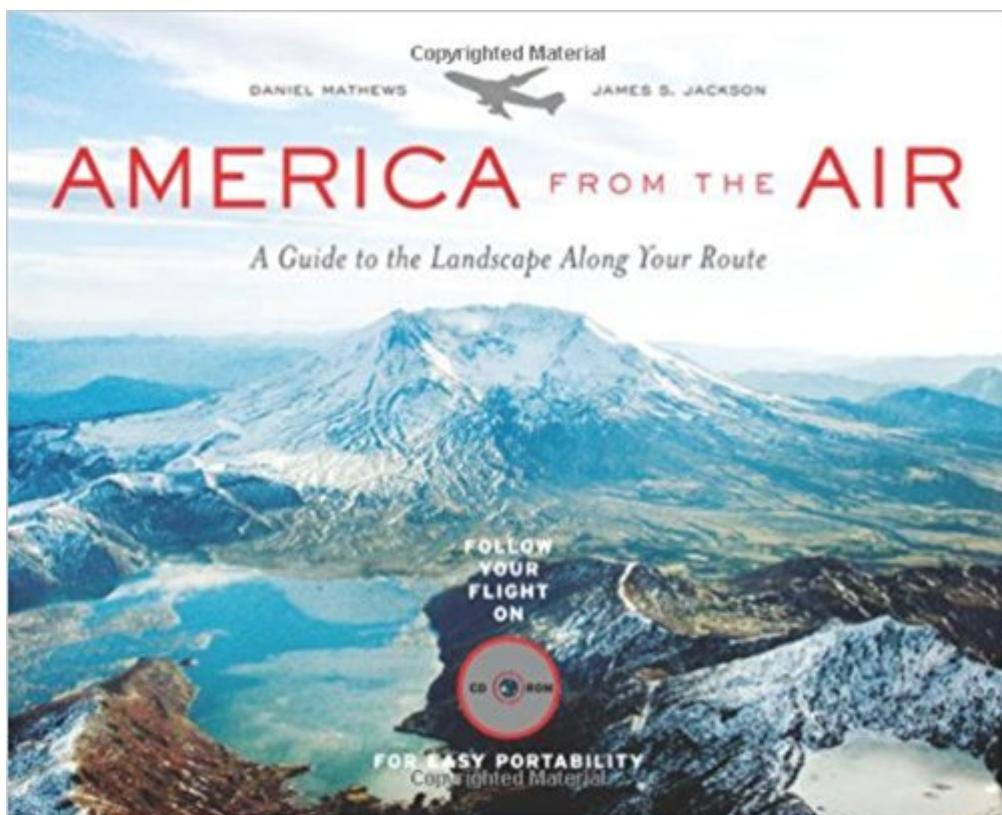


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America From The Air: A Guide To The Landscape Along Your Route



Synopsis

An illustrated guide, in both book and CD-ROM, of landscapes seen from commercial airplane windows across the United States. This is a guide to what an airline passenger sees from his seat while flying over the United States. Through its ingenious construction and a map of preferred flight paths, it's easy to find those pages that correspond to whatever flight a passenger happens to be on, and then to identify features that can be seen from the air. The book marries geology, natural history, and human history for a glorious portrait of the continent, from the Atlantic City Boardwalk to Mount St. Helens. Each two-page spread features an aerial photo with captions identifying features passengers will see and an essay interpreting the features. Each chapter is a Flight Corridor, with pages sequenced to follow a trip from takeoff to landing. Because many flight paths overlap, the fifteen corridors cover the forty most heavily traveled flight segments in the continental United States, plus many others. In many regions of the country, readers will have a new page to read about every twenty minutes. The entire book is also on the included CD-ROM, which can easily be used on a laptop in the air.

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We've written this guide for the many fliers like ourselves who secretly harbor a tingle of excitement as flight time approaches—so long as we fly in daylight, with auspicious weather and a window seat. Well, yes, it's also for you, you of little faith who gave up

on window seats years ago, perhaps because the views had all merged hazily, their rivers unnameable, their mysteries intractable. Here we name places, unearth histories, and unravel landscape puzzles. Welcome aboard.

