

Subject: Week 94 Learnings - Air travel QF 7879
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Dear All

Airlines have been one of the biggest innovations of the last century. I have always said that Airline and Mobile phones are the death of distance. Another major innovation happened last week.

Last week was a historic event in air travel. Qantas is running a project called project Sunrise. In this experiment, they are testing three 20 hour flights, the first happened last week new York to Sydney and the next from London to Sydney will happen in November followed by a New York Sydney flight. Qantas plans to check the impact of a long flight on pilots, crew and passengers. On this 20 hour flight, they only had 40 passengers. This project is called project sunrise because in some of these flights, the passenger sees two sunrises!

1. Qantas flight QF 7879 did a non-stop 19 hours 16 minutes flight between New York and Sydney. The previous best has been about 17 hours. Qantas 7879 took off three hours behind QF 42 which flew New York – San Francisco and San Francisco – Sydney. QF 7879 arrived before QF 42 in Sydney!
2. This is a long way from the first flight by the Wright brothers on 17th December 1903, that flight was 12 seconds and the distance covered was 120 feet in all.
3. Imagine in 115 years, the time factor has multiplied 5780 times and the distance has multiplied 400,000 times. Very few innovations have multiplied like this - computers, mobile phone processing speed etc. are other examples of dramatic jump in such multipliers.
4. This wasn't true even in 1947 when Qantas started the kangaroo flight from Sydney to London. That flight stopped at Darwin, Singapore, Calcutta, Karachi, Cairo, Tripoli before reaching London. As jet engines came into the fleet, stops like Calcutta, Karachi, Cairo got dropped from the itinerary. The fare was \$ 800 or so, which in today's money for the same flight will be \$ 40,000. Air travel has become abundantly cheaper as aircrafts can fit in more people into an aircraft, thus dropping per ticket price.
5. The top 5 inter country routes in a given year are : 1. KL-Singapore 30,197 flight, 2. HK – Taipei 28,447, 3. Jakarta – Singapore 27,046, 4. HK-Shanghai 20,678 and 5. Jakarta – KL 19,791. This data is 2019
6. The top 5 intra country routes in a year are : . Bogota-Medelin 31,279, Shanghai-Shenzhen 29,401, Beijing-Shanghai 29,233, Jakarta-Makassar 28,903, Bangalore -Delhi 28,716, and New York- San Francisco 26,286. I was surprised to see Bangalore – Delhi route there. This data is 2019.
7. Airlines have seen a number of innovations. In the early days, no 2 engine aircraft was allowed to fly without being close to an airport with 60 miles of its route, in case engine trouble happened. So, the USA-London route happened over the north pole. McDonnell Douglas introduced a 3 engine aircraft to beat this rule and subsequent engine technology ensured that 2 engines were good enough to cross the oceans.
8. Two airline innovations happened in 1979 – our friends Qantas were the first to introduce a Business class and Texas International Airlines introduced the frequent flyer miles program. Both are big hits even today.
9. I did a few long flights and I remember the Singapore – New York flight, about 17 hours. I did Dubai San Francisco a few times, close to 16 hours. The long flights are disconcerting since you don't know which time zone to adjust to.
10. Qantas plans to start these flights as a daily service on 2022 or 2023. Question – what happens to hubs like Dubai and Singapore and HK when these jets go fly direct for 20 hours, that will be interesting to watch.
11. Long flights tend to have impact on our physical well-being. Steve Waugh, the Australian captain complained of Deep Vein thrombosis as a result of his long flights between London and Sydney.
12. Air travel is always magical and will always be one of the highlights of every executive career. There is nothing that comes close.

Enjoy
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