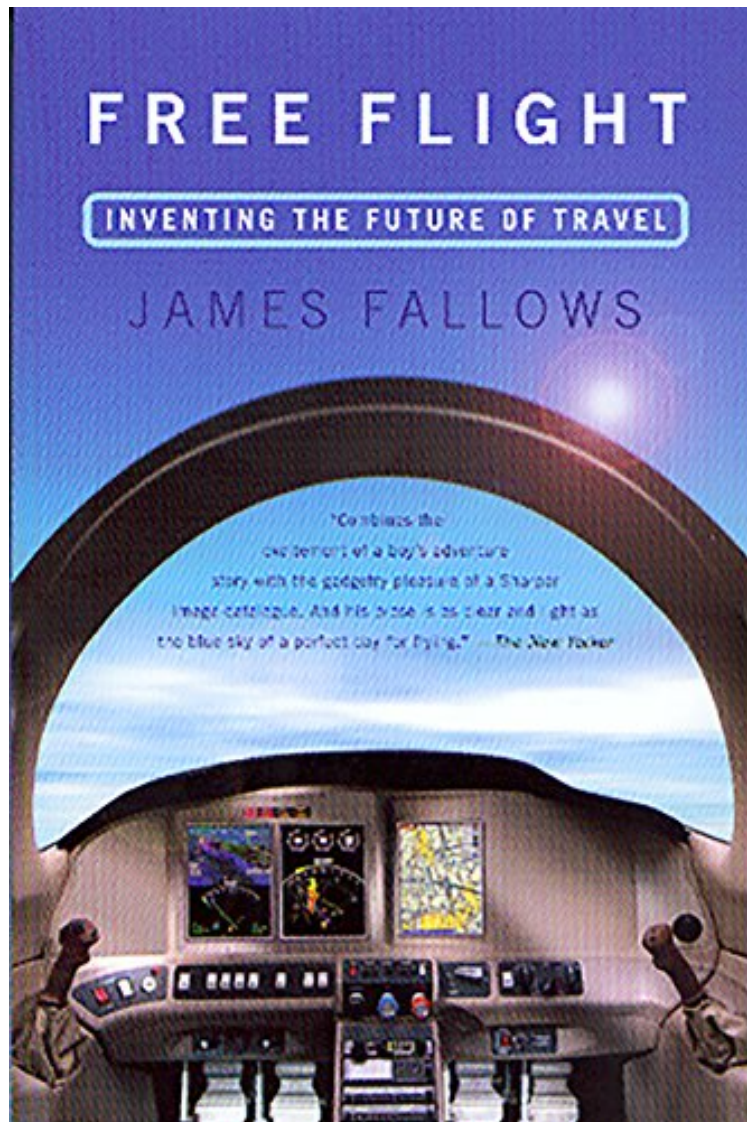


(Download pdf) Free Flight: Inventing the Future of Travel

Free Flight: Inventing the Future of Travel

James Fallows

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James Fallows : Free Flight: Inventing the Future of Travel before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Free Flight: Inventing the Future of Travel:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Interesting but dated By J. Tabarlet This is a fine summary of what was, at the turn of the century, considered a probable development: a nationwide system of "air taxis" built around fast, small jet aircraft that could be flown point to point by qualified pilots or hired (along with a pilot) by groups wanting to get somewhere quickly that was not served by the airlines. There is a good discussion of the late-1970s deregulation of the airlines which led to the "hub and spoke" scheduling model which makes it really easy to get from New York to Chicago but very difficult to get from Austin to Sheboygan. There is also a fine elaboration on the

history of the light aircraft general aviation industry, including a debunking of a myth I've heard numerous times--that the small aircraft manufacturers were driven nearly out of business by carnivorous lawyers and the high price of liability insurance. As Fallows shows, that was part of the story but not the whole tale by a long shot. Overall, however, *Free Flight* is a period piece. It was published just before September 11, 2001 changed everything, not least the airlines and private aircraft. Moreover, one of the companies touted in the book as the harbinger of a new age of aviation innovation, Eclipse, went into Chapter 11 bankruptcy in the 2008 financial crisis (the other, Cirrus, is still a going concern). Very few of the events predicted in the book have taken place and the whole work has the feel of a book written right before World War I about the new age of peace and prosperity that would come in the second decade of the twentieth century. *Free Flight* is worth reading, but it needs to be updated to reflect new realities.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Enjoyable read for aviators and aviation history buffs
By Donald Turrell
Enjoyed the history lesson and now better understand some of the challenges of Cirrus and Eclipse Aircraft as they struggled in the early days toward their goals in a changing General Aviation environment. Would be great to see a sequel that covered what happened in the past 10 years. Full disclosure...I am a pilot and flight instructor so this really hit my areas of interest....but don't think you need to be so intimately involved in aviation to enjoy this book that describes a pivotal chapter in US General Aviation during the 80s, 90s and early 2000's. Fallow is a good at clear writing and explanation of the facts...an easy read.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. flying with the little guys
By Newton Ooi
The author of this book, James Fallows, is a journalist and private pilot. This book is his presentation of an alternate mode of air travel that he believes is coming into existence; that is the use of small airplanes to connect people point-to-point using small airports, and avoiding the traffic and delays of major cities utilized by the current spoke-and-wheel model. This book is not really a history of American aviation, but instead focuses on several small companies that are on the leading edge of producing small aircraft for private use. The two major companies analyzed by this book are Cirrus and Eclipse, with mentions of Lear, Cessna and other companies of course. The author looks at the rise of these small companies, and their trials and tribulations in finding a market niche in the face of airline deregulation, economic winds and all sorts of regulations. And the author nicely includes pictures of these small planes. The only drawback to the book was the over-personalization of the book. One whole chapter is spent on the author's cross-country flight with wife and son. Material like this could have been replaced with more history and economics of the small-aircraft industry. Some graphs and charts would also have been nice; for example a graph comparing the costs of different models of new single-engine aircraft over the past several decades. Note that this book was authored before the 9/11 attacks, hence much of what the author proposed is really up in the air now.

