

The Freedom of Fifth Freedom Flights

by Luigi Vallero

Long-haul flying is nowadays almost synonymous with nonstop stages, as the entry into service of Singapore Airlines's ultra-long-range Airbus A340-500 'LeaderShip' on the Singapore to Los Angeles (Airways, June 2004) and Newark routes testifies. Generally, the current breed of airliners is capable of operating between most distant city pairs without the need to refuel or pick up traffic en route. But in the Sixties and Seventies, when air travel was still a luxury and jetliners lacked the capabilities of their modern successors, and traffic volumes did not justify nonstop point-to-point services, airlines used to 'hop' their way along intercontinental routes, making full use of their 'privileges' to carry passengers between different points along the way.

At the international air transport conference convened in Chicago in 1944 (the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation), a proposal submitted by the Canadian delegation was adopted to allow the following 'freedoms of the air'.

First Freedom: The privilege of Country A's aircraft to overfly another country without landing;

Second Freedom: The privilege of Country A's aircraft to land in another country for technical reasons, without picking up or letting off revenue traffic;

Third Freedom: The privilege of Country A to deliver revenue traffic, including mail and cargo, from Country A to another country;

Fourth Freedom: The privilege of Country A to pick up revenue traffic, including mail and cargo, from another country destined for Country A;

Fifth Freedom: The privilege of Country A to carry revenue traffic, including mail and cargo, between two or more other nations on flights operating out of or into Country A.



(The so-called sixth freedom is a combination of the third and fourth freedoms, carrying traffic between two countries via the home country of an air carrier. As well, an unofficial 'seventh freedom' combines fifth freedom rights, allowing an airline to carry traffic between two nations entirely outside its own country. Cabotage, or the eighth freedom, is the carriage of traffic within a foreign country.)

Upon the premise of the fifth freedom, or 'privilege', long-haul flying became commercially viable.

In those days, long-range operations, particularly from Europe to the Far East, South America or Africa, equated to multi-stop flying, the flight time of each leg averaging between three and seven hours. Journeys to the more distant destinations were, effectively, odysseys staging through a multitude of countries.

A look at Swissair's January-March 1979 timetable shows how the carrier was still scheduling one of its McDonnell Douglas DC-10-30 services from Geneva to Tokyo as a five-stop trip, calling in at Zürich, Athens, Bombay [Mumbai], Bangkok, and Hong Kong, involving a total of 20hr 15min flying time, and a journey time of 24hr 55min. Similarly, the Swiss flag carrier was dispatching another DC-10-30 from Zürich to Buenos Aires via Geneva, Dakar, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo, the longest leg being the 6hr 35min stage between Dakar and Rio. Of course, passengers could be picked up at any point along the route and between all city pairs involved, providing Indian or Senegalese travellers the chance to sample the fabled Swiss hospitality on their way to Thailand and Brazil, or beyond.

This tradition continued even until the mid-Eighties, as timetables of Alitalia confirm. The airline's DC-10 or Boeing 747 service from Rome to Tokyo was still stopping in Athens or Tehran, instead of

continuing to Delhi, Bangkok, and Hong Kong—as its Douglas DC-8s had done more than a decade earlier—before arriving in The Land of the Rising Sun.

The same was true, until the end of the same decade, of British Airways which, twice a week, used to route via Rome one of its Boeing 747 services to Hong Kong, a legacy of the legendary route that had been formerly flown by BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation) in the propeller and then early jet eras. From Rome, the flight continued to the Middle and Far East, whilst offering the only 747 service between the Italian and British capitals.

Likewise, other northern European airlines used to hop even between neighboring European countries to pick up traffic, before making a longer jump to the Middle East and onward to Pakistan, India, Burma, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Japan.

For carriers such as KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Sabena, or SAS (Scandinavian Airlines System), it was customary to have their DC-8s or Boeing 707s pick up passengers in Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Munich [München], Zürich, or Rome, before proceeding to Athens, Beirut, Teheran, Karachi, and Delhi. Following the track of the ancient 'Silk Route', these airlines profited from the local traffic carried between each city pair.

Today, despite the nonstop point-to-point trend, a considerable number of carriers continue to operate multi-leg sectors, making the most of their freedom rights whilst allowing the discerning traveller to glimpse, and at least scent, an exotic distant land, whilst flying not too far from home.

