet its customers' preferences. In addition, the 707 went into production before the DC-8.

The first Boeing 707 delivered to Pan Am was 145 feet 1 inch (44.2 metres) in length with a wingspan of 130 feet 10 inches (39.9 metres) and a [fuselage](#) width of 12 feet 4 inches (3.8 metres). Its first commercial flight in 1958 was from [New York City](#) to [Paris](#) and took 8 hours and 41 minutes, including a stop for refueling in [Gander](#), [Newfoundland](#), Canada. Its improvements over earlier planes in passenger capacity, range, and speed revolutionized air travel, and it came to be used by American airlines for most domestic and transatlantic flights throughout the 1960s. The last scheduled Boeing 707 flight in the United States was a [Trans World Airlines](#) (TWA) flight from [Miami](#) to New York City in 1983. Second-tier airlines in the rest of the world continued to fly 707s, however, and Saha Airlines of [Iran](#) used Boeing 707s for passenger service until 2013, after which commercial use of the 707 [ceased](#).



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Patricia Bauer

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