

# AIR MAIL TARIFFS 1926-1939

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*from NCF*

Although the setting up of a commercial air-line Turin-Pavia-Venice-Trieste by the Italian Air Service Company (S.I.S.A.) had been authorised by Royal Decree No. 1691 of 15th August, 1925, the inaugural flight only took place on April 1st in the following year, 1926. After that laws and decrees followed another another, never quite keeping up with events.

On the same day as the flights began, the postal validity of the first series of special postage stamps used to pay the fee established for the carriage of postal items by air, also came into effect. This series, heralded by Royal Decree No. 2582 of 20th December, 1925, was initially made up of four values (60c., L1, L1.50 and L5) although later, in order to satisfy a new tariff structure the L1.20, 50c. and 80c. were issued - provisionally as overprints and then as full values.

Two days after the first air service began the postal administration authorised, through the Royal Decree No. 632 of 3rd April, 1926, the use for carriage of postal items of "the air lines in subvention to the Air Ministry, or independent, whether within the interior of the Kingdom, or between Italy and the Colonies, or on international routes." As far as the international routes were concerned a convention had already been in existence since 7th May, 1924, approved by Royal Decree No. 1895 of 27th July, between the Italian government and the Aeroespresso Italiana Company for the institution and operation of a commercial air line between Italy, Greece and Turkey via Brindisi, Athens, Smyrna (or Salonica or Lemnos) and Constantinople. This air line - the Aeroespresso del Levante - was launched on 2nd August, 1926 and is well known to collectors in this field for the special stamps issued by the operator, sold in Greek post offices and, by rather dubious criteria, classified as Greek air stamps.

The special air service postal surcharge, allowed for in Clause 4 of the above-mentioned Decree No. 632, was established, according to R.D. No. 1381 of 9th July, 1926, published in the official gazette of August 21st, and therefore authorised 140 days after the first postal flight, as being:

a) Letters and letter-cards (each 15gr.), postcards (plain and picture), greetings cards, etc.

- Internal air lines	60c.
- International air lines	L1.20c.

b) Printed and manuscript paper and samples (each 50 grammes)

- Internal air lines	L1
- International air lines	L2



The same decree determined the surcharge for parcels and the proportions owing to the Italian and foreign administrations for the carriage for each kilogramme of mail by air on both internal and international air lines.

Let us make it clear at this point that, apart from the above-mentioned flights (Turin-Trieste and Italy-Greece-Turkey) other lines came into operation in the same period; internally Genoa-Rome-Naples-Palermo and internationally, Genoa-Barcelona and Venice-Vienna with a stopover at Klagenfurt. This last was later extended by a Venice-Rome link. At the same time the special air surcharge was brought into line with that of other international lines through a decree of 2nd June, 1927.

Through R.D. No. 1416 of 5th August, 1927, with effect from 16th August, reductions were made in certain rates of the postal tariff, both internally within Italy and San Marino and externally with the Colonies. The new air surcharges were:

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|------------------------|---------------------|
| a) Letters, etc.       | 50c. per 15 grammes |
| b) Printed paper, etc. | 80c. per 50 grammes |

In the meantime, the A.I.A. Conference of September, 1927 attempted to overcome the obstacles to the use of air transport for mail, first among which was the diversity of tariffs between one country and another and one air line and another, a diversity that made it virtually impossible to know the correct franking for any item of mail. The A.I.A. proposals for the carriage of letters and mail were recognised in Italy by R.D. No. 1560 of 11th April, 1929 which stated in Article 1, first paragraph:

*"Items in any category - ordinary, registered, insured or express, posted in the Kingdom and addressed overseas, for which carriage by air is requested for either all, or part of the journey, are submitted in addition to the normal fee to a special tax of L1 for every 20 grammes or part thereof, and for every 1,000 km, or part thereof".*

The UPU convention, agreements for which were drawn up in London on 28th June, 1930, confirmed for air mail practice a uniform tariff, the need for notification by the air lines and the simplification of payments due between countries according to the AIA proposals.

In the interim new national and international lines had been instituted and yet more followed in the succeeding years, leading to the inevitable spread of air mail usage. In consequence the postal administration proceeded to issue a new series of air mail stamps between 12th March, 1930 and 19th April, 1932, as well as including occasional air mail values in commemorative series. Also in March 1932, the first Instructions for the service were issued; as in the extracts of the more relevant clauses:-



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AIR MAIL TARIFFS 1926 - 1939 (contd)

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**"ART. 1: POSTAL ITEMS ADMITTED TO CARRIAGE BY AIR**

Types of correspondence admitted to carriage by air are letters, postcards (both single and with pre-paid reply), manuscripts, samples and printed paper of all kinds including braille material for use by the blind.