The troubles of the airline system have become acute in the post-terrorist era. As the average cost of a flight has come down in the last twenty years, the airlines have survived by keeping planes full and funneling traffic through a centralized hub-and-spoke routing system. Virtually all of the technological innovation in airplanes in the last thirty years has been devoted to moving passengers more efficiently between major hubs. But what was left out of this equation was the convenience and flexibility of the average traveler. Now, because of heightened security, hours of waiting are tacked onto each trip. As James Fallows vividly explains, a technological revolution is under way that will relieve this problem. *Free Flight* features the stories of three groups who are inventing and building the future of all air travel: NASA, Cirrus Design in Duluth, Minnesota, and Eclipse Aviation in Albuquerque, New Mexico. These ventures should make it possible for more people to travel the way corporate executives have for years: in small jet planes, from the airport that's closest to their home or office directly to the airport closest to where they really want to go. This will be possible because of a product now missing from the vast array of flying devices: small, radically inexpensive jet planes, as different from airliners as personal computers are from mainframes. And, as Fallows explains in a new preface, a system that avoids the congestion of the overloaded hub system will offer advantages in speed, convenience, and especially security in the new environment of air travel.

.com We've all heard, if not experienced, the horror stories: hours spent standing in line, lost luggage, a night passed on an airport bench waiting for a connecting flight that never arrived. And that's not even during the holidays. Though cutting-edge technology has made planes safer and more efficient, air travel is still an often arduous process, leading James Fallows to ask, "How can a system be so technically advanced and admirable, yet lead to results so unpleasant for everyone involved?" Part of the answer involves congestion: currently, over 80 percent of all flights are routed through 28 major hubs across the country, and according to federal officials, traffic to these same few airports is expected to double by 2010. In *Free Flight*, Fallows details an "impending, potentially broad change" in how we travel--one that he compares to the introduction of the car. This shift involves the use of small planes that "offer much of the speed, and as much as possible of the safety, of the big airlines, but at a small fraction of the cost of today's corporate jets." In this new world, people would either buy their own planes or hire piloted air-taxi services for no more than current coach fares. These planes would fly as directly as possible from one destination to another, taking advantage of the 18,000 small airports and landing strips currently available across the country. Focusing on the colorful personalities and visionary designers leading this nascent transportation revolution, Fallows looks at the

opportunities and obstacles small-plane manufacturers are likely to face. A national correspondent for the Atlantic Monthly and a recreational pilot, Fallows is both knowledgeable and passionate about the subject. Portions of the book will appeal mainly to flight enthusiasts and venture capitalists, but the bulk is interesting enough to hold the attention of those who are neither. And it's short enough that you can read it cover-to-cover the next time you're stuck at a hub. -- Shawn Carkonen

From Publishers Weekly Like many airplane rides, this timely book is a bit of a bumpy journey: smooth takeoff and landing, with some turbulence along the way. A national correspondent for of Atlantic Monthly and former U.S. News World Report editor, Fallows believes that the small-plane industry will revolutionize air travel the way computers and wireless devices have communications. In forming his argument, he focuses on those small startups that are making planes for individual flight; Fallows foresees a time when many travelers will hop on private air-taxis. But the book is most engaging at its beginning and end, when Fallows narrates in illustrative prose his own love affair with planes and a cross-country trip he piloted with his wife and son. He describes the view from a low-flying plane the "connectedness of physical features that seem separate from the ground." He's less successful, however, at bringing his story home to the general reader: many will find that the book's focus on technology and business makes for a difficult read. Some of the excitement of this nascent field comes across when he describes the personalities behind it and the obstacles they face, but readers may find their hopes deflated by the book's end, for the breakthrough that Fallows predicts does not appear to be on the horizon. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

From The New Yorker After decades of stagnation, small-airplane technology seems poised to make the kinds of advances that revolutionized computers and cars. Fallows envisions an alternative to the hub-and-spoke cattle pens of conventional airline travel: a flexible, affordable, on-demand air-taxi system using existing small airports and soon-to-exist small planes that offer comfort, speed, and safety. His account of the development of two such planes—one of which features a huge parachute that can float the entire craft to a soft landing—combines the excitement of a boy's adventure story with the gadgety pleasure of a Sharper Image catalogue. And his prose is as clear and light as the blue sky of a perfect day for flying. Copyright copy; 2005 The New Yorker