Technical requirements aside, another good reason for a carrier to hop between two countries is the opportunity of exploiting markets not already served—or underserved—by other airlines. Until recently, PIA-Pakistan International Airlines carried passengers on the Chicago-Birmingham leg of Airbus A310-operated Flights PK794 and PK796 bound for Islamabad and Karachi, and was the only airline doing so.

Air-India did the same a few years ago, when it was the only carrier operating the thrice-weekly Manchester to Rome service with Airbus A310s bound for Delhi and Mumbai.

Similarly, Ethiopian Airlines, which currently offers twice-weekly services between London (Heathrow) and Rome, is also flying the Stockholm-Rome segment, currently underserved by both SAS and Alitalia. The African carrier has also been—so far unsuccessfully—trying to gain local traffic rights between Rome



Opportunities from the Seventies: Air France, Alitalia, Cathay Pacific, and Swissair.

and Washington (Dulles), a route abandoned a few years ago by United Airlines, on its thrice-weekly service originating in Addis Ababa and stopping in New York as well. In this case, much to the chagrin of Ethiopian, Rome has thus far been considered a technical landing only.

The Far East is undoubtedly the most 'liberal' area in terms of city pairs granted to fifth freedom carriers, with a number of markets being remarkable examples. In particular, the highly lucrative Hong Kong to Bangkok route appears to be the most 'liberalized' air route in the world, with no less than six fifth freedom carriers—China Airlines, EgyptAir, Emirates, Finnair, Gulf Air, and Kenya Airways—currently battling for passengers alongside the 'official' Thailand- and Hong Kong-based airlines entitled to fly the route. Close rivals are the Bangkok to Tokyo, Manila, and Singapore routes, served by four, four, and three fifth freedom carriers, respectively.



Until the 2003/2004 winter season, PIA (Pakistan International Airlines) flew between Chicago and Birmingham with Airbus A310-300s.



Ethiopian offers service from Rome to London and Stockholm.

As an example of the variety available to passengers, on Saturday, April 3, 2004, a traveller needing to fly from Bangkok to Manila could have chosen from EgyptAir MS864 (a Boeing 777), Thai TG620 (777), Kuwait Airways KU411 (Airbus A340), Air France AF166 (747-400), Philippines PR731 (737-400), or Lufthansa LH744 (747-400). An impressive choice, indeed, in terms of frequency, products, and fares.

In Europe, Rome is still fairly well served by fifth freedom carriers, mostly thanks to its geographical position as the entry point to Europe for Oriental or African airlines. Apart from the connections provided by Ethiopian, Rome also features European flights to Paris, Madrid, and Moscow on such airlines as Saudi Arabian, Kuwait, Thai Airways International, and Japan Airlines (JAL), plus long-hauls to Bangkok on China Airlines.

The North America to Europe market shows a wide selection of services available on Far East airlines, with Air-India and PIA

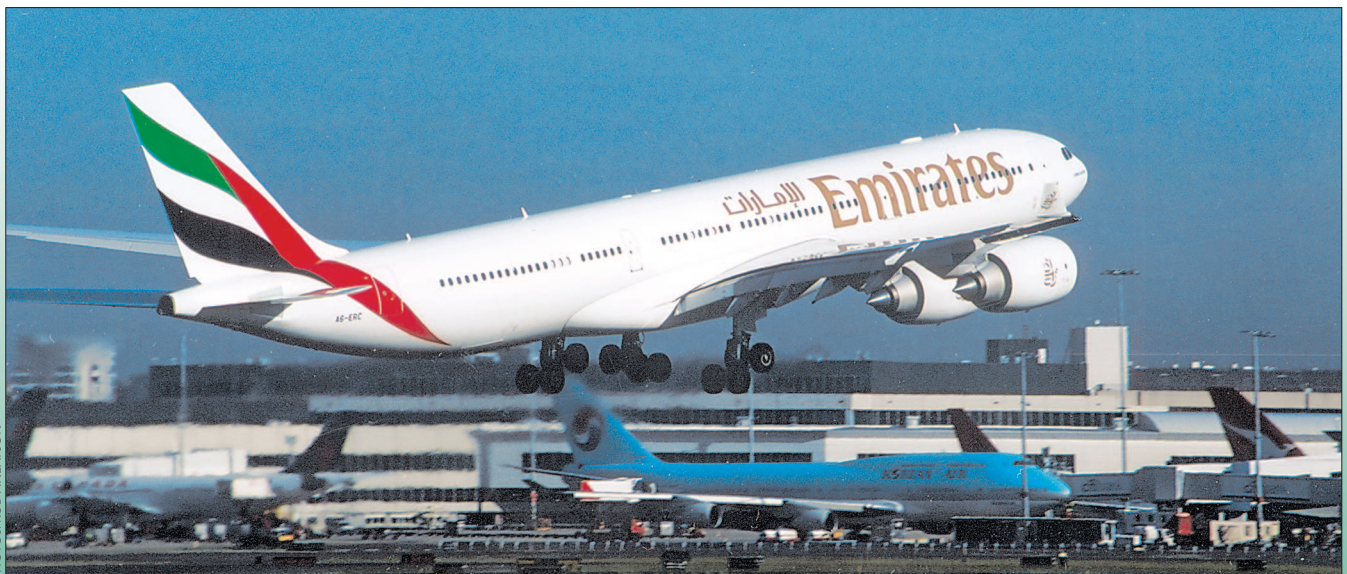
offering the greatest choice to the UK from the East Coast and Midwest. Biman Bangladesh Airlines offers a twice-weekly New York to Brussels and Dubai service, continuing to Dhaka.

