Contrails
condensation trails

A contrail, also known as a condensation trail, is a cirrus-like trail of condensed water vapor often resembling the tail of a kite. Contrails are produced at high altitudes where extremely cold temperatures freeze water droplets in a matter of seconds before they can evaporate.

Contrails form through the injection of water vapor into the atmosphere by exhaust fumes from a jet engine. If the surrounding air is cold enough, a state of saturation is attained and ice crystals develop, producing a contrail.

Photograph by: Knupp

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