

The adventure of a lifetime

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It started out as many of adventures do, with something we got in the mail. I was a postcard with a picture of a two seat jet aircraft and it said, "Learn to fly a jet fighter for the thrill of a lifetime". Well, I had just recently received a bonus from my company, I thought it would be a great escape from my ground bound problems. So, I called the company and made reservations for an hour flight at a local airport. They offered both half hour and one hour flights, but I figured what with taxi, takeoff, climb out, and landing, there would not be much time for actual maneuvers in a half hour, so I opted for the hour flight..

On the day of the flight, it was somewhat overcast, but I could see patches of blue showing through. I took a Bonine and 2 Imodiums, figuring I should cover both ends and headed to the airport. I had a little trouble finding the aircraft, as I was told that it was near the old fire station. It turned out there were 2 old stations, and I was at the wrong one. I went to the Jet Center and called the number on their card, and got directions to the airplane.

The instructor got me a flight suit and helmet, and briefed me on the operation of the aircraft. It turned out that the starter button was only in my cockpit, so I had to start the engine. He also told me how to work the radio controls to switch frequencies from Ground Control to the Control Tower.

I got suited up, and climbed into the front cockpit. I had previously downloaded the manual from his website, and had made a blowup of the Instrument panel, so I had a bit of familiarity with it.



I hit the starter and heard the engine fire up, sounding sort of like our forced air heater at home. I set the frequencies in the radio, and we taxied to the runway for takeoff. I pushed the power handle for full thrust and we started down the runway. After liftoff, I noticed I was drifting to the right, and the instructor said that was common with propeller pilots as we normally put in right rudder to compensate for the propeller pulling to the left.

We climbed to 12,000 feet out over the ocean, and the view was fantastic! I could see all the way up to Santa Barbara, and all the Channel islands which are off the coast near Santa Barbara. I had my 35mm camera with me, so I took some pictures of the coastline and the islands, and had the instructor take some of me. There was also a video camera on board, and at the end of the flight he gave it to me. The only problem was that it was microcassette, so I asked my son, who is a video editor to transfer it to a VHS tape, which he did.

After leveling off, we practice some stalls to get the feel of the airplane, and he asked me if I wanted to do any aerobatics. I told him I would like to try some aileron rolls, and I did about a half dozen, some in each direction. It was really neat! The roll rate of the aircraft is fast, but I was able to roll out into level after each roll.



Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end, and we headed back to the airport where I landed the plane and taxied it back to its spot. I then had the instructor take a couple of pictures of me in and out of the aircraft.



To say I enjoyed it is an understatement-as I was driving home from the airport, I kept smiling to myself.
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