Choice also extends to transcontinental services, such as New York to Vancouver, where the passenger has the chance of savoring Cathay Pacific's in-flight product as an alternative to the more traditional United or Air Canada offerings. Or, Las Vegas to Vancouver, where Philippines now offers service four times a week.

In another part of the world, trans-Tasman services between Australia and New Zealand are a bonanza to carriers such as Emirates—which links Auckland every day with independent services to Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane—or Royal Brunei Airlines, stopping in Australia en route to Bandar Seri Begawan.

What may be mundane to North Americans could translate to 'exotic' travel for Oriental passengers. Therefore, airlines such

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Across the Tasman Sea with Emirates, which flies between Auckland and Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney.

PHOTOS: ROB FINLAYSON

Fifth Freedom Flights of Fancy*

Airline	Stage	Frequency	Aircraft type
Aerolíneas Argentinas	Sydney–Auckland	3/7	A340
Air Canada	Buenos Aires	3/7	767
Air France	Manila–Bangkok	7/7	744
	Saigon–Bangkok	4/7	744
	Miami–Port-au-Prince–Pointe-à-Pitre–Cayenne	3/7	A320
	Buenos Aires–Santiago	7/7	777
Air India	New York JFK–London LHR	7/7	744
	Chicago–London LHR	3/7	744
	Chicago–Frankfurt	3/7	744
	Tokyo NRT–Bangkok	2/7	744
	Singapore–Kuala Lumpur	3/7	A313
	Frankfurt–Los Angeles	3/7	744
Air Tahiti Nui	Paris CDG–Los Angeles	6/7	A340
Air New Zealand	London LHR–Los Angeles	7/7	744
Ariana Afghan Airlines	Frankfurt–Istanbul–Tehran	1/7	A300
Avianca	Buenos Aires–Santiago	4/7	757/767
Biman Bangladesh	New York JFK–Brussels–Dubai	2/7	DC10
	London LHR–Dubai	5/7	A310
	Tokyo NRT–Bangkok	1/7	A310
Cathay Pacific Airways	Dubai–Mumbai	5/7	773
	New York JFK–Vancouver	7/7	744
	Taipei–Osaka KIX	7/7	A330
	Taipei–Tokyo NRT	7/7	744
China Airlines	Rome FCO–Bangkok	4/7	A340
	Amsterdam–Bangkok	7/7	744
	Tokyo NRT–Honolulu	7/7	744
	Bangkok–Hong Kong	7/7	744
	Singapore–Hong Kong	7/7	A300
Czech Airlines	Colombo–Dubai	3/7	A310
East African Safari	Paris CDG–Rome FCO (one way only)	1/7	767
EgyptAir	Tokyo NRT–Hong Kong–Bangkok	3/7	777
	Tokyo NRT–Manila–Bangkok	2/7	777
Emirates	Hong Kong–Bangkok	7/7	777
	Colombo–Singapore	4/7	777
	Dhaka–Kuala Lumpur	4/7	777
	Kuala Lumpur–Jakarta	3/7	777
	Singapore–Jakarta	4/7	777
	Auckland–Melbourne	7/7	777
	Auckland–Sydney	7/7	A340
	Auckland–Brisbane	7/7	777/A340
Ethiopian Airlines	London LHR–Rome FCO	2/7	757
	Stockholm–Rome FCO	2/7	757
	Mumbai–Bangkok–Beijing	1/7	767
EVA Air	Amsterdam–Bangkok	4/7	744
	London LHR–Bangkok	5/7	744
Finnair	Hong Kong–Bangkok	3/7	MD-11
	Singapore–Bangkok	4/7	MD-11
Garuda Indonesia	Hong Kong–Singapore	3/7	A330
Gulf Air	Hong Kong–Bangkok	4/7	A340
	Kuala Lumpur–Bangkok	3/7	A330
Iberia	Miami–Cancún	7/7	A319
	Miami–Guatemala City	9/7	A319
	Miami–Managua	6/7	A319
	Miami–Panama City	7/7	A319
	Miami–San José (CR)	14/7	A319
	Miami–San Pedro Sula	5/7	A319
Kenya Airways	Hong Kong–Bangkok	3/7	767
KLM Royal Dutch Airlines	Lima–Bonaire	5/7	MD-11
	Quito–Guayaquil–Bonaire	5/7	MD-11
Kuwait Airways	Chicago ORD–Amsterdam	2/7	A340
	New York JFK–London LHR	3/7	777
	Paris CDG–Rome	3/7	A300
	Frankfurt–Geneva	2/7	A340
	Manila–Bangkok	6/7	A340

