

For Lufthansa's female pilots the sky is not the limit

Lufthansa female commercial pilot, Barbara Kühlenkamp shares her experience of being a female pilot in a male-dominated field.



Barbara Kühlenkamp

Becoming captain of the big and beautiful Jumbo

"During my career as a female pilot, I have to say that I have only had good feedback from passengers and equally good experiences with male colleagues. Certainly, as a woman in this job, you are always focused on more than your male colleagues and you receive more attention, but I knew this would be the case from the very beginning and accepted the situation in order to move forward."

Ascending to this professional level to fly the Lufthansa Boeing 747-8 from Frankfurt to Johannesburg, Kühlenkamp always yearned to soar through the clouds. "I got enrolled as a trainee in 1989 at the Lufthansa Flight School in Bremen and also trained in Phoenix, Arizona. After two years I became the first officer of the Airbus A320, which I flew throughout Europe. After flying short and medium haul routes for over twelve years, I had the opportunity to become a captain of the big and beautiful 'Jumbo', which I have been flying for the last two years. I love this aircraft and truly enjoy being able to fly it around the world," Kühlenkamp says.

High demand for female pilots

Amongst other female pilots, Kühlenkamp has proven that the sky is the limit for women, and now many more women view being a commercial airline pilot as a career path. Despite the biggest obstacle being training and opportunities, Kühlenkamp believes there will be a very high demand for young female pilots in the next few years.

“Aviation is continuously growing and offering increased opportunities, especially for young women, although I’d advise women looking to start a career in aviation to have a solid training and education background because it will be their greatest basis for a successful career. By doing so, they’ll be preparing their way for the future and they can follow their path and fly as high as they can to where their career leads them.

By believing in dreams becoming a reality, one of the most exciting moments I experienced was 28 years ago during my training flight: it was the first time I was allowed to fly a single-engine aircraft by myself without a flight trainer – my first solo flight. It was such an exciting moment for me and afterwards, I was overwhelmed with happiness,” says Kühlenkamp.

The face of Lufthansa

Jo-Ann Strauss, former Miss South Africa, businesswoman, proud mom, and the Face of Lufthansa in South Africa, is adamant that women should never question their self-worth, or their ability to realise their goals.

“When we question our abilities and self-worth, we are giving into unsubstantiated ideas about the role of women in business and society. South Africa and the world have come a long way since the days when the only role that women could perform in the business world was that of a secretary.

Having flown often in Lufthansa’s Boeing 747-8 between Johannesburg and Frankfurt, and the Airbus A340-600 between Cape Town and Munich, I am very much aware of the responsibility of those pilots and co-pilots that command the skies. The pilots of Lufthansa are exceptionally talented, and are an inspiration to young women and girls alike – they are examples of how women can overcome traditional stereotyping and achieve anything that they put their heads and hearts to,” says Strauss.

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