

Recreational Flying in Northern Michigan

BY KARL
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There are many types of general aviation airplanes. Some are for business but the majority are for pleasure. The average recreational aircraft carries 3 to 4 people and goes about 130 mph, some slower and some faster. These are for the recreational pilots that only fly with good visibility, high or few clouds, and light to moderate wind velocity—in other words, for relaxation and fun with no white knuckles.

There is a special satisfaction and thrill to maneuvering an airplane off the ground, around in the sky, and back down for a smooth landing.

Northern Michigan offers the recreational pilot many enjoyable opportunities. You can fly from Lakes of the North to Pellston for a pleasant dinner at the airport restaurant, arriving there in about 25 minutes from takeoff. On a clear day, 5,000 ft. above Pellston, you can see Lakes Michigan and Huron plus

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hours, 30 minutes). A longer trip is just a series of shorter ones with stops for fuel and refreshment.

Maintenance

There is great effort to make flying safe. It is based upon the idea of preventative maintenance. You cannot just pull off to the side of the road if something breaks. The idea is to fix, overhaul or replace each part of the aircraft before it fails. Accordingly major components have to be inspected, overhauled, or replaced measured by hours of flying or age of the part. There is an annual inspection when all of the inspection plates are removed and a certified aircraft mechanic examines the many parts behind them for wear, operation and corrosion. The engine is inspected carefully for cracks in components, wear, and security of fit. Each cylinder is examined inside with a borescope. The cylinders are also tested for compression.

All of these operations are carefully noted in logbooks for the aircraft. There are separate logs for the airframe, engine, and propeller.

Not anyone can perform aircraft maintenance. The owner can do minor tasks but all of the main maintenance must be performed by highly trained mechanics, tested and licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration. There are different levels of licensure depending on the difficulty of the task. The mechanic inspecting or repairing an aircraft must sign in the log book that the aircraft is airworthy. If it is not, he or she risks being censured by the FAA through fine, suspension, or loss of li-

the Mackinac Bridge.

Another great trip is to fly from Lakes of the North to Mackinac Island Airport in about 35 minutes. You park the plane and then take a horse-drawn carriage into town. You can visit the fort, many restaurants and shops, and stroll the waterfront. Perhaps you would like to bike around the island or do some horseback riding. At the end of the day you head back to the airport in a horse-drawn carriage, hop in your plane and arrive back at Lakes of the North in approximately 35 minutes. Don't forget to take some Mackinac Island fudge with you.

On the other hand, if you just want to enjoy your flight and a picnic, you can depart Lakes of the North and about 20 minutes later, land at Northport on the top of the Leelanau Peninsula. There you can enjoy the airport picnic grounds. On the trip back, with a little detour, you and your passengers can marvel at Grand Traverse Bay and Torch Lake.

For out of the area golf, you can fly to Hillman or Harrison and the local golf

facility will pick you up or you can use the airport courtesy car. Arrangements are made ahead of time.

Beaver Island is a great day trip. After a 30-minute flight from Lakes of the North you can get a ride into town and enjoy the bars and restaurants and nautical atmosphere. No alcohol for the pilot.

If you want to be a little more ambitious, a 2-hour, 15-minute flight will take you to the Keweenaw Peninsula. You land at Houghton County Airport, get a rental car and a hotel or bed and breakfast. You then are free to enjoy the sights and silver mining history of the area for the next several days. When you think you have seen it all, a 2-hour, 15-minute flight gets you back to Lakes of the North.

That is not to say recreational flying is limited to short, for-fun hops. My wife and I regularly fly our Cessna Cardinal from Lakes of the North to Lansing (1 hour, 15 minutes), to Cincinnati, Ohio (2 hours, 50 minutes) and Sarasota, FL (9



PHOTO BY KARL BOHNHOFF

It goes by "Cardinal 1498 Charley" and lives at Lakes of the North with Gretchen (pictured) and Karl Bohnhoff.

cence. They are therefore very thorough, cautious, and conservative individuals.

If this sounds good to you find a local

flying school, take its introductory flight and if you share the sense of adventure, take lessons, and enjoy being a recreational pilot.