



**A need for speed:** This New Zealand Air Force BAC 167 Strikemaster (disarmed) jet fighter is available to take daredevils high in the sky.

**Below:** Australian Jet Adventures pilot Darren Deroia prepares to take off.

Pictures: IAN WILSON

## Top gun over our skies

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But most passengers, including myself, have to settle for an array of rolls and loops with a speed and grace roller-coaster builders have tried in vain for decades to duplicate.

Passenger and pilot experience up to four gees (gravity increased by four) and get close to zero (weightless).

As we entered our first barrel roll, I felt pressure building as though someone was leaning hard on my shoulders. That increased so much holding my head straight was difficult and raising my arm was like lifting weights.

As we spun into the barrel roll, it disappeared so completely that for a second I would have floated from my seat were I not strapped in.

And as exciting as the rolls and turns were, that view was still the best bit.

## Top gun in our sights

By ALEX EASTON

AS a teenager I, like every other boy I knew, wanted to be a fighter pilot.

Yesterday I found out why.

A new joy flight company based out of Ballarat and Essendon airports is taking thrillseekers up in its former New Zealand Air Force BAC 167 Strikemaster (disarmed) jet fighter.

Company marketing manager Christine Segaert and half-owner/

pilot Darren Deroia said they chose Ballarat because it was welcoming, had a good airport and was near Melbourne.

Flying in the fighter is exciting but expensive. Just starting the engine costs more than \$200 in fuel and maintenance.

If a customer can afford it, the plane can fly to 12,000m — high enough to see the curvature of the earth.

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