

Flight Culture  
Newsletter Number 16



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## What we've been up to



Sunrise from my bedroom window

We've just come back from Kenya and where do I start? It managed to combine being one of the most beautiful places I've ever been with some of the most outstanding flying I've ever had. We were on the eastern arm of the Great Rift Valley, 1400 m above the valley floor.



Our accommodation complex



The bottom landing area

Jody and I arrived a couple of days before the rest of the group to get everything set up. Our flight arrived in Nairobi at 6-15 in the morning which meant we could get a connecting internal flight to Eldoret followed by an hour in a taxi which put us at our cottages/restaurant in time for breakfast.

Having had an amazing selection of tropical fruits we decided to take a look at the take-off which was about 100 m away. “You know, this looks flyable said Jody” so we just did the decent thing and banged out a 30 km out and return. It was just so easy and the scenery was utterly breath-taking.



The thermals did get stronger and stronger so we landed and this was to be the normal daily pattern; flying morning and late afternoon. Landing was pretty straight forward with a top landing area that slightly tricky or a bottom landing area 400 m below which was huge and easy.

If you've travelled in East Africa before you'll know how hot it can be but up on top of the escarpment where we were staying, the temperatures were warm and pleasant as we were at 2300 m above sea level.



In addition to this, we stayed in luxury cottages (or bandas). All cottages faced the Rift Valley and gave us some of the most breath taking sunrises. The complex where we were staying had a central restaurant and lounge area with a huge fireplace which felt great in the evenings. The standard of food was outstanding with a huge range of choices.

In addition to some of the best flying that most of us have ever had, we also found time to see giraffes, hippos, and crocodiles, go walking in some virgin forest and watch the monkeys, do a motor bike trek along the valley floor, cool off in the swimming pool and wander around the local market.



The front of the take-off

If you weren't able to join us this year, you will still have a chance to experience this magic place. We're running another trip to Kenya next year from the 20 February – 3 March and two of the 8 spaces have already been filled!

### The next month or so...

We'll be teaching in the UK until 5 May before heading out to Dune de Pyla in SW France. This means that we will be around in the UK for the bank holiday at the beginning of May so we're hoping you'll be able to join us.

Please note that our dates for Dune de Pyla have now changed to 7 – 14 and 14 – 21 May and we currently have some space in both weeks. We will also be returning to the Dune from the 3 – 10, 10 – 17 and 17 – 24 September.



The take-off

The Dune is one of the best teaching venues that I've ever found which is why we've been coming there for 13 years. For beginners it is a very forgiving environment where progress is rapid and confidence building. In a week a complete beginner usually completes the first level course (Elementary Pilot) and at least some of the second level course (club Pilot).



We have two fully qualified tandem instructors and the tandem provides an invaluable teaching tool.

The more experienced will learn really solid soaring and

top landing skills and everyone comes away with much stronger ground handling skills.

If you are experienced and would like to learn to fly tandems, this is an ideal opportunity. You will need a Pilot rating and at least 100 hrs but if you've got this, we can turn you into a competent tandem pilot.



We don't restrict ourselves solely to the syllabus but aim to share our many years of experience with you.

So, from an educational point of view it offers great opportunities but there is so, so much more than that.

Part of what makes FC different is that we work very hard to give you the best experience possible. When we have non-flyable periods we'll show you what makes our chosen venues so special. At the Dune we'll take you to an

outstanding local market, organize meals out (including one at a Michelin starred restaurant), take you surfing, or to visit some of the famous vineyards.



We generally cook group meals on 2 or 3 nights per week where you'll get to try some of Grandma Welch's specialties including Coq au Vin, Cassoulet, and a Paella that will blow your socks off! The local area is also particularly famed for the excellent oysters which we'll have for you to try, accompanied by a cold glass of local wine.

This trip is so easy; there are very inexpensive Easy Jet flights to Bordeaux where we'll meet you, you'll have your own bedroom, and take-off is only a 5 minute walk away. If you have a non-flying partner or friend, The Dune is an idyllic place to unwind and also works well for families.

This trip always fills up so if you'd like to join us please let us know as soon as possible and we'll send you full details.

## Johnny's top tips

### Log Books



Do you feel like you'd like to improve your flying but are stuck and don't really know what to do? I think that most of us would like to be better pilots and if we keep flying we will (probably) improve but this undirected approach

is slow and often frustrating. Fortunately there is an easy way to address this via your log book.

I know that this might not sound like one of my most interesting subjects but just give me a few minutes because it's such a valuable teaching tool. Please read this with an open mind and I hope that you find something that will help you. If there is anything that you'd like more information on please feel free to contact me at [john@flightculture.co.uk](mailto:john@flightculture.co.uk)

If you are a UK Pilot (this applies to lots of other countries too) you are obliged to maintain a log book which we are told is a valuable record of your flying experience and can help to establish your suitability for more advanced courses. This might be true but if you think that this is as far as it goes, you're missing the most important part.

I am not a great fan of the standard BHPA log book for two reasons; the way it's laid out encourages using one line per flight which really doesn't give you the opportunity to record anything significant about it. The second reason is because it's given rise to a culture where in the absence of anything better, pilots compare "hours" to decide who's better and clearly this is nonsense.