Japan Airlines	Rome–Moscow SVO	1/7	744
	São Paulo–New York JFK	4/7	744
LAN Chile	Kuala Lumpur–Singapore	7/7	767
	Frankfurt–Madrid	6/7	A340
Lufthansa	Sydney–Auckland	3/7	A340
	Manila–Bangkok	7/7	744
	Bangkok–Singapore	3/7	744
Luxair	Santiago–Buenos Aires	7/7	A340
	Athens–Milan BGY	7/7	EMB4
Malaysian	Rome–Nice	1/7	737
	New York EWR–Dubai	3/7	777
Northwest	Buenos Aires–Cape Town–Johannesburg	3/7	744
	Singapore–Tokyo NRT	7/7	EQV
	Bangkok–Tokyo NRT	7/7	EQV
	Taipei–Tokyo NRT	7/7	EQV
	Seoul ICN–Tokyo NRT	7/7	747
	Beijing–Tokyo NRT	7/7	EQV
	Shanghai–Tokyo NRT	7/7	744
	Taipei–Osaka KIX	7/7	757
	Taipei–Tokyo NRT	7/7	757
Philippines	Las Vegas–Vancouver	4/7	A340
PIA–Pakistan International	New York JFK–Manchester	5/7	743
	Houston/Toronto–Manchester (pending rights)	2/7	777
	Chicago–Manchester	2/7	777
	Tokyo NRT–Beijing	2/7	A313
Portugália	Turin–Madrid	6/7	F100
QANTAS	London LHR–Bangkok	7/7	744
	London LHR–Singapore	7/7	744
Qatar Airways	Kuala Lumpur–Kathmandu	4/7	A320/A300
	Jakarta–Kuala Lumpur	5/7	A300
Royal Brunei Airlines	London LHR–Dubai	4/7	767
	London LHR–Abu Dhabi	3/7	767
	Frankfurt–Bangkok	2/7	767
	Auckland–Brisbane	4/7	767
Royal Nepal Airlines	Kuala Lumpur–Singapore (one way only)	2/7	757
Saudi Arabian Airlines	Milan MXP–Athens	2/7	MD-90
	Paris CDG–Rome FCO	2/7	777
	Frankfurt–Geneva	2/7	777
Singapore Airlines	New York JFK–Frankfurt	7/7	744
	San Francisco–Hong Kong	7/7	744
	Los Angeles–Tokyo NRT	7/7	744
	Los Angeles–Taipei	7/7	777
	Vancouver–Seoul ICN	3/7	777
	Manchester–Zürich	2/7	744
	Istanbul–Dubai	4/7	777
	Cairo–Dubai	3/7	777
	Osaka KIX–Bangkok	7/7	777
	Seoul ICN–Bangkok	5/7	777
SriLankan Airlines	Hong Kong–Bangkok	4/7	A330
	Kuala Lumpur–Singapore	5/7	A330
Sudan Airways	Istanbul–Cairo	1/7	A300
Swiss	Singapore–Bangkok	7/7	MD-11
	Buenos Aires–São Paulo	5/7	MD-11
	Karachi–Dubai	4/7	A330
	Muscat–Dubai	3/7	A330
	Manila–Hong Kong	3/7	MD-11
Thai Airways International	Madrid–Rome FCO	4/7	747/744
	Dubai–Chennai	4/7	A330
Turkish Airlines	Singapore–Bangkok	4/7	A340
United Airlines	Singapore–Hong Kong	7/7	744
	Bangkok–Tokyo NRT	7/7	744
	Taipei–Tokyo NRT	7/7	744
Uzbekistan Airways	New York JFK–Belgrade	2/7	767
VARIG	Amsterdam–Paris CDG	7/7	777
	Copenhagen–London LHR	3/7	MD-11
	Caracas–Aruba	1/7	MD-11

