

Having your head in the clouds is not necessarily a bad thing

It's a familiar ritual of flying, that moment when you're buckled into your seat and the cabin's loudspeakers come to life with a voice that says, "Hello, this is your captain speaking. Welcome aboard." But how many times in your travels has that voice belonged to a woman?

Hayley Pritchard, pilot for the Tintswalo Property Group, always knew she wanted to fly but that didn't necessarily mean she saw it as a career.

"Growing up, my dad had always had an interest in aviation and had taken us to a couple of air shows so I had always wanted to fly. In my matric year my parents gave me the option of either going to university or going to do my fixed wing licence, and at that stage I think I chose the safer option and went to study," explains Pritchard. "It was in my final year of Human Resources Honours degree that I got to go for a flight in a helicopter, and that was it, the bug bit and I just knew that I had to fly helicopters for a living."

Pritchard has been flying commercially for the last six years and says that the best part of her job is that it takes her to places that she wouldn't ordinarily choose to go herself.

"For me there is nothing better than being able to do what I love," says Pritchard. "There's just something about flying that gives me such a rush. I am so grateful to be able to work for a company that literally gives me the wings to live my dreams. I also love the fact that my job is so diversified; normal is boring. It's the kind of job that insists you stay on top of your game."

The only downside she will admit is spending so much time away from her family, but Pritchard certainly makes up for lost time when she has some spare time on her hands, citing spending time with family and friends as well as going to the gym, reading and shopping as some of her favourite past times.

Even though Pritchard loves what she does, she knows it's not a typical career choice for women but would really like to see that change.

"Even though it is male dominated industry one can't expect any special favours by being a woman. We really need to make the extra effort as it will ensure that women are treated as an equal. That being said, this is a definitely a career that you can excel at and I would love to see more women choosing to become pilots in the future – having your heads in the clouds is definitely not a bad thing," she concludes.

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