I'd encourage you to use an A5 or A6 notebook and in it you'll include a lot of the same information as the BHPA log book such as site, conditions, time (take off, landing, total), equipment used, total hours flown. In addition to this, use it like a diary, writing about your experience, including sketches or photos. I've seen some that even have ticket stubs from a mountain railway. If you make it personal, it really makes it come alive. As time goes by you can re-read what you've written and relive the experience. The final entry at the end of each day or flight is always to record something that you were really pleased about and something that you'd like to do better or differently, or maybe just something that you'd like to know more about. Sounds simple but there are a few rules; you can only pick one thing for each of them and the thing that you pick must be something that you had control over so it can't be "I was pleased that the weather was good". It's important that when you do something well, you pat yourself on the back and acknowledge it yourself. By reflecting on successes you will increase your chance of repeating them.

By identifying something that you'd like to change (or maybe find out more about) you are effectively setting short term goals. Here it is important that the thing that you'd like to change must be achievable the next time that you

go out (conditions permitting). As time goes on and you review your log book you'll notice how the goals become progressively more complex. As you continue to use this approach, you'll find that you might also want to include some medium term goals which will give you a sense of direction and success.



On March 7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> I was one of forty six hang glider and paraglider pilots to be part of Women With Wings 2 skills clinic! This was the biggest gathering of female free-flying pilots ever in Oz with pilots travelling from all over Australia to attend as well as visiting pilots from Germany, Sweden & Switzerland.



Held in Bright, Victoria, the aims of the event were to increase confidence, skills and to promote safe decision making in a fun, supportive, collaborative environment without the pressure of competition. There was a



mixed bunch of pilots, from recently qualified to competition pilots, and coastal pilots who have never flown inland, and many people wanting to get back into the sport after a few years out. This made for a great pool of experience and knowledge.

Having never flown in Bright before I was impressed by the beauty of the area. The views of this alpine region were breathtaking - tarns, waterfalls,

massive rock faces, forests with tree ferns! Not a bad place for perfecting para-waiting!

The thermals during the week were soft & very pleasant. Mystic (the main paragliding launch) has 2 very reliable house thermals, they even have names! Marcus to the left & Emily to the right making it a great place to practice your thermalling skills.

With minimal wind most days it was a perfect time to improve our alpine forward launches (or running reverse for some) & nil wind landings, as well as improve thermalling skills and cross



country technique. We were lucky with the weather and only lost 1 day out of 5 during the event. The event included retrieves & lifts back up the hill, which allowed multiple flights for people wanting to do sleddies, or for the pilots learning when, or when not to take off during thermic conditions..... it's all in the timing!! For many the

worry of finding your way back to the hill after a x-country flight proves enough not to venture away from the hill, so having organised retrieve drivers allowed pilots to comfortably fly without this added worry. We were lucky to have Brian Webb and Andrew Horchner as mentors, providing the group with support, valuable local knowledge & help with our technique

when required.



When not flying we would talk, eat, sleep flying! Launches & landing were filmed daily which proved an invaluable (and often amusing) tool for improvement and each evening we would debrief on the days flying and review the footage. Workshops during the week included introductory airspace/ safety session, Dealing with Fear, Secret Women's Business and cross

country theory workshops. Craig Collings delivered a session on mountain cross country flying, packed with information even for advanced pilots and John Chapman, president of the Northeast Victoria Hang Gliding Club, ran a parachute repack clinic.

Pilots' skills, confidence & technique improved massively throughout the week, including my own. It was great to be part of such a supportive & fun group of people and to watch everyone grow as pilots. Many pilots had 'firsts' including first inland flight, first forward launch, first cross country, first outlanding, first time landing in a pub garden! The list goes on! (Not to mention my first sighting of a red-bellied black snake..!!)

Thanks to Helen Mckerral and the rest of the team responsible for making it happen, and for everyone who sponsored the event. It was a great success,

and I can't wait till WWW3! If you're interested in checking out photos of the clinic, go to <http://womenwithwingsclinic.blogspot.com/>  
I am now looking forward to applying my new skills & confidence during the Queensland championship, with the first round of the competition this weekend! Watch this space for more info.....



## Featured Products



This Month I'd like to focus on Aircross; a glider manufacturer. Unless you're a competition pilot you probably won't have heard of them because for years they only made competition gliders. The Aircross philosophy was to simply produce a very small number of gliders with more performance



than anything else in the world. Recently, Aircross have widened their range to include the

highest performance entry level glider ever designed, they have an intermediate glider whose release is imminent, a serial class competition glider, and the highest performance open class glider currently available.

This highly specialist company is led by designer Herve Corbon and manager Konrad Gorg. This company which has been going for over 10 years has continually pushed the limits. They released their first true 2-liner in 2005 which was years before anyone else.,



Actually, Aircross and Flight Culture have much in common, both offering highly specialist products so it was natural that we should end up working together. We are now a test center and will carry a wide range of demo gliders. These gliders aren't for everyone, but will appeal to those who are looking for something that is truly outstanding.

