747.AEROPLANES.IM

# Why does the 747 have a hump?

*Two official stories, kept in order. First a nose that had to open. Then a hump that grew seats.*

Typographic only. No photographs inside.

| Official desk | Official wording |
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| **A cargo nose** | Bruce Hathaway, Smithsonian magazine, 15 November 2007: Pan Am's Juan Trippe "insisted that it be easily convertible to a cargo plane." That "meant a nose that could be opened and closed on a top hinge." |
| **The cockpit moves** | "A nose that would open and close would be an impossible place for the cockpit." Wiring and control cables could not be left "bending back and forth." "So the cockpit was put up behind the nose." "To make room for the cockpit, and to keep the plane maximally aerodynamic, there had to be a hump." |
| **Later, seats** | The same article: "Later versions of the 747 extended the hump farther back and made room for more first-class seats." The National Air and Space Museum: the 747-400 "features an extended upper deck and winglets." The 747-8 "adds about 5.6 meters (18 feet) of fuselage." |

## A short quiz

1. Why could the cockpit not stay in the nose?
2. What official sentence explains why there had to be a hump?
3. Were the extra first-class seats the first reason for the hump, or a later official chapter?

**Answers.** A nose that opened on a top hinge would have been an impossible place for the cockpit. The cockpit was put up behind the nose, and there had to be a hump. The seats came later, in later versions.

Wording from Bruce Hathaway, "Why DOES the 747 Have a Hump?", Smithsonian magazine, 15 November 2007, re-checked 18 November 2026, and from the National Air and Space Museum's "The Evolution of the Commercial Airliner." 747.aeroplanes.im is independent of Boeing and the Smithsonian. Typographic sheet: no photographs inside.