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## Pilot's historic journey stops on Long Island

BY BRANDON BAIN

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Barrington Irving, a Jamaican-born pilot, traveled from Cleveland to Long Island yesterday, the second stop of a journey that would make him the youngest pilot and the first black to fly solo around the world.

Irving, 23, a college senior, touched down in a single-engine airplane at Republic Airport in East Farmingdale in high spirits and was greeted by some flight students. The Miami-bred pilot started his six-week, 23-stop trip five days ago in Florida.

"I'm just glad that this flight is attracting kids who might not have considered a career in aviation or are a little bit discouraged," Irving said.

Irving is to continue his trip tomorrow, heading off to Canada, the Azores, Spain, Italy, Greece and Egypt. Packing energy drinks, water and nutrition bars, Irving said he tries to relax and plan ahead while he's in the sky. He puts the plane on automatic pilot when things are calm and prefers to read books, such as the Bible, to pass the time. He said he rarely listens to music, because he wants to "tough it out."

While the trip will take him around the world and back to Miami by the end of April, weather permitting, Irving said there is no speed record involved, so he won't rush. If he completes the trip, Irving will have logged at least 130 hours of flight time.

"I get a very limited time to enjoy the places I visit," he said standing near the red, white and blue custom one-seater aircraft he named Inspiration. "I have to constantly think ahead; it's like running a marathon."

Irving said he caught the pilot bug at age 15 when he met a Jamaican airline pilot, Capt. Gary Robinson, at Irving's parents' Christian bookstore in Florida.

Four years later, at 19, he obtained his private and commercial licenses. He also turned down several football scholarships in favor of a Flight Awareness scholarship at Air Force/ Florida Memorial University, where he is a student.

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By 21, he started Experience Aviation Inc., a nonprofit organization that encourages young people to consider aviation careers. Irving, who admires the Tuskegee Airmen, the noted black pilots of World War II, said he wants to set an example for young inner-city youths.

"I'm trying to do something now to share my story in the same way my mentor inspired me," he said.

Irving said he plans to write a book about his travels and complete a documentary film. While he travels alone, a videographer flies on commercial airlines to each of his destinations to document the journey. To get off the ground, his trip cost about \$800,000, based on sponsorships and money he raised himself. His sponsors include Miami Executive Aviation, Microsoft Flight Simulator and Chevron Corp., among others.

Irving will meet today with students at the CUNY Aviation Institute at York College in Jamaica, Queens. His trip can be tracked online at [experienceaviation.org](http://experienceaviation.org).

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