

# ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS





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## Episode #213

### A Brief History of The Cost of Flying

#### 23rd Nov, 2021

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:12] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:22] I'm Alastair Budge, and today we are going to be talking about the cost of flying and the economics of air travel.

[00:00:31] Air travel is something that has gone from being a [luxury<sup>1</sup>](#) available only to the richest in society to something that, at least in most parts of the developed world, is available to everyone.

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<sup>1</sup> a pleasure enjoyed only rarely

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[00:00:45] This all happened over the space of less than 100 years. The first commercial flight happened in 1914. It cost today's [equivalent<sup>2</sup>](#) of thousands of dollars and less than a century later it was possible to buy a ticket on an aeroplane for less than 5 euros.

[00:01:04] So, how did this all happen, when and why did flying become so cheap, and how do airline companies actually make money, and how has this changed over time?

[00:01:17] We have a lot to get through in today's episode, so let's get started right away.

[00:01:24] On December 17th of 1903, the Wright brothers, Wilbur and Orville, of Dayton, Ohio, became the first people to ever successfully fly a powered aeroplane.

[00:01:38] It wasn't fast - it only went at around 50km per hour - and it wasn't long - it only lasted 12 seconds, but it did make history.

[00:01:51] The [potential<sup>3</sup>](#) use of the aeroplane was immediately obvious. It means you can go anywhere without relying on a road or rail network. You can go over seas, mountains, across rivers. You can transport people, [goods<sup>4</sup>](#), letters, anything.

[00:02:09] Although commercial passenger flight got started in the 1920s, for several decades it remained the [preserve<sup>5</sup>](#) of only the richest in society.

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<sup>2</sup> equal in value

<sup>3</sup> the ability of future success

<sup>4</sup> merchandise or possessions

<sup>5</sup> something considered as being exclusive to certain people

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[00:02:21] Put simply, flying was a [luxury](#).

[00:02:24] The experience itself was a [luxury](#), but the service on board was also [premium](#)<sup>6</sup>.

[00:02:31] Passengers would have received [equivalent](#) service to what you might get in a [fancy](#)<sup>7</sup> restaurant, with drinks and food being served to you.

[00:02:41] It wouldn't have been particularly comfortable, given that the planes travelled at a much lower [altitude](#)<sup>8</sup> and therefore there would have been a lot more [turbulence](#)<sup>9</sup>, the plane would have moved up and down a lot, but perhaps the freely available alcohol would have helped the passengers manage this.

[00:03:02] As technology advanced, aeroplanes became larger and more comfortable, flight distances were increased, and as we get to the 1940s and 1950s it became the real [heyday](#)<sup>10</sup> of [glamorous](#)<sup>11</sup> commercial flying. It was the era of Pan Am, the “golden age of flight”.

[00:03:24] It was still expensive, and flights were rarely full.

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<sup>6</sup> of high quality

<sup>7</sup> expensive and impressive

<sup>8</sup> height above sea level

<sup>9</sup> unsteady or irregular movement

<sup>10</sup> most successful period

<sup>11</sup> attractive and exciting

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[00:03:29] Passengers were a mix of individual and business travellers.

[00:03:34] There were only two classes of ticket: tourist class and business class. Tourist class, as you might expect, was slightly cheaper.

[00:03:44] But there was no difference in experience once you were on the plane.

[00:03:49] The difference was about how flexible the tickets were.

[00:03:54] Tourist class tickets weren't flexible at all. They were for a fixed date in the future. If you're going on holiday, you normally choose a date, and it doesn't [tend<sup>12</sup>](#) to change, so tourists don't really need flexibility.

[00:04:10] Business class tickets, on the other hand, were more flexible. You could simply arrive at the airport at the last minute and book a ticket, or you could book a ticket that could be used on different flights, both of which were useful for business travellers who might be called to a last-minute meeting.

[00:04:30] Airlines realised that they could charge more for this, and given that it was the company paying, not the individual, the individual passenger wouldn't care so much about the price being higher.

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<sup>12</sup> to be likely to happen

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[00:04:44] The airline industry was also a highly [regulated](#)<sup>13</sup> industry, especially in the US, because flight was considered to be a [public good](#)<sup>14</sup>, similar to the railways. This meant that routes, [fares](#)<sup>15</sup>, and [schedules](#)<sup>16</sup> were all regulated by the government.

