

Powered Paragliding

As crazy as it sounds, it can be a ... safe way to fly.

Story and photos from John Kelly



A beautiful evening for my first flight

If you aren't already aware, powered paragliding is a form of flight using a carefully engineered frame and harness to sit in with a 2-stroke engine mounted propeller strapped to your back. All while hanging from strings mounted to a glider made of fabric. As crazy as it sounds, it can be a reasonably safe way to fly.

This unconventional practice of aviation has given me the opportunity to experience what feels like the most natural form of flight with an unobstructed view, without the hidden costs of hanger storage and rigorous airframe maintenance. All while having the ability to launch and land in smaller landing zones.

Many have described it in the same way as a child - who hasn't dreamed of the ability to fly?

Most of my life I have been heavily involved in motorsports and some extreme sports. Turning to PPG only felt like a natural progression to pursue a dream.

After a year or more of research in the sport, I felt it was the safest and least costly avenue into the art of aviation.

This brings me to training. There aren't many people who train PPG in Canada. Luckily for me, there are 2 very qualified trainers in Ontario, with maybe only a dozen nationwide.

So myself, alongside my friend Jason, gathered up the money and confidence to sign up for training with Andre Zeman of Powered Para Gliding Ontario, Andre is also a dealer

for the Canadian made paramotor frame, Kangook. I knew going into training that this experience was only going to further my desire to fly.

Once completing the theory and even before taking my first flight I was hooked! With much research and from advice of my trainer, I decided to make my purchase of a new Kangook paramotor and wing.

Throughout training, I quickly realized there is far more going on here than meets the eye. I learned that to become a safe and proficient PPG pilot, one needs to be a mechanic and meteorologist with an understanding in aerodynamics and aeronautical charts with a lot of patience.

Since completing my training in September of 2020, my next hurdle was to find a safe space to fly. This is when I really learned how amazing the local PPG and UPAC community is. It was suggested that I visit Kathy and Ed at their airfield in Bright, Ontario along with the amazing UPAC members. There I met some very insightful people who were willing to assist "the new guy" in efforts for me to achieve

Right: In the air at last!

Below: John Kelly (left) with Jason Boerman (right) relax with their ppg units.



confidence in my new mission to fly.

I have now logged a bunch of flights with some new found friends out of Lubitz field and I am thrilled for what is to come. Powered paragliding has brought me so much on a personal level and in my experience, life changing. I would highly suggest this sport as you can experience self gratification on so many levels.

I would I like to thank all the helpful UPAC members at Lubitz field for all their positive support and the passion for flying that unites us.

In a world with all that is going on, this is exactly what is needed to keep one grounded.

