

EPISODE 181

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[00:00:07] IP: Hello, and welcome to Episode 181 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik, back in Chicago and here, as always with –

[00:00:17] JR: Jason Rabinowitz. Welcome back, and congratulations on completing your ridiculous flight itinerary with –

[00:00:24] IP: Thank you, sir.

[00:00:25] JR: No issues, whatsoever. And upgrade.

[00:00:29] IP: Yeah. All of the issues that arose actually ended up working in my favor. Even though there were some delays. Like I said, both flights on the way there were delayed, similar amount of time. Those didn't end up costing me much on the way home. Made it up to Stockholm after we recorded the podcast. Had a lovely evening in Stockholm. Full moon rising and very beautiful stuff. Made it home on Saturday, connected to New York, waved as I landed. Jason, I hope you saw me going. Then, because of the random assortment of SkyTeam flying that I've ended up doing over the past year, I have now achieved what I had never set out to achieve, because this trip was the first time I've ever flown Delta, let alone the rest of SkyTeam.

[00:01:19] JR: What I find super difficult to believe, I mean, I know Delta is not a hub carrier in Chicago in any way. Come on. Really? I did a bunch and they don't have a hub in New York and IATA confirmed that. That Newark is not New York.

[00:01:33] IP: Newark is not in New York anymore. That's right. I went back. After I set – because I believe that. I was like, okay, let's make sure I'm not mistaken. I can't find anytime – and there were a couple times that I've flown through Detroit. I was like, maybe I flew Delta there, I've flown – No. Both of those times were pre-merger Northwest flights.

[00:01:53] JR: Well, you didn't get Delta's best aircraft. We know that for sure. You all have to come back another time and try something a little better.

[00:02:00] IP: Yeah. I'm going to try anything with a working – On the way out, the screens needed to be reset a bunch of times on the way back on the 767. It was a different 767. On the way back, my screen got stuck on the moving map, which was ended up being fine.

[00:02:14] JR: Not the worst thing to get stuck on.

[00:02:17] IP: No. At least, it wasn't stuck on something I didn't like. But no, good flights. I got to the flight from New York to Chicago is empty, so I got a I got an upgrade on my E175, which is I'm not going to look any courses of gifting in the mouth. I will take what I can get and say, thank you very much. Made it home. Did not get COVID on the trip.

[00:02:41] JR: Fantastic.

[00:02:42] IP: All things considered very well-traveled exercise. I made it home just in time to prepare for what we expected would be a very well-tracked flight. I'm referring to the carriage of Queen Elizabeth the Second's coffin from Edinburgh airport, down to RAF Northolt. It was well tracked, but much, much more well tracked than we thought it would be. Beginning of August, Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of United States House of Representatives flies from Kuala Lumpur to Taipei. That flight ends up being, I think, was almost eight hours and ends up being tracked by 2.2 million people, at the peak there were 700 and some odd 1000 people following, 708,000 people following, I think.

We figured, okay, it's going to be a little bit more than that, but how much more we didn't know. We prepared the waiting room that we talked about before. That helps meter traffic, because the issue with traffic and platform stability isn't necessarily the number of people. It's the concurrency of the number of clicks. When the platform gets hammered, it's basically a real live DDOS and dealing with all of that, that flood of people wanting to track something creates problems. The problem here was that it wasn't a few 100,000. It was 6 million people.

[00:04:19] JR: That's a lot of people. At one point when I had the actual website loaded up, I think it topped out at 520,000 concurrent people watching the fight before it stopped.

[00:04:30] IP: That was the transponder turned on. We went –

[00:04:33] JR: Yeah, that was before it even took off.

[00:04:35] IP: Yeah. The transponder turned on. To put things into perspective, there were nearly 200,000 people tracking a Turkish Airlines A321 that was just sitting on the ground in Edinburgh.

[00:04:47] JR: That's important.

