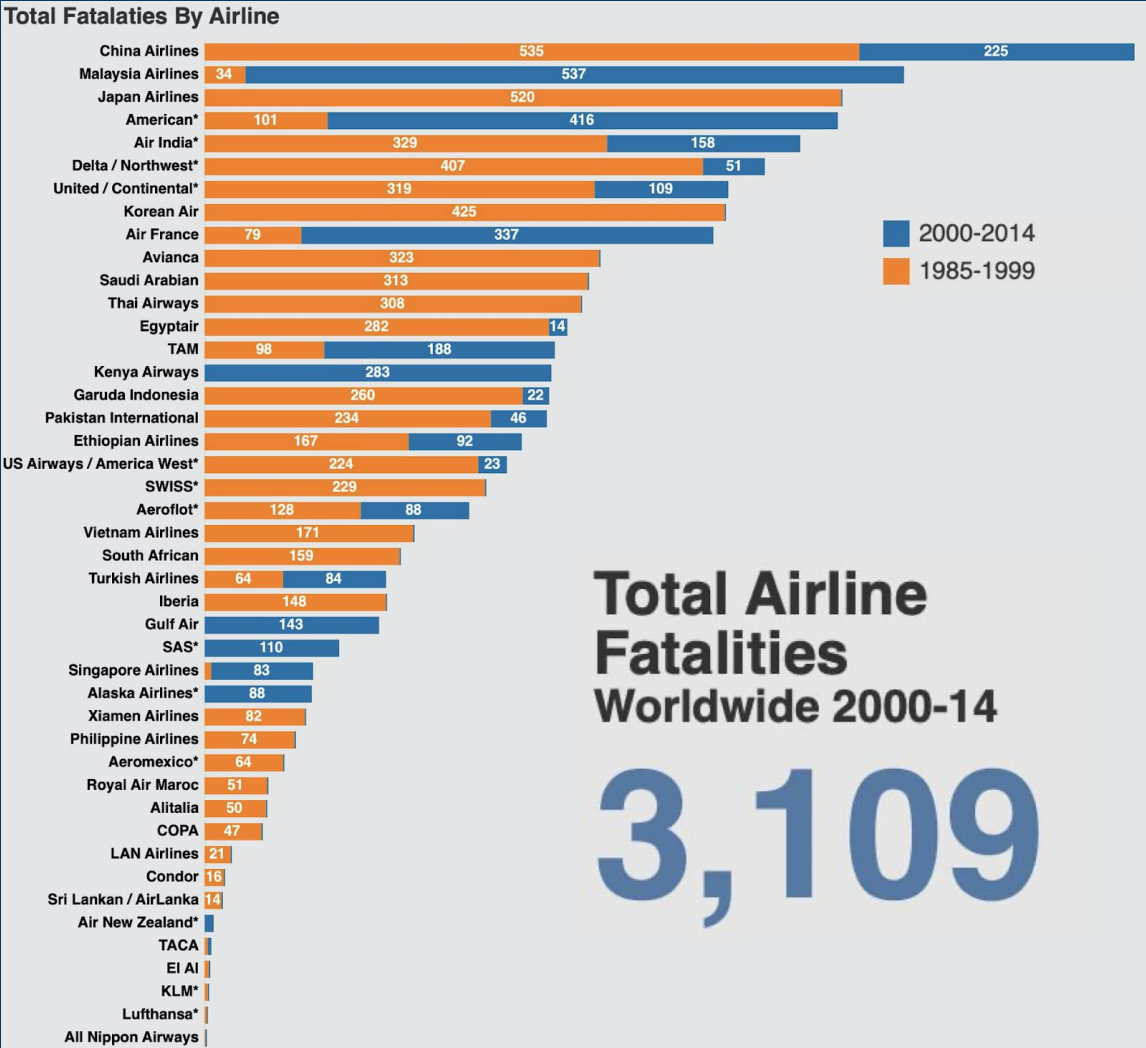


KEEP CALM AND DON'T FORGET YOUR CARRY-ON

Posted by: Xander Hieken on February 2, 2020



Spring Break is coming up soon, which means millions of people from across the country are getting ready to take a vacation to cure their winter blues. Depending on how far you need to travel, you might find yourself facing a tough decision- should you drive or fly to your destination? There have been some recent headlines surrounding the safety of air travel after two Boeing 737 Max airliners crashed in the span of five months. A Lion Air flight from Indonesia crashed in October 2018, then an Ethiopian Airlines flight to Kenya followed in March 2019 for a total of 346 fatalities (Chicago Tribune Wire Reports, 2019). Without proper context, this might seem worrisome for travelers. The following chart shows the breakdown of total fatalities by airline- split into 15-year timeframes.⁺



As you can see by the proportion of orange to blue, additional airline safety measures have been implemented that reduced the total number of global airline fatalities to 3,109 in the first fifteen years of the new millennium. To add a point of reference for these numbers, below, we can see how during each of those same years, there were more than 10 times as many highway fatalities in the United States alone!^{*} Then, the total number of highway fatalities in the United States over those fifteen years were more than 185 times the total airline fatalities worldwide! For Avengers fans, that's like Thanos snapping and the entire population of Atlanta disappearing from the map.



Unfortunately, I have some slightly bad news for the more altruistic individuals that prefer to utilize their time off school for mission trips or otherwise serving the less fortunate around the world. “If you’re insistent on minimizing your crash risk, you should avoid airlines from developing countries... In fact, if you want to predict an airline’s future rate of crashes, you’re best off looking at its home country’s GDP and largely ignoring its track record” (Silver, 2014). That is to say, no matter where you are flying, you have no reason to worry about your safety. If you’re flying within a large first-world country like the United States, you should be more afraid of getting into a car and driving to the airport than anything that could potentially go wrong once you’re in the air.



Conveniently, many larger airlines have been branching out to smaller markets through regional subsidiaries- like how American Airlines uses American Eagle as their regional branding. This means it has never been safer, easier, or less expensive to travel to your destination through the air. You can now utilize a regional airport that is closer than ever, so you can spend even less time putting your safety at risk on the road! If your entire Spring Break is only 9 days long, why should you spend any more of that time traveling than absolutely necessary? Now that you can take a regional airline to a smaller regional airport, you have a wider selection of destinations to help you find that secluded beach or fresh powder to get away from it all. Just remember to keep calm and don’t forget your carry-on!

Chicago Tribune Wire Reports. (2019). Timeline: Boeing 737 Max jetliner crashes and aftermath. Retrieved from <https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-biz-viz-boeing-737-max-crash-timeline-04022019-story.html>

Silver, N. (2014). Should Travelers Avoid Flying Airlines That Have Had Crashes in the Past?. Retrieved from <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/should-travelers-avoid-flying-airlines-that-have-had-crashes-in-the-past/>

† : Aviation Safety Network statistics for airline fatalities from <https://github.com/fivethirtyeight/data/tree/master/airline-safety>

* : National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) statistics for fatal crashes from <https://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/Main/index.aspx>