

## Your First Airplane Flight



In 2019 US commercial airlines carried 926 million passengers. There were almost 69 million individual commercial flights, almost 189,000 each day. In the United States there are just over 5,000 commercial airports. So flying is a big deal that millions of people do each day! Airplanes also transport items such as priority mail, fruit, fish, and other high value items that need to arrive at their destinations quickly.

### The Airplane

Each plane has 2 pilots -- a captain and a co-pilot. Before every flight, the pilots inspect their aircraft top to bottom, personally confirming that critical systems are in working order. Most of the actual flying is done by a computer and monitored by the pilots. The pilots sit in the very front with their own windows, and they lock the door when the plane is in the air.



When you board the airplane, if you look to your left, you can see the pilot area, which is called the cockpit.

Virtually every commercial flight we take has airplanes with two jet engines. Larger planes can actually have more than 2 engines. Large US airline jets are made by Boeing in the United States or by Airbus in Europe. These airplanes have 2 aisles with seats in groups of 2 seats or 4 seats. Small and medium jets have one aisle between the seats with 2 to 3 seats on either side. The outside seat has a window next to it. The windows have a shade that can be pulled down, except they need to be open for take-off and landing.

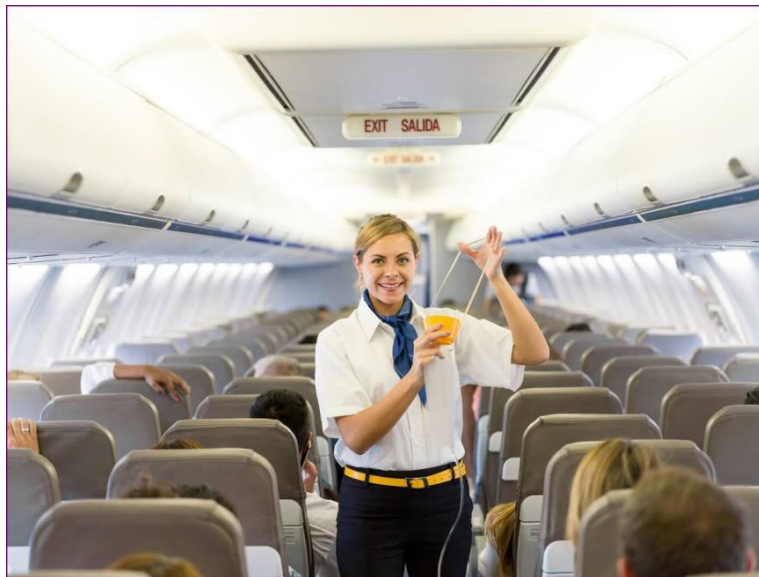
Bathrooms are available on the airplane, but they aren't available at the beginning of the flight or near landing. There are signs that show you when the bathroom is available and open. Most planes have at least 2 bathrooms, 1 on each end of the plane. Bathrooms on large jets are wheelchair accessible, but on small and medium jets, they are not. So, we make sure you have a chance to use the bathroom before boarding and then again right after we exit the airplane.

### Boarding the Plane

The Tour Leaders guide you to your seat. All our suitcases are stored in large baggage holds beneath the seating area. We store our carry-on items underneath our seats and in compartments above our seats. Before we take off, turn off your cell phone and other electronics, and fasten your seatbelt.

For safety purposes, individuals who use wheelchairs are transferred outside the airplane to a smaller narrow chair that goes through the airplane aisle between the seats. These individuals are then transferred via team lift to their assigned seat if they cannot transfer themselves. All wheelchairs are stored underneath the airplane with the luggage.

Each airplane also has 3 or 4 flight attendants who are there to take care of your safety, serve drinks and snacks, and direct the passengers. Before we take off, the flight attendants give some instructions, so listen carefully.



### Take Off

There is a high tower at the airport where people sit who direct all the operations of the airplane on the ground and during take-off and landing. When the airplane is ready to go, the crew in the tower gives the pilots permission to taxi (drive) to its take-off position. The ground crew then guides the plane to back up and then the pilots take over. They steer the airplane on the taxiway to the main runway.

Our plane may need to line up and wait as the planes in front of ours take off. The tower crew tell the pilot when it's our turn to take off. The pilots then steer onto the runway and increase speed and the plane lifts off into the air. You'll feel as if you are being pressed back against your seat – an exhilarating feeling that some people really enjoy. Your first flight has now officially begun!



The plane quickly flies to 10,000 feet and then levels off. At this point we can use our electronics; however cell phones need to remain off for the duration of the flight. The pilots are then directed by a different tower crew that guides the airplanes going between cities. Our pilot then climbs to our cruising altitude and takes us to our destination city.

### In Flight

After we are at our cruising altitude, the flight attendants serve drinks and a small snack. The pilots update us during the flight with our status and sometimes they point out things of interest on the ground, such as a city we are passing nearby that can be seen from the windows.



It's important to stay seated with your seatbelt fastened, especially during any times of turbulence or when directed to stay seated by the flight crew.

If there is turbulence, it's just a few bumps and they don't happen that often!

### Landing

When we get close to our destination airport, the local tower crew starts directing our pilot. They organize the planes for landing. When given the "go ahead" by the tower crew, the pilot begins descending the plane and lining up on the runway. Then we land and you're at your destination. Your first flight is now over and you're ready for many more.

Your Tour Leader directs you when it's time to get off the airplane. Sometimes we may need to get on another flight to reach our final destination. Whether we're at our final destination or not, after we get off the airplane we stop at the restroom.

Once we reach our destination city we walk as a group to the baggage claim area. The Travel Companions grab your suitcase off the belt when it arrives. Then we locate our transportation and head to our hotel.