[00:04:48] IP: It happened to be in the right place at the right time. Within one minute of the transponder becoming active, 6 million people tried to follow that particular flight. About 600,000 were successful before the site said, “This isn't really going to work.” We had to implement more traffic calming measures, which I know is unfortunate. I want to have some of our infrastructure team on the podcast to explain what we're doing, because they're really, really, really excited about some of the things that we're working on in the next, well, starting a few months ago, and working through the next few months to really re – I don't want to say, reimagine, but revamp the entire infrastructure that powers and sustains flightradar24, so that things like this are a thing of the past, where we have to implement traffic calming measures.

[00:05:41] JR: You tried with the YouTube live stream, which ran into the same problem as any other user. You tried, y'all did your best, but this is one of those situations where you can't test for it. You can't reasonably expect it to happen anytime in the near future, just websites, any websites, whether you are flightradar24, or Amazon, isn't built to handle a spike in traffic like that.

[00:06:03] IP: Yeah. I mean, one of the big things is all of this stuff is live. There's nothing to cache. We run into the problem of having – we have to serve everything as it's happening, which becomes – I mean, cash as much as we can obviously, like the information about that particular aircraft, or the photo from jet photos as shown as much as we can. There's still a lot of

things that just are just live data. In the end, 5 million total people, 4.7 9 million on the website, and then another nearly 300,000 on the YouTube live stream were able to follow the flight. If you are one of the people that was not able to follow the flight, I'm deeply and truly sorry. Rest assured that we are moving towards a solution that will allow a significant increase in traffic, even compared to what we saw last week. Though, for the life of me, I don't want to think about what type of flight would lead to more traffic than that.

[00:07:04] JR: This wasn't even supposed to happen. I think the queen want to be transported by train.

[00:07:07] IP: She was supposed to take the train.

[00:07:10] JR: Her wishes were to be transported by train, and just like here in the US where Biden wanted to go to his inauguration by Amtrak, because of course, the powers that be that protect and plan these things that no, that's not safe enough. We'll put you in an airplane. People can watch that instead. I know. I know. It was one of those that shouldn't be an airplane, it should have been a train. So many other flights that should be a train, this was one of them.

[00:07:39] IP: This is really a harbinger for a larger conversation. 5 million people, 6 million people tried in the first minute, 5 million people total because of the traffic calming measures that we had to implement. The total would have been much higher, had the platform been able to support additional traffic, more than it was already the increase we already saw. It's the most tracked flight of all time. Hopefully, we don't see anything like that for a while, while we implement all of these changes that I'm really excited about and our infrastructure teams are really excited about.

[00:08:14] JR: How many people were watching your Delta E175 flight? Probably less than that, right?

[00:08:19] IP: A few less. A few less. It was like a 130,000. Yeah, something like that.

[00:08:24] JR: Yeah, definitely.

[00:08:24] IP: When I travel, people –

[00:08:26] JR: Move the decimal point a few places.

[00:08:28] IP: 1.3. 1.3 people were following. Let's leave that at that. That was her final flight. The RAF did a wonderful job. It is now the most tracked flight on flightradar24 of all time. If you want to watch a replay of the flight, you can click the link in the show notes. Now, something that we could also have not expected just a short time ago. We briefly mentioned it a couple of weeks ago, when Jon Ostrower broke the news. Then both Emirates and United scrambled to put something out as by way of a teaser to not confirm it, but confirm it. Today the announcement that United and Emirates are entering into a codeshare agreement. United is restarting service to Dubai. They're now buddy, buddy.

[00:09:19] JR: Yeah, codeshare and interline agreement. It certainly is a little odd. This announcement today was at Dulles. United is actually launching its nonstop flight to Dubai from Newark, which is, I don't know why they decided to do that from Dulles. Really no idea why, but this starts up in March.

[00:09:39] IP: Doesn't Emirates fly to Dulles?

[00:09:41] JR: I mean, they fly then they work, too.

[00:09:43] IP: Do they?

[00:09:43] JR: They do, or they used to. I'm pretty sure they do. It's that one-stop flight from Athens, I think.

[00:09:48] IP: You just answered your own question.

[00:09:50] JR: How did I answer it?

[00:09:51] IP: They're going to announce it at the fifth freedom airport.

