

Indoor skydiving attraction simulates free falling — with zero chance of hitting ground

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The more time you spend practicing indoor skydiving, the fancier your moves look to the observers on the outside of the large plexiglass wind tunnel.

Inside the tube, you are riding atop a steady 80 to 160 mph blast of air. The hurricane-force wind is generated by 450-horsepower fans in the ceiling that push air in opposite directions atop the building, down both sides and up through the floor.

Welcome to iFly's newest location in Davie, the company's 37th indoor skydiving attraction in 18 years. Since the first iFLY opened in Orlando in 1999, the company has built attractions around the world, including Brazil, Australia, and Sao Paulo, and the smaller "Rip Cord by iFLY" on three [Royal Caribbean](#) cruise ships.

The company has also built wind tunnels for military training and as attractions under other brand names, said president and chief operating officer Matt Ryan. Lately the company has been riding an expansion wave, opening 16 attractions over the past year.

The Ultimate in Entertainment

The newest attraction, built at 11690 W. State Road 84, just off Interstate 595, cost between \$10 million and \$12 million to build, including furnishings and staff training, says sales manager Joe Souza. It opened to the public on Feb. 11.

If it's your first flight, like it is for Sue Reddy Silverman and her colleague Caroline Williams, you're just concentrating on remaining in a free-fall position -- chin up, legs extended, hands over your head -- as the wind and your "flight instructor" keep you aloft. Don't worry, you can't fall far. Most of the flight is spent just three to four feet over a mesh floor that would easily catch you.

"It's perfectly safe," Ryan says.

Nonetheless, Silverman and Williams are asked to sign waivers before their flights affirming they are flying at their own risk. But after half-jokingly predicting she would hit a wall and die, Silverman emerges from her inaugural flight fully intact in the bright red and blue iFLY flight suit she was issued.

"It was an amazing life experience," she gushed. "At first you're scared to do it, but once you're in, it's exhilarating. But it's weird. All this wind! It's in your mouth!"

Silverman and her colleague Williams work for Duree & Company, a Fort Lauderdale public relations firm, and are contracted to promote the Davie iFLY in South Florida. They said they needed to experience what they were urging others to enjoy.

More advanced derring-do takes time and practice and iFLY won't mind if you get hooked and come back for many more sessions.

Instructor Andrew Carlisle zips around like Superman, zooming out of sight where the 14-foot-wide tube disappears into the ceiling, then rapidly drops down before turning a somersault or two and shooting to the ceiling again, as if

buoyed by an invisible jack-in-the-box spring.

You won't perform like Andrew after your \$69.95, two-flight visit. But iFLY offers numerous packages to fit every budget and of course the more flights you buy, the less they cost.

Weekends are typically the busiest time for iFLY, with 200 to 300 fliers, said Souza, the sales manager. On weekdays, iFLY depends on group bookings, such as birthday parties, corporate events or school field trips that teach kids the science of how wind tunnels work.

Pricing begins at \$69.95 and includes two one-minute flights and a personalized flight certificate. Additional flights are \$20 each, and group packages include free video clips from flight sessions.

Souza says he'll tailor a package price for any sized group — even actual skydivers who have been known to visit the attraction to experience the familiar rush at a lower price.

Although indoor skydiving doesn't offer the ability to travel distances, it also doesn't cost \$250 for a free fall lasting just 30 to 60 seconds, says flight instructor Devin Barillari. Actual skydiving requires packing your parachute and hitching another plane ride — a wait that usually lasts an hour, he says.

Chris Newman of Coral Springs confirms the appeal to experienced skydivers like himself. He's known through the skydiving community that iFLY was coming and he's here during the opening week, confidently zigging and zagging inside the tube.

"It's very similar to skydiving. You're just not jumping out of a plane," he says.

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