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Agenda Revealed & Registration Open

March 19-22 at Cutter Aviation PHX
& Sheraton Phoenix Downtown

by MeLinda Schnyder



King Air Gathering co-hosts King Air Nation and BLR Aerospace announced the speakers, companion activities and a full list of educational and networking events attendees can expect during the 2025 King Air Gathering happening March 19-22 in Phoenix, Arizona.

“King Air Gathering is perfect for fueling your knowledge and building connections,” said Carl Davis, vice president of King Air Nation. “We’ve expanded our speaker panels and resources to provide efficient, relevant and the most personalized instruction in the industry specific to the Beechcraft King Air and today’s flying environment.”

Now in its eighth year, KAG is the only King Air-dedicated event of its kind. It gathers together owners,

operators, pilots, trainers, maintenance providers, FBOs, manufacturers and other industry folk for learning opportunities and chances to network.

Registration details

Go to kingairnation.com/gathering-2025 to register. The cost is \$999 plus online fees for each participant or companion. This fee includes meals, cocktail hours, transportation for KAG events and all activities on the agenda unless an extra fee is noted.

Among the highlights of the itinerary:

- Welcome reception on Wednesday, March 19
- High Altitude Chamber Training on Wednesday, March 19

See information on page 3 for more on this add-on opportunity.



Add-on Option: Aviation Physiological Training Course

Offered in conjunction with Phoenix-based King Air Academy, there is an option during registration to add a high altitude chamber experience through the full-day Aviation Physiological Training Course at Arizona State University's Polytechnic School Aviation Program in nearby Mesa. The cost is \$295/pilot and spots are limited. FAA license and medical are required to participate.

This course covers the basics on the physiological and psychological stresses that impact human performance at altitude. The first half of the day is classroom lectures and familiarization with oxygen equipment used during the chamber flight. The chamber flight and associated pre- and post-flight discussions with participants predominate the afternoon. The chamber flight itself includes responses and performance during hypoxia (25,000 feet), rapid decompression (6,000 to 18,000 feet) and a demonstration of the impact of hypoxia on night vision.

Though generalized responses are well known, how an individual cognitively perceives hypoxic symptoms is a unique experience influenced by factors such as age, gender, physical condition and generalized stress levels. You'll finish this course knowing and being able to recognize those symptoms as triggers to take what could be lifesaving action. Wings credit is available.

2025 KAG keynote: Millicent Hill



Hill, CFI, CFII and MEI, serves as an aviation accident investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board in the Alaska Regional Office in Anchorage. Hill earned a bachelor's degree in professional aviation from Louisiana Tech University after receiving an associate degree in air traffic management from Texas State Technical College. Prior to becoming an investigator, she was a watch officer in the NTSB's Response Operations Center.

- Expanded FBO Day at Cutter Aviation on Thursday, March 20

Attendees will be shuttled to Cutter after lunch and spend the rest of the day there. Take part in on-site presentations by Dean Benedict, Zach Cleaver, Tom Clements and Travis Lamance. The evening includes cocktails, dinner and King Air Awards.

- Friday, March 21 is packed with informative sessions, KAG's keynote presentation plus an evening of Hall of Fame inductions, dinner and a live auction featuring exclusive aviation memorabilia, state-of-the-art accessories and unique experiences with proceeds benefitting the aviation community through the King Air Nation Foundation.

- Companions are encouraged to attend, and there are experiences planned specifically for them each day, ranging from ground school to wine tastings. See page 5 for the KAG itinerary.

Accommodations

Registration does not include accommodations. KAG has negotiated room rates starting at \$289/night plus fees and taxes at the host hotel, Sheraton Phoenix Downtown. Call 866-837-4213 and use "King Air Gathering" for the group rate or visit the KAG registration website at kingairnation.com/gathering-2025 to click the link for online booking.