[00:09:55] JR: Yeah, that's a good point, isn't it? Didn't really think of that. That flight does represent the very thing United, Delta and American were fighting against for. Yeah. Not but anyone other than you, me and probably Gavin are thinking that deeply about the prop plane used for this. Also, not great that they flew a plane 7,000 miles just to be a background image at the hangar, but –

[00:10:16] IP: Did they put passengers on it?

[00:10:18] JR: I don't think so. Either way, whatever. starts up in March 2023. Newark to Dubai non-stop. Really weird flight timing. It has six hours on the ground in Dubai. not sure what that is about. Emirates passengers will be able to connect on to United flights in, I think it's Houston, San Francisco and Chicago. Then Emirates passengers, both airlines will have an interline agreement that eight other US airports are by Emirates, Boston, Dallas, LA, Miami, JFK, Orlando, Seattle and Washington DC. I think that's all of Emirates's gateways in the US.

Not quite a partnership. United passengers won't earn mileage plus points on Emirates flights just yet, but you will get some perks, I think, like access to the Emirates lounge in Dubai if you're flying in a United and premium cabin, which is nice.

[00:11:12] IP: Sounds fine.

[00:11:12] JR: Yeah. This is the next step towards normalization of airline relations between the US and the Middle East. We had American and Qatar not too long ago go all buddy-buddy. Whereas, American launching a flight to Doha from JFK. Now we have United getting buddy-buddy with Emirates, launching a flight again from New York/Newark to Dubai. All that's left is Delta. I think it is extremely unlikely, we will see at any point in the near future, Delta in partnership with as tightly with a Middle Eastern airline, as we've seen with United and American, because they were really the main player in the whole spat between the airlines.

[00:11:56] IP: Yeah, they were the driving force behind. Yes, that's a good word. I feel like, it's more than a spat. A little bit deeper than a spat. Is it tiff deeper than a spat? I don't know.

[00:12:08] JR: It was stupid. Whatever you want to call it –

[00:12:10] IP: We could go British and call it a Rao.

[00:12:11] JR: Yeah. Whatever you want to call it, it was stupid, the whole thing. It seems to have been swept under the rug. They poked fun at each other. Today, United CEO and Emirates CEO were at the event today in Dulles, and they were poking fun. I think they said – Emirates CEO said, “If I were here three years ago, you would have been throwing tomatoes at me, or something like that.” Yeah, maybe? I don't know. It's just nice to see two very, very large airlines cooperate, rather than throw up barriers that really just didn't make any sense.

[00:12:42] IP: Yeah. This goes into play over the coming months. I think, the most interesting question is how useful it is, or how useful it ends up being for passengers. Because I mean, really, that's the ultimate goal here, right? Is that you've got – I mean, obviously, the ultimate goal for the airlines is to make money. The ultimate goal, as far as we're concerned as travelers is how useful it is for passengers. I think, I mean, really what you're seeing is United's getting access to India, or secondary markets –

[00:13:14] JR: Well beyond that. The massive Emirates and Flydubai route network. It's not just Emirates. It's Flydubai as well. That's a massive route network. There's nowhere you can't go with that combination.

[00:13:23] IP: True. True. I mean, as far as United is concerned and where the traffic can really come from with that Dubai flight. I mean, I think you're going to see a lot of people transiting on to secondary cities in India that Emirates serves, versus them operating a flight to that city themselves. Then obviously, if you're flying Emirates and landing in, say Chicago, or Houston, I mean, that opens up a pretty decent route network. I mean, you're not talking about what. I mean, Dubai Fargo being a –

[00:13:57] JR: A one stop.

[00:13:58] IP: A one stop. That's amazing. That's truly amazing.

[00:14:03] JR: Well, I mean, technically they did have that before. JetBlue was Emirates' partner before they divorced, I guess. JetBlue, I think they do, or did have flights to Fargo, right? That also under JetBlue, could have been a one stop. They did have Fargo flights, right?

