



Interviews with Princeton High School aviation enthusiasts

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Tyler Cenci '25

Tell us about your journey to getting a pilot’s license.

I started flying when I was in sophomore year. I soloed a plane, which means I flew by myself, for the first time on my 16th birthday, which was in 2023. Since then, I’ve worked towards, my rating [and] my license, [and] I just got it in January 2025. So, it’s taken almost two years exactly to go from no flying at all to getting a license.

It’s definitely been challenging, but it’s also been really rewarding because there’s a lot of things you need to learn.



Who have been your biggest mentors when you learned to fly?

Over the course of my training, I’ve had three people that have been mentoring me.

Two of them have been my flight instructors ... I worked with [my flight instructors] Josh [Nunn] and Mike [Lenner] to train and to build up my skills. And then the third person would be my dad. My dad’s also a pilot, so he’s taught me a lot of stuff about aircraft systems and airspace and all of the knowledge based items that I need to learn. He’s been a great help and inspiration to me ‘cause I probably wouldn’t have had the idea to fly if it weren’t for him.

What are some of your craziest or best experiences flying?

One that just comes to mind immediately is this thing in New York City on the Hudson River ... it’s called the Hudson River Corridor. This corridor is right over the right over the Hudson River in, otherwise really controlled airspace for Newark and JFK and LaGuardia.

But there’s this little corridor over the river that is uncontrolled. So as a private pilot, I can fly in there and I can go see the buildings so touring the Hudson River in a plane [is] probably one of the best experiences that I’ve had. The challenges of maneuvering there have been really fun and enjoyable to go through.

You fly between 1,013 hundred feet. That places you above all of the obstructions bridges wise, but it places you below like the top of the World Trade Center and the Empire State Building, so it’s a really cool perspective to fly alongside the buildings.

What are your future plans? Do you plan on continuing on your pilot journey and pursuing this further?

As a career, I want to become a commercial airline pilot. I’m committed to the Florida Institute of Technology for aviation. My major is Aeronautic Science and Flight. When I’m there, I’m going to get all of the rest of the ratings that I’ll need to become a commercial pilot. And hopefully once I’m out of college, I’ll work for airlines and then eventually make my way up to one of the big three airlines, which is United, Delta, or American. That’s my end goal.

Shaurya Ranjan '27

What do you do during Aviation Club meetings?

Sometimes, we have debates where people are split up into a pro and con side and then they debate it out and try to come to an agreement or a conclusion on an aviation topic. Sometimes, we have open discussions. We give them a prompt and everyone can share their ideas on it. Recently what we’ve started doing is having a “guess the cause of the crash” [activity] where we give them the facts of a crash, but we don’t tell them what happened or why. And it’s up to them to deduce what happened without looking it up.

My goal is for us to develop a community of people that have this interest in aviation or maybe [want] to have an interest in aviation and haven’t found a way to really connect to that yet. [I want to] create an open environment where everyone can sort of share their thoughts and opinions about this topic, and we all grow together as a community.



What initially got you into podcasting about aviation?

In the summer after eighth grade, I didn’t really have anything to do in August. I knew that my passion for aviation was really strong ... Initially I thought about going into photography because that’s a big part of being an aviation enthusiast.

But with all the camera equipment and then learning all of it, it’s quite a process ... I realized that podcasting was an equally great way to share my thoughts on the aviation industry. And with photographs, you can’t really talk about history ... whereas with my podcast, I could dive into a lot more nuanced stuff.

What is planespotting and what got you interested in that?

Basically, you go to a place where you would see planes very frequently ... Plane spotting is basically the hobby of going to a location near the airport — in JFK, there’s Rockaway Boulevard, which is right behind two of the runways — you can watch planes as they land, get some good pictures, [and] identify the aircraft. One of the fun games that I like to play while plane spotting is like, I see an aircraft and I try to guess what it is, and as it gets closer, I start to realize what it is.

I think plane spotting is such a unifying thing in the aviation enthusiast community because almost all of us have done it at some point ... If you’re really interested in the mechanics of it and the physics, you really get to see that when you’re playing spotting, and I think that’s a really gratifying experience.

Do you plan to continue pursuing aviation?

A lot of people’s minds immediately go to me wanting to be a pilot. I think being a pilot is a great career option, but for me, I think my interests and skills lie elsewhere ... I would love to go into making the aircraft.

