

Italian female Pilot , FEWP and 99's member , achieve new World altitude record with Autogyro

For more than 10 years the World Altitude Record with an Autogyro was fixed at 26,407ft (8,049m) having been achieved by Andrew Keech in 2004 in the USA. However, since Sunday 8th November 2015, a new World Record has been set at 27,556 feet (8,399m) in Italy, breaking the previous record by 1,149ft (350m) – by a female pilot, Donatella Ricci born in Rome but living close to Venice since 7 years.



Donatella is Instructor in an airfield close to Venice (Caposile, Club Papere Vagabonde) and is flying fixed and rotarywing aircraft, as well as the autogyro, for more than a decade.

The idea for the record attempt came to Donatella in January this year, after the classical first-of-the – year flight with the member of my flight club. Since then she has devoted herself to planning, studying and testing the attempt. In August, with special authorisation from ENAC (a NOTAM to climb up to FL280 in a controlled airspace), she began altitude training, at which point she discovered several problems that needed to be solved before attempting the record. There was the limited availability of oxygen present in the atmosphere at that altitude, causing difficulties breathing and also for the engine itself and the very low temperature which affects both human and mechanical systems. But finally, with the support and encouragement given to Donatella by AgustaWestland colleagues, and the Magni family, the Sorlini industry and SG FlyEvolution who fitted and maintained the autogyro, Donatella finally reached the record breaking altitude of 27,556ft last Sunday, validated by the The International Aeronautical federation (FAI).

Donatella said “The panorama and the feeling flying at that height is incredible and very difficult to explain in words. It’s a mixture of admiration and fear, surprise and curiosity, pleasure and respect. At the moment I reached the top of my flight , on Sunday, I took a second to realise that I was doing something that wasn’t permitted to everybody and that I was a really privileged person. To say thanks to God in that moment was the only reasonable thing to do. “

A last and funny note about this great result is that Donatella just after having reached the top of the flight, was so enthusiastic and happy that she tried to communicate to the ATC operator : “I succeed, I did the record ! “ but unfortunately all the attempt to speak with Treviso were negative (radio temperature problems) . She tried also to speak with the base airfield but she received the same negative result.



Without hesitation and without losing the moment, she took a second to decide to take a selfie, to keep live the incredible moment and the scene in front of her eyes.