Paths Planes Fly Articles in this guide are sorted into 14 corridorsâ "assemblages of more or less overlapping flight paths. These flight paths embrace nearly all the 60 most heavily traveled city pairs in the United States. If your flight is not on one of these corridors, look it up in the Index of Flights, page 343. You will find suggested sequences of articles for many trips that arenâ "t so cluttered with contrails. But youâ "ll have to skip around from corridor to corridor (of the guide, not of the plane). Maps on the preceding pages of this guide largely reflect a recent edition of the Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) Preferred Routes published by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Pilots frequently wish to depart from the preferred route to save fuel or to avoid bad weather and file a request to take a different specified path. The FAA grants the majority of these requests. Preferred routes commonly, but not always, lump the airports within a metro area together, as this guide does. Different preferred routes are sometimes given for different regional airports, for different times of day, or for different aircraft. Flights east from Oakland, California, for example, are more likely to take a northerly option, whereas flights from San Francisco and especially San Jose more often take a southerly option. (We give more examples of such correlations in the corridor introductions.) While the plane is near the departure and destination airports, pilots are directed in real time by local air traffic controllers. For many city pairs, the FAA publishes no preferred routes. By tracking flights online, we were able to find customary routes, as well as to select among FAA preferred routes to find the ones most often followed. Our maps present the results of our investigations. Each city pair typically has at least two flight pathsâ "one for each directionâ "and theyâ "re often pretty far apart. Some city pairs, especially the longest and busiest routes, have four or more preferred or customary paths. New Yorkâ "Los Angeles is an extreme example, with paths wandering farther apart than the north-to-south extent of Colorado. (The most northerly New Yorkâ "Los Angeles route that we have tracked repeatedly crosses a big corner of Wyoming; the most southerly one crosses a small corner of Oklahoma.) For that reason, we divide New Yorkâ "Los Angeles into two corridors. If you take the northerly one, you are likely to fly over or very close to Chicago and Las Vegas, so it makes sense to include New Yorkâ "Chicago, Chicagoâ "Las Vegas, and other segments in the same corridor. If you take the southerly one, you are likely to fly near Philadelphia and Indianapolis, which join that corridor.

Why Planes Donâ "t Fly Straight For many decades, air navigation worked by triangulating between radio beacons (Navigational Aids, or NAVAIDs) set up for this purpose by the FAA and the military. the easiest way to keep planes on precise routes and avoid

midair collisions was to have the planes proceed directly from beacon to beacon. the FAA preferred routes are expressed as sequences of NAVAIDs. Today, it is possible for planes to navigate precisely using Global Positioning System (GPS) satellites. But to meet safety requirements for planes, GPS instruments must be far more sophisticated and expensive than those offered for cars and therefore won't become ubiquitous overnight. With the aid of these instruments, as well as the pressure of the increasing price of jet fuel, the FAA has undertaken a program that takes long-haul flights in uncongested parts of the country off NAVAIDs and puts them on more fuel-efficient paths, often straight lines, once the planes are out of their departure patterns. Flights in opposite directions can take almost the same straight line, as 1,000 feet of difference in altitude is accepted as a safety margin. Back in the present, though: While preparing this guide, we tracked hundreds of flights on the Web; the majority flew from NAVAID to NAVAID. Since NAVAIDs are spots a lot of planes fly over, we include a lot of NAVAIDs in the locations we illustrate in this guide: Garden City, Kansas; Linden, California; Zuni and Albuquerque, New Mexico; Amarillo, Texas; < North Platte, Nebraska; Bowling Green, Kentucky; Jamestown, New York; Carbondale and Williamsport, Pennsylvania; and Newport News, Virginia. Three other reasons to fly crooked are to avoid rough weather, to avoid military airspace when the military requires it, and for greater fuel efficiency and speed when near the jet stream. We don't foresee those diminishing. It can be well worth going hundreds of miles out of the way to catch a ride on the jet stream eastbound or to avoid fighting it when westbound. Transcontinental flights in the northern third of the country are likeliest to make wide detours based on where the jet stream blows on flight day. So, you're wondering which path your flight is going to take today? Sorry, we can't predict. A handheld GPS unit can often provide and record precise positions if held very close to the window for several minutes at a time. Some jetliners show you your progress on a digital map on a personal TV screen. If you aren't so lucky, try asking your flight attendant, during boarding, to pass along a request for the captain to announce an outline of the flight path soon after takeoff. If enough of us ask, we may find pilots making a habit of it before long. If you have time, Internet access, and curiosity, you may enjoy tracking your itinerary daily for a few days before departure. The tracking Web sites we used are www.flytecomm.com, www.fboweb.com, and www.flightview.com. Other Web sites predict the weather and the position of the jet stream. If you see either severe storms or a contrary jet stream in your path, expect a substantial deviation. Here's a Severe Weather Avoidance Pattern (SWAP) taken by one Miami-to-Chicago flight in yellow, compared to the typical flight path in green. the blue to red colors show weather intensity.

Tips on Using This Guide On many heavily traveled itineraries, you could read

one of the corridor chapters from beginning to end. (That would be from end to beginning if you are flying south to north or west to east.) Pay attention to the cross-references to other chapters, at the lower right- and left-hand corner; these refer you to a subject that is visible from both your flight corridor and at least one other. Each article appears just once. Most likely, some subjects in your corridorâ™s chapter are far from your flight path because the common paths between any two cities diverge widely. You will have greater precision in turning to the right articles if you follow your flight on the map and pick your articles in sequence by their numbers on the map. A few articles cover subjects so widespread that you could simply go ahead and browse them at any time, because youâ™re likely to see these things by the time youâ™ve viewed any substantial stretch of the nation: Center pivot irrigation (Great Plains to the Pacific), page 36 Forest fires (Rockies to the Pacific, and Southeast), page 288 Forests pests (Rockies and the Southeast), page 162 Interstate highway system (everywhere), page 76 Wind farms (scattered nationwide), page 65

 On our maps and in our Index of Flights, major terminals are represented with either standard three-letter airport codes or nonstandard two-letter codes. For cities with one major airport, we use the standard three-letter airport codes. For metro areas with multiple major airports, we treat all the airports as one destination or origin, and we give it a two-letter abbreviation so that we wonâ™t leave you scratching your head trying to think what airport those three letters stand for.