[00:05:02] If an airline wanted to add a new route or change its price, it would have to [seek](#)<sup>17</sup> official approval to do so. This worked fine for the existing airlines, because their profits were [virtually](#)<sup>18</sup> guaranteed—if you wanted to fly on certain routes, you didn’t have many options and you just had to pay whatever the price was—but it meant that it was very hard for any new routes to be added, new airlines to be created, or for real improvements to happen.

[00:05:36] In the late 1970s this all changed, for a few reasons.

[00:05:42] [First off](#)<sup>19</sup>, an [initiative](#)<sup>20</sup> was led by an economics professor named Alfred E. Kahn, who would later be given the nickname “The Father of Airline [Deregulation](#)<sup>21</sup>”.

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<sup>13</sup> controlled by means of rules

<sup>14</sup> benefit of the public

<sup>15</sup> money paid

<sup>16</sup> lists of planned flights including dates and times

<sup>17</sup> try to get

<sup>18</sup> almost, nearly

<sup>19</sup> firstly

<sup>20</sup> new plan or action

<sup>21</sup> removal of government control or rules

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[00:05:55] He changed the [legislation](#)<sup>22</sup> to [do away with](#)<sup>23</sup>, to get rid of most of this [regulation](#)<sup>24</sup> that he felt was [stifling](#)<sup>25</sup> competition, that was getting in the way of competition.

[00:06:09] The result was that [all of a sudden](#)<sup>26</sup> airlines could do what they wanted, [within reason](#)<sup>27</sup> of course. They could open up new routes without government approval, they could change their prices, they could do whatever they wanted in order to attract customers and maximise profits.

[00:06:28] It also meant that it was far easier for new airlines to enter the market, offering new routes, new prices, and new services.

[00:06:38] As any good student of economics knows, when there is an increase in competition this typically results in lower prices for consumers.

[00:06:48] [Deregulation](#) meant that it was possible to find much cheaper tickets, especially for international routes.

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<sup>22</sup> set of laws

<sup>23</sup> get rid of

<sup>24</sup> rules and control

<sup>25</sup> holding back, getting in the way of

<sup>26</sup> very quickly, suddenly

<sup>27</sup> within reasonable or not extreme limits

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[00:06:55] For example, a return flight from London to New York in 1970 cost the [equivalent](#) of almost €3,000. Today you can find tickets for around €300, about 10% of the cost.

[00:07:12] The second development was the arrival of the 747 aeroplane. It was simply a much bigger plane, taking up to 500 passengers. This meant that airlines could experiment with different seating classes, and they started adding more expensive seat types with more space, [reclining](#)<sup>28</sup> seats, the seats that go back, and some even a [lounge](#)<sup>29</sup> area with a piano!

[00:07:41] Airlines did invest into [differentiating](#)<sup>30</sup> their ticket types, changing their aeroplanes to allow for first and business class areas.

[00:07:51] Although business and first class were the most [profitable](#)<sup>31</sup> category of seats, as we'll come to discuss in a minute, several airline history experts have suggested that the airlines didn't fully [commit](#)<sup>32</sup> to turning their new aeroplanes into first and business class [paradises](#)<sup>33</sup> because they thought something else was coming, a new technological invention: Concorde.

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<sup>28</sup> able to have the back moved into a nearly horizontal position

<sup>29</sup> space where people could relax

<sup>30</sup> separating

<sup>31</sup> making a profit

<sup>32</sup> devote or dedicate themselves

<sup>33</sup> places of great happiness



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[00:08:17] As a reminder, Concorde was a [supersonic](#)<sup>34</sup> plane, a plane that could travel at over twice the speed of sound, meaning it could travel from London to New York in 3.5 hours, half what normal planes would do it in.

[00:08:34] The airlines thought that Concorde would become the new version of first class, that passengers who were currently travelling in First Class on a normal plane would soon [switch](#)<sup>35</sup> to travelling in a Concorde.

[00:08:49] After all, the cost of a Concorde ticket could be less than the cost of a first class ticket on a normal flight, and if [money were no object](#)<sup>36</sup> wouldn't you rather get to your destination twice as fast than have a couple of extra glasses of champagne in the air?