Managing the engineers that are making it [and] being a part of the team that’s on the frontier of new aerospace discoveries. I like being an engineer in the aerospace industry would be a really great experience [and] I’d really be on the forefront of innovation.

graphics and
photos: Emily Kim

Anatomy of a Plane

Kylie Sek and Claire Tang, CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Fighter Jet

Fighter jets are high-speed military aircrafts that are designed for air combat. They are equipped with various military-grade weapons and advanced maneuvering capabilities.

Stabilizers: Relatively large and aerodynamic horizontal and vertical stabilizers are located on the rear of the jet to enable maneuverability.

Wings: As fighter jets often fly at supersonic speeds, their wings are designed to be thin and triangle-shaped with short spans.

Radome (cone tip of the plane): Radomes are designed to protect an aircraft's radar antennas, increasing its ability to navigate and communicate.

Cockpit: Though the cockpits are pressurized, the pressure increases at intervals rather than continuously. They also have special pressure modes for combat to prevent sudden depressurization if the jet is struck.

Landing Gear: Unlike passenger planes that land at a g-force of around 1.3, jets land at g-forces up to 5.5, with the landing gear designed to sustain such extreme forces.

graphics: Emily Kim

Passenger Plane

Cruising at an average of 6.6 miles above the earth, this type of plane is meant for transporting people and cargo across long distances. With a long, tube-shaped body, pressurized cabins, and noise-canceling insulation, they are designed to optimize passenger comfort and provide a safe means for transportation.

Tail Fin: A vertical stabilizer aligning aircraft with its direction of motion, stabilizing it through gusts of wind and other disturbances.

Wings: Designed to generate lift, wings are made of a curved top and flatter bottom, creating pressure differences that push the plane upwards.

Jet Engines: Provides power for high-speed flights through expelling a high-speed jet of hot air backwards, propelling the aircraft forward.

Cockpit: Enclosed area containing flight instruments allowing the pilot to steer the plane. Its windows — designed to withstand bird strikes — are made of thicker, stronger glass than passenger windows.

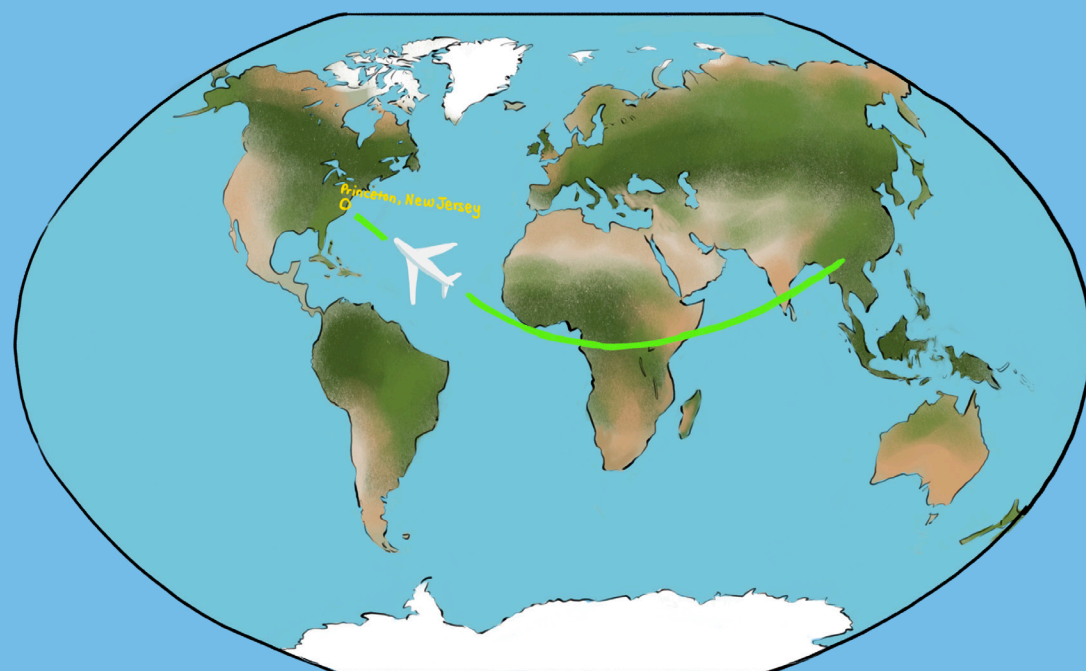
Landing Gear: The undercarriage of an aircraft meant for absorbing and dissipating kinetic energy during landing, reducing the impact to the airframe. It includes wheels and tires, brakes, retraction mechanism, and struts.