[00:14:19] IP: Okay. I don't know if JetBlue ever flew to Fargo. While Jason frantically looks that up, let's stick with New York and DC, because this is an interesting one. Tailwind was slated to start flights this week, from New York to DC. This is the sea plane operator that is flying, well, they're doing New York and Boston, and a few other cities and they were slated to begin service from New York to DC this week. Then they said, "Oh, wait, wait. We can't do that. They're going to fly to College Park, and then they were told that they can't do that for interesting reasons beyond their control." We'll get to that in a second. Then so they announced that they were going to fly to Dulles, which is nowhere near – I mean, it's in the same region, I guess. As far as things are concerned, it's not the ideal situation.

[00:15:08] JR: There is precisely one person in the world that is excited about this change. Do you know who that might be?

[00:15:15] IP: I know exactly who it is.

[00:15:16] JR: It's me.

[00:15:17] IP: It's you.

[00:15:18] JR: I unfortunately have resumed going down to Dulles a lot. This option that while I probably wouldn't realistically be able to do it, because it's expensive, but maybe just once flight from the East River to Dulles is quite attractive to me, and probably literally nobody else. Also, in the same week, Delta announced LaGuardia-Dulles service four times a day. I'm rolling in options now. It's great.

[00:15:46] IP: I love that you went from having just a United CRJ200, to being able to choose between a sea plane and delta out of LaGuardia. The airline industry is a marvel of universe sometimes.

[00:16:00] JR: Things change quickly. We went from maybe up to four LaGuardia-Dulles flights a day only on United CRJ200s up to 13 just out of LaGuardia, plus a couple from Tailwind off the river. I don't know why there's so many flights on these routes and there shouldn't be. If there are, I'm probably going to make use of them.

[00:16:23] IP: You're spoilt for choice.

[00:16:24] JR: For now. I mean, wait two months, and then –

[00:16:27] IP: They'll all go away.

[00:16:28] JR: They'll all disappear.

[00:16:28] IP: Yeah. Exactly.

[00:16:30] JR: It's almost slot squatting, at least for United and Delta. They'll find the new shiny object on another route and all those flights will disappear soon.

[00:16:37] IP: You'll be stuck with Tailwind, or left with Tailwind.

[00:16:40] JR: I mean, there are worse options than that.

[00:16:42] IP: I mean, that's true. That's true. Okay, so next week, early next week is the 19th of September. The 19th of September could be a very interesting day.

[00:16:58] JR: A couple of very different things might happen.

[00:17:00] IP: A couple of very different things might happen. It is entirely possible that China will certify the Comac C919 on the 9th, or 19th of the 9th month. That is entirely possible, because reports are circulating that it is getting close to certification. There are two of the flight test vehicles that have been flown to Beijing. This is the first time that they visited there together. We're shaking the magic eight ball of aircraft certification. All signs are pointing to yes.

[00:17:34] JR: That's exciting.

[00:17:37] IP: I think so. Well, I mean, we'll have to obviously wait and see what happens, but we might be talking about this on next week's show.

[00:17:43] JR: I hope we are. That's very exciting for China. Might even mean at some point, the MAX gets recertified in China, but this has some pretty significant repercussions industry-wide to have the first real competitor to Airbus and Boeing. Only time will tell if that actually comes to be. I'm assuming Russia is probably very interested in these aircraft as well, after they placed their large order for Russian made aircraft and said, "We'll never order another Airbus, or Boeing again." This is exciting for China.

[00:18:14] IP: I wonder if Russia can order those aircraft, because legally speaking, there are enough parts in the C919 from Western aerospace industries, that they're probably sanctioned in Russia.

[00:18:28] JR: Does China care about that, though?

[00:18:29] IP: I think China probably cares about that, because they want to continue to receive the parts for their own aircraft.

[00:18:34] JR: Yeah. That's true. We'll have to see if that happens. It's probably that we haven't heard of any such an order just yet. Good for China. Always good to have a new aircraft manufacturer breaking up – not breaking up, but adding some competition to the duopoly. Whether or not this aircraft will be successful in China, or outside of China is anyone's guess at this point. The track record off the ARJ21 can't get any worse than that. There's only room to improve.