[00:09:07] I know I certainly would.

[00:09:09] As we know, Concorde didn't work out, and this caused these [legacy](#)<sup>37</sup> airlines to [rethink](#)<sup>38</sup> their [premium](#) offerings completely, as we'll come to discuss in a minute.

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<sup>34</sup> faster than the speed of sound

<sup>35</sup> change, shift

<sup>36</sup> money were not something to be worried about

<sup>37</sup> older, recognised and accepted

<sup>38</sup> think again about

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[00:09:21] Another factor that [disrupted](#)<sup>39</sup> the [legacy](#) airline carriers was the arrival of private jets.

[00:09:29] In fact, in the US at least private jets had really been in existence since after the Second World War, as military pilots and large amounts of fighter planes returned back home.

[00:09:43] Former military pilots would offer to fly these planes privately, and it was an [alternative](#)<sup>40</sup> to travelling on a commercial flight, especially going to and from less popular destinations.

[00:09:57] In the early days, these weren't particularly comfortable but in the 1960s private jet companies realised that they could [cater](#)<sup>41</sup> for a [time-poor](#)<sup>42</sup> and [cash-rich](#)<sup>43</sup> traveller.

[00:10:11] If you didn't want to go through a normal airport, and you wanted to be able to go anywhere at any time of day, well, a private jet was an option. Many large

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<sup>39</sup> prevented them from continuing as expected

<sup>40</sup> another available option

<sup>41</sup> provide, attend to the needs of

<sup>42</sup> having a little time to spare

<sup>43</sup> having a lot of money

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businesses bought their own jets, and companies [sprung up](#)<sup>44</sup> that would offer seats on private jets.

[00:10:31] The growth of the private jet industry put a limit on how much a commercial airline could charge for its business and first class tickets. If it was too much then it wouldn't be [competitive](#)<sup>45</sup> against the option of hiring or even buying a private jet.

[00:10:50] Now, moving on to a very different type of passenger, the 1970s and 1980s also saw the arrival of the [so-called](#)<sup>46</sup> “low cost airlines”, starting with SouthWest in the United States and followed by companies such as Ryanair and EasyJet in Europe after EU [deregulation](#) in 1992, as well as others such as AirAsia in southeast Asia.

[00:11:19] These companies realised that what people really wanted from a flight was to get from one place to another, and the extra cost that came from providing things like free drinks, being able to choose your seat, free bags, and so on, the cost of all of this [outweighed](#)<sup>47</sup> the value of it.

[00:11:41] In other words, people would rather pay less for their ticket and have a more basic experience than pay more and have included baggage, check-in, on-board drinks and so on.

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<sup>44</sup> came into existence

<sup>45</sup> as good as others when compared to them

<sup>46</sup> as they were called, without being necessarily true

<sup>47</sup> was more than

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[00:11:55] So, these low-cost carriers looked at all of the costs that went into transporting someone from A to B and gradually stopped including them in the cost of the ticket.

[00:12:07] In terms of things that a customer would see, as I'm sure you know, with Ryanair for example you have to pay extra to take luggage, to choose your seat, for any food or drink [on board](#)<sup>48</sup>, to print your boarding pass, even to get an SMS confirmation of your flight details.

[00:12:26] The CEO of Ryanair has even publicly joked about charging passengers to use the toilets [onboard](#)<sup>49</sup> the aeroplane.

[00:12:36] And in terms of things that we, customers, don't see, Ryanair's behind the scenes [cost-cutting](#)<sup>50</sup> is [extensive](#)<sup>51</sup>.

[00:12:45] It only buys one type of plane, the Boeing 737-800, and it buys this plane in large quantities, which leads to discounts on the price. It means the planes can be [customised](#)<sup>52</sup> to be very basic so they rarely need to be repaired, and it means staff don't need to be trained on how to operate different types of plane.

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<sup>48</sup> used aboard or on the plane

<sup>49</sup> aboard, or on

<sup>50</sup> reducing of costs

<sup>51</sup> large in amount or scale

<sup>52</sup> changed or modified to suit a particular need

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[00:13:10] Ryanair and all of these other [budget](#)<sup>53</sup> air carriers, these low cost air carriers also [negotiate](#)<sup>54</sup> hard with airports for [favourable](#)<sup>55</sup> prices to land and take-off, essentially telling an airport that they will bring millions of passengers through the doors, all of whom will spend money in the airport and create jobs in the local area.

