

An iconic Airbus BelugaST readies for new mission in the UK

Broughton, UK, 29 January 2026 - One of Airbus' BelugaST aircraft, formally among the largest in the world, will be rehomed in the UK, with plans to turn it into a Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) support facility at Airbus Broughton. Schools and community groups across the UK will gain access to the world of aviation through the Beluga, ensuring its legacy continues to fly in the minds of future aerospace pioneers.

The super jumbo touched down in Broughton, North Wales, at around 11am GMT having completed its final flight from Bordeaux, bringing down the curtain on a remarkable 30-year career as the backbone of Airbus' industrial logistics. The BelugaST fleet, first launched in 1994, has predominantly been used to transport wings made in the UK to other Airbus facilities around Europe.

Gareth Davies, Head of Airbus Broughton, said, "It's a proud and incredibly exciting moment for Broughton. This particular Beluga first took flight 25 years ago, and since then has played a crucial part in transporting our wings from Broughton to Airbus' mainland European sites. By transforming this aircraft into an education facility, we aren't just preserving our history, we are using it to fuel the future of UK aerospace and inspire the talent of tomorrow."

"The focus will be to promote STEM in a fun and interactive way to inspire young people to consider a career in science, technology, engineering and maths."

Davies added that the STEM activities will be designed in conjunction with local schools to ensure alignment with the national curriculum.

Didier Puxeddu, BelugaST pilot who flew the last mission said, "Flying the Beluga has always been a unique privilege, and bringing the ST5 home to Broughton for the last time was no different. As we made our final approach, we were all too aware of the history behind us. Knowing this aircraft will now stay here to inspire future pilots and engineers makes this touchdown one of the most rewarding of my career."

Beluga lovers everywhere will still be able to see the replacement of the BelugaST, the even larger BelugaXL in the skies, transporting Airbus components to 11 sites around Europe. Airbus announced the retirement of the BelugaST fleet earlier in 2025. From mid-2027, the larger BelugaXL fleet will be the sole transporter of components for Airbus.

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Notes to editors

About the Airbus BelugaST

- The BelugaST fleet entered service in 1995 to replace the "Super Guppy." It revolutionised how Airbus' aircraft components were moved across Europe, allowing Airbus to scale production to record levels.
- 'Tango Foxtrot' turned 25 years old on 12 December 2025. In its time it has:
 - Carried 1,700 wings from Broughton and many other components from other Airbus sites
 - Completed around 13,300 journeys between Airbus sites
 - Was the most used BelugaST for transporting satellites to the Kennedy Space Centre
- Special missions for the **BelugaST fleet** included:
 - In 1997, the BelugaST set a world record for the biggest payload to be carried by air, transporting a chemical tank for a merchant ship.
 - In 2003, a BelugaST performed the longest ever charter flight at the time, flying for 25 hours plus stops to transport three Airbus Helicopters rotorcraft from France to an airshow in Melbourne, Australia.
 - In 1999, a BelugaST transported the famous Eugène Delacroix painting 'Liberty Leading the People' from Paris to Tokyo.
 - It also transported the Columbus module for the International Space Station and delivered massive telecommunications satellites like Inmarsat to launch sites.
- The BelugaST's payload is 40 tonnes - the equivalent weight of an adult Humpback whale.

For more information on the Beluga, [click here](#).

How will Airbus use the BelugaST to focus on STEM?

The Beluga will enable STEM topics, linked to the UK curriculum for primary and secondary schools, to come to life. It will also be used to showcase the history of aviation in the UK. The focus will be to promote STEM in a fun and interactive way to inspire young people to consider a career in science, technology, engineering and maths, using the BelugaST as a visual centre piece.

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