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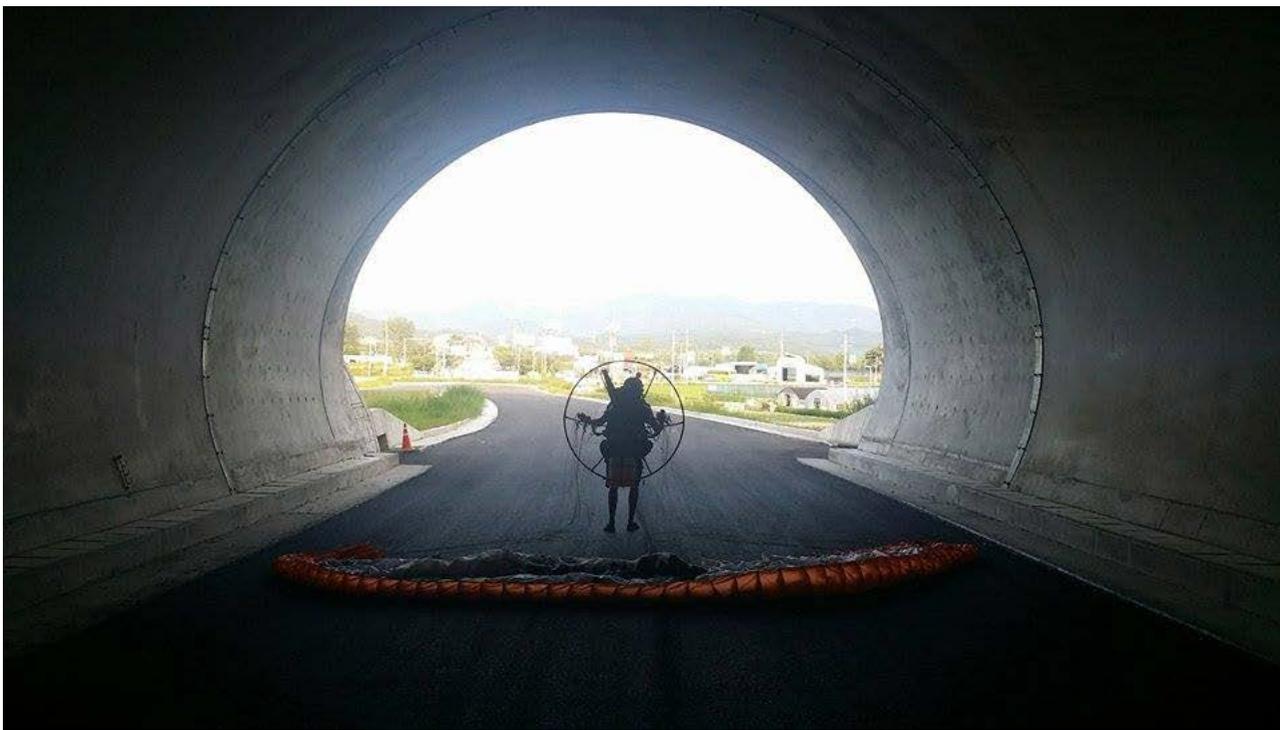
Photo : Glenn Tupper

URBAN PYLONS – KOREAN STYLE

"WE ARE THE ROVERS 2"

The latest episode of 'We are the Rovers' has just been filmed in Korea, starring Sylvain Dupuis and his paramotoring friends.

*Written by Sylvain Dupuis.
Translation by Ruth Jessop*



Please don't try doing this on the M25.

A year ago we travelled to Scotland to film the first episode in a series of films called, 'We Are The Rovers'. The concept is simple: a group of French and English speaking paramotoring friends with, as a common language, a lot of franglais on the tip of our tongues. Our goal: human adventures, cultural discoveries, and lots more... So plane tickets packed, a cameraman in tow and off we go... half way round the world to Korea.

