



NON-AIRTIGHT

first flight

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St. Augustine Air Tours functions with the mission to transform an ordinary day into an extraordinary experience of a lifetime, while providing unique, early 20th century sightseeing flight experiences over St. Augustine with safety, professionalism and customer satisfaction as primary goals.

In my case, extraordinary can be replaced with a more absolute term: unforgettable.

On a windy Saturday afternoon, I ended up 1,000 feet in the air simply because I said “yes.”

It was my first time on any type of aircraft, and I was afraid. But what better way to inspect the distinctive characteristics of a 1935 model Waco open cockpit biplane than to enjoy its features firsthand while coasting through a transparent sky that didn't look as beautiful from the ground?

Even the evening thunderstorms that were expected in the area weren't mighty enough to diminish the thrill of my first major spontaneous adventure.

While soaring over St. Augustine's most notable attractions, I recalled what Gary McDonald, information and sales specialist for St. Augustine Air Tours, said to me right before I strapped myself in for takeoff.

“Anyone can take a trolley tour, but there's so much more to see from the air.”

He was absolutely right.

Similar to but not advertised as a nature cruise, St. Augustine Air Tours offers five scenic flights for visitors to choose from, with the option to soar over the St. Augustine Beach shore, the Great Cross of Mission Nombre De Dios, San Marcos Fort, The Bridge of Lions, Flagler College, The Lighthouse on Anastasia Island and more.

Established almost 20 years ago by Steve Collins, an experienced pilot and native of Jacksonville, the primary flight company Acadia Air Tours was first developed in Bar Harbor, Me.

With a desire to extend his business closer to the place he calls home, Collins decided to form St. Augustine Air Tours in November 2011.

The company also has a third location at The DeKalb-Peachtree Airport in Atlanta.

Over the past three years, the entire Acadia Air Tours aircraft line has experienced a 10 percent increase in fuel usage (11,000 gallons in 2009, 14,000 gallons in 2010, and 17,000 gallons in 2011).

The first flight at the company's newest location occurred on Jan. 14, 2012.

Full-time pilot Dave Genet is responsible for managing the flights on the St. Augustine location's single Waco aircraft, af-

fectionately referred to as a historic time machine.

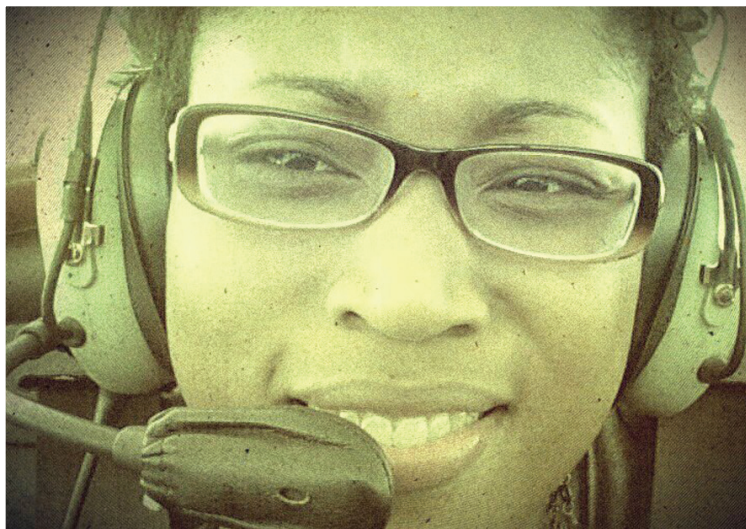
Designed for two passengers sitting together side by side up front with the pilot flying from the rear cockpit, the 1935 model Waco aircraft, which was recently re-badged with the 450th logo, is a brand new FAA-certified production aircraft powered by a 7-cylinder Jacobs radial engine.

Those who volunteer to take flight will travel back in time to the golden age of aviation sharing the sights, sounds and spirits of adventure experienced by famous aviation pioneers such as Amelia Earhart and Charles Lindbergh.

Flight instructions aren't presently offered, however, with St. Augustine Air Tours, solo flyers will have the rare opportunity to “take the stick” and fly the biplane with the expert guidance of an assigned pilot.

This flight option is only available with single passengers and is limited to 20 minute or longer flights. “Sunset flights” are also highly recommended for a memorable visual experience.

Currently, St. Augustine Air Tours is rapidly booking anywhere from one to 10 flights a day or more, which is contingent upon the time of year.



The city's tourist attractions and beautiful, year-round sunny weather, along with the unique ceiling decorations above the information center that showcase various types of planes were a literal and metaphorical “sign from above” for Collins and his team.

At St. Augustine Air Tours, providing an opportunity for non-fliers, beginners and experienced fliers to enjoy historic scenery from creative flight angles and creating lasting memories for visitors and tourists are

the main objectives.

While describing the features of the 1935 Waco aircraft model, and obviously noticing the bewildered look on my face, I'll never forget the moment Pilot Dave looked at me and asked, “Would you like to go for a ride?”

That windy Saturday afternoon when I spontaneously ended up 1,000 feet in the air will always be a reminder of the time that I was brave enough to simply say “yes.”

All aerial adventures depart out of St. Augustine Airport (just north of town off U.S. 1). The Waco plane operates from 9 a.m. to sunset (weather permitting), and earlier flights can be arranged.

Scheduling is recommended but walk-ups are always welcome. Visit www.staugustineairtours.com for more information or call (904) 819-0002 to reserve your flight.