[00:19:01] IP: Can only go up from here. A month later on the 19th of October, much closer to our homes, is the vote by Spirit Airlines shareholders to accept or reject the JetBlue proposal. All signs there again point to yes. Whether or not that eventually culminates in JetBlue owning Spirit Airlines is still a long way off, but this is another step in the process and another vote

along the way. Not expecting any fireworks there, but it's something to put on your avgeek calendar.

[00:19:38] JR: Yeah, yeah. Sorry. I'm distracted. I'm looking out the window and a pair of what looks like Blackhawks are just very slowly cruising over the skies of Brooklyn. Good for them.

[00:19:48] IP: All right then. Good for them.

[00:19:50] JR: That's nice.

[00:19:51] IP: Let's go to India now, shall we?

[00:19:52] JR: Back to India. We already went to India.

[00:19:54] IP: Back to India. Okay, we're going back to India. There we go. This time with Air India, they have signed agreement to take five 777-200LRs, along with a vast selection of A320neos. It will be four A321neos, and then 21 A320neos arriving in the second half of next year. Those are going to be used on domestic and short-haul international routes. The five 777-200LRs will show up beginning at the end of this year, through March of next year. That will be an interesting addition to the Air India fleet for two reasons. One, they used to operate that particular crafting and got rid of it.

[00:20:46] JR: They do not have a good history with that particular aircraft either.

[00:20:50] IP: Then, the question becomes, where are they coming from? A lot of the speculation was that they would be coming from the 10 aircraft that Delta retired. That does not appear to be the case, given the fact that those are slated for cargo conversion. We mentioned Gavin earlier in the show. Gavin and I, Gavin Werbeloff, who's our resident numbers expert, who spends, in my estimation, far too much time thinking about these things. As far as listeners, the podcast might be concerned, not enough, because his insights are often very useful. Looking at what that lease agreement would say about the cargo conversion market, not so great.

It seems that these aircraft will come from Air Canada, which is the most likely candidate at this point. The announcement has included that they will have premium economy, so this leaves Air Canada being the likely source as they seek to get rid of their 200LR fleet, at least the passenger one. Their incoming 200LR fleet will be cargo. It remains to be seen what ends up happening with these leases to Air India after Air India is done with them. Do they get converted to cargo? Probably.

[00:22:07] JR: Yeah. Delta, most of these aircraft, at least the ERs are in the middle of conversion to freighter. One of them is actually operated, or was at least operated by OneWeb, the satellite company as a flying testbed for satellite connectivity, which is pretty cool. One of them, I thought, ended up as a private aircraft for a sports team. N866DA is owned by Gridiron Air LCC. I think, that one is now a private jet. Very fancy. I don't remember who exactly it was. The Patriots, was it?

[00:22:43] IP: It wasn't the Patriots, because the Patriots have the two 767s. It's not –

[00:22:49] JR: Somebody. It's white now. It's white. It's owned by an LLC, but some of them will remain in passenger service, but not for –

[00:22:58] IP: Cardinals. It was the Arizona Cardinals.

[00:23:00] JR: That's it. Right, right, right. They modified the interior. Some of them will end up in non-commercial passenger service, but it's not going to be Air India. Good for them. Their fleet is in dire condition. That's why they have to go out here and buy some, or lease some aircraft to fill in the gap because their aircraft – I think we talked about this recently, are falling apart on the inside. Air India has a troubled history with 777LRs in the past. Or they did have them in their fleet, but they were very new aircraft and they started cannibalizing them on the ground very early into their lifespan, which is a shame to see. Hopefully, they treat these ones better than the last batch.

[00:23:43] IP: Well, these will be leased, so who knows?

[00:23:46] JR: Well, in that case, I really hope they don't part them out, because they don't belong to them.

[00:23:50] IP: Oh, man. Yeah, I don't think that'll happen. Let's talk about some really interesting things that happened yesterday. Yesterday, a Wiz Air aircraft that had been on the ground in Ukraine since the beginning of the war, made it out. That was one of four aircraft, Wiz Air A320s.

[00:24:10] JR: There's still three more.

