

# Amazing Facts Highlighted by Malaysian Airliner Mystery

By LIZ FIELDS | *Good Morning America* – 20 hours ago 24 March 2014

The coordinated search for missing Malaysia Airlines flight 370 has highlighted some interesting facts about the world and airplanes, including just how easy it is for a Boeing 777 airplane to simply vanish, despite the seeming pervasiveness of modern technology and network location services.

There's still much we have yet to learn about the details of the case, but amid all the theories and conjecture, ABC News has gleaned some impressive nuggets of information over the course of the two-week long investigation. Here are 16 of them.

1. Some parts of the Indian Ocean can reach 25,000 feet deep. That's 20 times the height of the Empire State Building, which measures 1,250 feet tall.
2. Brain death can occur at 45,000 feet in the air. Airplane oxygen masks can only provide about 10 to 15 minutes of air for passengers, which is more than enough time for a pilot to return a plane to lower altitude.
3. Two passengers used stolen passports -- one from Austria and one from Italy -- to board the flight. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, [Interpol](#) introduced a worldwide database of lost or stolen passports, which has details of more than 40 million stolen or lost travel documents (passports, identity documents, visas) from 167 countries. The only countries that regularly check travelers against the database are the United Arab Emirates, the U.S., Britain, France and Switzerland according to Interpol officials.
4. Intense focus has been placed on finding the plane's black boxes, consisting of a cockpit voice recorder and a flight data recorder. Both are bright orange and each about the size of a coffee maker. Searchers only have about 30 days to find the boxes before the box stops pinging, making it much more difficult to locate. Even after the pinging stops, the batteries last for years and the data should be intact.
5. The flight data recorder will detail the last 25 hours of the plane's activity, from engine performance to the position of flight control surfaces, while the cockpit voice recorder tapes the sounds on the flight deck and cycles after two hours.
6. Both cockpit voice and flight data recorders work to an ocean depth of 20,000 feet, with a signal range of about 2 nautical miles, depending on variables like sea conditions. The signals are located using a device operated on the surface of the water or towed to a depth. The deeper the water the more difficult it will be to detect the pings.
7. There are approximately 41,821 [airports in the world](#), 13,513 in the United States alone.
8. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, is the [world's 28th busiest airport](#) with a yearly estimated traffic of more than 37 million travelers. Atlanta, Ga., ranks first, with more than 92 million people passing through and second is Beijing's Peking Airport with more than 78 million.

9. Flying is still one of the [safest methods of transportation](#). On average, travelers would need to take one flight a day for about 10,000 years before they would be involved in a fatal crash.
10. The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) estimates 90 percent of aircraft accidents worldwide are survivable.
11. The best option to maximize your chances of walking away from a plane crash is to sit in the rear end of the plane. [One study found](#) those sitting near the plane's tail are 40 percent likelier to survive than those in the first few rows.
12. The search is taking place in an extremely remote part of the Indian Ocean between Australia and the Antarctic known as the "roaring forties" for its sharp westerly winds and rough waters.
13. The ocean surface current in the Indian Ocean close to the equator is around 1 to 2 knots. A drifting object in the water around the equator can shift between 26 to 52 miles a day (728 miles in 14 days). But around 200 miles further from the equator, the current is much weaker at less than 0.5 knots.
14. A Boeing 777-200 is 70 yards long and needs at least 4,000 feet of runway to land safely. But the plane would not be able to take off again on a runway of that length.
15. Many pilots use [flight simulators](#). They can be assembled at home and range from simple software on personal computers that can be purchased off the Internet for \$30, to sophisticated full-motion simulators for professional pilots, which cost thousands.
17. A pilot's experience is calculated in flight hours. The Malaysian plane's captain, Zaharie Ahmad Shah, had more than 18,000 flying hours. Most major airlines require pilots to have at least 2,500 flight hours under their belt, while regional carriers generally require a minimum of 1,500 hours.

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