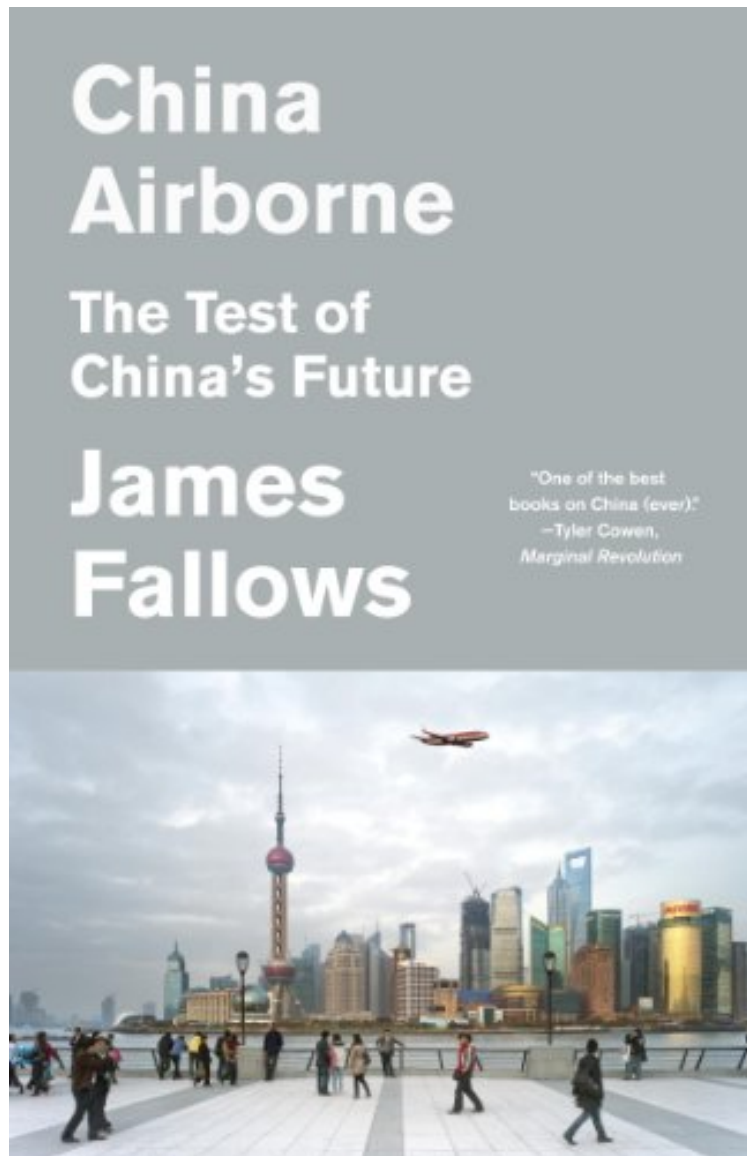


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China Airborne

James Fallows

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James Fallows : China Airborne before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised China Airborne:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. China via the Airlines IndustryBy George FulmoreI don't remember why I bought this book. I've been reading a good deal about China via other books, plus magazines and newspaper articles. While this book has occasional insights about the Chinese and their society, in general, it is mainly about the history of the aviation industry in China. This subject, I would think, would be of limited interest to most.The author has a personal interest in air flight, and, of course, China needs to link its huge cities via airliners. Here is where the