[00:24:12] IP: Yeah. There are three in Kiev. The one that made it out yesterday was in **[inaudible 00:24:15]**, and that HALWS. The transponder went on as soon as they left Ukrainian airspace and flew into Poland. That's one down. Four to go. Would be really interesting to see if the other four make it out anytime soon. The three that are still in Kiev are HALWY, HALPJ and HALPM.

[00:24:43] JR: Yeah. Those other in Kiev – that's a much farther flight to get over to friendly airspace. Those from the aircraft that went out this week just had what? Like a 50, maybe 100-mile flight over to the Polish border. The others in Kiev that the nearest neighboring country is Belarus, and that's not good. You don't want to fly in there, because Belarus is complicit with Russia and the whole Ukraine situation. They would have to fight quite a bit west to get to Polish airspace, and that's probably a bit more risky. Those are probably going to be there for a while.

[00:25:18] IP: Yeah. It remains to be seen, if and when they'll be flown out.

[00:25:21] JR: Hey, one aircraft is better than none. Good for them.

[00:25:23] IP: Right. It also remains to be seen how and what condition those other three Wiz Air A320s are, given the fact that they've been much closer to the fighting. That's another open question. Let's talk about our favorite Scandinavian airline, SAS, which has had its bridge financing approved. We talked about the fact that they were working on wide-body lease returns, three A330s and two A350s. They're rejecting those leases and sending them back. They had their bridge funding approved at the end of last week, and then at the beginning of this week, they announced that they were trying to work with lessors to reject a few leases for

A320neo aircraft, so that they could continue to slim down their fleet as they reconfigure everything. Things moving along, as far as SAS is concerned. It's a long way from a sure thing that they come out of this on the other side, a leaner and stronger airline.

[00:26:17] JR: All right. As long as they're still around December for our flights to Stockholm.

[00:26:21] IP: Yes, yes. They haven't rejected the lease on those aircraft.

[00:26:25] JR: Yeah. That would be problematic for us.

[00:26:29] IP: There you go. I just don't want to end up on a Euro Atlantic wet lease.

[00:26:33] JR: Yeah. No. No.

[00:26:35] IP: Airbus cut Qatar's final A350s orders. They're gone from the order book now.

[00:26:41] JR: Is this the fourth time they've incrementally canceled this order?

[00:26:44] IP: They're done. They're done.

[00:26:45] JR: Now. It's all gone.

[00:26:46] IP: Now it's all gone. All of them are gone. This should be a fun trivia question that is just coming to me now, and so I don't have the answer off the top of my head. For the first time in X number of years, there are no Qatar Airways orders with Airbus.

[00:27:05] JR: I feel like, it's got to be for as long as Qatar has been an airline, right? They've had Airbus aircraft in their fleet for forever.

[00:27:14] IP: Yeah. I don't know what that length of time is, but it's a really, really long time.

[00:27:19] JR: I don't know who can answer that question, but –

[00:27:22] IP: I mean, I could probably look it up when we're done recording.

[00:27:24] JR: Yeah. Qatar has had Airbus aircraft – every Airbus aircraft. They've had the A380, A350, A340.

[00:27:31] IP: Been the launch customer for a lot of them.

[00:27:33] JR: 321, 320, 319, 310 and A300. There isn't really an Airbus aircraft they have not had.

[00:27:41] IP: Well, I guess, now whatever comes next really is probably off the table at least for a while. Until all of this gets resolved and who knows when this will actually be resolved, no more Airbus aircraft for Qatar.

[00:27:58] JR: Back of the line for new aircraft orders, which is a long line right now.

[00:28:04] IP: Yeah. Especially now if you're an Airbus customer, or not yet an Airbus customer. The summer started off not great at all.

[00:28:13] JR: Bad. Bad.

