



# FIRST OFFICER TESSA NARAN - FACES OF NORWEGIAN

News / Airlines, Personalities



**Name:** Tessa Naran

**Position:** First Officer, London Gatwick, LGW

**How long have you been flying for Norwegian?**

I joined Norwegian in November 2018.

**Can you give us a brief overview of your journey into aviation?**

My passion for aviation started with a dream of becoming an astronaut from a young age. This motivated me to complete a Master's Degree in Physics with Astrophysics at the University of Manchester. I worked hard to save for my pilot training, working 20 hour shifts, skateboarding to work to save on travel costs and in 2012 my hard work paid off and I was able to start training to

become a pilot.

My first pilot job was at Monarch Airlines flying the Airbus A320. My dream of becoming an astronaut never wavered and in 2017 I was selected from 3,500 applicants to experience the astronaut selection experience, competing as part of an educational TV series "Astronauts: Do you have what it takes?". Monarch Airlines went into administration shortly after filming was completed and I went on to experience charter and private jet flying. I am delighted to have my career and now fly one of the most innovative and technologically advanced aircrafts - the Boeing 787 Dreamliner to long-haul destinations with Norwegian.

### **What does International Women's Day mean to you?**

International Women's Day 2020 is, "I am Generation Equality:" Realising Women's Rights. It is accepted across the globe that even with some progress, change is just not happening fast enough to impact the women and girls of our time. Not a single country has managed to achieve gender equality.

Women have contributed significantly to aviation over the last 100 years, from designing and building aircraft, delivering spitfires, to commanding the space shuttle and yet there is still a huge way to go towards pilot gender balance within the aviation industry. Currently less than 6% of the worldwide pilot population are female, meaning that for every 1000 public announcements made from the flight deck, statistically less than 60 of these may be made by a female pilot. It is estimated that it will take more than 100 years to achieve a 50% pilot gender balance in aviation.

### **What are some of the typical issues you find women face in aviation today?**

You may find that most people who aspire to become a pilot, had an idea that it was what they wanted to do from a young age. Those with the highest chance of success have been shown to have had first hand contact with pilots growing up and first-hand experience of aviation is an even stronger driver towards success.

Currently there is a pilot shortage, with 90%+ of applications for pilot careers and training coming from male applicants, who make up less than 50% of the population. This indicates that women are not considering or thinking about becoming pilots. If as many women applied for flying jobs as men, there would be a greater talent pool to recruit from, making up the deficit.

Promoting gender equality in aviation isn't about discriminative selection. It is about creating an environment where young women are as likely to dream about becoming a pilot as men are and therefore build a larger talent pool of highly skilled male and female pilots.

We need to encourage more women to consider going for a career they hadn't originally believed they could apply for due to their gender. This starts from inspiring young children, being a present, active and visual role model and helping to change cultural and media stereotypes. This will start paving the way towards gender balance within aviation..

### **How are you working to help reduce any stigmas about the industry?**

I volunteer at events, on outreach projects and at airshows to help encourage younger generations, especially women or those from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds, into considering careers in aviation. It is even more important than ever to stimulate enthusiasm about STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math's) and Aviation with the younger generations now to help pave the way for the future.

Growing up, I didn't know any pilots I could ask for career advice or speak to for inspiration. I was told by teachers that being a pilot was a "man's job" and the media portrayed pilots in a certain stereotypical way. It is important that there are visible female role models to change the ingrained cultural perception and start inspiring the future generations into careers they may not have thought of previously to help encourage diversity and a different uptake of skillsets into the industries.

### **Looking back on your career what advice would you give yourself as a young girl interested in flying?**

Start saving earlier. Try and seek out a female pilot to be a mentor/role model. Do more trial flights and seek out sponsorship opportunities at a younger age.

### **What is your wish/goal for women for the future of aviation?**

I hope that aviation becomes more accessible to all, allowing those with the desire to become pilots or work in the aviation field to be able to gain the necessary skills, no matter their gender, ethnicity or economic background. That women are as likely to aspire to any job role they wish to succeed in, as much as men do. That there is no gender stereotyping and that gender balance is achieved within my lifetime.

### **You have been a recipient of many awards for diversity and aviation. Can you give us an overview of these. What do these awards mean to you and why?**

I am feeling extremely grateful, humbled and delighted to have been nominated for the 2020 Positive Role Model Award at the National Diversity Awards and also for the We Are The City Rising Star 2020 Award. The NDA awards are for people who inspire other individuals through their work, through their commitment to helping others, through their infectious personalities and through adversity across the UK. The WATC 2020 Rising Star award celebrates individual female role models who demonstrate high levels of competence and passion within their careers and paying the way to help others achieve their goals. To be nominated for either of these shows that my work in these fields is making a difference and that there are others out there fighting for the same cause.

### **How do you feel being nominated for the 2020 National Diversity Awards?**

I was a shortlisted National Diversity Awards finalist from 10,000 nominees in 2019 and so it was a wonderful surprise to find out that I had been nominated once again. The volunteer work I participate in is so important for our future young women, in order for them to identify their dreams and understand how to make these achievable, so to be recognised for my work with these awards, even just a nomination, has given me even more motivation to talk to as many young people as possible and really get this important message across. To win would enable me to take this work further still and gain more visibility and credibility. If you would like to find out more or submit a nomination to support what I am doing please see <https://nationaldiversityawards.co.uk/nominate/28430/> and check your emails after submission to

verify your nomination.

### **What do you like most about your job?**

I enjoy the responsibility and safety aspects of my job. I have always had an eye for detail and enjoyed learning and developing my technical skills. Being a pilot is the closest thing to being an astronaut for me. We get such a wonderful and unique view of the Earth from more than 7 miles up in the air, we are constantly learning and trained to act calmly and remain systematically at all times. I love the fact that I work with different crew every flight, meet so many people from around the world and get to explore places down route. No day is the same and that's what makes the job enjoyable and exciting!

### **What is your best experience/memory during a Norwegian flight?**

I recently operated a flight to Tampa with a female Captain. This was the first time in my whole career as a pilot that I have ever flown with another female pilot. This was really inspirational to me as female pilots are a minority and I think every female pilot looks forward to the day they get to fly with another. The captain was so professional and such a role model, it has inspired and motivated me towards setting further career goals.

This trip to Tampa was particularly special to me because the crew were fantastic and we bonded very well. We had some wonderful experiences in Florida, including taking a road trip to Kennedy Space Centre. I hadn't been to KSC since my parents took me as a child. My original visit inspired my aspirations to be an astronaut and ultimately led me to my current career as a pilot and all the experiences, including participating in astronaut selection, along the way. It was really humbling to think that originally my parents brought me to KSC the first time and this time I literally flew myself over the North Atlantic to bring myself back to where it all started. This was a truly special and unforgettable memory for me.

### **What do you do during your days off?**

I enjoy visiting friends, travelling (preferably to somewhere with a beach) and also volunteering on outreach projects and programs to inspire younger generations into considering careers in aviation.

### **Do you have a life motto?**

Dream big, work hard and anything is possible.

### **Favourite part of working for Norwegian?**

One of the best things about working for Norwegian is the people. We are truly blessed to have such a diverse and varied team of numerous nationalities and walks of life. I absolutely love getting to know the crew on each flight and when we are lucky enough to have several days down-route, our time is our own to explore the destination, experience the culture, make memories and forge new friendships. Experiences like this really unify the team and encourage team work so the flight operates more efficiently. I love finding out where crew are from and practicing my language skills and I now have friends across the world which is great.

You can follow Tessa's journeys on Instagram @Tessthepilot

08 MARCH 2020

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