

Now that we are in the cruise section of the flight, flying at over 500 MPH or about three quarters the speed of sound, it is now time to really start concentrating on the arrival into Glasgow.

On a short flight like this, there is not a lot of time in the cruise and if we have managed a few short cuts with Air Traffic Control, even less. So use of our time is very important.

Today as the nominated Pilot Flying for this flight, as opposed to the Pilot Monitoring, I shall be landing the aircraft into Glasgow.

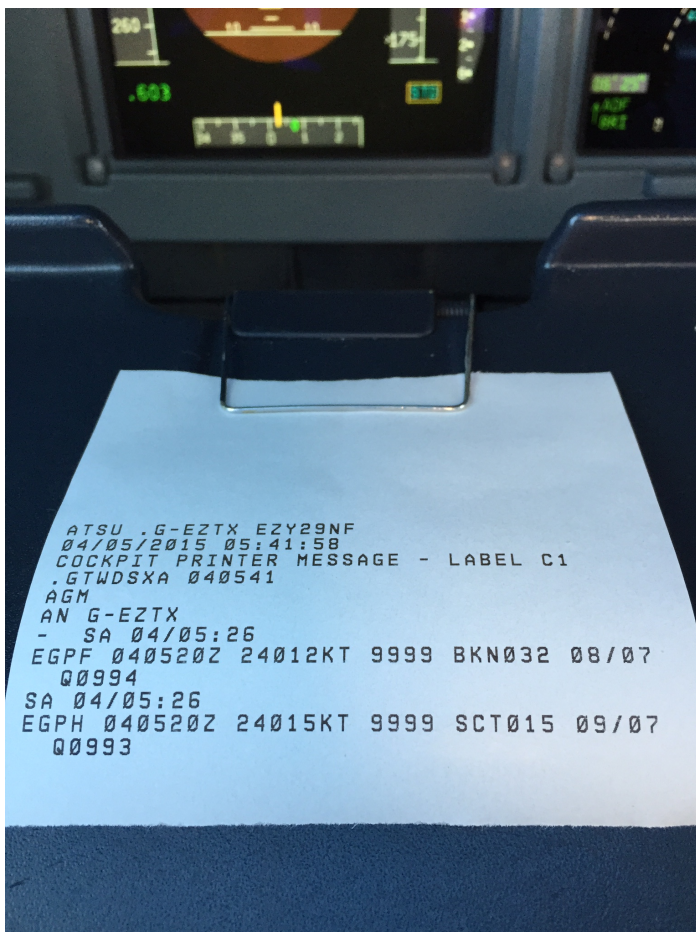
Unless there is a legal requirement to do an automatic landing in low visibility, then we will always manually fly the latter part of the approach and the actual touchdown.

At easyJet we are very fortunate to have the very latest technology in the Airbus aircraft we operate. As a passenger, there can be nothing more stressful or infuriating than a flight cancelled or delayed due to a foggy day.

When it is foggy or there is a very low cloud base, there are certain legal requirements set down for landings and also for take offs by our Regulating Authority. These affect both the aircraft being operated and the airports that we fly into.

Fortunately, flying the Airbus and operating into major airports means that it is very unlikely that we would be unable to land due to heavy fog, whereas other airlines would have to either hold or divert from their destination because of a higher visual requirement.

Today though, there is no adverse weather to affect us! Earlier at the briefing table, my co-pilot and myself would have assessed the weather and now is an opportunity to check that what we are expecting is still true. Through further Airbus technology, we are able to receive text like updates of the weather to the flight deck that we can print out.



From this report, we can decipher that the wind is from the south west at 15 knots, the visibility beneath the broken cloud of 3,200 feet is very good, 9999, the temperature is 8 degrees and the pressure is 994 hectopascals. The pressure setting is very important because to make sure that aircraft are all flying at the correct height in relation to each other, we use a standard setting on our altimeters that we select in the initial climb out.