The Sheraton Phoenix Downtown is in the heart of the Valley of the Sun, just minutes from KPHX. Beyond beautifully designed guestrooms and suites, you'll find inviting communal areas, exceptional on-site dining, a

(continued on page 6)



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Itinerary

Note: This schedule is subject to change after publication. Visit kingairnation.com/gathering-2025 for times, additional details and the most up-to-date itinerary.

Tuesday, March 18

Arrivals

Transportation provided from Cutter Aviation PHX to the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown

Wednesday, March 19

Arrivals

Transportation provided from Cutter Aviation PHX to the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown

High Altitude Chamber all-day session *limited availability

Registration

Evening welcome reception

Thursday, March 20

Breakfast with sponsors

Registration

Sponsor exhibits

Opening remarks from King Air Nation

Session: King Air Incidents with Peter Basile

Companions: Ground school & lunch

Session: Anatomy of King Air Phases KAN 145 with Travis Lamance

Break with sponsors

Session: Understanding the PT6A in YOUR King Air with Pratt & Whitney

Lunch with sponsors

Shuttle to FBO for King Air displays and demonstrations, including:

What is a complete preflight with Zach Cleaver & Tom Clements

On-aircraft look at maintenance with Travis Lamance & Dean Benedict

Companions: Jewelry-making party

Evening cocktails

Dinner and King Air Awards



Friday, March 21

Breakfast with sponsors

Registration

Sponsor exhibits

Companions: Visit Desert Botanical Gardens

Session: Looking from the “other” side: How FAA/Tracon/ATC views you with Bruce Reins

Session: Pilot expectations of engine rigging with Paul Sneed

Break with sponsors

Session: The King Air pressure vessel and how it is architected with Tom Clements

Lunch with sponsors

Looking at the weather vs planning with Zach Cleaver

Companions: Scottsdale Wine Walk Tour

Keynote: Millicent Hill, NTSB

Break with sponsors

Evening cocktails

King Air Hall of Fame Awards, dinner and live auction

Saturday, March 22

Departures


Transportation provided from Sheraton Phoenix Downtown to Cutter Aviation PHX



sun-kissed terrace pool, a state-of-the-art fitness center plus premium and versatile private event spaces for KAG activities.

Transportation will be provided compliments of KAG from Cutter Aviation to the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown on Tuesday and Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. as well as from Sheraton Phoenix Downtown to Cutter Aviation on Saturday at 7, 8:30 and 10 a.m. You'll need to make your own transportation arrangements if you're traveling outside of those timeframes.

KAG has negotiated for attendees to not pay landing, ramp or any other fees if they make a fuel purchase of at least 40 gallons. Please check with your current fuel card provider for fuel discounts that may be available at Cutter Aviation, a preferred location for CAA members.

Make plans now to attend the 2025 King Air Gathering! 



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Navigating the Changing Tides of the King Air Insurance Market

by Kyle White

The King Air insurance market has been on a tumultuous journey over the past several years with plenty of unexpected twists and turns. This has not necessarily been the most expensive hard market the King Air community has navigated through, though it has certainly been the longest. Since 2018, most of you have likely seen reduced coverages and increased premiums with each renewal. It was considered a 'win' if you could keep your rate flat. In the May 2018 issue of King Air magazine I wrote that the soft market had come to an end in 2017. Finally, almost seven years later, we see a promising shift on the horizon: We expect 2025 to bring a softening market.

Many King Air owners remember a time when insurance was more favorable. Higher liability limits, flexible training options and minimal price differences between FAA Part 91 and Part 135 operations were the norms. Upgrading from a Baron to a King Air was a

straightforward process, with few hurdles to overcome. Unfortunately, the landscape has changed significantly due to various factors, including rising aircraft values and the increasing costs associated with parts and labor for repairs.