We set off with just over 50 kg of luggage; our first change of train nearly brought the entire Parisian metro to a halt! Next stop, a quick kip on the floor in Beijing airport. So here we are, finally in Korea, pretty shattered after thirty hours of travelling by train, car, plane, underground and the inevitable waiting around for connections; such is the life of a paramotoring wild Rover.

For this episode, Paramania chose three pilots: Pascal Campbell Jones on a GTR24, Glenn Tupper on a GTR22 and me on a GTR18 (which seemed to have shrunk a bit in the wash – thanks Mum!) AH Studios were responsible for making the film.



Paramania's film stars.



Off for a spot of window shopping in downtown Chuncheon.

Korea was going to be a far cry from the setting for the last episode, Scotland, with its wild rugged landscapes. We would be flying in a raw urban setting where, luckily, paramotoring is more or less tolerated.

Let me guess: like me, you love beautiful fields with a slight into wind slope, cut grass, no obstacles, a windssock in all four corners and happy birdsong all around. However...!

Here, we're not on our home turf, but 5 km from the centre of the town of Chuncheon, with a population of 250,000 spread out over 1,100 km² !

The take-off is, needless to say, a gravel car park, in the lee of anything and everything, surrounded by power lines. A lake, a go-carting track and even an Olympic stadium all add to the fun. Arrgh! Time to pay a lot of attention!

Time to get into our harnesses. It's only 6 in the morning and four of us are in the air! Pasc, Glenn and me as well as the dual trike which is taking care of the filming. 400 m above the lake, we slalom about between some little wisps on this beautiful summer's morning. One kilometre away, the city faces us like an impenetrable rampart, like a giant hand

made of glass, metal and concrete. This is a first for me, and I start to realize just how hostile this urban environment can be.

It's like a monster, armed to the teeth, with traps that could catch you out on every street corner. Sometimes the power lines are even slung between two buildings, hidden in the shadows, watching us out of the corner of their eye.

The old town: The smell of sewage, fried food and exhaust fumes wafts skywards from seedy, shady streets.





And yes, the arms on all those cranes are moving!

These same buildings generate turbulence, as treacherous as it is invisible. Trees, posts, cars, buses, lorries, notice boards, trams, cows, calves and pigs all need to be avoided. It may be nice in the air but, it is war on the ground.

We are all a bit nervous, our stomachs churn at the same rate as our motors turn. But, we haven't come to Korea to try out the sandwiches, I put in a SAT over the town centre, and the two others follow suit with some synchronizations. Brilliant! Our butterflies have flown away to be replaced by adrenalin, time to go for it, time to swoop down over Chuncheon! 30 m above the ground, lower than the rooftops, we become conscious of the altitude, the sensation is vertiginous, really bizarre! It's as if, for all our lives as pilots, we had flown just on the flats, in two dimensions, and as if the third dimension, had only just appeared.

With maximum concentration, we fly as a tightly knit group, following each other very closely, doing wingovers between the buildings. Believe me, you need to be really wide awake to watch your flying friends, whilst at the same time looking out for electricity wires, buildings, cranes, cables

and masts, all of which jump out at you from every direction and, all that, combined with keeping an eye out for a quiet road or a football field to land in, in case of engine failure. We are all so stressed and it shows, you can feel it in our piloting. The slightest turbulence and we all react immediately! Fortunately, probability and statistics are on our side...!

Vile, revolting smells come up from the town and assault our nostrils: A mixture of disgusting drains, exhaust fumes and the smell of frying oriental food. We invent the expression 'Spring roll rotor' (I don't need to draw a diagram), a smell that always heralds bumpy air! The nearer we get to the old part of the town, the more enclosed it becomes, everything squashed in, and squeezed together. To fly so low is stifling, the roads are narrow and only leave us a few (in fact zero) emergency landing opportunities. You could read the billboards and the big screens, and the pedestrians wave to us...

