

Jam Today, Fly Tomorrow

This is a reading comprehension test divided into two parts. Each part is followed by statements. Complete the statements, basing your answers on information in the text. Answer briefly and, as far as possible, in your own words. Read each statement very carefully so that your completion fits in with it.

A look at charter flights and delays

If you want to know why the chances of your charter flight being delayed in the summer are one in two, nip over to the control tower at Heathrow. The entrance is guarded by two men who will not let you in if you don't have a security dog-tag. But if you do, take the lift to the seventh floor.

You emerge to confront one of the most wonderful sights the technological world can offer: a darkened glass-walled circular room crammed with radar screens—and beyond the glass, an airport alive with planes. Landing, taking off, parking, manoeuvring. There are 82 movements hourly at Heathrow—one plane lands or takes off every 45 seconds. It is an unbelievable juggling act. And you begin to sense the problems that lie behind those infuriating delays which affect nearly half of all package holidays. The average delay in 1996 was 30 minutes, but some planes

lingered on the tarmac for a day or more. So why do people still put up with charter flights?

Over the next three hours, Keith Williams, Director of Air Traffic Operations for the whole of Britain, demonstrates the complexity of the jigsaw which enables tens of thousands of charter flights to make their way across the continent to the Mediterranean.

When you hear how things have been organised until very recently, you wonder why all the delays haven't been worse. Until just a year ago there was no centralised way of arranging flight paths through Europe. But this problem was solved by a technical breakthrough—the installation of a single computer in Brussels serving 35 countries. All flights from Britain and the rest of Europe are now cleared from this monster in a process that begins six months ahead of take-off.



1 To gain entrance at Heathrow control tower, visitors must...

2 “An unbelievable juggling act” refers to the fact that...

3 Considering the large number of charter flights, the writer seems surprised that ...

4 The problem of centralising flight routes has been solved by...



No computer works miracles, however, and there is still plenty of room for hitches in other areas. Strikes by air traffic controllers are one problem that can cause major hold-ups. On the other hand, some problems are technological. Congestion over so-called choke-points in the sky-corridors, where several routes cross, is an important cause of charter delays. Extremely precise satellite navigation, allowing more flights to be funnelled through at peak times, could virtually eliminate such hold-ups. But this level of technology isn't likely to be available until the year 2015, by which time air traffic will have doubled anyway.

A more down-to-earth problem lies with the ground services. Charter flights by definition go to resorts ig-

nored by most scheduled services, and some of these resort airports can cope with only limited numbers. And here we come to the problems caused by the travel industry itself.

Handling capacity at Corfu, for example, is limited due to primitive air traffic control. Travel industry organisation is equally to blame. On Corfu, change-over is restricted to Wednesdays, when all tour operators try to whisk their customers in and out.

Ironically, this restriction is in the interest of the tour operators who, in order to keep the prices down, must ensure that each of their planes averages three round-trips every 24 hours. One company, Britannia Airways, is trying to break the mould by keeping a back-up aircraft on the tarmac at Manchester,



whereas others rely on trying to rent a plane when things go wrong—this is not easy in the high season. If Britons were prepared to pay more for flights, the charter companies claim, then planes

could average two round-trips per day instead of three. This would both reduce pressure on the system and lessen the risk of escalating delays.

from the Sunday Telegraph



5 All reasons for delays are not technological. **One** other reason might be...

_____ .

6 Better satellite navigation could be a solution if only ...

_____ .

7 Charter flights differ from scheduled flights because they...

_____ .

8 The problems at Corfu airport could be solved by improving...


_____ .

9 Britannia Airways is unique among charter companies because...

_____ .

10 If Britons want to avoid delays when going by charter, they should...

_____ .

Points

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