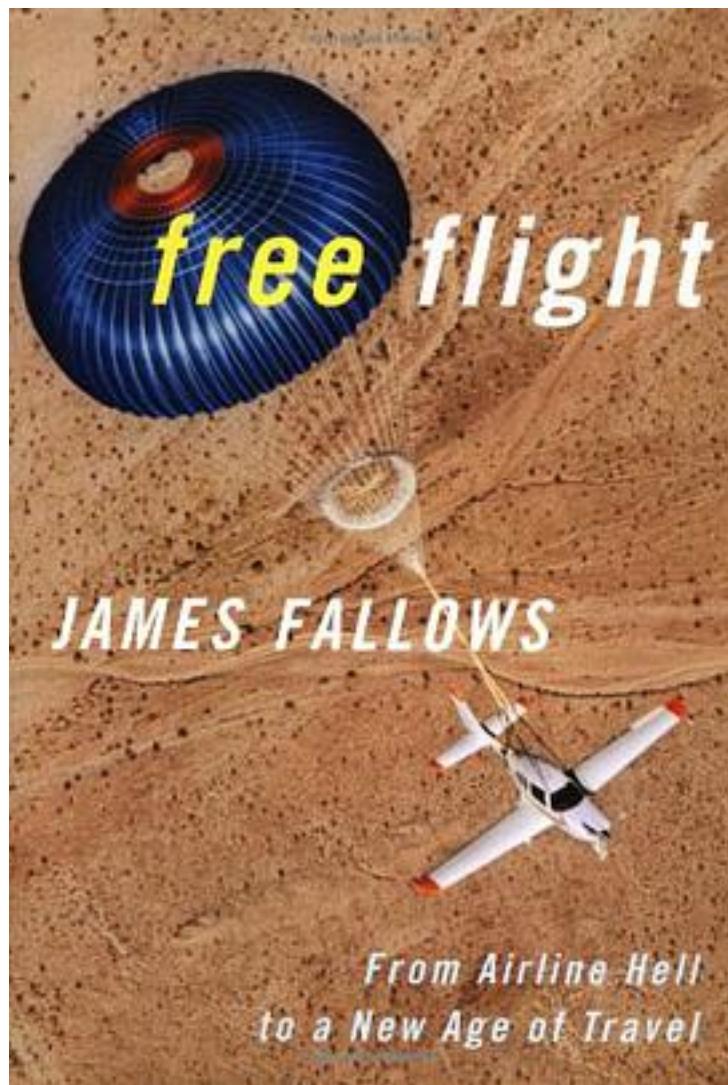


# Free Flight



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With the airline industry under siege: A prescient analysis of its problems and an engaging look into its future-as well as a thought-provoking account of the challenges of entrepreneurship in the dot-com age-by the well-known Atlantic Monthly writer and award-winning author of National Defense and Breaking the News. Ask someone who has recently flown commercially about their experience and you'll hear a common complaint: "We spent almost as much time waiting as we did flying." The airline system has reached a nightmarish state due to a combination of economics and technology. As the average cost of a flight has come down in the last twenty years, the airlines have survived by filling all the seats and funneling traffic through a hub-and-spoke routing system. Virtually all of the technological innovation in airplanes in the last thirty years has been devoted to moving passengers more cheaply, and more safely, between major hubs. Each generation of new planes has been more reliable, and has carried more passengers on less fuel, than before. But what was left out of this equation was, of course, the comfort, convenience, and flexibility of the average traveler. A technological answer to this logjam is underway at the moment. Free Flight will tell the story of three groups who are inventing and building the future of all air travel. There's a NASA administrator who long ago anticipated airline gridlock and began agitating for another system; there are the two brothers who created the first genuinely new small airplane in more than twenty-five years; and there is Eclipse Aviation in Albuquerque, which uses technologies first applied on cruise missiles to develop "cheap" jet planes for "air taxi" services that take you exactly where you want to go, when you want to go there. This book is fascinating reading for anyone interested in the airlines, airplanes, or American business.

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