[00:13:34] Anyone who has taken a Ryanair flight and arrived at “London” Luton or the Paris “Vatry” airport will have [found out the hard way](#)<sup>56</sup> that the airline also saves money by using airports that are generally further away from the city. From Paris Vatry airport it takes a similar time to drive to the centre of Paris as it would take you to drive to the Belgian, Luxembourg and even German border!

[00:14:03] There are all sorts of other reasons that low-cost airlines cut costs that we, as consumers, are often [unaware](#)<sup>57</sup> of: they often hire staff on short term contracts, meaning their employment costs are lower, they don't do [transit](#)<sup>58</sup> flights, so they don't need [infrastructure](#)<sup>59</sup> on the ground, they [turn around](#)<sup>60</sup> their planes more quickly, so

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<sup>53</sup> cheap

<sup>54</sup> have discussions with them in order to reach an agreement

<sup>55</sup> to their advantage

<sup>56</sup> learned from unpleasant experiences

<sup>57</sup> not realising or knowing

<sup>58</sup> connecting, not direct

<sup>59</sup> systems and services

<sup>60</sup> send towards a new direction



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they aren't sitting on the [tarmac](#)<sup>61</sup> doing nothing, they have much fewer staff to every passenger, and they are better at selling their tickets directly to consumers, so they don't have to pay agency fees or commissions.

[00:14:42] Now, that is a very brief summary of how we have got to where we are today, but now let's [delve into](#)<sup>62</sup> the actual numbers of how airlines work.

[00:14:53] The easiest way to think about this is by [splitting](#)<sup>63</sup> airlines into two categories: the [legacy](#) carriers, which are the older, more [established](#)<sup>64</sup> airlines, which normally offer higher levels of service and more expensive tickets.

[00:15:09] By this I mean carriers such as British Airways, Air France, Iberia, KLM, and so on.

[00:15:17] And the low-cost carriers, companies that offer what's called "[no frills](#)<sup>65</sup>", cheap tickets with nothing extra included in the price.

[00:15:27] Companies like Ryanair, EasyJet, Norwegian Air, and so on.

[00:15:33] So, firstly, the [legacy](#) carriers.

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<sup>61</sup> material used for making roads and runways for aeroplanes

<sup>62</sup> study it in detail

<sup>63</sup> separating

<sup>64</sup> recognised and accepted

<sup>65</sup> basic, without extra details

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[00:15:36] The interesting point to note here is that many of these carriers still offer the [luxury](#) options of the 1950s and 60s, and really it is exactly the same type of people who are buying the [luxury](#), [premium](#), tickets as those who travelled in the “normal”, or tourist or business, class tickets of 50 or 60 years ago.

[00:16:00] The only [addition](#)<sup>66</sup> is of an “economy” class, of the type of person like me and perhaps like you who is prepared to save money on the cost of their flight by [opting for](#)<sup>67</sup> a slightly less comfortable experience.

[00:16:17] So, the [legacy](#) carriers, companies such as British Airways, are [split into](#)<sup>68</sup> sometimes up to 4 different classes on a plane: Economy, [Premium](#) Economy, Business and First.

[00:16:32] Where it gets really interesting is what this actually means in terms of where the airlines make money.

[00:16:40] Despite the [majority](#)<sup>69</sup> of passengers on an airline travelling in economy class, on the cheapest ticket, these passengers typically represent a [minority](#)<sup>70</sup> of the revenue, less than 50% of the cost of the tickets.

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<sup>66</sup> the action of adding something to something else

<sup>67</sup> choosing

<sup>68</sup> separated

<sup>69</sup> greater number

<sup>70</sup> smaller amount

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[00:16:58] Airlines don't often release the [breakdowns](#)<sup>71</sup> of where all of their revenue comes from, but some [estimates](#)<sup>72</sup> have up to two-thirds of the money a [legacy](#) airline makes coming from the [premium](#) tickets.

[00:17:13] Tickets for business and first class can be ten times more expensive than economy, and in the case of [long-haul](#)<sup>73</sup> flights this can be thousands if not tens of thousands of Euros. The cost to deliver that [premium](#) service might be a few hundred Euros more, so it's with these [premium](#) ticket offerings that these [legacy](#) carriers can really make their money, make their profits.