Around the World in 80 Ways: Unique Flights!

Maxime DeVico, STAFF WRITER

Fastest plane: The fastest plane in the world was unmanned. In 2004, the NASA X-43A flew at a speed of 9.6 Mach, which translates to about 7,366 miles per hour. The plane flew at that speed for 10–12 seconds above California.

Longest non-commercial flight: Robert Timm and John Cook piloted the longest flight ever recorded, flying for 64 days, 22 hours, and 19 minutes. Their journey began on December 4, 1958 and ended on February 7, 1959, when they landed at Harry Reid International Airport. One of the men would pilot the plane while the other rested, and they would refuel midair.



Shortest commercial flight: The shortest commercial flight goes from Westray to Papa Westray, two of the Orkney Islands in Scotland. Offered by Logan Air, the flight lasts 57 seconds to two minutes long depending how much wind there is. The reasoning behind taking a flight this short is because the only other option is to take a choppy and dangerous boat ride.

Landing On a Beach: The Barra airport in Scotland is unique because many flights are scheduled to land on the beach Traigh Mhor which happens during low tide. Workers have to ensure that the beach is dry enough before planes land to make sure the plane won't get stuck.

Paving the Sky: Aviation Pioneers

Anaya Sinha, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Amelia Earhart

Born in 1897 in Atchison, Kansas, Earhart grew up with an adventurous spirit and a fascination with aviation that began after witnessing a stunt plane at a state fair. During World War I, she worked as a nurse's aid in Canada and she later studied aviation in California, where she earned her pilot's license in 1923, becoming only the 16th woman in the United States to do so. In 1932, Earhart became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. As her Lockheed Vega lifted off the runway, its crisp engine scorched the morning mist and began to carry her through the thick clouds. Earhart flew for nearly 15 hours, enduring fatigue, mechanical issues, and a variety of storms. Her red monoplane eventually carried her into the history books, accomplishing what few dared to attempt. In 1937, she attempted to circumnavigate the globe but her journey was cut short when her plane vanished over the Pacific. Her legacy, however, never faded. Today, Earhart isn't remembered for just where and how long she flew, but for how she made others believe they could reach just as far.

The Wright Brothers - Orville and Wilbur

What does it take to lift human ambition off the ground? Raised in Dayton, Ohio, the Wright brothers grew up in a home filled with curiosity, books, and encouragement from their father, a bishop who nurtured their love of learning. They got their hands-on experience working at their repair shop, where they primarily repaired printing presses before shifting to bicycles. As their fascination with flight grew, so did their commitment. The Wrights learned how to design, test, and improve machines. Over time, their attention turned skyward. They refined wing shapes as they studied bird flight and tested several control systems, treating the vast sky like a problem they could solve. In 1903, after many years of trial and failure, their homemade aircraft lifted off the dry sand of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The flight lasted a mere 12 seconds, but opened an entirely new realm of possibilities for the skies. The Wright Brothers are remembered today as the inventors of the airplane, and proof that bold ideas, persistence, and two great minds working together can change the course of history.

Bessie Coleman

Forbidden from flying schools in her own country, Bessie Coleman crossed an ocean and a language barrier to take to the skies. Coleman was born in 1892 in Texas, one of thirteen children in a working class Black American and Native American family. As she grew up in the segregated south, she helped support her household through various jobs before discovering her passion for aviation, a dream sparked by stories of World War I pilots. At the time, no American flight school would accept a woman of her background, so Coleman learned French, traveled to France, and attended the Caudron Brothers' School of Aviation in Le Crotoy. She learned to fly using a Nieuport 22 biplane. In 1921, she became the first Black and Native American woman to earn an international pilot's license. Upon returning to the United States, Coleman performed various daring stunts at airshows, gaining popularity as she used her platform to challenge restrictions and barriers in the aviation world. She quickly earned the nickname "Queen Bess" for her fearless airshow stunts, doing figure eights and dives that left crowds breathless. She dreamt of opening a flight school for aspiring Black aviators. In 1926, while training for a show, she died in a tragic plane crash at the age of 34, but her legacy soared far beyond the bounds of her own life. Bessie Coleman opened the skies to generations of pilots who had previously been advised to keep their feet planted firmly on the ground.