Such items may be admitted to the facility of registration. Not admitted, for the moment, are items of insured mail or of declared value.

In describing the services, correspondence and mail bags using air transport the designation 'Air Mail' is used for the sake of brevity.

**ART. 2: AIR MAIL SURCHARGE AND MEANS OF FRANKING**

Air mail of all categories - ordinary, registered and insured (when it is admitted) and express, posted in the Kingdom, is subjected to a special surcharge, differing according to the country of destination as indicated in the table appended to the present instructions. The above-mentioned surcharge must be pre-paid by means of the apposite air mail stamps. In their absence the use of ordinary postage stamps is permitted.

The sender of an air mail item may request, by means of an appropriate declaration on the aforesaid item, that it should be sent by air over only part of the normal route. In this case the surcharge to be applied over and above the ordinary Italian tariff is that established for mail addressed to the country that is the terminus of the air route requested.

**ART. 4: TREATMENT OF UNFRANKED OR UNDER-FRANKED MAIL**

In the event of franking being totally absent on mail bearing the indication 'per via aerea' or 'par avion' it is subjected to the treatment established for ordinary mail, the above-mentioned indication being cancelled. These must then be taxed according to the regulations for ordinary mail and forwarded as ordinary mail.

In the case of under-franking, whether by ordinary stamps on mail bearing the above indication or by special air stamps, mail should only be sent by air if the total tax paid represents at least the amount established for the special air surcharge whether for the total or partial journey requested, the deficit being taxed according to the normal regulations. Where this is not the case the items should be treated as ordinary mail, cancelling all indications relating to the air mail service.

**ART. 5: AIR MAIL LABELS**

Air mail must have affixed, at the charge of the despatching office, on the address side, the label MOD.24-R bearing the wording 'PER VIA AEREA - PAR AVION' if addressed abroad, or label MOD.24-Rbis if addressed to the Italian interior or colonies.



In the case of large packets where the address has been duplicated the above-mentioned label must always be attached by the side of each address.

The post office, before applying such labels, must ascertain that the surcharge paid corresponds to that required, and take action, in the case of a deficiency, as laid down in the preceding article.

#### ART. 13: DELIVERY, RE-DIRECTION AND RETURN OF AIRMAIL

Air mail on arrival will be included in the first subsequent distribution by the receiving office, using the normal means of distribution as used for ordinary mail.

Mail not delivered will be returned to sender by normal transport, cancelling any indication such as 'Par Avion', 'Per Via Aerea', etc. In cases where the addressee has moved house, undelivered mail must be sent on by normal means to the new address unless the recipient has previously asked for mail to be forwarded by air and pre-paid the air surcharge for the new journey.

Whenever mail is re-directed to normal transport the re-directing office must cancel the indication 'Par Avion', 'Per Via Aerea' in this case as well.

#### ART. 15: EXCHANGE OF MAIL BETWEEN DIFFERENT COMPANIES

When, within the Kingdom, air despatches are exchanged between airplanes operating coincidental routes but operated by different companies the exchange must be made by means provided by the Post Office or by an employee of the Post Office".

As from 24th April, 1932, as required by Royal Decree No. 272 of 3rd March, 1932, the special air surcharge for every type of air mail sent to European countries was reduced to 75c. for each 20 grammes, while the surcharge for air mail items addressed to countries outside Europe was individually established for each weight step and for each country depending on the sum owing to the foreign postal administration, or to the air line company. The table of these charges is given as an appendix.

We shall not, and need not, follow all the successive changes caused by the growth in the service. Let us say only that the surcharge for items addressed to European destinations was not subject to any fluctuation until the crisis caused by the war. The fees for Brazil and Argentina (and obviously for other South American countries) were raised respectively to L9.75 and L11.75 because of the charge made by the German Air-Mail service 'Europa Sudamerika' which operated the relevant air routes. The surcharges were maintained at that level even after 21st December, 1939 when the transcontinental airline 'Italia-America Latina' was established. As of 1st May, 1934 the surcharge on express letters within the Kingdom and Colonies was reduced from 50c. to 25c.

We close this present study with the special reduced air tariff for greetings cards posted between 15th December, 1939 and 5th January, 1940.