[00:17:41] If you're interested in this, there's an amazing video on YouTube called "The Economics of Airline Class".

[00:17:48] Now, let's move onto the low-cost carriers, because the way they operate is very different.

[00:17:55] And just because their tickets might be cheap, it certainly doesn't mean that they aren't able to be incredibly profitable. Ryanair, for example, is one of the most profitable airlines in the world, despite selling tickets that are [alarmingly](#)<sup>74</sup> cheap.

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<sup>71</sup> explanatory information or analyses

<sup>72</sup> guesses

<sup>73</sup> lasting for a long time or going a long distance

<sup>74</sup> in a worrying way

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[00:18:12] Well, as anyone who has flown Ryanair before, they might look [alarmingly](#) cheap before you actually buy them, but if you want to do anything more than travel from A to B, such as sit next to your friend or take a bag, the costs start to [rack up](#)<sup>75</sup>.

[00:18:32] Indeed, Ryanair makes an average of just under €15 per passenger on these extra charges, which is around 7 million Euros a day, and [makes up](#)<sup>76</sup> around 35% of its total revenue. And a lot of this is pure profit - it costs [fractions](#)<sup>77</sup> of a penny to send a text message, for example, and a passenger pays €3 to receive it.

[00:18:59] Combined with [cutting costs](#)<sup>78</sup> on planes, training, and staff, this has meant that Ryanair is an incredibly profitable organisation, despite selling [cut-price](#)<sup>79</sup> tickets.

[00:19:12] Now, let's take a minute to reflect on [the lie of the land](#)<sup>80</sup> today, and what we might see in the future.

[00:19:20] In the one corner there are the legacy carriers which [cater](#) to both the [premium](#) traveller and the [cost-conscious](#)<sup>81</sup> traveller. For a [hefty](#)<sup>82</sup> fee, for a lot of

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<sup>75</sup> gradually get more

<sup>76</sup> forms or constitutes

<sup>77</sup> small part

<sup>78</sup> reducing costs

<sup>79</sup> less expensive than the usual prices

<sup>80</sup> the way the situation is developing

<sup>81</sup> careful about spending

<sup>82</sup> large amount of

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money, you can travel in [luxury](#), and for a more reasonable price you can simply get from A to B.

[00:19:38] The [premium](#) travellers might make up [the lion's share](#)<sup>83</sup> of the profits, but there is a [cap](#)<sup>84</sup> on how much airlines can charge for this, given that another option for the wealthiest of travellers is to go by private jet.

[00:19:54] In the other corner there are the low-cost carriers, companies that [cater](#) for people who simply want to go from A to B and will choose the cheapest option, people for whom flying is simply a [commodity](#)<sup>85</sup>.

[00:20:09] These low-cost carriers have opened up flying to the average person, and made international and [long-distance](#)<sup>86</sup> travel an option that simply was too expensive 50 years ago.

[00:20:22] We'll [touch on](#)<sup>87</sup> some of the problems that have come with this in a minute, but low-cost flight has been a great [equaliser](#)<sup>88</sup> in terms of who is able to travel - it is no longer the [preserve](#) of the rich; anyone can fly, at least anyone in the developed world.

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<sup>83</sup> the largest part

<sup>84</sup> limit

<sup>85</sup> a basic, interchangeable good

<sup>86</sup> relating to distant or far-away places

<sup>87</sup> mention quickly

<sup>88</sup> something that makes people equal



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[00:20:41] The one thing that unites the [legacy](#) carriers and the low cost carriers is that they have become incredibly efficient at making as much money from each flight as possible.

[00:20:53] Their approach to this is, of course, [vastly](#)<sup>89</sup> different.

[00:20:56] For low-cost carriers like Ryanair, they simply want to get as many people onto the plane as possible, which is why you can find tickets for even 5 or 10 Euros. It knows exactly how much it can charge on each route at each time, so it has become incredibly efficient at filling its planes.

[00:21:18] That's why, by the way, it can claim to be "[environmentally friendly](#)<sup>90</sup>", because on a per person basis Ryanair flights typically burn less fuel than most other airline carriers.