The shift to a soft market is primarily driven by an increase in capacity within the insurance sector. More carriers are entering the market, eager to compete for your business. This influx of competition is a welcome change for King Air owners, as it opens up new opportunities for securing better coverage at more favorable rates. However, the challenge lies in reconciling the hull values of the 2025 King Air market with the insured values from 2015. While the actual premium dollars may not see a dramatic decrease, the rates per thousands of insured value are expected to decline, providing a better value proposition for aircraft owners.

Sample aviation insurance policy

D. Aircraft Hull and Liability: *Tenant shall at its expense maintain Aircraft Hull and Liability Insurance. The aircraft hull insurance shall be all risk, including war, in an amount of at least 100% of the replacement value of the owned Aircraft and shall provide a waiver of subrogation by Tenant's insurer against Landlord. The aircraft liability insurance shall include war risks liability insurance and shall be in an amount not less than \$100,000,000 each occurrence. The aircraft liability insurance shall name Landlord as an additional insured.*

Trends we saw during the hard market

Interestingly, the softening market is not solely a result of reduced losses. While catastrophic losses, often referred to as “bell ringers,” are relatively rare, the insurance industry continues to grapple with attritional losses. These losses, including incidents such as hangar rash, foreign object debris and hot starts, can accumulate and cost insurance underwriters millions of dollars each year. Adjusting these partial losses remains a significant expense, particularly as shop rates and the pricing of OEM parts continue to rise. Inflation has made it increasingly difficult for underwriters to manage these costs effectively.

During the hard market, insurance carriers were focused on reducing their exposure and increasing their pricing structures. This led to a situation where some King Air operators found it challenging to secure policies, especially those wishing to operate single-pilot. The industry began to see the emergence of “quota-share” or “vertical” placements, where one insurance carrier would provide the primary policy and additional carriers would agree to share the risk. While common in the airline industry, this practice had been relatively

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unfamiliar territory for the King Air market until recently. As a result, brokers often had to find multiple carriers to share the risk for single-pilot operations with hull values exceeding \$5 million or liability limits over \$25 million. This effectively halved the number of competing markets, exacerbating the challenges faced by operators.

Underwriting companies also took a closer look at the attritional losses within their portfolios. They observed a trend where fixed base operators required King Air owners to sign contracts that absolved the FBO of liability for any damage to the aircraft. This shift placed the burden of repair costs squarely on the aircraft owner's insurance policy. Consequently, many carriers began charging additional premiums for policies that included "waiver of subrogation" language in hangar leases, further complicating the insurance landscape for King Air owners.

The implications of these changes extended beyond pricing and coverage structures. The cost of adjusting claims increased as King Air owners relied on their own policies to cover damages. Extra Expense coverage became a critical component of many policies, but insurance carriers began capping the amounts they would pay per day to mitigate their exposure to attritional losses. Additionally, underwriters started to refuse coverage or impose additional premiums for operators engaged in dry leasing their King Air to third parties, recognizing the added liability risks associated with such arrangements.

Sample aviation insurance policy

8. Replacement Aircraft / Extra Expense – *If an Aircraft shown in item 5 of the Declarations sustains Physical Damage to which this Policy applies, the Company agrees to reimburse you for Extra Expense associated with obtaining a Replacement Aircraft for use while the damaged Aircraft is being repaired. The Company's limit of liability under this extension shall not exceed \$5,000 per day for up to five (5) days.*

Training requirements and pilot qualifications also came under scrutiny during the hard market. The age of pilots became a contentious issue, with some experienced King Air pilots facing significant premium increases and reductions in liability limits as they reached age 75. This prompted many operators to develop long-term transition plans to manage the perceived risks associated with aging pilots.

Be a strategic insurance consumer

As we move forward and leave behind the painful experiences of recent insurance renewals, it is essential for King Air owners to adopt a more strategic approach to securing coverage. With new markets entering the scene and bringing more options, now is the time to assess operational risks to take full advantage of the emerging buyer's market in the 2025 insurance landscape. King Air owners should consider the following key factors.