- Italy, Vatican, Colonies, Aegean Islands, Albania - 15c; Europe 20c;  
Italian East Africa -30c; Brazil -L1.70; Remainder S.America - L2.



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 AIR MAIL TARIFFS 1926 - 1939 (contd)
 

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 APPENDIX - AIR MAIL SURCHARGES APPLICABLE 24TH APRIL, 1932
 

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<u>DESTINATION</u>	<u>TYPE OF MAIL</u>	<u>WEIGHT LIMIT</u> (grammes)	<u>SURCHARGE</u> (Lire)
Italy & Colonies	Letters & letter-cards	15	0.50
	Postcards	-	0.50
	Printed paper	50	0.80
Albania (as for Italy)	All items	20	0.75
Europe (ex. Albania)	All items	10	2.75
Afghanistan	Letters and cards	10	1.00
Algeria	Other	50	1.25
	All items	10	6.50
Dutch Antilles*	Letters and cards	5	8.25
Argentina	Other	50	16.25
	All items	10	1.50
Australia	All items	10	1.75
Bahamas*	All items	10	8.50
Bolivia - via USA*	Letters & Cards	5	8.25
	Letters & Cards	5	7.00
Brazil	Other	50	13.75
	All items	10	1.50
Canada*	All items	10	2.25
Ceylon	All items	10	10.75
Chile - via USA*	Letters & Cards	5	8.25
	Other	50	16.25
- via France	All items	10	3.75
	All items	10	1.50
China	All items	10	7.50
Cyprus	Letters & cards	10	2.00
Colombia*	Other	50	2.00
Belgian Congo (direct)	All items	10	2.00
	Letters & cards	10	2.75
" (via E. Africa)	Other	50	3.50
	All items	10	4.25
West Africa	All items	10	1.75
Costa Rica*	All items	10	2.25
Cuba*	All items	10	0.75
Dominican Republic	All items	10	6.50
Egypt	All items	10	3.25
Ecuador*	All items	10	6.50
Guatemala*	All items	10	2.25
Guyana*	All items	10	3.25
Haiti*	All items	10	2.75
Honduras*	All items	10	3.25
India	All items	10	2.75
Dutch East Indies	All items	10	3.25
Indo-China	All items	10	4.50
Iraq	All items	10	2.00
Kenya	All items	10	2.00
Morocco	Letters & cards	10	1.25
	Other	50	1.25
Mexico*	All items	10	2.50
Mongolia	All items	10	3.25
Nicaragua*	All items	10	3.25



<u>DESTINATION</u>	<u>TYPE OF MAIL</u>	<u>WEIGHT LIMIT</u> (grammes)	<u>SURCHARGE</u> (Lire)
New Zealand (via Australia)	All items	10	1.50
Palestine	All items	10	1.75
Panama*	All items	10	4.25
Paraguay	Letters & cards	5	8.25
	Other	50	16.25
Persia (Iran)	All items	10	2.50
Peru - via USA*	All items	10	8.50
- via France	Letters & cards	5	8.25
	Other	50	16.25
Rhodesia	All items	10	2.50
Puerto Rico	All items	10	2.25
San Salvador*	All items	10	3.25
Siam (Thailand)	All items	10	4.00
Syria & Lebanon	All items	10	1.75
Straits Settlements	All items	10	3.25
U.S.A.	All items	10	1.25
Sudan	All items	10	1.25
Tanganyika	All items	10	2.00
Tunisia	All items	10	0.75
Turkey	All items	10	0.75
Uganda	All items	10	2.00
Union of South Africa	All items	10	3.25
Uruguay	Letters & cards	5	8.25
	Other	50	16.25
Venezuela*	All items	10	6.50
Zanzibar	All items	10	2.00
Panama Canal Zone	All items	10	4.25

\* Mail for destinations marked with an asterisk is flown via New York from where it is carried onto its final destination by American air lines.

(NB: The countries are not in strict alphabetical order, although they were in the original Italian - translation as in West Africa for Costa Occ. d'Africa, means some places have been transposed.)

Brindisi-Constantinople.



Monsieur M. H. Marcus,

Galata Box 120,

Constantinople.

FIG. 2: Cover from Rome to Constantinople October 1927 flown from Brindisi by Aeroespresso Italiana. Foreign air fee still L1.20 despite fall in internal rates.



