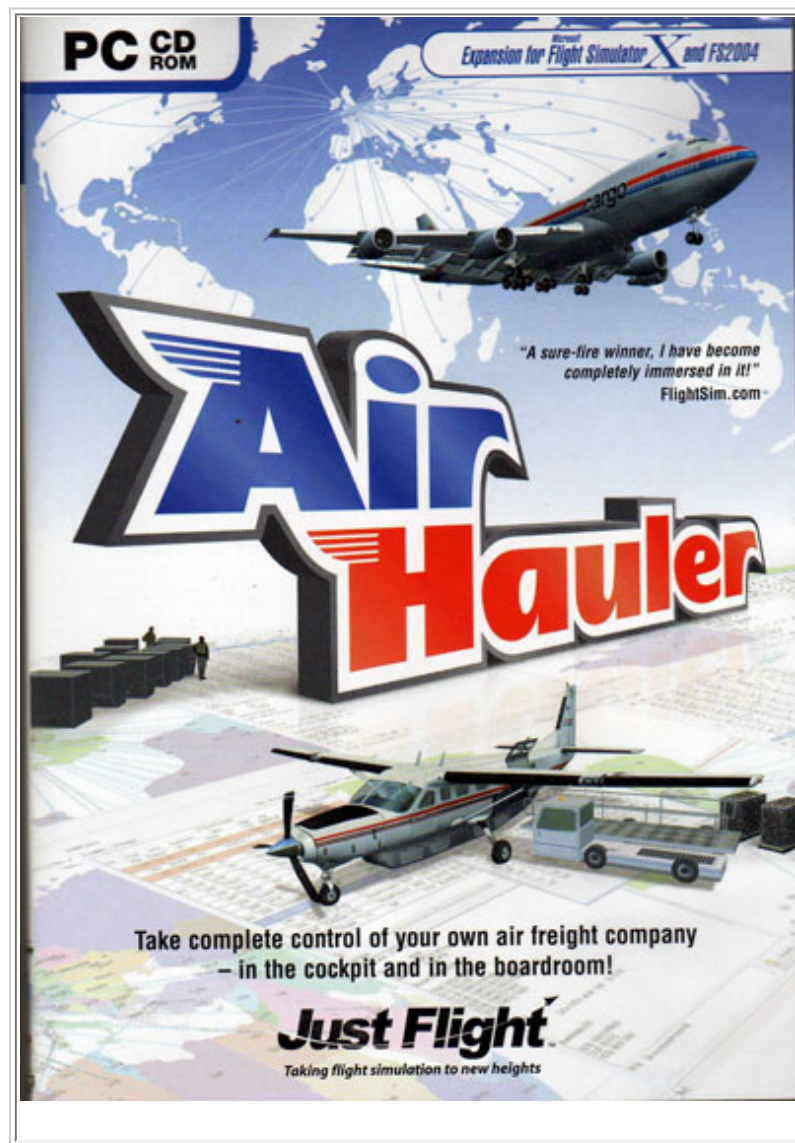


AVSIM Commercial Simulator Review

AirHauler



Product Information

Publishers: Just Flight		
Description: Expansion - business simulation for use with Flight Simulator.		
Download Size: 65.5 MB	Format: Download / CD	Simulation Type: FSX & FS9
Reviewed by: Proflig8tor AVSIM Staff Reviewer - July 17, 2009		

Introduction

Have you ever thought, "it would be neat to be financially rewarded for doing a good job in Flight Simulator, to have something more than another 0.8 in the logbook to show for your work?" If so, running your own cargo operation in AirHauler might be just what you are looking for. Smooth landings and on time deliveries are met with sounds of applause and cash hitting the bottom line of your fledgling air cargo and charter operation. What could be better?

Creation of a program which merges the real time strategy genre with Flight Simulation is something many Flight Sim enthusiasts have wanted for a long time. Duncan Murray acted on this desire and built the business simulation program we had been waiting for. Your reviewer pulled out his personal Credit Card to spend \$36.99 before Robert at AvSim could even reply to the request to work on a review of this product. The boxed version is currently \$41.99.

Installation & Documentation

Available from JustFlight, the installation and product verification process is quick, easy and trouble free. The install file is 65.5 MB. Total installed space required was less than 1GB.

