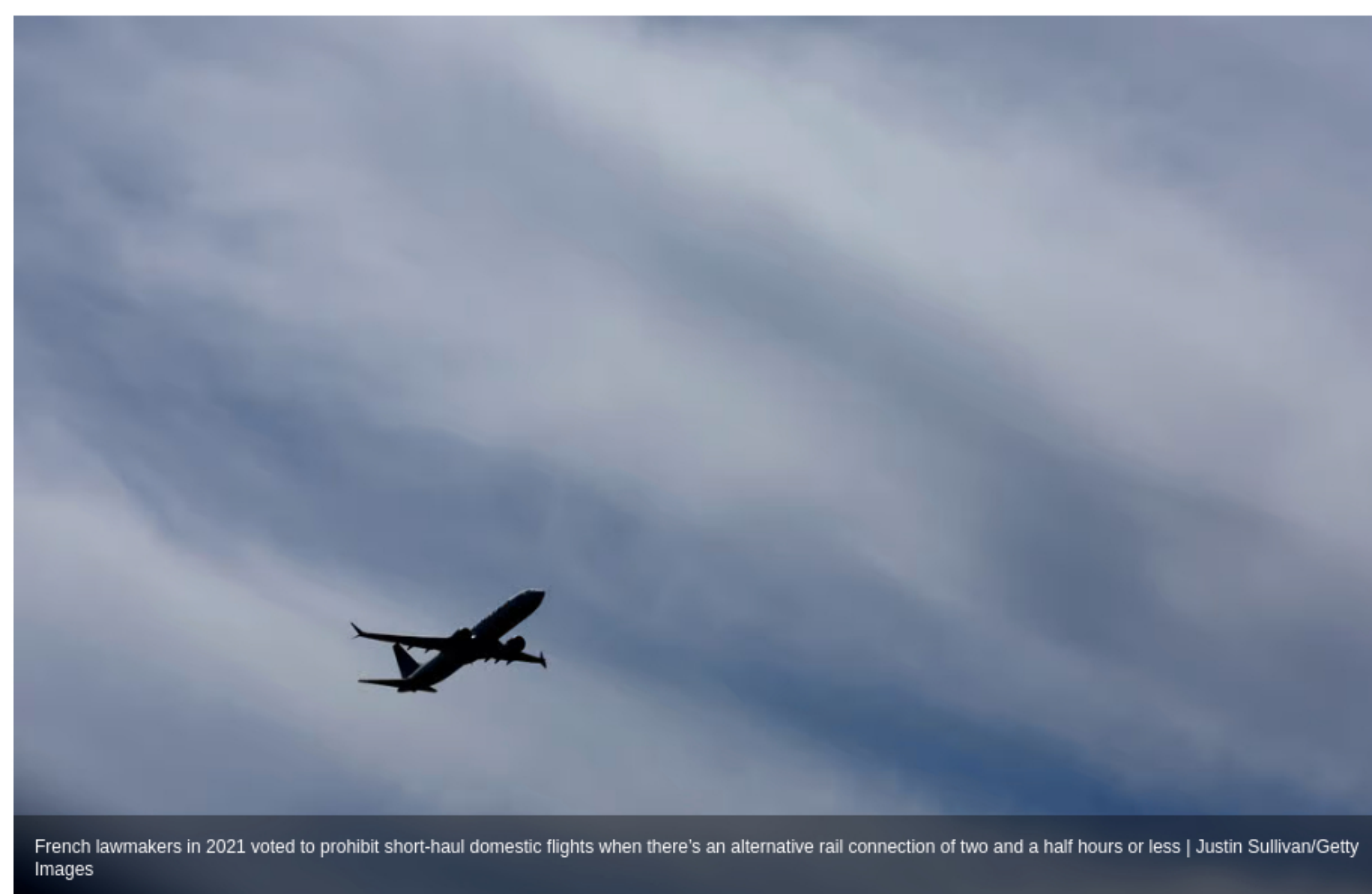


# EU approves France’s short-haul flight ban — but only for 3 routes

The new plan will cancel domestic flights that can be replaced by a short train journey.



French lawmakers in 2021 voted to prohibit short-haul domestic flights when there's an alternative rail connection of two and a half hours or less | Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

BY MARI ECCLES

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The European Commission has approved France’s plan to ban short-haul flights when there’s a decent rail alternative — but it will only affect three routes.

French lawmakers in 2021 voted to prohibit short-haul domestic flights when there’s an alternative rail connection of two and a half hours or less. The original proposal, which required the green light from Brussels, was slated to affect eight routes.

Now the [Commission has said](#) the ban can only take place if there are genuine rail alternatives available for the same route — meaning several direct connections each way every day.

That means only three routes will currently fall under the ban: journeys between Paris-Orly and Bordeaux, Nantes and Lyon.

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The EU executive said France was justified to introduce the measure provided it is "non-discriminatory, does not distort competition between air carriers, is not more restrictive than necessary to relieve the problem."

Three more routes could be added — between Paris Charles de Gaulle and Lyon and Rennes, and between Lyon and Marseille — if rail services improve.

Those routes currently don’t meet the threshold because travelers trying to get to airports in Paris and Lyon don’t have a rail connection that would get them in early enough in the morning or late enough in the evening.

Two other proposed routes — from Paris Charles de Gaulle to Bordeaux and Nantes — were excluded from the measure because the rail journey time falls above the two-and-a-half-hour limit.

The Commission also removed a proposed exemption to the ban that the French government wanted to apply to domestic flights that are part of a multi-stop international journey. The overall measure should last only three years, with a review after two, it said.

“This is a major step forward and I am proud that France is a pioneer in this area,” France’s Transport Minister Clément Beaune said in an emailed statement.

Green groups were also encouraged by the Commission approval, but stressed that the country has to do much more to decarbonize transport.

“The French ban on short-haul flights where quick train connections exist is a baby step, but it’s one in the right direction,” said Thomas Gelin, Greenpeace’s EU climate campaigner.

French Green MEP Karima Delli [described](#) the news as a “victory,” but said that the legislation should have been extended to cover flights that could be replaced by a four-hour train journey.

That was the original idea for the flight ban as proposed by France’s Citizens’ Convention on Climate, a citizens’ assembly tasked with making proposals for reducing the country’s carbon emissions. The scope was narrowed following objections by some French regions and by Franco-Dutch airline Air France-KLM.

Delli also argued that private jets should be included within the measure. Beaune said this summer he wanted to see more EU-wide measures against private planes, [following popular backlash](#) against them in France.