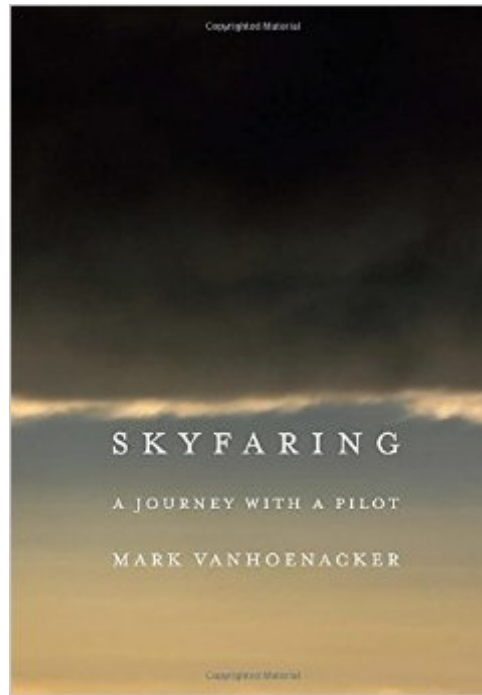


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Skyfaring: A Journey With A Pilot



Synopsis

A poetic and nuanced exploration of the human experience of flight that reminds us of the full imaginative weight of our most ordinary journeysâ "and reawakens our capacity to be amazed.Â The twenty-first century has relegated airplane flightâ "a once remarkable feat of human ingenuityâ "to the realm of the mundane. Mark Vanhoenacker, a 747 pilot who left academia and a career in the business world to pursue his childhood dream of flight, asks us to reimagine what weâ "both as pilots and as passengersâ "are actually doing when we enter the world between departure and discovery. In a seamless fusion of history, politics, geography, meteorology, ecology, family, and physics, Vanhoenacker vaults across geographical and cultural boundaries; above mountains, oceans, and deserts; through snow, wind, and rain, renewing a simultaneously humbling and almost superhuman activity that affords us unparalleled perspectives on the planet we inhabit and the communities we form.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Many years ago I had a friend whose brother in law was a Navy fighter pilot- or "aviator," as he preferred to be known. He hated the regimentation of the military, he hated long carrier cruises that took him away from his family- in fact, he hated just about everything about the Navy save for one: Flying F-14s off a carrier. For him, the thrill of the catapult launch, the ability to climb like a rocket, and to soar in the sky, unfettered by gravity- all that made it worth putting up with everything else. I have other friends, hobby pilots you might call them, who have more prosaic job, and who fly on the weekends, or on vacation. For most of them, their regular job is just a way to earn a living; it's not

until they step into a plane- their plane- that they feel truly alive. To those of us whose only exposure to flight is as passengers, x-rayed, groped by the TSA, and crammed into an aluminum tube, listening to a pilot wax eloquently about the great romance of flight reminds us that there's something magical, something romantic, about it. Writers like Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Ernest K. Gann, Richard Bach and others have written of the transcendent experience of flight, of how it allows mere humans to escape what poet John Gillespie MacGee Jr. called "the surly bonds of earth" and "touch[ed] the face of God." More recently, William Langewiesche's "Inside the Sky" has tried to put the reader inside the mind of the pilot, to feel what he feels as he flies cross country, taking in privileged view of the Earth below. Mark Vanhoenacker writes very much in the spirit of those earlier poets of flight.

Okay, you know who you are. You're the passenger who always chooses a window seat, so you can gaze out during the flight, looking on as the world on the ground passes smoothly beneath you. Maybe you like traveling at night, so you can see the lights of cities large and small twinkling below, reminding you that the world is a series of lights. Maybe you wish the inflight entertainment monitors would show the takeoffs and landings so you could see what the pilots can see. And even though you might find it difficult to put yourself completely in the hands of those at the airplane's controls, you love to fly. It's for those fliers - and I'm including myself - that Mark Vanhoenacker has written "Skyfaring: A Journey with a Pilot". Mark Vanhoenacker is American born and raised and is pilot with British Airways. Now in his 40's, he took up piloting somewhat later in life than most; he didn't become a commercial pilot until he was 29. But he had always loved flying and airplanes and traveling, and had known from an early age that he wanted to fly commercially. Vanhoenacker has flown two plane types in his career; an Airbus which flew the "short" routes in and out of London, and the 747, the plane for long flights. London to Tokyo, London to Cape Town, London to Mumbai, to name a few. "Skyfaring" is not a conventional book about flying airplanes. Vanhoenacker takes the reader on voyages through the air while talking about both the mundane and the magic of flying. Dividing the book into a series of chapters, some of which are "Lift", "Water", "Encounters", and "Return", the author takes the reader up in the air with him.

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