

EUROPE 24 BEAUTIFIES AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL



Air traffic control is often seen as something out of sight and out of mind, the work of trained men at consoles in remote towers and little more, but the creators of the new “Europe 24” video are challenging this perception by turning the patterns these air traffic controllers make into something beautiful and accessible.

Hours of data for thousands of flights in one stunning video less than 2 minutes long.

This new visualisation of data aims to provide a better understanding of the dance of air traffic control, the one that goes unseen and under-appreciated by the average man on the ground or the single passenger in the single plane that makes up the thousands of aircraft heading between all of Europe's destinations. Visualisation is an important tool for showing this enormous transport network because not only does it show the vast number of strings like a beautifully complex spiders web, it offers a chance to see this transportation in movement in a whole new way, like necessary blood passing through large veins and tiny capillaries.

This “Europe 24” video shows radar data from the UK for June 21st – and this date only – at 1440x the regular speed to highlight key routes and patterns across the country. This includes the central artery, to continue the metaphor, of regular flights from London to the north of England and Scotland (1401 flights having left Heathrow alone on this date) and while great sweeps of light show the thousands of planes being carefully controlled around the giant runways of Gatwick and Heathrow, this is contrasted by the gentle, occasional flickers that rise up and disappear from smaller destinations in Ireland or the Westcountry. The full result creates a network from 5675 departing or arriving aircraft that equates to 25 million nautical miles. As the show continues, it zooms out to expose the wider map – which uses European information from July 28th – in order to show the grander scale and deeper connections.

Providing a new perspective and appreciation.

While the beauty of the video is the most obvious benefit to viewers, it also helps to remind people that air traffic control really is vital work. It may be invisible to the eye but it is still a vital piece of infrastructure in Europe: it is easy to forget that there are typically 30,000 flights in European airspace on a single July day, 25% of these over the UK, but it is crucial that all these strings and connections work if our business trips, domestic short-haul flights and international vacations all run smoothly.

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