Documentation

The download file unzips with a 92 page Manual.PDF which provides a tutorial and guide to the many customizable features of the program. It is a very useful and well written reference, and the program is very user friendly and well designed. So much so that most users will probably bypass the manual and jump right into the sim. This is what I did, but a better job of running your cargo operation can quickly be gleaned from the information in the manual.

Set Up & Company Creation

The set up and creation of your Company is straightforward with the ability to customize your Flight Sim version, Company name and your Chief Pilot. You then select the difficulty level from amongst Easy, Hard, or Career Mode.

Easy - \$500,000 in the bank, a Lear Jet and 60% reputation

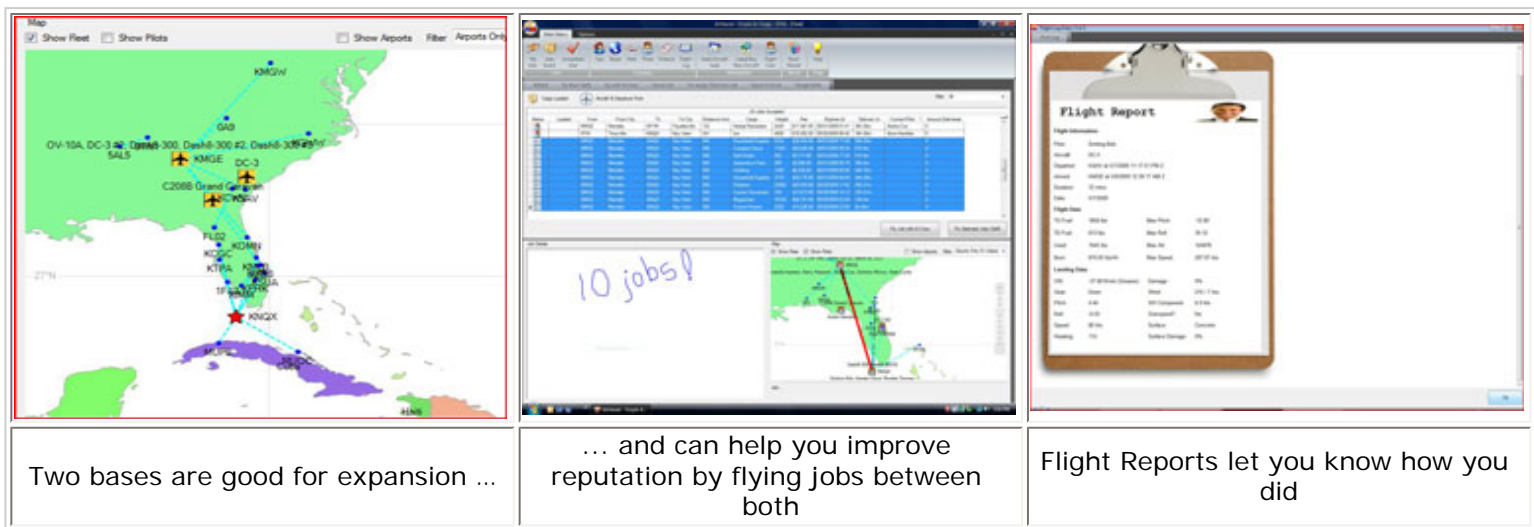
Medium - \$200,000 in the bank, a Cessna Caravan and 50% reputation

Test System
Intel E6600 Clocked to 3.0Ghz 4Gb linked at 667Mhz, 1333 FSB NForce 680i GeForce 8800 GTS SATA RAID 0 Microsoft Vista SP1 Flight Simulator FSX + Accel Flying Time: 170 hours

Hard - \$100,000 in the bank, a Cessna 172 and 40% reputation

Career – Aircraft limited by Rank, \$100,000 in the bank, a Cessna 172 and 40% reputation.

Career mode is the most challenging scenario. You can even choose to use real world weather and oil prices. Then you must choose a base to begin operations.



Your choice of basing is very important to both your success and hassle factor in the sim. Choose a short grass strip and your pilots will not land there in airplanes that require longer runways, you'll find few jobs and if remote enough, can make a real headache for trying to dispatch your pilots to. Of course the program increases the costs for long runways in big cities to the point where you might not be able to afford that KJFK, or KATL operation to begin with. Many users have found military bases to be an excellent compromise, as the Strategic Air Command built plenty of long runways and a few are near population centers. You will want to make sure there are suitable approaches at your base for low visibility operations and go to AirNav.com or other suitable source to print up approach and taxi charts that you will need to find your way around.