## AIR MAIL TARIFFS 1926 - 1939 (contd)

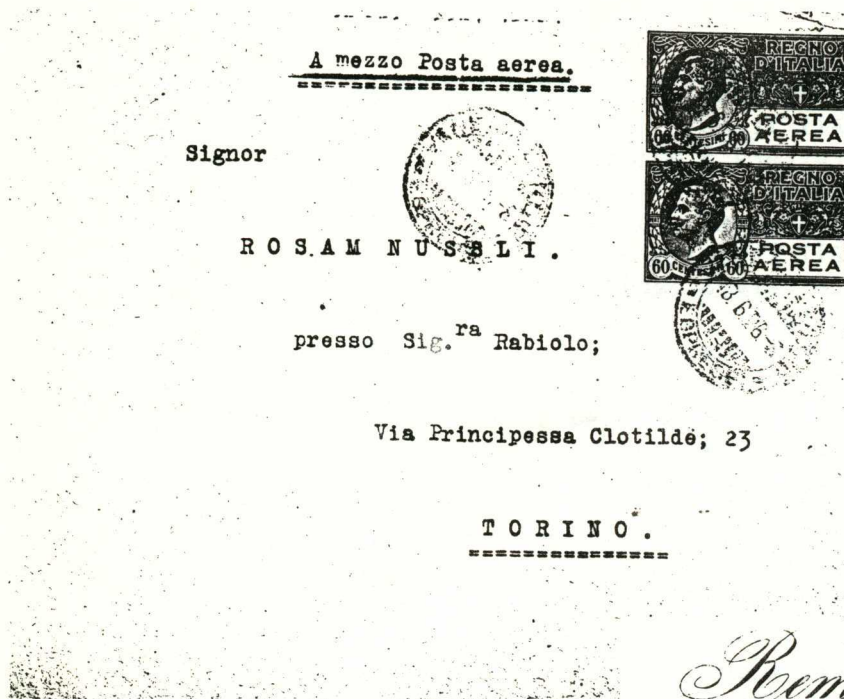


FIG. 1: Flown cover Venice-Turin June 1926. 60c. ord. postage + 60c. air fee. Contrary to regulations the ordinary postage as well as the air mail fee is paid for by air mail stamp. Apparently tolerated by the Post Office.

FIG. 3: Cover to Argentina June 1932 before rise in S. America rate. Letter franked L1.25 Imperiale for foreign postage and total of L8.25 in air mail stamps.

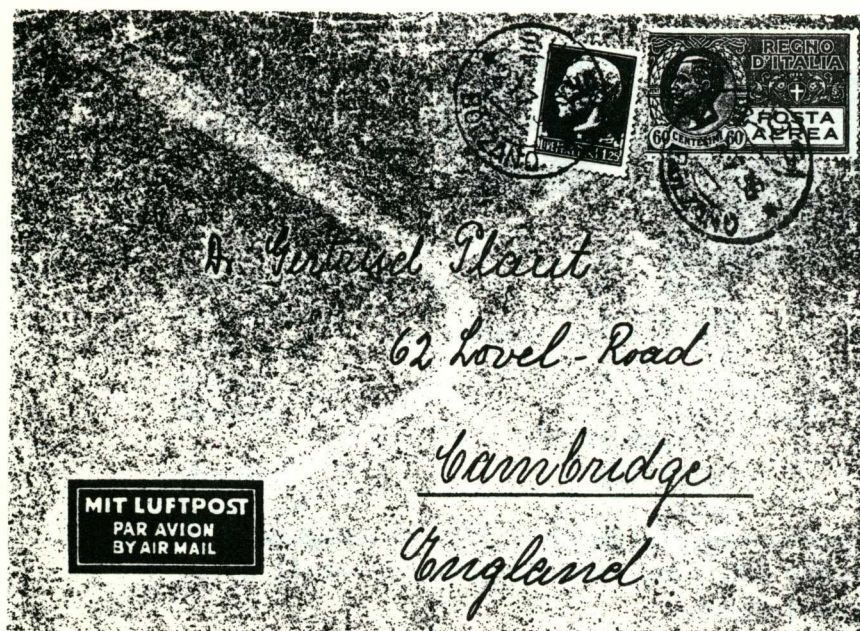


FIG. 4: Underfranked cover sent from Bolzano to Cambridge 1936. The air fee should have been L1 but only 60c. stamp applied. As a result the regulations were applied and cover not flown. Transit marks of TPO offices on reverse show that the letter was sent surface via Milan and Switzerland.