[00:28:15] IP: Bad is the word I was looking for. As far as passenger ease of use at various airports go. Heathrow was a mess. Schiphol was a mess. Variety of airports. Orlando was a mess and Stockholm. Variety of airports across Europe, especially were just an absolute disaster at the beginning of the summer travel season, as the airports didn't have enough staff, as a crush of travelers came through, airlines were operating too many flights for the staff they had. Things had normalized a bit over the last few months. By the beginning of September, things were looking up. Then, people forgot that the uptempo of travel was still such that it was, compared to how many staff were available. Now we're starting to see bad things happen again, and this time, it's Schiphol yet again, is a problem. Jason, you had an interesting take on basically, what happened.

[00:29:17] JR: Yeah. I had read. I don't have the source in front of me right now. Basically, Schiphol has stopped paying staff a summer bonus and incentive to come to work. Workers stopped coming to work. They stopped picking up extra shifts, I guess, or stopped working as many shifts as they were. It just threw the airport back into chaos. Whoops.

[00:29:39] IP: Not enough slack in the system. Not even close.

[00:29:44] JR: I mean, if that's all it takes to put the airport back into chaos, that's not great.

[00:29:48] IP: No. Certainly not great.

[00:29:50] JR: Meanwhile, also, we had other issues in Dublin this past week, where Aer Lingus's IT fell over for a day. It was all disaster there. Though that can happen to seemingly any airline anywhere at this point. We'll actually talk about that more in a moment. Amsterdam in particular, just can't catch a break. Also, it comes at an interesting time in September, mid-September now when things are supposed to be chill. Summer's over. Kids are back in school. Parents are back at work. People are largely done with their summer vacations. An interesting quote was tweeted out from @thetranscript_ on Twitter. I guess, an account that tweets out transcripts from earnings reports. This one in particular from United, that September has been actually really strong. I'll quote them here. What I would say is we're seeing a really strong September and it does not appear that summer has come to an end. It's that strong.

We look at Mexico, Caribbean, Europe, kids are back in school, but the demand for our product in those places is the same as it was in the summer. It's a premium leisure demand, ultimately, that's driving this train. This is new. Before COVID, September was supposed to be a month where you could **[inaudible 00:31:03]** wherever you want, or get an empty middle seat, or lower fares. It seems the summer season has bled into the fall, and that is a new and very interesting twist, one that I am not happy about, because I love traveling in September and October. It's the best time of the year to travel, because other people aren't doing it. They've earned it.

[00:31:24] IP: Anecdotally, I can confirm what Patrick Quayle from United is saying. I mean, my flights, except the 7:30 p.m. Saturday evening departure from New York to Chicago, which was healthy, but not completely full. All of my other flights were completely full.

[00:31:44] JR: It's not supposed to be that way. It's good for the airlines that they are busy. As a leisure traveler who likes empty flights and available seats and low fares, it's horrible.

[00:31:56] IP: Fair enough. I was surprised, my Delta flight from New York to Stockholm. I did not expect that to be completely full.

[00:32:06] JR: Especially, since it's a route that they only picked up again during the pandemic. They haven't flown that route for years. That's on top of the other airlines operating that, too. We have Finnair flying JFK-Orlando as well, so there's now four airlines flying New York-ish to Orlando, and they're all probably all full. It's crazy.

[00:32:25] IP: Yeah. They're looking at these numbers, looking at the revenue reporting from the airlines and then looking just anecdotally, being in the aircraft. Things are still busy. I wonder how much the pandemic's influence on being able to work remotely and being able to school remotely is influencing the bleed through of premium leisure. Because if you're looking at premium leisure travel, you're talking about people who probably have white collar jobs, and were probably able to work, or at least partially work from not at a desk in an office these days. I guess, what I'm wondering out loud for the podcast and dear listener, if you have any opinions or thoughts on this, please, podcast@fr24.com. Is this the new normal? Has the fantastic fair and empty plane of mid-September through mid-October gone away? Or is this just something where we're seeing so many people, there was so much pent-up demand, so many people were like, "Forget it. I'll take my kids out of school. We'll go. It's not a big deal." Now that you can finally – I don't know.

[00:33:30] JR: I mean, I would say, people put off their summer travel and did it in September, but summer was plenty busy with travelers. Maybe it is really just people traveling when they want, dealing with it.

[00:33:43] IP: Yeah. I don't know.