Below it is hell! We fly between two ten storey high tower blocks, through a gap of just 30 m. As if in a high-speed chase we slalom into the bend dodging telephone aerials.



A lot more exciting than a video game!

*“flying through
spring roll rotor”*

It's like being in a video game, going round a giant obstacle course, in which we link steep turns and surges Tomb Raider style, a sort of pure speeded up urban border cross.

In the distance, a magnificent water tower seems to beckon, drawing us in like a pylon, begging us to come and play around it. It's one of those old fashioned ones, with a white and red trellis, ideal for us and our cameramen! It gives us time to catch our breath and soothe our nerves with the glorious sight of a landing field in view. The guys from AH Studios seem quite happy to risk life and limb to get some great shots and we find them perched on the top of this metal monster. Pascal, Glenn and I stay close together, alternating between sharp synchronized turns, touching wings and big wingovers as close as possible to the tower. What a pylon! The film crew signal to us that they have got the shots they want – time to go. On to the next photo shoot: nothing too mad – just the main bridge in the town centre...

It's cool this bridge, if a little kitsch with pink and blue suspension lines. But it fits in perfectly with the 'new town' style, a visually and aesthetically pleasing bridge, with a touch of Eiffel Tower, all rolled into one! We have great fun flying around it in our new playground, racing the lorries and cyclists who are completely oblivious to us...What a superb spot. We fly over the bridge in every direction possible: above it, beside it, to the right, to the left, and barefoot. There is no shortage of possibilities (unfortunately there isn't enough space to go underneath it).

We also play around a modern art sculpture in the middle of a lake which is very popular with the Koreans. Pascal does some of his famous barefoot turns. Glenn does a good imitation of a mixer, doing SATS 100 m above the water and I, on the other hand, do a barrel role at a ridiculously low height, not good... Fortunately, we are all wearing inflatable life jackets...One last synchronized barefoot, before regaining our height and returning to somewhere more sensible. What a fantastic sensation! Flying downtown – big tick!

Glenn and I improvised an acro session at 600 m: a few asymmetric SATS and other tumbling, for fun...



The town's massive sports stadium.

Attack!





Don't forget to pack your drivers license.

We celebrate our day in an appropriate fashion, in a Korean restaurant, which happily brings me onto the other great part about travelling with a paramotor: the food!

It's not haute cuisine, no it's much better: a local restaurant where we eat the specialities of Chuncheon with the locals! On the menu is a type of spicy chicken called Dakgalbi, one great big plate between everyone, that you share sitting on the floor around a low table, barefoot like everyone else. From a conviviality point of view it was like sharing a good raclette! From a service point of view, we were served by two wonderful grannies, high on chilli, who fussed over us. They both looked as if they were about 130 years old. We were so spoilt!

The local tradition dictates that you drink a glass of beer (what an excellent custom), to which you add a chaser of rice spirit. Brilliant! The Koreans are wonderful people, very friendly, enthusiastic and mightily amused by our chopstick etiquette! We continued chatting till late, recounting the day's madness!

What a place, what flying! A long way from visiting a holiday camp for busy people. Instead we had a total immersion holiday, lapping up the local customs in the company of normal people.

What better way to discover the planet? Our little aircraft is just an excuse. The most important thing, is what you do, and especially who you do it with. Travelling with a paramotor brings its own bit of madness. Sleeping like a tramp in a railway station after 20 hours in a plane, not washing for three days or even longer or getting lost in a town where the writing means absolutely nothing to you. All very scary and very real.

You have to be a bit mad, but in the end the film isn't called "We Are The Rovers" for nothing. ■

For more information:
www.wearetheroversfilm.com

Film maker: Antonin Michaud Soret /AH Studio.
A big thank you to all our sponsors who made this film possible: Paramania, RS Ultra, Parajet and Vittorazzi.



Chuncheon is a town full of bizarre, brightly coloured modern art.



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