

## Training on the Albatros L39 with “Fly & Fun”



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All starts with a sunny day in Reims airport. This is not time for Champagne but time for being upside down!!! Just imagine, a good preliminary debrief on the ground including Aircraft Systems, Briefing for the Flight, Pre-flight Inspection, Cockpit Adjustment, Safety Brief, Flight Instruction and how to use the rocket strapped below your seat... As said by Michel *“ONLY to be used with a clear message from me Ejection - Ejection - Ejection”* unless you want to leave him alone on board!

We move then to the Engine Start procedure and once ignition is done the *“after start”* Xlist is as simple as a C152... Few checks from outside by our ex Jaguar military engineer Stephane who was very friendly and helpful, with a short taxi and a strong break application! We are good to go, no leaks!

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Taxiing is unusual with nothing on top of the rudder pedals. It's a single hand break on the main control coupled to the rudders. Quite surprising at first glance but after a few meters the yellow line remains below the nose (close too...) You then realize that you are sat in an Eastern Soviet bloc machine together with the Air Speed Indicator in meters... Once aligned, T/O Clearance, Flaps, brakes on, power rate and after 10s brakes released, Air Speed alive, 50km/h, 100km/h, 200km/h, 10° attitude, nose up but it keeps the main gear on the floor for several meters. It's a military aircraft! Then finally in the air, gear up, 3 greens (but also

3 reds as the gear retracts...) Once we reached our desired altitude, I flew west 2000 ft to reach the D-day coast in Normandy. Some clearing turns. 30°, 60° banks to feel the aircraft and the G. It's so smooth and reactive! I fight against the needles, not because of the aircraft but because my rusty skills... The electric trim is also so efficient that you cannot fly bad, but you need muscles to compensate for no hydraulic control systems, straight cables! The view over Normandy is awesome despite that we face the sea cloud along the coast. Not sure what Michel said to Poseidon but only the D-day beaches were clear of clouds!



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**/ BREAKING NEWS**

Few strong changes of attitude and I have the Liberation beaches on my left cruising at 400+km/h and at low altitude. A dream!

Now time to return home, power set climbing FL115, all smooth and so calm. Field in sight and Michel takes back the controls above the tower at 1500ft, clear to enter the Lh circuit to land and a few seconds after a Rh break I realized that we were on base leg, gear and flaps down and ready to land. Guess I missed something... On short final the speed is around 200+ km/h, the feeling looks fast compared to a light jet but in fact we are close to similar Jets Vref. approach speeds. Kiss landing, as usual with Michel. Back to the hangar and nice de-brief with a few litres of water. After an hour and an anti-G suite on, Michel message is clear, "on est pas là pour enfler des perles", we are not here to bake a cake!

I am back in my favorite cockpit and few minutes later we are heading to an aerobatic zone East direction. A nice straight road below me to keep ground references and let's go straight into to the G-force manoeuvres, yet the thrill is unbelievable. Barrel Rolls, Loops, Sharkstooth overs and rapid

acceleration descent maneuvers. I keep fighting against the G forces to avoid Black vision and save the face... It's the stuff of strong dreams!

Once back in Reims after 40 mn flight time and 2 liters of water lost, I feel exhausted but still feeling in the clouds!

After a nice recovering night, same plans for the day after except that we went over the Formula One Circuit of Magnicourt showing friends who were racing what is really pedal to the metal or we should say controls to the max! I wish Thierry would have been here as I know these similar feelings can exist on a circuit.

This experience was still the most wonderful flight of my life, let's complete the final type rating! Nonetheless you must remember how crucial training of your aircraft has to be. There is no risk of ego or such things with Michel and his team, these pilots, engineers know the importance of flying close to the limits and the potential dangers of being arrogant or overconfident! Certainly the best school of life, thanks to the whole team!!!



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