[00:21:32] Now, when it comes to the legacy carriers, they aren't always so concerned about [filling](#)<sup>91</sup> every seat, especially the most expensive ones. Historically they would sell very few First class tickets, and instead would [upgrade](#)<sup>92</sup> loyal travellers from

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<sup>89</sup> to a great extent, a lot

<sup>90</sup> that causes the least environmental problems, the least pollution possible

<sup>91</sup> putting people into, using

<sup>92</sup> raise to a higher standard

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Business class to First class, [thus](#)<sup>93</sup> making them more loyal and likely to book again, especially if their company was paying.

[00:21:59] Most airlines have got better at selling their more expensive tickets, knowing what is the most that they can charge for a ticket before it becomes [uncompetitive](#)<sup>94</sup>, but still keeping them priced [sufficiently](#)<sup>95</sup> high that they are [aspirational](#)<sup>96</sup>, and that people want to continue to fly with that airline to collect [loyalty points](#)<sup>97</sup> and hopefully, one day, be [upgraded](#)<sup>98</sup> to first class.

[00:22:25] Of course, both legacy and low-cost carriers [alike](#)<sup>99</sup> were [blindsided](#)<sup>100</sup>, they were [hit hard](#)<sup>101</sup> by COVID, as flights were [grounded](#)<sup>102</sup>. People simply couldn't travel, and airlines had to look to the government for [bailouts](#)<sup>103</sup>.

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<sup>93</sup> in this way

<sup>94</sup> not as good as others when compared to them

<sup>95</sup> to a satisfying degree, enough

<sup>96</sup> giving hope to people who want to belong to a higher social class

<sup>97</sup> rewards for loyal customers

<sup>98</sup> raised to a higher standard

<sup>99</sup> in a similar way

<sup>100</sup> taken by surprise

<sup>101</sup> affected badly

<sup>102</sup> prevented, kept on the ground

<sup>103</sup> financial assistance

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[00:22:40] While analysts suggest that the low-cost operators will recover more quickly, given that they have a more healthy cost structure and they are less [reliant](#)<sup>104</sup> on business travellers, the future isn't bright for many of the [legacy](#) carriers, and many have already gone bankrupt.

[00:22:59] They [rely](#)<sup>105</sup> heavily on business travellers, their most profitable customer [segment](#), and COVID has shown that a lot of business travel was simply unnecessary, or not nearly as necessary as people had believed it to be.

[00:23:15] There are serious question marks about if at all the business travel [segment](#)<sup>106</sup> will recover to pre-COVID levels, as people have realised that they can save a lot of time and money by simply having a virtual meeting rather than jumping on an aeroplane.

[00:23:34] Now, it would be [negligent](#)<sup>107</sup> to not mention some of the negative consequences that have come from the mass availability of commercial flight, the greatest of which is of course its impact on global warming.

[00:23:47] Approximately 2.4% of all global emissions come from aeroplanes.

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<sup>104</sup> dependent on

<sup>105</sup> depend

<sup>106</sup> group

<sup>107</sup> failing to give proper attention

[00:23:53] Although this might sound like a small amount, flying frequently is one of the individual largest [contributors](#)<sup>108</sup> to someone's carbon footprint.

[00:24:03] A return flight from London to San Francisco on economy is responsible for 5.5 tonnes of CO2. That's more than twice the emissions produced by driving a petrol-powered car every year, you would save an equivalent amount of CO2 by recycling for 25 years or switching to a meat-free diet for almost 7 years.

[00:24:28] You might be thinking - surely if the emissions are so large, is it really only 2.4%? Well, yes it is, and this is because it's estimated that less than 20% of the world's population has ever been on an aeroplane.

[00:24:45] And talking specifically in terms of the cost of flying and the economics of air travel, the worrying factor is that the most profitable customers, those travelling in First and Business class, are the largest [emitters](#)<sup>109</sup> of CO2. Because the seats, and often even full beds, in First and Business class can take up to 7 times as much space as those in Economy, the carbon footprint of those tickets is seven times more.

[00:25:17] To help you visualise this, with our example of the return flight from London to San Francisco, the carbon footprint of that one flight in First Class would be the same as what you would save by eating a [meat-free](#)<sup>110</sup> diet for almost 50 years!

