

If you need time out from the stress of work, kids, household chores and all the other lovely stuff which goes along with everyday life, then may I suggest you leave it all behind and head to Tauranga for a Gyroplane flight.

Having never flown before - you can't really count the time when I was ten and I jumped off my tramp and flew into the sandpit - I found myself at Tauranga's airport café, sitting down with boyfriend and three people, who looked suspiciously like pilots.

Over my cappuccino, I was unsettled about plans which had been made for a surprise.

Then I learned this surprise involved me and something called a Gyroplane.

After more explanations, I was more than unsettled - try terrified!

Why terrified? Look at what I was going flying in! There're no walls for starters.

And when it's a windy day like it was when I got to fly, walls would have made me feel a whole lot safer.

First I had to sign a waiver, which did not really reassure me very much, in fact quite the opposite could be said... luckily my insurance was up to date!

In fact, this is sensible practice and proved to me that I was about to fly with someone who takes his business seriously.

That's Tony Unwin by the way - the man who heads up gyroplaning in New Zealand and who has flown more type of aircraft than I've had breakfasts in bed - according to boyfriend anyway.

Tony had me dress up in a very fashionable - not - thick red overalls and a heavy jacket.

Red really is not my colour.

I have to say between those and what I was already wearing, I felt like the abominable snowman.

My ensemble was finished off with some nice, warm, black gloves and a helmet with a walkie talkie device built in.

Trust me, no matter how much you hate wearing red, you will be very thankful you feel and look like the abominable snowman when you're in the air, because its cold up there!

'Bumpy, bumpy bumpity bumpity' is what you feel when the Gyroplane goes across the grass to the runway where you take off from.

"This is as bumpy as it will get" said Tony, whose enthusiasm for Gyroplaning was becoming ever more obvious.

"Fantastic," I thought, "but this is OK. We're safe on the ground, if I fall out, nothing bad will happen." And before my next thought could form, up, up and away we went.

I think I must have been as white as a ghost as I realized not only was I around about 1500 feet up in the sky, but the only thing that was really keeping me safe inside this thing were the seatbelts and the fact we were still upright.

I found flying over the ocean a little unsettling at first, for some strange reason the idea of falling out and plummeting into the cold blue water was...oh wait...it's actually quite pretty from up here...

The first few minutes were scary, but if you stop thinking about what could happen and just enjoy the view then you - like me - will be in for a very pleasant experience.

Some people may enjoy flying over the ocean and taking in the vast blueness, the waves, the kayakers and surfers, but for me, the magic was flying over land.



From the gyroplane looking down on all the rows of houses, the swimming pools in back yards, trampolines, roads and cars that looked like matchbox toys, it was like looking at a miniature model of a town and really quite exciting.

Tony kept me up to date with what was going on via the walkie talkie thing and while we were joyriding across the sky, I learned a few things...

Apparently, the safest flying machine designed to date is, can you guess? Yes, it's the gyroplane.

After a 20 minute flight taking in the scenic sights of Mt Maunganui and the coastline, my first foray into flying was over and done - all too soon on reflection - and we alighted gently on the ground at Tauranga airport.

This has to be on the list of something everybody should do at least once in their life.

Oh and if you find you really enjoy sitting in the passenger's seat but you think piloting is more you, Tony can teach you to fly your own, and from there you can progress to buying your very own Gyroplane. Hmm....

If you want to find out more, then get in touch with Tony at Gyrate NZ via the www.gyrate.co.nz website.

Carpool Day August 5 2009 **WOULD YOU CARE TO SHARE?**

Sick of the traffic jams?

Want an easy way to reduce your impact on the environment?

Aucklander Sarah Painter has a solution - she is organising Auckland's first carpool day on Wednesday, 5 August 2009.

"It might sound like a crazy idea, but we'd like Aucklanders to have a go for one day," says Sarah.

Carpooling is all about commuters sharing their cars, thereby making a difference to the Auckland traffic situation, doing something positive for the environment, saving themselves money, and having some fun with friends.

"We've set up a website www.carpoolday.com," says Sarah "where people can make a pledge to carpool on Carpool Day, find out more about carpooling, and get advice on finding fellow carpoolers.

"We're hoping that people will be so interested

in the idea of Carpool Day, they'll encourage their friends and family to pledge as well. We aim to have 1,000 people carpool on Carpool Day.

"By having a go on Wednesday 5 August, you'll make a difference to the traffic and the environment, and find out if carpooling is something you want to do more regularly."

Sarah, an environmental educator, was inspired by her partner Ian, who carpools to work every day with family members.

"I think we all know there are too many cars on Auckland's roads, and for many people, public transport is not a viable option.

"Carpooling is the perfect solution - it saves time, money, fuel, wear and tear on your car, reduces traffic congestion and air pollution.

Carpool Day is an entirely voluntary project - Sarah has roped in friends to help, and is looking for more people to get involved and make it happen. Visit www.carpoolday.com to find out more.

Psst! Wanna win some more FREE stuff?

As you know, Rush Hour has been out on the streets for some time now and we know that a good many of you enjoy reading the magazine.

We'd like to know a little bit more about what you think though, and make your magazine look a whole lot better.

Now, some of you folks out there are quite handy with the Interweb thingie, and that's why we've decided to do this online. Besides, it's the end of school hols, so you probably can't find your scissors.

Just go to your nearest computer and go to the www.nzrushhour.co.nz website.

Now you can tell us online all the things we can do a little better and be in to win some top quality gear from Honda Motorcycles (and no, our ride team is NOT allowed to enter, so you have a pretty good shot at getting something out of it, other than a better magazine, that is). And if we don't get much in the way of responses, we'll assume that we're doing OK.

If you really don't like something we do, now's the chance to tell us. Or you could just tell us we're doing fine - and have a better chance of winning!