The setup completes with sliders to adjust the number, size and distance of jobs you would like Air Hauler to generate for you. One suggestion is to pick a good number of smaller jobs at nearby airports so you can haul multiple loads on single flights. While this can be more work for less money, it helps with establishing and maintaining your all important reputation. Also, long runways are always good for safe operations and allow for fewer problems as your Company grows, obtains larger airplanes and as you get stuck delivering that load your AI pilot forgot at 12:30 at night while your family screams at you to get off the computer... an experience all Air Hauler users are familiar with.

The program will then begin generating your jobs. To sync its database with the scenery used in your Flight Simulator installation, an option will prompt you to import scenery to capture any custom files you might use.

You will be presented with a list of jobs to pick from. Carefully review the weight, destination airport and all important expiration time. The worst case, aside from crashing an aircraft with cargo on board, is to simply pick a job that you or your AI crew does not deliver on time. Each failed job results in a serious hit to your reputation, as your reputation can only be improved by flying loads yourself and the rate of improvement is very small, something along the lines of 0.3 per load. Your reputation is also subject to being reduced as a result of rough landings, exceeding aircraft limitations, or

even exceeding bank angle and pitch limits.

Once selected, your jobs can be assigned to one of your AI pilots, or flown yourself. I try to give my AI pilots plenty of time, so I can check back on them and correct any difficulties they might be having. They simply will not fly beyond the range of the aircraft, or land on "too short" a runway. For these tasks you might have to help them, or fly multiple loads with a smaller aircraft.

If you choose to fly the job yourself, clicking that selection will launch Flight Simulator with the aircraft loaded and positioned as chosen in AirHauler with the Flight Plan loaded in the GPS and ATC functions ready to go. Complete your flight and at engine shut down your job will be concluded when you select to unload your cargo. Getting cargo to its destination undamaged and on time improves your reputation.

The best reputation can get you a better selection of pilots applying at your Company, make loans available at better rates and attract cargo which pays more for your efforts. With a reputation below 55 no one will want to work for you and below 60, even the banks shun your requests for loans. The AI pilots also carry reputation scores and rankings. As they complete missions their personal reputations improve as do their rankings, which allow them to fly heavier and more complex aircraft.

Air Hauler is very much a real time affair which relies on a link between it and your Flight Simulator using FSUIPC. The link is very stable and works very well, sometimes too well. For example, to squeeze that last bit of cargo on, I neglected to carry sufficient fuel and lost both engines over the jungle. Efforts to refuel Flight Simulator in the unpowered descent were thwarted by AirHauler and the program recognized the resulting crash, loss of cargo and costs to recover the airplane for repairs. Thank goodness I had bought insurance from within AirHauler that covered most of the loss.

In plain terms, the program prevents an attempt to "control, alt, delete" from an oopsie. When the user makes a mistake and picks a load the AI pilots will not fly, you will find yourself doing the crazy landing on an agricultural strip in a part 25 certified transport aircraft, don't crash is always good advice. The landing field requirements for the AI pilots are:

Max Weight	Rwy Length Required (m/ft)
< 10.000	Any
10-50.000	1000 / 3,281
50-100.000	1500 / 4,921
100-200.000	1800 / 5,905
200-400.000	2500 / 8,202
400-500.000	2800 / 9,186
> 500.000	3000 / 9,843

In flight, your limits for fragile cargo are:

20 degrees pitch

40 degrees bank

5% damage for over speed

Your landings are graded on the following scale:

Greaser
Ok
Positive
Hard
Very Hard
Dangerous
Suicidal
Catastrophic

The user gets chimes with notifications from AirHauler while in Flight Simulator letting them know the status of their monitoring, as well as hearing your AI pilots delivering their loads. Also, there is the warning claxon to let you know you have a serious problem, or rather letting you know that AirHauler knows Flight Simulator has been disconnected. I found it better to minimize full screens before switching between the Flight Simulator and AirHauler applications while running them simultaneously.

One neat feature of Air Hauler is the ability to import and manage third party aircraft. While 75% of all AirHauler users have been FSX users, the minority do enjoy an ability to download a greater variety of aircraft which are simply better cargo aircraft.

