

FLYING CARS COMING TO THE TOWN



Flying cars may become soon available for customers. Two projects in this field have recently drawn the attention of the world. First one is the **SkyCar Expedition**. The team behind this expedition claims they have built the world's first bio fuelled flying car. Their intention is to use the SkyCar to travel from London to Tombouctou, across the Sahara desert. They set off for the journey in mid January. The car was designed by Giles Cardozo in 18 months and cost £50,000 (\$73,800). It was the rapid development in flexible wing technology that made this project possible.

The car has a parachute in its boot that can be easily unfolded. It also has a large fan mounted upon its rear. The vehicle needs a runway over 200m long to take-off. Once airborne it can climb to a maximum altitude of 4,572 m (15,000 ft). Top air speed is 110 km per hour (68 mi/hr) and range is 300 km (186 mi). The team estimates it will fly for about 40 per cent of the journey. When on the ground the vehicle top speed is 180 km per hour (112 mi/hr). The car is piloted by an ex Special Air Serviceman, Neil Laughton and Giles Cardozo is the co-pilot.

Another flying car project comes from the USA and a Boston-area company called **Terrafugia**. The company, founded by a group of MIT students in 2006, already has 40 orders for their flying car "Transition" which they prefer to call a "roadable aircraft". It is a two-seater airplane that looks like a car - it just has wings that can be folded up. The company is going to sell the machine for \$194,000 (£130,000).

As with the SkyCar, Transition was constructed thanks to the fast development of new materials but also the changes in the U.S. flying regulations. In 2004, the Federal Aviation Administration formed a new category of aircraft and license for sport aviation. It is easier now to get a sport pilot license than the private and commercial pilot licenses. They hope these changes will bring more people to flying so that there are enough pilots to fly airliners in the future. What they could not expect is that such license will make possible the success of commercial flying cars.

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