



## Planespotting: 6 colorful airplane wraps to watch out for



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Ever look up and see Mickey Mouse, Pikachu, Hello Kitty or The Simpsons flying the friendly skies? If so, you have spotted a special aircraft livery. What's that, you ask? A livery is a paint scheme applied to an airplane's exterior. In many cases, instead of directly painting a plane, vinyl graphics are "wrapped" on the exterior of the fuselage. Planes often get redesigns in honor of special events, marketing alliances or new routes, like when British Airways designed a panda plane to whisk passengers between London and Chengdu, China. Here's a look at some of the planes you might spot in the air these days.



Photo courtesy of EVA

EVA Air seems to have a feline fetish. The Taiwanese airline is Hello Kitty crazy. Its decorated five of its planes with the Japanese cartoon phenom. Hello Kitty fans will also find the interior of these planes to be the cat's meow. EVA has more than 100 Hello Kitty in-flight service items, including amenity kits, pillows and cat food (that is, food cut to look like a cat's face...not actual cat food).



Flickr CC: Mark Harkin

Meanwhile, the official airline of Middle-Earth, Air New Zealand, unveiled a Hobbit-inspired 777-300 marking the release of "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey" in 2012. To honor the second film of the franchise, Air New Zealand emblazoned Smaug on its fuselage the next year.



Photo courtesy of Brussels Airlines

Brussels Airlines is all over special liveries. The nation's most noted artist, René Magritte, inspires a surrealistic aircraft covered with images of clouds and birds taken from his paintings.



Photo courtesy of Brussels Airlines

Even more whimsical is Brussels Airlines' *Rackham*, otherwise known as the Tintin plane. Tintin is a Brussels-born cartoon character who travels the world with his trusty dog, Snowy. Hergé, Tintin's creator, was fascinated by planes and they are the most-used means of transport in the Tintin oeuvre. The Airbus plane portrays the shark submarine made famous in *Red Rackham's Treasure*. Not familiar with the tale? No worries. The comic book is available for reading on board.



Photo courtesy of Finnair

In the far northern reaches of Europe, Finnair is taking design from the fashion runway to the airport runway. The national carrier teams up with Marimekko, the noted Finnish fashion house, to make its planes pop. The partnership includes specially-designed amenity kits and tableware on board Finnair's flights. But the stars of the show are two wrapped planes based on Marimekko's iconic Unikko (poppy) floral print.





Flickr CC: Bill Abbott

Plane painting is not strictly an international affair. Southwest, which once replicated a Sports Illustrated cover of bikini-clad supermodel Bar Rafaeli, currently features less scandalous airships. Southwest has several planes with state-themed paint schemes celebrating places to which the carrier flies. There are 11 such aircraft currently in the fleet, including Maryland, Nevada, Colorado and California. The newest plane, unveiled this year, marks 30 years of Southwest flights to Tennessee.

Have you spotted any really cool airplane wraps in your travels? Let us know in the comments and we'll add them to the list!