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<sup>108</sup> factors in the existence of

<sup>109</sup> things that spread or give out

<sup>110</sup> not containing meat

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[00:25:36] So, what's next for air travel?

[00:25:39] Obviously that is the billion, or probably even trillion dollar question. While there have been significant improvements in fuel efficiency, the reality is that we power aeroplanes in a similar way to how we always have - with large amounts of fossil fuels - and that doesn't look like it is going to change that much in the near future.

[00:26:02] And the airlines have two main ways of making money.

[00:26:06] Either they offer [premium](#) service to high-paying customers, meaning the aeroplanes are relatively empty, or they fill their aeroplanes with as many people as possible, [enticing<sup>111</sup>](#) passengers with low ticket prices, so that more and more people decide to take planes as a mode of transportation.

[00:26:28] Neither of which [bodes well<sup>112</sup>](#) for the planet.

[00:26:31] There are all sorts of political and economic options that have been proposed, such as increased taxes on tickets that would go towards green [initiatives<sup>113</sup>](#), but if that happens then the cost of flying will go up, meaning a [retreat<sup>114</sup>](#) to the days where it was a [luxury](#) that only the richest in society could afford.

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<sup>111</sup> attracting, tempting

<sup>112</sup> shows that the future will be better

<sup>113</sup> new plans or actions

<sup>114</sup> act of moving back



## A Brief History of The Cost of Flying

[00:26:52] Perhaps this is the price that is needed to be paid for a [sustainable](#)<sup>115</sup> future, but it would cause huge [disruption](#)<sup>116</sup> to the travel and tourism industries that have grown dependent on flying being something available to all.

[00:27:08] For the time being at least, there seems to be little that will stop the growth of air travel, and for as long as tickets are cheap and [exotic](#)<sup>117</sup> new destinations are only a short trip away, then there is not much that will stop passengers from travelling, and the airline companies making a lot of money in the process.

[00:27:30] OK then, that is it for today's episode on the cost of flying and how airlines make their money.

[00:27:37] I hope it's been an interesting one, that you've learnt something new, and whether you are a frequent flier, either on one of the [legacy](#) carriers or on a low-cost carrier, or you've never been on an aeroplane in your life then it's made you think about air travel in a slightly different way.

[00:27:56] As always, I would love to know what you thought of this episode.

[00:27:59] What do you think the future holds for the airline industry?

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<sup>115</sup> able to continue or be maintained

<sup>116</sup> problems or disturbance

<sup>117</sup> unusual, exciting because of being far away

[00:28:03] Were you surprised by how much money airline companies make from their first class tickets?

[00:28:09] If you have flown on Ryanair or one of the other low-cost airlines, do you love or **loathe**<sup>118</sup> them?

[00:28:17] I would love to know, so let's get the discussion started.

[00:28:20] The place for that is our community forum, which is at [community.leonardoenglish.com](http://community.leonardoenglish.com).

[00:28:26] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:28:32] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

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<sup>118</sup> hate

## Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Luxury	a pleasure enjoyed only rarely
Equivalent	equal in value
Potential	the ability of future success
Goods	merchandise or possessions
Preserve	something considered as being exclusive to certain people
Premium	of high quality
Fancy	expensive and impressive
Altitude	height above sea level
Turbulence	unsteady or irregular movement
Heyday	most successful period
Glamorous	attractive and exciting
Tend	to be likely to happen

## A Brief History of The Cost of Flying

<b>Regulated</b>	controlled by means of rules
<b>Public good</b>	benefit of the public
<b>Fares</b>	money paid
<b>Schedules</b>	lists of planned flights including dates and times
<b>Seek</b>	try to get
<b>Virtually</b>	almost, nearly
<b>First off</b>	firstly
<b>Initiative</b>	new plan or action
<b>Deregulation</b>	removal of government control or rules
<b>Legislation</b>	set of laws
<b>Do away with</b>	get rid of
<b>Regulation</b>	rules and control
<b>Stifling</b>	holding back, getting in the way of
<b>All of a sudden</b>	very quickly, suddenly
<b>Within reason</b>	within reasonable or not extreme limits

