



RISK INFORMATION

FLIGHTS FOR NON- PILOTS IN A SPITFIRE

1) What is the History behind flying in ex-military aircraft in the UK and why haven't we been allowed to do it before?

It is important for us to explain to you, as clearly as possible, the risks involved in flying in a Spitfire. Historically the Civil Aviation Authority, have erred on the side of caution, believing that the average non-pilot has insufficient knowledge to understand the level of risk they are taking when flying a vintage warbird. With the success in other industries of adventure sports such as bungee jumping, car racing etc. there has been a change of policy, providing the operator of the aircraft takes the time to explain the risks to the participants, and minimise these risks as far as possible.

2) What are the differences between a Spitfire & the aircraft in which you might go on holiday such as a Boeing or Airbus?

The Spitfire is not an aircraft built for passenger carriage. It was built as a war machine whereas Boeing and Airbus make their aircraft almost solely with people's safety in mind, so there is a clear difference in design philosophy that affects safety. This is compounded by the fact that the technology is many years apart and older aircraft are mechanically less predictable so unexpected failures more likely. That said, flying in all types of aircraft remains very safe, whether it's used for travel or as a pastime.

3) So what risks are you taking when you fly the Spitfire, and what can we do and what have we done already to minimise these risks, or reduce them as far as practicable?

Before worrying too much about all the things that could go wrong you should first consider our PILOTS and their history. They are all professionals, from commercial or military backgrounds. They are all highly experienced in flying vintage aircraft, and they undergo regular competency checks and recurrent training by ourselves in addition to the other professional training they receive. Amongst them are some of the finest pilots in the country.

Being a good, pilot is about making constant well-informed, safe decisions throughout a flight that will avoid any of the potential scenarios which we will discuss during this briefing. In the event of an incident of any sort, it is about acting calmly and applying professional training to guarantee the best outcome possible from the situation in which they find themselves.

There is a well-known saying in aviation that states: "A superior pilot is one who uses his superior judgment so as not to have to use his superior skill".

So what can go wrong?

ENGINE FAILURE

In most non-pilot's minds this means the end! It does not. Just like any other aircraft, the Spitfire will glide. If there isn't an airport near then the pilot will choose a suitable landing place. The aircraft will stop in about 100 metres in any field we choose. The reason we don't do this all the time is because it will mean some damage to the aircraft.

MAINTENANCE

This provides an opportune moment to talk about our aircraft maintenance. We at Aircraft Restoration Company (ARCo) are responsible for the maintenance of a large number of Spitfires flying today.

Each year the Spitfire goes in for an Annual Check during which time all panels are removed, revealing the control systems, engine and aircraft structure, all of which are thoroughly inspected.

Throughout the season, the aircraft has interim servicing consisting of a 25 hour, 50 hour examination which includes checking the engine, undercarriage and control systems

ARCo have a team of highly trained engineers who carry out a thorough check prior to each day of flying and remain on hand throughout the day.



MID-AIR COLLISION

This flight will be performed in uncontrolled airspace, which means once we depart the airfield we will not be directed by an Air Traffic Controller. It is, therefore, our responsibility to see and avoid other aircraft, a task you will be asked to participate in once briefed by your pilot prior to the flight.

A key part of your pilot's job is to maintain a good lookout at all times to ensure the risk of a mid-air collision is minimised but, should the worst happen, you still have options. Mid-air collisions do occur outside controlled airspace every year, however, this is balanced by the fact that there are also hundreds of thousands of safe flights every year. Should this occur you still have options; one of those is bailing out and using the parachute.

SAFETY EQUIPMENT

We will give you a comprehensive brief on the equipment you will have with you on this flight, such as flight suit, boots and gloves, helmet, lifejacket and parachute. All this equipment is fire retardant.

PILOT INCAPACITATION

There is also the extremely remote possibility that your pilot could become incapacitated. If this were to happen then you'd still be able to use the parachute. However, to reassure you, all our pilots are Commercial Pilots who carry Class I medical certificates, which entails having regular thorough medical examinations to check that they are fit to fly passengers.

And finally, there's.....

YOUR OWN HEALTH TO CONSIDER

The Spitfire is a very dynamic aircraft and it is possible to get very excited in it. We are, therefore, obliged to ask a number of questions about your health and weight prior to your flying, whilst we also reserve the right to make our own decision about your suitability for flight. Should we need to have such a discussion with you regarding this, please don't get upset. We are doing it for your benefit and safety. In some rare cases it might be necessary for you to go to an aviation doctor to assess your suitability to fly.

There is also an AGE LIMIT that needs to be considered. There are no upper limits. Suitability just depends on your health. However, we cannot fly anyone younger than 18 without parental consent.

4) **Are there any statistics that contextualise the risks, and is it any more dangerous than a track day, parachute jumping, bungee jumping, kite surfing, Paragliding, hill walking, or even riding a motorbike.**

We have looked closely at the risks involved and whilst there is some data available, it is very difficult to provide any reliable figures that would provide a basis for comparison. What we can say is that the risk of serious injury or death in other General Aviation activity for the duration of the flight you are about to undertake would indicate a less than 1 in 300,000 chance of death. This is a generalised statistic - with the CAA's guidance and support, we go to a great deal of effort to minimise risk on your behalf, utilising highly experienced pilots, top class maintenance, and robust operational procedures, as well as providing you with comprehensive safety equipment. With this in mind, we consider our operation is probably safer than many other General Aviation activities.

So in summary, if you choose to fly in the Spitfire, there is an increase in risk, but the overall chance of injury, or indeed death, is likely to be less than many other potentially hazardous activities such as bungee jumping, hang-gliding or motorcycle racing.

5) **If something does go wrong what is your Insurance status when you fly?**

I fully understand and agree that ARCo or any person(s) acting on the group's behalf accept no liability or responsibility in any way for injury, including death, damage or loss of property which I may suffer, or incur, unless as a result of the direct negligence of ARCo personnel. ARCo carry third party and passenger liability of £25 million to cover these flights.