

Student Works

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## The Jump Seat Experience

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## **The Jump Seat Experience**

**Luke Moriarty**

It was a Tuesday afternoon as I sat in the conference room of Aegean Airlines, an airline based in the country of Greece. My fellow peers, professors and I were here on a study abroad program, currently participating in a week long workshop with the airline company. It was lunch time, all gathered around at rectangle tables when we found out the answer to our long-anticipated question. The Chief Pilot stood up stating he had an announcement to make. All of the students including myself had a look confusion and anticipation on our faces, we wondered could this be what we have been waiting to hear all week? The looming question was whether or not we would fly jump seat on an Aegean Airlines flight.

In the United States, the ability for a non-airline employee to sit in the cockpit of a commercial airliner was abolished after the September 11 terrorist attacks. However, in other countries, such as Greece, the decision about who can and cannot be in the cockpit is left to the pilots.

The Chief Pilot stood up from his seat, and proudly presented us the opportunity to fly jump seat. To sit, watch, and feel what it's like to be in the front of the plane is, for an aviation enthusiast like myself, a dream. It has been my goal to be a pilot since I was a little boy.

On the day of the flight, all I could think was, is it 4:45pm yet? It seemed as if time was standing still. I couldn't contain my excitement. I was constantly checking my watch as I paced up and down the terminal still in shock over what was about to happen.

When 4:45pm arrived, there were four Embry Riddle students including myself ready to go. Two would fly jump seat during the outbound leg and the other two, the return to Athens. We scanned our boarding passes and boarded the quick 40-minute flight. I chose to sit in the jump seat on the return flight from Mykonos. I wanted the best possible view of leaving the picturesque island. I knew our departure would be special because the airport has a tight 6,244-foot runway and is surrounded by mountainous terrain and clear blue water.

Once we touchdown in Mykonos, I waited for passengers to deplane before walking to the cockpit. I shook the pilot's hand and was greeted with a big smile and enthusiastic hello. Conversation flowed naturally. The captain and first officer were kind enough to answer all my questions regarding how all the controls in the cockpit work. They even explained some of the main components of the Airbus A320. As we pushed back from very small terminal the aircraft came to life as the engines began to spool. The flight displays became illuminated, Air Traffic Control started giving instructions, and before I knew it the cockpit was fully operational. As we pulled onto the tight runway, the wheels lined up with the centerline and the engines roared. My shoulders flew back as we accelerated down the runway. We climbed over the tall mountains of Mykonos and then made a left turn, banking over the beautiful blue Aegean Sea. The mega yachts below started to turn to specs as we climbed to 12,000 feet.

Looking at the world from a view I've never seen before was outstanding. It was a view that confirmed I want the cockpit to be my office. It's one thing to look out of the window from the body of the airplane, but the view from the six

front square windows at the controls created a panoramic image I will never forget. This experience only made my desire to become a professional pilot even stronger.

As we got closer to Athens and the sprawling metropolis situated in the mountains came into view, the captain flipped on the seatbelt sign. Descending into the ancient city, I knew that being a pilot is the job for me. I thought to myself “I cannot wait to do this for a living.” The jump seat was more than just an amazing view while flying back from Mykonos, it was a real-life application of my hard work and dream to fly an Airbus on my own. This flight served as a reminder of what I am passionate about. Thank you to Embry-Riddle and the Office of Global Engagement for providing me with an opportunity that has further fueled my passion for aviation.