Once we are in the descent we change our altimeters to the local setting as this helps maintain required clearance from obstacles as well as other aircraft in the approach vicinity. If you ever see another aircraft pass below above us, there is always at least 1,000 feet between us, and 5 miles separation horizontally, reducing to 3 miles nearer the airport.

So after we have checked the weather, it is my job to set the aircraft up for the approach to land. Generally the runway in use will be the one that allows us to land into wind, in this case, runway 23, which is orientated in the direction of 230 degrees.

Whilst I am programming the expected arrival into the computer- each airport will have a specific arrival to about 10 miles from the runway that we will fly from a specific direction - my co-pilot will be carrying out a landing performance calculation on his laptop. This is a double check that for the particular conditions of the day, we have sufficient landing distance available for the weight of aircraft. As in your car, surface conditions of the runway affect our performance and braking capability and these must all be checked.

Now that the aircraft is set up and my co-pilot has double checked all of my entries into the aircraft's computer, it is time to brief him on how I expect to fly the arrival. During this I will mention again the weather, the status of the aircraft, any airport notices that may concern us and any particular areas that we need to be particularly aware of. Going into Glasgow it would be wise to discuss the high ground towards the North of the airport and should we get any short cuts from Air Traffic Control from the anticipated routing, how we will deal with them. This may involve extending the spoilers on top of each wing which you may notice if you are seated by the window. They also cause a little bit of rumble as they are raised into the slipstream and allow to descend at a faster rate. A short cut will save us all time but it must not be at the expense of an unstableness too fast approach that would necessitate a go - around and flying the approach again!

At 36,000 feet and having done our farewell PA to you, we would look to be starting our descent about 120 miles from Glasgow. As pilots we take great pride from managing our descent as efficiently and smoothly as we possibly can. Not only does this make it quieter for you in the cabin, it is quieter for people living on the flight path to the airport as the engines are able to be at a low power setting for longer.

10 minutes before landing we will ask the cabin crew to make sure that everyone has their seat belts fastened and any final rubbish cleared away. We will then carry out our Approach Checklist.

As we approach 20 miles from the airport, our thoughts will now be about slowing the aircraft down to what will be our final landing speed. The speed that we will be touching down and flying the last 3 or so miles today will be about 140 miles per hour.

In order to fly that slow we will need to use the thrust from the engines and at the same time, increase the lift provided by the wing. Similar to the take off, we extend slats at the front edge of the wing and large amounts of flaps at the back of it. Also very importantly, we will also need to extend the landing gear, which we will generally do at about 6 miles out.



Air Traffic Control will by now giving us headings that will line us with the Instrument Landing System (ILS) at a distance, generally, of 10 miles and 3'000 above the ground. As we pop out of the cloud and have a good picture of the runway ahead, now is a good time to disconnect the autopilot and hand fly the last segment of the approach and landing. For us in the flight deck, this is definitely the most exciting and rewarding part of the flight!

As we continue to descend at about 700 feet per minute, the final landing checklist complete, and our visual decent now backed up by an invisible 3 degree glide slope represented on our instruments, my eyes are constantly looking out at the runway and then back in at the instruments. My co-pilot will be monitoring me at the same time, making sure that I am always flying the correct speed and at the correct heights.

As we get close to the ground, it's time for the heart rate to start increasing again as we gently fly the aircraft to the ground, for a nice soft touchdown!

Then it's a short taxi to the terminal. If the taxi time is going to be more than 3 minutes, then we will shut down one of the engines and taxi in on the remaining one. Again, this is more environmentally friendly as it uses less fuel. However, and particularly so if you are seated over the wings, you will hear some strange noises, rather like a dog barking! This is just the hydraulic pumps again maintaining their pressure. As we park on stand, all the ground crew will come out and be ready to make sure that in 25 minutes we are ready to fly back to Bristol!

I do hope you enjoyed reading my 3 Blogs, that hopefully have given you a little bit of insight into what we are doing during your flight. Thank you for reading and hopefully I might have the pleasure of flying you on one of our easyJet aircraft one day!