

DARE to EXPLORE

BY C.M. TOMLIN

Pilot Barrington Irving—who broke a record to become the youngest person and first African American to fly solo around the world—discusses the importance of confidence at 17,000 feet.

“I was flying from Saudi Arabia to Egypt when a wall of sand suddenly rose up in front of the plane. As I flew into the sandstorm, grains began seeping into the cockpit through vents. I could hear the sand scraping the outside of the aircraft. All I could do was hope that none of it got into the engine turbochargers, which would have been disastrous. Luckily I made it through the storm unharmed.

“My trip around the world took 97 days and included 145 hours of flying. Sometimes I flew more than 12 hours in a row before making a stop. And there were times after landing when I had to crawl from the plane on my elbows because I lost my leg strength during the long flight.

“It’s lonely in the air by yourself, and it can be scary. You hear thunder louder than you’ve ever heard it before. Wind shakes the plane all over the place, and at night it can become so dark you don’t know upside down from right-side up. But being a pilot is totally worth it. You have the opportunity to explore the world from amazing heights. You just have to trust yourself and your equipment. There are so many things to discover, but you have to get out there.”

“You have to have confidence. If you don’t believe, no one else will. Confidence will always keep you going.”



WANT TO BE A PILOT?

STUDY: Algebra, chemistry, biology, and geography

WATCH: *Flight Simulator* or *X-Plane*—with this computer software, you can fly virtually

READ: Anything you can get your hands on, including magazines such as *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics* to keep up with technology

CELEBRATING

125
YEARS

The NG Kids series “Dare to Explore” helps celebrate the 125th anniversary of the National Geographic Society, which was founded in 1888. Grab a parent and go to nationalgeographic.com/125 for more information. Coming next month: Photographer Joel Sartore snaps pictures of amazing wildlife.



IRVING IN THE COCKPIT

THE PILOT FUELS HIS AIRPLANE.



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