What makes a better cargo aircraft? In Air Hauler the available Cargo Capacity of the aircraft is the result of Maximum Takeoff Weight minus Empty Weight and Full Fuel. Your AI pilot always uses full fuel, which places a real unfair handicap on long ranged aircraft, particularly jets. In the real world, cargo and fuel loads are nearly always optimized, but for now that is just how it is in Air Hauler.

Aircraft pricing is enigmatic and does not follow real world prices. But they are close enough that if you see an aircraft on the ramp in FedEx colors, or flying cargo in the islands in the real world, that same aircraft will most likely be a good choice in AirHauler. The AirHauler prices are derived and calculated based on information from the aircraft.cfg file and the [forums](#) are active with "What does it cost and What does it carry" information.

Of course, you'll want to buy a 747-400F but that is going to take a while. Meanwhile, work on your reputation in the Cessna.

Game Play

AirHauler is a product that enhances Flight Simulator by making your Sim flying more meaningful. If you like point to point flying in airliners and enjoy real world weather and operations, you will have a ball in AirHauler.

Because AirHauler forces you to fly Flight Simulator smoothly, you will be frustrated by the lousy autopilots, flight models and automation in many aircraft. You will want to pick aircraft for use in AirHauler that are both easy to fly, and fly well without intense monitoring. The Beechcraft Baron, B200 and Cessna Caravan work well.

Premier Aircraft Design's thoughtful inclusion of hot button links to the pop up panels is appreciated. The most recent version of Captain Sim's 757 makes a good, heavy hauler, while the default 737 and Airbus jets in Flight Simulator are more likely to leave you frustrated with large repair bills. PDMG's MD11 looks like the ultimate AirHauler jet, but even several months into the sim part-time, I simply can't afford it yet.

There are tons of reports, graphs, maps and customizable options that will allow you to analyze your work. Better yet, AirHauler ports this data to a statistics website so you can compare your work to your competition and see what they are flying and where. An active online community has grown to support users, exchange ideas and works as a virtual crew lounge for AirHauler pilots.

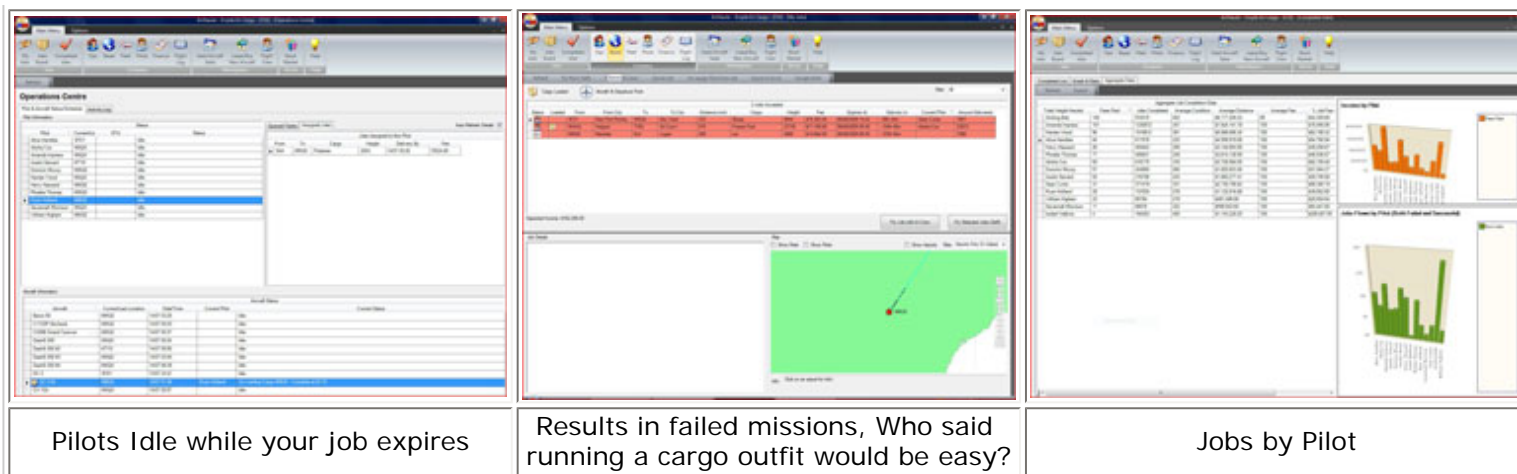
You have options to invest your Company's free cash in the stock market, will need to buy insurance, manage leases, payment costs and rents. Your work as an AirHauler CFO can take as much, or as little time, as you want. There is almost always the option to just accept the cost and move on.

