FEMALE BRITISH AVIATOR SURVIVES DESERT PLANE CRASH

News / Personalities

British adventurer on a round-the-world journey has escaped without serious injury after her 1940s bi-plane crashed in the Arizona desert.

Tracey Curtis-Taylor suffered only bruises to her thigh after the vintage Boeing Stearman aircraft turned upside down after hitting a bush during takeoff at Winslow, where it had stopped for re-fuelling.

Ewald Gritsch, Ms Curtis-Taylor's Austrian passenger, also escaped unharmed.

The plane, built in 1942 and known as the Spirit of Artemis, had been bound for Phoenix when the accident happened.

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Tracey Curtis-Taylor celebrates her arrival at Sydney's International Airport in January

Tracey Curtis-Taylor celebrates her arrival at Sydney's International Airport in JanuaryCREDIT: REUTERS

Writing on Facebook, Ms Curtis-Taylor, 53, said the crash had been caused by a combination of

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high density altitude and a partial lost of power at a height of about 50 feet shortly after takeoff.

“The Spirit of Artemis then started to sink which was not a great scenario with power lines directly ahead but thankfully there was open desert to the south,” she wrote.

“I did a gentle left turn and then levelled off. It hit the ground and rolled forward about twenty feet but then the right wheel struck a dense sage root mound which tore off the right landing gear and threw the plane onto its left wing. It then cartwheeled tail over the nose in a cloud of sand and dust.”

The crash left the aircraft with extensive damage, meaning Ms Curtis-Taylor will be unable to complete her trip across the United States this year, which started when she took off from Seattle last month. She has refused Boeing’s offer of a replacement plane because of her “deep attachment” to the Spirit of Artemis.

Tracey Curtis-Taylor at Goodwood Airfield in Sussex

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Tracey Curtis-Taylor at Goodwood Airfield in Sussex Credit: Andrew Crowley The Telegraph

The US trip was to have followed her 14,600-mile flight in the open cock-pit aircraft from Farnborough to Sidney last year. That voyage was modelled on the flight taken by the aviatrix Amy Johnson in 1930, who was the first woman to fly the route solo.

Ms Curtis-Taylor, who grew up in Canada and has also lived in New Zealand, flew the Spirit of Artemis from Cape Town to Goodwood in West Sussex in 2013, also following Johnson’s path.

Self-Styled as the “bird in a bi-plane”, she vowed to carry on the flight once the damaged plane was repaired, writing on Facebook: “The journey continues….”

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