author knows his stuff: Beijing International Airport is the second busiest in the world behind Atlanta. Air China is the largest airline in the world as far as capitalization. China is adding airports like mad in parts of the country that have yet to have an airport. Today, more than 250,000 people work in the Chinese aviation industry. When Henry Kissinger went to China, secretly, in 1971, its airports were closed to western traffic. Kissinger flew via Pakistani International Airlines in a Boeing 707, for which the Chinese did not have a proper walk-up ramp. They had to build one especially for the Kissinger visit. Because of the long Sino-Japanese Wars, plus the horrible economic disasters in the country under Chairman Mao, the Chinese fell far behind the developed countries in air travel by the 70s. China used old Soviet plans before the Boeing 707s became available after President Nixon's visit in 1972. But China's aviation infrastructure was primitive. It was simply not in the position to monitor flights from airport towers, or to properly maintain planes, or to staff them with qualified pilots. Plus, there was reluctance on the part of Chinese pilots to criticize their superiors or those around them who might be failing and/or needing more training. It was up to Boeing to make this all work. After all, if there were plane crashes, the budding industry in China would grind to a halt. Today, of course, building and maintaining infrastructure is China's thing. By 2025, China expects to have more than 220 cities with more than one million people. It needs airlines to link these cities to move people and cargo. But prior to the 90s, China had few certified pilots. The U.S. had 500,000 of them. Pilots had to be imported, and flight schools needed to be established. Another complication was that the Chinese military inherited control of all air traffic in the country. The Chinese would eventually like to build their own airliners. But the author makes the point that this is not going to be easy. One source claims that making a reliable airliner is harder than sending a man to the moon. The author says that China will not be able to do it without coordinating with international expertise in airlines production. To date, for example, the Chinese-made jet engines have proved to be far inferior to U.S.-made jet engines. But the author tells us that China is a country that has entered the modern era. Concerts by The Eagles have been selling out for years. And the Chinese know the words to the most popular tunes from that group. But in China, it can be all about balance and tension. The government in many ways wants tight controls, but in many ways it knows that it needs to foster innovation and the lack of controls. He says that China's government understands the "informal accountability" that is demanded of it in the age of the Internet, when huge groups can interact with each other instantaneously and news of a scandal or problem can spread like wildfire. Having written all this, I guess I really did get something out of the book. On that basis, I would recommend it to others. It fills in some blanks in one's understanding of modern China.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. very readable intro to China
By Seth E Kolloen
An erudite and readable writer creates a short and enjoyable look at modern China through the lens of its attempts to create a modern air travel system. After reading this I feel that my understanding of China has gone from 10th percentile to at least 50th. My main takeaways are that China is much more vast and subject to much more competing interests than I had thought before. At the economic level the government is not controlling things exactly, it really is allowing for people to pursue whatever crackpot ideas they have. But it reaffirmed what I've read in foreign policy type books, which is that the military is an incredibly powerful institution that's not willing to give up power and in aviation especially is holding China back from reaching international standards. The most interesting of Fallows' analyses is his supposition that China unlike other powers of recent centuries has not yet put forth a vision for mankind, which hampers its ability to be a true world leader. China's world outreach is entirely about China, not at all about why anyone should care on any emotional level whether the Chinese system is successful...or about what a successful Chinese system could mean for them.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Real on the ground intel on China's aviation industry and much more
By Avalon
Piecing together the conundrum that is china is extremely difficult for those that have not spent much time in china. This book reveals with first hand accounts the tale of two cities that is china through the lens of an aviation enthusiast. It considers many of the aspects required for china to ascend to a first class aviation designer and builder. But, places many of the requirements in the light of the author's experiences and the manner in which china operates today from both a government perspective but also a historical perspective providing context for the reader to assess the probabilities of success for china in this massive endeavor. I found this book very helpful in filling in the pieces I needed to gain a better understanding of the current state of China's aviation industry. It also does a good job of revealing many of the personalities that have been instrumental in China's aviation ascendancy. The reason I gave this book five stars is that it does not come to any conclusions. It merely provides perspectives and context for the reader to come to his/her own opinion.

More than two-thirds of the new airports under construction today are being built in China. Chinese airlines expect to triple their fleet size over the next decade and will account for the fastest-growing market for Boeing and Airbus. But the Chinese are determined to be more than customers. In 2011, China announced its Twelfth Five-Year Plan, which included the commitment to spend a quarter of a trillion dollars to jump-start its aerospace industry. Its goal is to produce the Boeings and Airbuses of the future. Toward that end, it acquired two American companies: Cirrus Aviation, maker of the world's most popular small propeller plane, and Teledyne Continental, which produces the engines for Cirrus and other small aircraft. In China Airborne, James Fallows documents, for the first time, the extraordinary scale of this project and explains why it is a crucial test case for China's hopes for

modernization and innovation in other industries. He makes clear how it stands to catalyze the nation's hyper-growth and hyper-urbanization, revolutionizing China in ways analogous to the building of America's transcontinental railroad in the nineteenth century. Fallows chronicles life in the city of Xi'an, home to more than 250,000 aerospace engineers and assembly workers, and introduces us to some of the hucksters, visionaries, entrepreneurs, and dreamers who seek to benefit from China's pursuit of aerospace supremacy. He concludes by examining what this latest demonstration of Chinese ambition means for the United States and the rest of the world—and the right ways to understand it.

From Booklist*Starred* Atlantic correspondent Fallows dives into this most timely subject and, in brisk yet erudite language, takes readers on a tour of China's burgeoning aviation industry. Along the way, he provides an in-depth look at a place where general aviation is nearly nonexistent, multimillion dollar airports are built before airline traffic is approved, and the military holds ultimate control over all of the airspace. This economic and political narrative includes a great deal of history as well, including that of the American aircraft company Cirrus (now owned by the Chinese government, a subject that Fallows hints is worthy of a book of its own) and a significant look at the shadow Boeing casts worldwide. Fallows' prescient look at society, culture, and business is based on his conversations with numerous individuals in China who spoke to him about the hard shift required to change gears and embrace open and accessible aviation, and the epic hurdles that stand in the way. Paired with China's Wings (2012), readers will acquire an unparalleled view of China in the air past, present, and future. Highly readable and significant, Fallows' book should not be missed by those seeking to understand America's relationship with this global power. --Colleen Mondor

