



Free Preview

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Fly Like a Bird – Paragliding

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1. What is Paragliding?

A Brief Overview of Paragliding

Paragliding is both a pastime and competitive sport that makes use of assisted human flight. A paraglider is a free-flying, motorless aircraft that can be launched simply by running. The pilot is firmly attached to the harness and to launch into the air he runs rapidly down incline boards, downhill or mountains. Once airborne he sits comfortably in the harness.

The pilot maneuvers the wing by shifting his or her weight and through the use of brakes that can alter the form of the end part of the wing. Aside from manipulating the suspension lines, the form of the wing can also be changed by the pressure of air going through the vents at the front part of the paraglider. As the shape changes, the pilots can change the course of their travel and go virtually anywhere they like providing the weather conditions are good.

Equipment Make Up

The wing of the aircraft is primarily made from rip-stop nylon using special strengthening techniques. This makes the fabric extremely resistant to being torn or ripped apart. The wings are put in place with the use of Kevlar lines that are strong, resistant but light-weight synthetic

fiber that secures the pilot's harness.

The harness is the part of the paraglider where the pilot can use either standing or sitting position and is designed to provide the most comfort and ease during paragliding. Instruments that paraglider pilots use include variometers, radios, and Global Positioning System (GPS) units while flying.

These instruments provide safety for the pilot and enhance their flying experience by giving information on how rapidly they are rising or falling. For individuals who wish to experience the calm and peace of flying like a bird through the clear, blue sky, the investment is worth every penny.

About the Goal

The primary goal of the paraglider is to ascend on wind currents. In the history of paragliding, world records have been made as recognized by the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI). On November, 14, 2007, Frank Brown, Rafael Saladini, and Marcelo Prieto made a world record for paragliding with a straight distance of 461.6 km in Duque, Brazil. On December 7, 2006, Urban Valic and Aljaž Valic of Slovenia reached their intended goal of a straight distance of 368.9 km in Jamestown, South Africa.

On January 6, 1993, Brandvlei of South Africa and Robbie Whittall of the

United Kingdom made a record in gaining a height reaching up to 4,526 meters. The most recent record was achieved by Nevil Hulett with a record of flight beyond 500 km in South Africa on superb conditions.

Comparison to Other Flying Sports

Compared to other forms of human-assisted, motorless aircraft such as parasailing and parachuting, one of the favorable characteristics of paragliding is that the whole wing and harness can be tucked inside a 30-pound backpack. This allows the pilot to go back to another round of flying or to carry his or her wing by checking it in as baggage in buses or airlines.

Other motorless, human-assisted aircrafts such as hang gliding, parachuting and parasailing allow the pilots to soar in the air but may provide different experiences. In hang gliding, the equipment is much heavier compared to the paraglider and must be carried by a luggage rack on a motor vehicle. In hang gliding, the pilot has to be positioned in a prone position instead of sitting as in paragliding. Hang gliders, however, fly at more rapid speeds and can soar higher than paragliders.

Paragliding Training

Courses and training are very important for anyone interested in learning and engaging in the sport. Fundamental techniques and flying solo can be learned within the usual 2-day introductory course on paragliding. If the

person develops more interest in the sport and wants to continue paragliding, they should get a certification by enrolling with advanced courses and training. This course can take about 10 days.

Choosing the School

When choosing a reputable school that can provide good quality and safe instruction in the United States, look for paragliding instructors that are certified by the United States Hang Gliding Association (USHGA). If unsure about the reputability of a certain school or instructor, it is recommended to contact the United States Hang Gliding Association (USHGA) for more information.

How to Paraglide

Paragliding is an aerial recreational and competitive sport enjoyed by tens of thousands of enthusiasts all over the world and its popularity still continues to grow. This sport makes use of an ascending parachute that literally soars or flies in contrast to the parachute that descends slowly to the ground, such as when jumping out of an airplane or unloading cargo.

The tear-resistant and strengthened paraglider wing is attached to a harness that supports the pilot. The whole aircraft is maneuvered with the use of foot pedals with ropes attached to the paraglider wing or canopy. The wing will change its shape as the pilot utilizes the pedal and changes the position of his or her body.

Paragliding as a Sport

Enthusiasts of the sport find paragliding an exceptional and very enjoyable sport. With paragliding, one can enjoy the experience of flying like a bird and at the same time appreciate a different view of the surrounding environment. Individuals who may have heard or seen paragliding in pictures for the first time will be sure to entertain the idea of doing it, unless they have some kind of phobia of flying and heights.

About the Rules

Like all sports, however, it has its own set of rules and learning how to paraglide takes time to master. Another potential issue that one may encounter is the equipment needed for paragliding plus expenses in training school; one may find that paragliding is not at all an affordable activity to engage in. Although paragliding is expensive, it is definitely worth every single penny as people who give it a shot find out.