

Press Release



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Air France KLM Martinair Cargo facilitates special transport of lions Vasylyna and Nikola to South Africa

Lions Vasylyna and Nikola embarked on a significant journey on 25 April, boarding on a Martinair Cargo 747 freighter aircraft headed for South Africa. This remarkable flight marks a new chapter in the lives of these majestic creatures, who are now en route from FELIDA, the specialised sanctuary for big cats run by animal welfare organisation FOUR PAWS in Friesland, the Netherlands, to LIONSROCK, an expansive 1250-hectare sanctuary managed by the same organisation in South Africa.

Air France KLM Martinair Cargo is proud to play a significant role in this journey, leveraging its extensive experience in transporting wild animals. The airline boasts a dedicated animal hotel at its KLM Cargo facilities at Schiphol and expert staff members who diligently oversee the welfare of animals throughout the trip.

“At our animal hotel at Schiphol, we prioritise dedication to providing the best care for our animal passengers. We ensure the highest level of attention and care for every animal under our care, from the moment of arrival to departure. Our team of seasoned professionals is ready to deliver the best service and care, including special diets, administering medication, and, of course, plenty of love and attention. We strive to ensure that every animal with us is happy, healthy, and well-cared for,” said **Mirjam Scherer, Global Head of Specials Logistics at Air France KLM Martinair Cargo.**

Vasylyna and Nikola share remarkably similar backgrounds. Lioness Vasylyna arrived at the big cat sanctuary on 7 June. Originally kept as a pet in Ukraine, she managed to escape and wandered through the war-affected streets of a village near Kharkiv before being captured and taken to a temporary wildlife shelter in Ukraine. Due to the wartime situation and lack of adequate care and space, she was swiftly relocated to the Netherlands.

Nikola's journey to the specialised sanctuary of FOUR PAWS began after being rescued from illegal private possession in Montenegro. In February 2022, he was found and confiscated by local authorities. After ten days of roaming the streets near Budva on the Adriatic coast, exhausted and malnourished, he was brought to the safe haven of FELIDA.

"The relocation of Vasylyna and Nikola to LIONSROCK means they finally have the opportunity to live in a large sanctuary, surrounded by other lions. While it's saddening that they never had the chance to be released into the wild due to illegal trade, we are glad to offer them a more natural life here," said **Petra Sleven, director of FOUR PAWS**.

About Air France KLM Martinair Cargo

The Air France-KLM Group is a global airline group with a strong European base. Its main areas of business are passenger transport, cargo transport and aeronautical maintenance. Air France KLM Martinair Cargo is the Air France-KLM Group's dedicated air cargo business. Air France KLM Martinair Cargo is a member of SkyTeam Cargo (www.skyteamcargo.com) offering even larger network coverage. Please click [here](#) to go to our press releases online or visit www.afklcargo.com for more information about Air France KLM Martinair Cargo.

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