That is the new book by James Fallows. On the surface it is a book about aviation in China, but it is also one of the best books on China (ever), one of the best books on industrial organization in years, and an excellent treatment of economic growth. It is also readable and fun. --Tyler Cowen

Not only does the book benefit from Fallows' keen observations as a journalist in China, but also it is enriched by his technical knowledge as a passionate aviator. The result is informative and lively. --The Economist

What sets China Airborne apart from other books on China's rise is Fallows' remarkable ability to analyze both China's unprecedented achievements in economic modernization and its inherent limitations. . . . The story so brilliantly told in China Airborne, a metaphor for the much bigger story of China's rise, suggests that no one should take its future as a superpower for granted. --San Francisco Chronicle

It is worth the reader's time to obtain it and read it. It is a timely look at a country in a newly dangerous economic and political situation. Understanding that situation is of utmost importance to the rest of the world. --Asia Sentinel

Fallows has an earthy, engaging style, and he sees the human stories of government officials, entrepreneurs, workers and intellectuals all pursuing the dreams they have for themselves and their country as they take off together into the skies. The book is accessible in different ways to different people. Sinologists and aviation geeks like me will happily pore through Mr. Fallows' detailed endnotes, trapped at the back where they won't bother casual readers. People looking for a grab bag at the airport will find something light that will also make them think. Businesspeople, students, or tourists going to China can pick this up and get a good grip on the Chinese zeitgeist. --Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Fallows keeps the reader engaged by weaving personal stories and lively personalities into his depiction of the changing aerospace landscape. his book makes for an intriguing read, looking at both sides of the picture: reasons for why China might succeed, as well as those for why the country might struggle. --Publishers Weekly

Prescient. . . . Highly readable and significant, Fallows' book should not be missed by those seeking to understand America's relationship with this global power. --Booklist, starred review

Precise yet accessible. . . . An enjoyable, important update on an enigmatic economic giant. --Kirkus

Will China change the 21st century, or be changed by it? China Airborne describes a country ambitiously soaring to fantastic new heights even as its destination remains perilously uncertain. James Fallows reports elegantly on the puzzles and paradoxes of this massive nation and its quest for global prominence. --Patrick Smith, author of Somebody Else's Century

James Fallows has found a brilliant metaphor for China, and he is uniquely qualified to unspool the tale. Based on years of firsthand experience on the ground in China—and in cockpits around the world—this book showcases his gifts for deep reporting and analysis. Fallows doesn't simply bear witness; he unravels and dissects. For this vast country to achieve a leading role in the aerospace industry, it must attain standards of innovation, efficiency and precision that would signal a new era in the rise of a superpower. Has it attained that level? There is no better writer to find the answer, and Fallows has done it. --Evan Osnos, contributor to The New Yorker

In China Airborne, Fallows tells the story of China's efforts to become a global leader in aviation and aerospace, a story that reveals the economic and political tensions in contemporary China. China's past economic success has been built on a combination of massive investment and labor force mobilization—what Fallows calls "hard" economic power and autocratic political control. But success in aerospace, like success in other industries that depend on innovation, requires what Fallows calls "soft" economic power—things like trust, honest and transparent regulation, coordination between

civil, commercial and military organizations, and a culture of free research and exchange of ideas. Anyone interested in China's future economic, technological and political developments should read Fallows's fascinating and insightful new book.

— Laura Tyson, Former Director of the National Economic Council and Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors in the Clinton Administration, professor and former dean of the Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley

Praise for James Fallows: "Fallows is refreshingly aware. . . . A shrewd observer of human foibles and political quagmires with the eye for detail of an experienced journalist, he gives us panoramic views of China that are both absorbing and illuminating."

— Jonathan Spence, *The New York Times Book Review*

"Fallows represents the best of American journalism—honest, fearless, and hard-hitting. Moving easily among Chinese, from the ordinary to the high-ranking, he reports from China as an American observer, with the same questions and frustrations that most Americans feel but without either the prejudices of some or the ideological pixilation of others."

— Sidney Rittenberg, Sr., coauthor of *The Man Who Stayed Behind*

"Postcards from Tomorrow Square offers some wonderful snapshots of the contradictions of modern China. As always, Fallows writes from the front lines with insight and flair."

— Rob Gifford, author of *China Road*

"James Fallows's insatiable curiosity and clear narrative make his China journey a real reward."

— John Sculley, former CEO of Apple Computer

About the Author: James Fallows is a national correspondent for *The Atlantic*. He has reported from around the world and has worked in software design at Microsoft, as the editor of *U.S. News World Report*, and as a speechwriter for President Jimmy Carter. He is currently a news analyst for NPR's *Weekend All Things Considered* and a visiting professor at the University of Sydney.