* A sample of recently available routings. EQV = Equipment varies.



Thai Airways International can take you between Madrid and Rome, or Dubai and Chennai.

Between Los Angeles and Paris, there is the choice of Air Tahiti Nui.



PHOTOS: ROB FINLAYSON

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as United or Northwest—with routes from their Tokyo-Narita hub, operated by Airbus A320s and Boeing 757s, and linking the Japanese capital to Bangkok, Beijing, Seoul, Shanghai, Singapore, and Taipei—could provide an unusual alternative to Air China, ANA (All Nippon Airways), Asiana, China Airlines, JAL, Korean Air (KAL), Thai, or SIA.

Hub operations have been set up away from home by a number of carriers. Miami is the center for Spain's Iberia, which has based a small fleet of Airbus A319s there to provide a valuable Central American 'feed' for its Madrid services to and from Costa Rica, Guatemala, México, Nicaragua, Panamá, and El Salvador. All these flights are also available for local traffic, thus providing a different 'European' experience for North American travellers heading 'south of the border'.

As well, Miami has long been a Caribbean mini-hub for Air France, now using A320s to carry local traffic on all segments of the 'bus stop' service to Port-au-Prince (Haiti), Pointe-à-Pitre (Guadeloupe), Fort-de-France (Martinique), and Cayenne (French Guiana).

In Manchester, England, PIA is setting up a substantial long-haul hub operation, its 747s and 777s providing Mancunians with the opportunity of several weekly nonstop services to New York (JFK) and Chicago O'Hare, and—if traffic rights are granted—to Houston and Toronto.

There are several factors to be taken into account if you decide upon a fifth freedom trip, apart from a simple desire to fly 'different' airlines or sample the flavor of faraway locales. Price-sensitive passengers should always consider seriously the options offered by these airlines, which are frequently eager to

sell residual capacity on multi-hop services, and are therefore much more likely to discount—often heavily—the traditional carriers' fares in all cabins, including premium classes. Thus, a first class ticket on Air-India between, for example, Chicago and London, or Air New Zealand between London and Los Angeles, would cost as little—or only slightly more than—a business class ticket on British Airways, United, or KLM, while the business class price would be more akin to a full economy fare with the latter trio. Along with this pricing incentive, carriers will often offer passengers the bonus of accruing double miles on their frequent flyer programs.

In terms of in-flight service, even on short stages such as Rome to London or Frankfurt to Madrid, fifth freedom carriers tailor their product for the long-haul traveller, often including a first class cabin that has all but disappeared on short-haul routes. This can mean—for first or business class passengers at least—wider and better reclining seats usually associated with long flights, as well as providing full hot meals in every class, unlike most 'local' airlines that have downgraded to peanuts or sandwiches for economy passengers.

You may have dreamed of sipping a Singapore Sling whilst being pampered by a legendary Singapore Girl on your way from the USA to Europe. Or savoring a spicy Indian chicken tandoori en route from the US Midwest to London; being offered a Polynesian Tiarè bloom during your flight from California to Paris; or merely glimpsing and 'sampling' a faraway land on the relatively short leg between Geneva and Frankfurt. If so, you now have the opportunity to sample all these and more on the fantastic world of fifth freedom carriers. ✈