The business model for AirHauler is, in my opinion, a little too profitable compared to real world operations. This apparently is balanced by repair costs that are greatly exaggerated. For instance, a simple MMO over speed is a straightforward inspection in the real world. In AirHauler it can be ridiculously costly at 5% of hull value to send a mechanic around the airplane with a flashlight. (This damage model just received a new revision as this is being written and probably is being improved.)

As is, your primary focus is maintaining reputation. Unfortunately, your AI pilots don't seem to care near as much as you do. They frequently fail to deliver the last part of a load, or simply become idle for no clear reason causing damage to your reputation. Of course these problems can be induced by the user not providing the AI pilots with airplanes to fly their missions. Some users have resorted to naming the airplane and the pilot the same name to make it easier to assign them together.

It is important to note that AirHauler is a real time experience. You assign the flying and AirHauler completes it according to your computer's system clock. Frankly, this can be brutal as running an airline is a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week operation. Some users have referred to AirHauler as "divorce by download" and that isn't much of an exaggeration.

<p>Training Capt. Rep. Well, this is realistic?</p>	<p>Many graphs to monitor your Company's Performance</p>	<p>The constant struggle to maintain your reputation</p>



Pilots Idle while your job expires

Results in failed missions, Who said running a cargo outfit would be easy?

Jobs by Pilot

Speed & Stability

Overall the program is remarkably stable given the potential for problems running an add-on program plus third party aircraft with add-on panels within Flight Simulator. I've not experienced a single frozen screen or crash to desktop while using AirHauler. The occasional notice of an unhandled exception error usually makes sense when you asked the program to do something impossible, like fly a trip with no airplanes. Your reviewer has clicked through these and not experienced a problem.

There has been some corruption of the Flight Simulator file *users/documents/flightsimulatorXfiles/logbook.bin* which prevented FSX from loading, but I do not believe the cause of this error was AirHauler. It most likely was the result of attempting to "control/alt/delete" my way out of the aforementioned dual engine flameout, or an attempt to change the system time to buy a few more minutes for my lazy AI pilot to deliver some cargo.

The unfortunate fact remains that eventually you will have an AI pilot fail to deliver, or just quit halfway through a load. At first I thought this was intended to improve realism, but the fact that every revision to the software includes a note that this problem has been fixed, lets me know that they did not intend for the AI pilots to be unreliable. Power users tend to task their AI pilots with a few days worth of work and about 98% of the time they fly with no complaints and no sleep. But occasionally you'll find them just sitting there idle while your reputation gets whacked as a result of their sloth.

Overall, I have been impressed with the quality and stability of the product, and wish to give praise to the creator of this software, Duncan Murray, who has been very responsive to users and quick to issue fixes when some minor problem is raised on the forums.

Conclusions:

AirHauler's developer built the sim that he wanted to play. It is a very well done effort that has resonated amongst many Flight Simulator users and which gives real promise to the continued growth of the genre. The program is easy and fun to use, it's stable and supported by a quickly growing fan base and responsive creator.

I consider it a must try at its reasonable price, particularly if you ever harbored any thoughts of being a freight dawg pilot. AirHauler is easily challenging enough to provide the real wrinkled shirts and blood shot eyes that go with that

territory. In this writer's opinion, AirHauler is on its way to becoming a classic in the Flight Sim community.



What I Like About Air Hauler

- AirHauler is the real time business strategy game for Flight Simulator so many have waited for
- AirHauler will enhance your Flight Simulator experience and encourage you to try new airplanes and airports
- Very stable, has a very light overhead with no reduction in frame rates or system performance on your reviewer's system
- Great support from the software's writer and producer
- Growing web board community and site to share statistics via automatic upload
- Air Hauler is addictive fun! Start building your aviation Empire.

What I Don't Like About Air Hauler

- AI pilots only operate the aircraft with full fuel and cargo capacity is diminished. In the real world freight and fuel are always optimized
- AI pilots sometimes forget to deliver cargo, resulting in painful reductions to your reputation
- Revenue & Cost modeling is not very reflective of real world operations
- The real time nature of the simulation makes real life demands on the user's time

Printing

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[Air Hauler](#)

[\(adobe acrobat required\)](#)

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