

PART 2 – IN ORBIT

P2T2 VLOG 2

Hi again.

I've spent 4 hours now, boiling in my suit, gazing at the panels; watching the levels of fuel and oxygen, calling out the answers to the checklist from MIC.

All going well, Tazz. We have reached 17,000 miles per hour. Pressure, fuel, engine functions all normal.

Thanks.

It would be hard for me to operate the controls myself with these heavy gloves on. Most of these switches are ones you flick or turn. All the vital ones are two-stage, so you couldn't knock one accidentally and turn an engine off; you'd have to confirm, maybe even lift a flap before you could get to the main functions. They think of everything, these engineers! And, of course, the plan is that MIC will do all the flying of the ship, anyway.

I am programmed, Tazz. It is straightforward, and my sensors will warn me of any malfunctions.

Lucky for me.

How are you feeling Tazz?

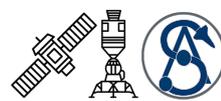
OK. Excited.

It's weird to think that only about 100 people in the history of the world have done what I'm doing now. Peering down out of my window at the Earth, I can see the continents so clearly and the amazing blue of the seas. When I was 15, I had a book about space flights. My photos of the Earth didn't have these brown clouds I can see today. That's the air pollution. Parking orbit circularised.

The 3 little origami birds I brought with me start to bob about in the air. I know what this means! When I untie them, they float away, spinning over my head. Free fall. Seems like magic even though I've prepared for it for years. They put us in a centrifuge in training. It's like a fairground ride. A giant revolving arm with you strapped to the end spins you at incredible speed. You tense your muscles; your face gets stuck in this massive terrified grin wondering if you will pass out. I never did. Also, they made trainees fly in a plane going in steep swooping curves. We all called it the vomit comet.

It is safe to take off the spacesuit, Tazz.

Great.



It's in two sections so I'm doing the top half first then the legs. Woah. They are stuck to me so tight it's like climbing out of an extra skin.

Being able to move about the cabin, at last, is fantastic; there's hardly space to swing a cat but I'm doing some stretches, floating around ...I'm doing a forward roll. Wow, that's so easy! It's fantastic to be up here. Fantastic but just a bit....eugh....my head is spinning now!

Bleuch...

Oh no, I wish my last meal on Earth hadn't been scrambled eggs!

Bleuch

Space sickness bags are in F14. Did you take your anti-sickness medicine Tazz?
Nope...I forgot. I'll do it now MIC.

I'm now moving slowly about the cabin, catching the sick droplets in a towel. It's like yellow rain; sorry, but even this is beautiful, trying to catch every bit as it floats around and trap it. Think of it like water droplets on a duck's feathers but the wrong colour, obviously. Using the space toilet went OK. It's all a matter of getting the suction going so the liquids all travel up a tube. Practise makes perfect I think. I certainly practised enough on Earth. Anything liquid is recycled to make my drinking water. Solids get stored in a pouch or frozen. Then they might be burnt later or just discarded into space.

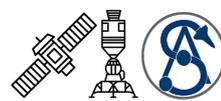
I've been thinking about explaining how they selected me in the first place in case this is useful for any of my Vlog followers who may be considering the Space industry as a career.

My background is in science; I did a degree in Physics then specialised in Geology. That's how I come to be working for Mineralec. Training lasted two years once I got selected for this mission.

I had intelligence tests, operating robots, tests of my blood pressure and fitness; pedalling a bike and press-ups. How well could I withstand pain? How well could I operate machinery when they froze my hands? Ice water was poured in my ears to see how well I recovered from vertigo. They watched my eyes and I couldn't focus properly and then my vision slowly went back to normal. I even remember having to swallow a rubber hose. It sounds like a lot, doesn't it? But I told the people testing me that I liked to take risks and they nodded.

Because floating in water is the nearest to the microgravity of space, I spent many hours in a massive adapted swimming pool. You wouldn't believe the things they had underwater: a full spacesuit with its own oxygen supply, tasks for learning underwater mechanics, using a drill and making repairs.

Lots of my training was done in a simulator which is identical to the inside of a ship where a computer can create problems that could happen to you in space and you work through the answers. You can make mistakes safely and understand why something went wrong.



At one point, they made me float in a tank in total darkness with no light, hearing or smell for hours. I liked that. I'm good at switching my brain off.

Wilderness training was interesting. This was to prepare us for an unexpected landing in some remote place on Earth. Ed and I were left in a desert and spent several days using our wits to survive: build shelters, find water and not get attacked by snakes and spiders. The great thing is, there aren't any spiders up here in Space. To be honest, I hate spiders.

I'm sucking a pouch of fruit juice. Everything is in pouches up here. I've also eaten a bit of vegetable broth. It comes in a pouch and you just connect it to a nozzle in the side of the ship. 5 minutes later it's ready to eat.

Excuse me, Tazz, I have your parents transmitting...

That's great MIC. Put them on.

Hi love.

Hi Dad. Hi Mum. I'm fine. Everything's great.

Can you hear me?

I can hear you fine. It's just a bit slow. There's a time delay.

Hope everything's going well. We watched the launch. It was spectacular. Then we were interviewed. Are you properly in space now?

Yes

And everything's going the way it's supposed to?

Yes. Completely. How's Puzzle?

She's fine Tazz. Romping in the back garden, chasing the squirrels.

You'll spoil her rotten.

We're so proud of you. Get plenty of rest tonight; you've been through a lot.

I will. Send everyone my love. I'll be home soon.

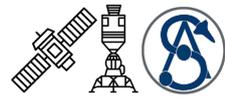
Bye!!

Transmission over.

That was great.



Time to get some sleep. Wake me if there are any issues, MIC



Going to lunar transfer orbit, ready for your mission, Tazz. Rocket engines are now firing to 25,000 miles per hour.

Sounds good.

Spitting is a very bad idea because anything liquid will float in droplets, so I swallow the toothpaste. I wash using a pouch of water and a bar of no rinse soap. I squirt a bubble out through a straw, catch it and rub all over my hands and face then towel dry. Short hair is so much better than long which drifts into your eyes. That's why I have mine spiky.

I have a card wishing me good luck from all the guys at work and some photos I've saved for this moment: my dog Puzzle rolling in the cherry blossom in my parents' back garden; Ed and I climbing on Ben Alder, a Scottish mountain; Mum and Dad and Puzzle on a beach in Cornwall on one of those endless sunny days.

My sleeping bag is attached by a bungee cord to the side of the ship. It's like a cocoon and very cosy with arm holes and a hood. I'm like a caterpillar now.

My sleeping bag is rocking and floating away from the wall. It's very soothing.
Good night everyone!