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<b>Reclining</b>	able to have the back moved into a nearly horizontal position
<b>Lounge</b>	space where people could relax
<b>Differentiating</b>	separating
<b>Profitable</b>	making a profit
<b>Commit</b>	devote or dedicate themselves
<b>Paradises</b>	places of great happiness
<b>Supersonic</b>	faster than the speed of sound
<b>Switch</b>	change, shift
<b>Money were no object</b>	money were not something to be worried about
<b>Legacy</b>	older, recognised and accepted
<b>Rethink</b>	think again about
<b>Disrupted</b>	prevented them from continuing as expected
<b>Alternative</b>	another available option
<b>Cater</b>	provide, attend to the needs of
<b>Time-poor</b>	having a little time to spare



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<b>Cash-rich</b>	having a lot of money
<b>Sprung up</b>	came into existence
<b>Competitive</b>	as good as others when compared to them
<b>So-called</b>	as they were called, without being necessarily true
<b>Outweighed</b>	was more than
<b>On board</b>	used aboard or on the plane
<b>Onboard</b>	aboard or on
<b>Cost-cutting</b>	reducing of costs
<b>Extensive</b>	large in amount or scale
<b>Customised</b>	changed or modified to suit a particular need
<b>Budget</b>	cheap
<b>Negotiate</b>	have discussions with them in order to reach an agreement
<b>Favourable</b>	to their advantage
<b>Found out the hard way</b>	learned from unpleasant experiences
<b>Unaware</b>	not realising or knowing

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<b>Transit</b>	connecting, not direct
<b>Infrastructure</b>	systems and services
<b>Turn around</b>	send towards a new direction
<b>Tarmac</b>	material used for making roads and runways for aeroplanes
<b>Delve into</b>	study it in detail
<b>Splitting</b>	separating
<b>Established</b>	recognised and accepted
<b>No frills</b>	basic, without extra details
<b>Addition</b>	the action of adding something to something else
<b>Opting for</b>	choosing
<b>Split into</b>	separated
<b>Majority</b>	greater number
<b>Minority</b>	smaller amount
<b>Breakdowns</b>	explanatory information or analyses
<b>Estimates</b>	guesses

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**Long-haul** lasting for a long time or going a long distance

**Alarminglly** in a worrying way

**Rack up** gradually get more

**Makes up** forms or constitutes

**Fractions** small part

**Cutting costs** reducing costs

**Cut-price** less expensive than the usual prices

**The lie of the land** the way the situation is developing

**Cost-conscious** careful about spending

**Hefty** large amount of

**The lion's share** the largest part

**Cap** limit

**Commodity** a basic, interchangeable good

**Long-distance** relating to distant or far-away places

**Touch on** mention quickly

## A Brief History of The Cost of Flying

<b>Equaliser</b>	something that makes people equal
<b>Vastly</b>	to a great extent, a lot
<b>Environmentally friendly</b>	that causes the least environmental problems, the least pollution possible
<b>Filling</b>	putting people into, using
<b>Upgrade</b>	raise to a higher standard
<b>Thus</b>	in this way
<b>Uncompetitive</b>	not as good as others when compared to them
<b>Sufficiently</b>	to a satisfying degree, enough
<b>Aspirational</b>	giving hope to people who want to belong to a higher social class
<b>Loyalty points</b>	rewards for loyal customers
<b>Upgraded</b>	raised to a higher standard
<b>Alike</b>	in a similar way
<b>Blindsided</b>	taken by surprise
<b>Hit hard</b>	affected badly
<b>Grounded</b>	prevented, kept on the ground

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<b>Bailouts</b>	financial assistance
<b>Reliant</b>	dependent on
<b>Rely</b>	depend
<b>Segment</b>	group
<b>Negligent</b>	failing to give proper attention
<b>Contributors</b>	factors in the existence of
<b>Emitters</b>	things that spread or give out
<b>Meat-free</b>	not containing meat
<b>Enticing</b>	attracting, tempting
<b>Bodes well</b>	shows that the future will be better
<b>Initiatives</b>	new plans or actions
<b>Retreat</b>	act of moving back
<b>Sustainable</b>	able to continue or be maintained
<b>Disruption</b>	problems or disturbance
<b>Exotic</b>	unusual, exciting because of being far away

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*We'd love to get your feedback on this episode.*

*What did you like? What could we do better?*

*What did you struggle to understand?*

*Let us know in the forum [community.leonardoenglish.com](https://community.leonardoenglish.com)*