

About Gliding

You can participate in the sport of gliding in different levels, for example many simply enjoy learning to fly, and others want to fly hundreds of kilometres in National competitions. Of course the first step in learning to glide is to have a trial instructional flight with one of our club's qualified instructors. We offer these flights at \$50 for a winch launch, or \$160 for a longer aerotow launched-flight.

Learning to fly

If you decide to continue further then the next stage is learning to fly. You will receive both theoretical and practical training from the club's voluntary instructors.

Practical flying takes the form of launches or tows to medium altitude and gliding slowly back to the landing strip. You'll be in a 2-seat glider with the instructor sitting behind you in the rear seat. Throughout the flights you will be using the controls under guidance of your instructor. Each flight lasts about 20 minutes but could be much longer if rising air currents can be found (which is normally the case). It would take about 20-50 flights before you go solo. You will also study the following subjects: theory of flight, weather, air law, human factors and other gliding related matters. None of the subjects is difficult, especially at this "A/B cert." level.

Post solo flying

After your first solo you will continue learning with advanced instruction, as well as longer solo flights. Increasingly you'll be flying on your own and trying to find rising air or "lift". You are probably aiming for your "QGP" or qualified glider pilot licence. Along the way there will be further study towards your radio exam and other topics such as cross country soaring.

Cross country soaring

Many club pilots reach QGP status and continue to fly within 10 or 20km of their club airstrip. However for others there's the lure of "heading for the hills" and exploring areas 100km or more from home. Clearly such flying is out of gliding range of the airstrip and requires being aloft for many hours. These flights involve using lift: thermals, wave and ridge lift. You may be flying close to mountains, or perhaps 20,000 feet above the plains. All the time you will remain within gliding distance of a safe landing area, this may be a farmer's paddock or another airstrip. If you land out in a paddock then (hopefully!) fellow club members will drive out to pick you up and tow the glider home in its trailer. Modern gliders only take a few minutes to "rig" or derig and the trailers tow easily behind a medium sized car. Several times a year our club packs up the gliders and trailers them over to another club for a weekend's visit.

We usually visit Omarama and Five Rivers at least once a year. It is good experience (and fun) to fly from another location. Glider pilots are a very social bunch.

Awards, competitions (and records!)

There are several internationally recognised award badges that can be gained. For example flights of 50, 300 and 500km each qualify for popular awards. Other awards now exist for longer flights that are now possible in modern high performance gliders. Skilled pilots have flown over 2000km distance in a day's flight.

Summer is competition season. Each year there are North and South Island Regional, plus an annual National competition. Tasks are set and points are earned for speed and distance flown. Many pilots compete for fun and friendship, but NZ has produced world-beating champions too.

Many world records have been set in NZ for speed, distance and altitude.

Own your own...

If you really enjoy your flying then the time may come to buy your own glider. The cheapest gliders are now about 40 years old and can be had for about \$8,000. These will be made of wood and fabric and offer only low to medium performance. These gliders offer a lot of fun for a minimum investment.

For \$20,000-\$50,000 you get a fibreglass glider with quite high performance and requiring little maintenance. These gliders will be 20-35 years old yet still perform almost "as-new". This generation of gliders currently makes up the bulk of private and club fleets. They are always popular and hold their value well.

Gliders younger than say 15 years can be quite pricey. This is because their performance is close to that of a new model, and new gliders may cost \$150,000 or more!

Aside from the initial purchase your next biggest expense will be the annual insurance bill. This may be 4-5% of the insured value. Other annual maintenance cost will add another \$1000 or so to your running costs. In general you could say that owning and operating a medium priced glider will cost about the same as a good sized boat. Obviously if 2 or more like-minded pilots get together a syndicate can be formed and this is common practice.

For further info on gliding with our club:

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Or look at our website: www.cofc.co.nz

Or turn up at the Alexandra Airport one Sunday (we fly all year)

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