

Fresh Air Matters... with Capt. Yaw

Over the past 100 years aviation has made a massive impact on the world and its way of doing things.

Much – if not practically all - of our trade in Ghana has inextricable links to aviation. Cargo planes bring in and take out products such as agro-inputs, pineapples, high value items for and from the mining industries, etc. Cocoa (for which we are famous) is shipped by sea – the volumes are too great for it to go by air. BUT the buyers and specialists use air travel to get to and from Ghana. It is hard to find any industry that does not have a direct or indirect dependence on air travel and transport.

Consider your business – do you use computers, mobile phones, photocopiers, etc? If you just stop for a minute and consider it well, you will realise that aviation is bringing in or taking out goods and people that support your organisation and lifestyle EVERY day – probably almost every minute of every day! Been to the doctor or dentist lately? I wonder what items in that surgery came by air... Put petrol or diesel in your car this week? Petrochemical equipment and industry personnel depend on air transport too. The oil and gas industry has many helicopter flights to and from the rigs every day – not to mention the transport by regional airlines between Kotoka and Takoradi!

Aviation has one primary advantage over other travel methods - time savings. We are all aware that 'time is money'. We are also aware that time is an infinite resource that we never get enough of; therefore, money supply must be also be limitless but migrates primarily to those who use their time wisely. So it makes sense that we see people saving hours of travel time by using aircraft.

Such movements over large distances make a great deal of sense to all of us in Ghana. Nobody considers taking a boat to London. Why take 4 weeks each way when you can get there in around 7 hours directly? Of course it takes a lot longer than 7 hours to get from home to where you are going. Let us say that I want to travel from Koforidua to Birmingham in the UK. I would need to leave at around 2:00pm to avoid traffic to get to Kotoka, clear formalities and check in, depart KIA at 10:00pm, arrive in London at 6:00am on day two, clear formalities at 7:30am, catch a train and get to my destination at around midday. Too tired for a meeting that day, so overnight in a hotel and meet at 09:00am on day three. Total time is not 7 hours but over 40 hours!

What about going to Tamale from Tema? This is only a few hundred kilometres away – but you need to allow plenty of time to get there. Let us say that if we left Tema just before dawn we should make Tamale by nightfall or soon after, provided we did not get stuck behind an accident, or get delayed by a security check point. We assume that we stick to the speed limits for safety reasons also. Upon arrival we need to sleep, and so it is about 30 hours from leaving our office to have a meeting – by road. We would leave the next day to come back - missing three (or four) days from our office! For the same trip, by air, using scheduled flights, we need to leave at the same time in the morning to get to Kotoka, clear flight formalities and land in Tamale at 8am. Our return flight will be the next day and we should get back to Tema before midday. A total trip time of just over 30hours – the same as it would take to just get to our meeting by road! Not only have we saved time but also stress, probably been safer, not got so dirty from the dust of travelling, saved a night or two in a hotel, etc. Say that the ticket cost \$400

return – but we did not have the wear and tear on our car, did not spend \$200 on fuel and ‘on-the-road snacks’ and our productivity was greater. Cost wise it is a close call, but convenience and stress wise air travel wins, in most scenarios.

Of course it is not always so simple, cancellations, over booking, etc. Such may cost us a deal. But that happens in every country and on every airline. The only way to be more in control of your air travel is operate your own or share a corporate aircraft. With entry level aircraft now costing about the same as a good 4x4 vehicle, and the possibility of piloting yourself, the options grow. To get to Tamale from Tema in your own plane you would probably fly from Kpong Airfield. Leave the office at your convenience in the morning, drive to the field (45minutes), fuel and check your aircraft (30minutes) get in your plane and head off to Tamale, weather permitting. Less than four hours later you are at Tamale, have your meeting and impress your clients at your independence. Then come back via Techiman airfield and go to the market, spend the night there and have a meeting with a client you cannot normally visit, before proceeding home the next morning, getting to the office for 10am. This is not for everybody, but now that aircraft are built in Ghana and flight training is available in country, it is possible! Having have flown all over Ghana, using small aircraft, primarily via the smaller airfields, I know the benefits. Such is now available to all who are interested in taking advantage of corporate light aviation – supported by Ghanaian regulations. We all need to make more of air travel and support the regional operators, and to consider flying ourselves too. If you are interested in learning to fly, owning or sharing a corporate aircraft and the benefits thereof, then there is a program on the 23rd June at the Alisa Hotel in North Ridge from 08:00am.

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