[00:33:44] JR: I say, stop it.

[00:33:48] IP: Okay, we said we were going to talk about another IT issue. This one isn't the airline's fault. Jason, you've –

[00:33:54] JR: It's never the airline's fault. Come on. No airline will ever admit to an IT issue. Except if you're BA, you'll break up the high visibility vests. You could still blame the airline for not having proper redundancy. Same goes for Aer Lingus. Your backup plans are not real backup plans if one issue takes out your primary and backup functions. In this case, this is really weird. I picked up on this. I had missed this back in January, where apparently, WestJet had some major issues in Calgary back in July. Actually, two months ago at this point.

The weirdest thing happened. A freight train, I think it was either a Canadian Pacific freight train derailed outside of Calgary, like a 140 kilometers outside of Calgary, and took out two buried fiber optic cables. That itself ended up taking out ATC functions for Nav Canada in Calgary and also, a bulk of WestJet's IT services. That impacted their flight significantly for two days. It's just, that's the weirdest thing that a freight train derailment a 100 miles out of town could impact flights.

[00:35:14] IP: It's like the beginning of a movie.

[00:35:16] JR: Yeah. It's just, it was 85 miles outside of Calgary. They cancelled a bunch of flights, delayed hundreds that lasted for two days, enough so that WestJet had to make a note in their weekly performance metrics, which I just picked up on is a thing, by the way, that this external factor impacted their flights because of Nav Canada issues, but also their own IT issues. It's just the weirdest, the weirdest cobbling together of words that I've seen in a while. I think, the exact words were, significant operational impact on July 14th and 15th due to western Canadian train derailment, which led to network-wide IT outage. That's a weird one.

[00:35:56] IP: I don't think we'll ever see that again.

[00:35:59] JR: I hope not. There are a lot –

[00:36:01] IP: These things happen.

[00:36:02] JR: There are more than you would think fiber lines running through railroad right of way. It could happen again, but just the odds, like the freight derailment that would be bad enough to take out a fiber – both fiber optic lines is just as strange.

[00:36:18] IP: Yeah. That's a new one on me. I want to close the show with something that we've done, I think once or twice before, but not usual. When I fly, I like to read books. I just like having a book in my hand. I wanted to recommend two books that I thoroughly enjoyed on across all of my flights last week. The first was *The Apollo Murders* by Commander Chris Hadfield, who were going with a space team. I promise, it's avgeeky enough. Man, Hadfield's book, it's his first novel. It's a historical fiction set in the Apollo space program after the last Apollo, and it takes off from there. There are murders and it's a interesting mystery novel. Really well written and I thoroughly enjoyed that.

Then I finished that, and so I asked for recommendations what to read next. A few people, first on that list, Matt Cherry recommended *Project Hail Mary*, which is Andy Weir's follow-up novel. He wrote *The Martian*, which is also amazing if you haven't read that.

[00:37:25] JR: Even I have read that book.

[00:37:27] IP: There you go.

[00:37:28] JR: And I don't read books.

[00:37:30] IP: I picked up *Project Hail Mary* in the airport on the way out of Stockholm and finished it before I got home.

[00:37:35] JR: Wow. Well, you also had 18 hours at JFK.

[00:37:39] IP: True. True. I did. I was also taking pictures of mismatched radomes while I was at JFK, so that happened, too. *Project Hail Mary*, a very good novel as well from Andy Weir. *The*

Apollo Murders from Chris Hadfield and *Project Hail Mary* from Andy Weir, if you're looking for a book to read, listen to, peruse on your e-reader, or wherever you find reading in between listening to this fine podcast.

This has been episode 181 of AvTalk. If you have enjoyed this episode, or any of our other episodes, please tell us about it and tell other people about it by leaving us a rating and review, wherever you get your podcasts. We truly appreciate it. I appreciate it ever so slightly more than Jason. I promise.

[00:38:29] JR: Yup.

[00:38:31] IP: Yup. I am Ian Petchenik, and I am here, as always, with –

[00:38:35] JR: Jason Rabinowitz. Thanks for listening.

[END]