



Reach for the Skies: Ballooning, Birdmen and Blasting into Space

Sir Richard Branson

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As far back as stories go, pioneers have reached for the skies. In the last two hundred years, they have mastered the air and made the modern world possible. Reach for the Skies is my look at the history of flight through the stories and people who have inspired me throughout my life. It is a story of pioneers, and of course it includes the world famous Montgolfiers and the Wright brothers, but I also want to describe some of the lesser-known trailblazers. People like Tony Jannus, who in 1914 created the first scheduled commercial flight, flying his passengers over the waters of Tampa Bay at an altitude of just fifty feet; the 'bird man' Leo Valentin, who in the 1950s jumped from 9,000 feet with wooden wings attached to his shoulders; and my friend Steve Fossett, who dedicated his life to breaking records and having adventures. This is their story. It is also, in a small way, my own. ? Richard Branson

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