Here are our two-letter abbreviations:

 CH Chicago (MDW, ORD) DC Washington, D.C., and Baltimore (BWI, DCA, IAD) HO Houston (HOU, IAH) LA Los Angeles (BUR, LAX, LGB, ONT, SNA) MI Miami (FLL, MIA, PBI) NY New York City (EWR, HPN, ISP, LGA, JFK, SWF) SF San Francisco Bay Area (OAK, SFO, SJC)

 Remember that several airport codes are non-intuitive: MCI for Kansas City; MCO Orlando; MSY New Orleans; YUL Montreal; YVR Vancouver; YYC Calgary; YYZ Toronto. We have indexed the 30 busiest airports or metropolitan airport clusters in the United States, and the 3 busiest in Canada. Before taking off, figure out which compass direction your window faces for the main portion of the flight. If you

 fly west, right-side seats look north, left-side seats look south fly southwest, right side looks northwest, left looks southeast fly south, right side looks west, left looks east fly southeast, right side looks southwest, left looks northeast fly east, right side looks south, left looks north fly northeast, right side looks southeast, left looks northwest fly north, right side looks east, left looks west fly northwest, right side looks northeast, left looks southwest

 Then do your best to read the landscape, especially in the first 20 minutes of your flight. Refer to the map in this guide to see whether you are on one of the routes that we show. The landscape in the image may seem upside down or sideways to you. Look in the image for distinctive shapes that would be

easy to spot no matter which way they're turned. If the picture is oblique, the first caption on the image page tells which way the camera was facing. If the captions do not begin with 'facing', the camera was shooting straight down, and the image bears a small North arrow. Those pictures were not taken from window seats. Most photographs in this guide are of three types:

 1. Snapshots from jetliner windows. 2. Astronaut photos. On most of these, you must adjust to a much broader scale. Try scanning the photo one-third at a time to spot something that looks like your view. Showing a broader area improves your odds of flying over it. We chose broad photos for locations where features we want to point out are spread over a large area. 3. Orthoquads, or photos shot straight down from about 20,000 feet up by joint state/federal programs and digitally corrected to remove perspective distortions. We selected scales roughly comparable to your jetliner view and printed them with north up. Most of these photos are mosaics of several tiles, leaving visible tile edges in places.

 In addition, a few aerial photos were taken from small aircraft at low altitude. </div>

I bought this book as a gift after a review in Wired. It has major routes, and large area pictures of main land features and discussion of the routes. I wish it had more pictures, more analysis, and more blowups of the land features. Perhaps looking at the images by computer on the CD (which comes with the book, and which is a copy of the book) would allow zooming in on features in more detail (which I haven't tried). I was a little disappointed in the book expecting even more discussion and analysis of 'what one sees from air'. Most of what was pointed out I already knew. However, my spouse has taken the CD on several trips and hasn't complained. The pictures are still great.

I'm expecting to be a road warrior and I like to look out the window. Being kinda dumb, I was wondering what some of the things are down there. I tried this on a couple of flights (BOS to ORD) on perfectly clear days. The experience was meh. It could be we didn't take the exact path described in the book. OK but not great. I would not buy again.

Never got the DVD promised

This is a beautiful book, of our beautiful American land from the air. Fine photographs and lots of good information about land forms. It is, though, too heavy to carry with you if you want to travel light on planes.

I was expecting to see pictures from the air of the routes. It was not at all what I expected.

I love knowing what I am seeing when I look out of airplane windows, and this book is pretty thorough!

The idea is excellent - what, exactly, am I flying over right now? Selecting the most traveled air routes in the country is a great way to constrain the scope to a manageable effort. Unfortunately, this is a great idea that is very poorly executed. For starters, the routes are very confusing to follow as they often have alternate paths. Just show me what LA to New York looks like, don't divert my attention by diverting me to Las Vegas or Phoenix or whatever. Second, the pictures aren't very good. It is safe to say that very few of the pictures were taken from the window of a commercial jet. As a result, the view is not even close to what you would see from your window seat (unless you regularly fly in a satellite). Again, a great idea. And kudos for making it a low-cost paperback. But the execution is poor.

I like the book. But I will need to study it before I travel so I know exactly what to look for. However I knew that when I bought it, so no problem.

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