

## NICOLA WINTER



**Eurofighter Pilot**  
**ESA Reserve Astronaut**

Nicola Winter is a pioneer with an extraordinary career: she was a fighter pilot in the German Armed Forces for over a decade, was one of only three women in the air force to pilot the Eurofighter, trained young pilots herself in the USA for several years and most recently held the rank of Major. She is a helicopter pilot and, as a former space engineer at the German Aerospace Centre (DLR e.V.), she was responsible for launching satellites into space.

Aviation, space and adventure are Nicola's passion - and have been since early childhood: in 2004, Nicola Winter (\*1985) joined the German Air Force, thus realising her childhood dream. She became the Bundeswehr's second ever female fighter pilot, flew the Tornado and was a flight instructor in the USA. At the same time, she studied aerospace engineering via distance learning. In 2015, she retrained for the Eurofighter, making her one of only three women in the German Air Force authorised to fly this fighter aircraft. Before retiring from the Bundeswehr in 2018, she held the rank of Major and was stationed at the Tactical Air Force Wing 31 "Boelcke" at Nörvenich Air Base. She then worked for a well-known, large management consultancy for a year and volunteered as a paramedic for the Bavarian Red Cross before moving to DLR as an aerospace engineer where she worked on her doctorate in the field of micro-launchers. Since December 2024 she has been active for ADAC Luftrettung.

In 2017, Nicola Winter and Insa Thiele-Eich won the selection process for the "Die Astronautin" initiative against 400 competitors. The project aims to take a German woman into space for the first time and prepares the participants for a ten-day stay on the ISS, which unfortunately did not materialise due to a lack of funding. However, she is still pursuing her childhood dream of flying into space and is taking part in ESA's astronaut selection process. "I want to do pioneering work," says Nicola Winter, "the goal could also be the moon or Mars." She has been a reserve member of the new class of ESA astronauts since November 2022.

Over the course of her career, Nicola Winter has received numerous honours. In 2013, for example, she was honoured as the best flight instructor of the year at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas. In 2017, she was named "Forward Thinker of the Year" by the Boston Consulting Group and Wirtschaftswoche magazine. She convinced the jury because she "overcomes technical, physical and social boundaries".

In her entertaining talks, Nicola Winter vividly demonstrates how she turns her dreams into reality, how to deal with crises and stress with ease and how to lead with empathy and passion in challenging times. She shares her wide-ranging experiences from the world of supersonic flying and space travel with the audience. Nicola Winter is also happy to give her talks in English.

### **Topics (Selection):**

- Empowerment - Unleashing potential and gathering courage for take-off
- Focus - Targeted multitasking and focus on the important things
- New Leadership - Leading with empathy and respect
- Crisis Management: A decade as a fighter pilot - lessons learned in the world's fastest jets about risk, crises and the path to success