

Stowaways

From the Desperate to the Preposterous

Next time you're flying and trying to get comfortable in the tiny, cramped seat for which you forked over a small fortune, stop for a second to remember the poor hobo who may be hiding in the wheel bay. Whether out of desperation or a bout of insanity, people risk their lives to fly as stowaways. Read these amazing-but-true stories of people who flew for free inside a suitcase, a cargo crate, in the wheel well and more.



Shimon Rosenberg

Many people dream about flying for free. But how many can say they actually did? Read the following stories about people who not only flew for free but went to extremes to do so. These include some of the world's most desperate and preposterous stowaways, the original techniques they used and how their story ended—be it comically or tragically.

Anything But School...

Three years ago, in July 2012, 11-year-old Liam Corcoran of Manchester, England, shocked the world. He went to an incredible extreme in order to avoid going shopping with his mother.

While they were in a shopping mall, the boy took advantage of an unguarded moment to sneak away. He made his way to the Manchester Airport where he slipped past security. Despite lacking a ticket or passport, he managed to enter the terminal. Once inside he marched onto the first airplane ready to fly, which happened to be bound for Rome.

Nobody noticed Corcoran, so he was not stopped. He never showed anyone a boarding pass—he didn't have one. He just walked onto the plane and sat down in an empty seat. By the time the passengers began wondering about the young boy flying alone, the plane was already halfway to its destination. A few fellow passengers eventually shared their suspicions with a flight attendant who began questioning Corcoran.

Of course the truth quickly came out and as soon as the plane landed in Rome, he was summarily sent back to Manchester. (That makes it a *round trip* for free!)

However, the fact that it was possible to board a plane without any papers created a storm. Corcoran should have been stopped at any of several checkpoints. Yet, somehow he managed to slip by them all.

The biggest question that plagued all who heard Liam's story was: If an 11-year-old, whose presence alone should have attracted notice as he boarded a plane without an accompanying adult, could pull that off...



Liam Corcoran managed to board a plane to Rome without being stopped once.



After he made international headlines, a newspaper paid for Liam to take a trip in the main cabin of a private plane.

who can say that a terrorist won't be able to repeat the trick?

Children Who Beat the System

Liam Corcoran's story was far from the first time a child managed such a trick in the UK.

On a summery Tuesday, August 20, 1985, two children—10-year-old Keith Byrne and his 13-year-old friend Noel Murray—fled from their home in Dublin, Ireland. The pair planned to visit America. Of course, a trip to America was beyond the budget of the two young explorers, so they found ways of traveling for free. The press reported that Byrne masterminded the incident.

The two hitchhiked from their hometown in northern Dublin. Switching modes

of transport several times along the way, they managed to travel 400 miles by car, bus, train and even by boat! Apparently, all the good-hearted citizens who stopped for the boys never bothered to ask questions. In the end, the two reached London's Heathrow Airport. And that was just the beginning.

In Heathrow the pair evaded several security checkpoints as well as passport control. They boarded an Air India flight to New York and landed at JFK Airport. There they again avoided the border control and managed to reach the outskirts of the airport. Only then did they make their first serious mistake.

They walked up to a police officer and asked for directions to New York City. The fast-thinking member of New York's finest realized that there was something funny about these two. He tried questioning them but, as the officer later admitted, the two were very clever. Every answer they gave him sounded plausible. They no longer had their tickets with them because they discarded them after their flight. Their parents had their passports with them because they didn't trust the children to carry them themselves. Etc.

Despite their straightforward-sounding responses, the police officer still suspected that something was amiss. Finally, after grilling them for a full hour, the two boys admitted the truth. They had slipped onto an Air India flight because they wanted to visit the big city, New York. Considering how many people turned a blind eye to the boys until then, the policeman deserves a medal.

The police contacted Air India. Although the airline categorically denied that the two children flew with them (there was no solid proof), they were able to describe in detail the airplane and flight experience, right down to the food that was served and who was sitting near



Keith Byrne is released from the police station in Dublin after returning safely home.

them. Air India was forced to admit that it was responsible.

Since Air India had no more flights to England that night, the boys were put up in a posh hotel overnight at the airline's expense. The next day they were placed on a return flight to England, again for free.

Free Ride with the Rich and Famous

Sneaking onto planes is certainly not new. The hobby is nearly as old as powered flight itself.

In 1928, the famous Graf Zeppelin airship made its first trans-Atlantic crossing, from Germany to New Jersey. The passengers on that historic flight were mostly uber-wealthy businessmen and other notables. The trip received extensive media coverage around the world and millions closely followed the airship's progress.

Of course, although the Graf Zeppelin never achieved anything approaching the speed of a plane, it offered an extremely comfortable ride. The passengers enjoyed an roomy cabin with plenty of luxurious rooms, including several exclusively for leisure. The dining rooms served lavish meals with expensive drinks.

This historic flight marked an additional first in history: the first aerial stowaway. This honor goes to 19-year-old Clarence Terhune, an adventurous American boy who enjoyed intrigue. As he grew up his appetite for action grew with him. Out of a desire to see his country the boy traveled around America, taking on odd jobs whenever he could find one.

Terhune never paid for his travel expenses. He developed an ability to identify and exploit weaknesses in the train, bus and ship industries. When Terhune wanted to go somewhere he set out with his rucksack and began walking. He found a hitch to the nearest railroad station where he would sneak onto the train. If there was no train heading in his direction he would grab a free ride on a bus. When he reached a river he would sneak onto the ferry.