Are single-pilot or crew operations the best fit for your mission? Each option comes with its own set of risks and benefits, and understanding these nuances is essential for making informed decisions.

Are your pilots and maintenance technicians employees or 1099 contract professionals? Employment status can have significant implications for insurance coverage and liability, and it is essential to ensure that all personnel are properly classified to avoid potential issues down the line.

For those with pilots over age 65, proactively engaging in discussions about managing perceived risks associated with older pilots can help mitigate concerns and demonstrate a commitment to safety. Creating a long-term transition plan that outlines steps to address these issues can also be beneficial.

Review contracts with FBOs and other third-party service providers. It is essential to understand whether you are unnecessarily assuming liability for the negligent behavior of these entities. By clarifying responsibilities and ensuring that contracts are fair and equitable, owners can protect themselves from potential claims that were not their fault.

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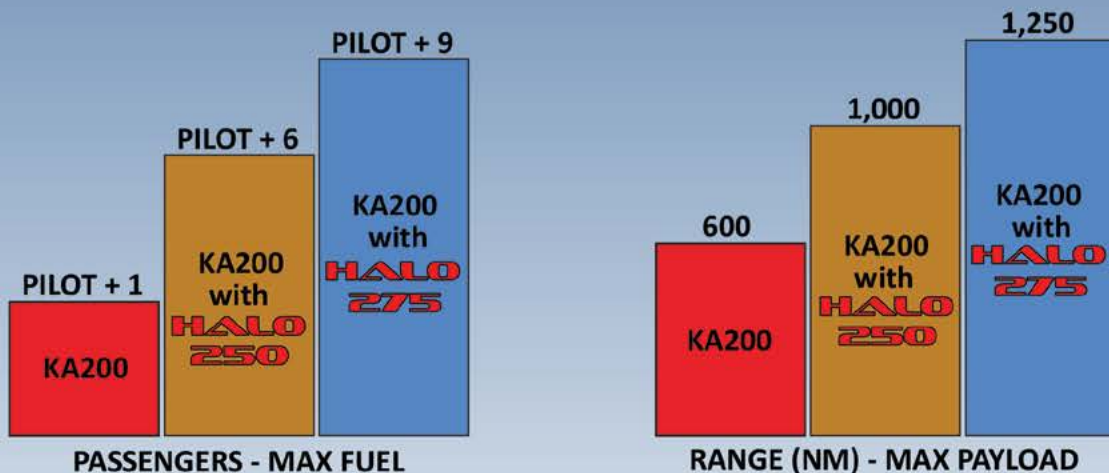
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Analyze any existing dry leases to determine whether they need to be implemented, modified or canceled altogether. The added liability risks associated with dry leasing can have significant implications for insurance coverage, and it is crucial to address these concerns proactively.

Evaluate whether your current training provider and intervals align with your operational needs. Exploring alternative training options may yield better results and enhance overall safety.

Finally, it is essential to examine ancillary coverages to determine their relevance and importance. For instance, Extra Expense coverage can be an asset, and owners should assess whether increasing or decreasing these coverages could provide additional benefits without incurring extra costs.

As we approach the buyer's market, King Air owners must proactively review their policies, risk profiles and available options. Engaging in open communication with brokers and underwriters will yield the best results and potentially reduce premiums in 2025.

In conclusion, the King Air insurance market is undergoing a significant transformation. As we move away from the challenges of the hard market, there is an opportunity for owners to secure better coverage and more favorable terms. By adopting a strategic approach to risk management and actively engaging with their insurance broker and carriers, King Air owners can navigate the changing market tides with confidence and foresight. The key to success lies in being prepared, informed and proactive in securing the best possible insurance coverage for your aircraft. **KA**

Kyle P. White, ATP & MEII, is an aviation insurance executive for a global insurance brokerage company. As a former professional King Air captain on BB-1118, he still enjoys flying his family's J-model Bonanza and Piper Cub. He can be reached at kpwhite816@gmail.com.

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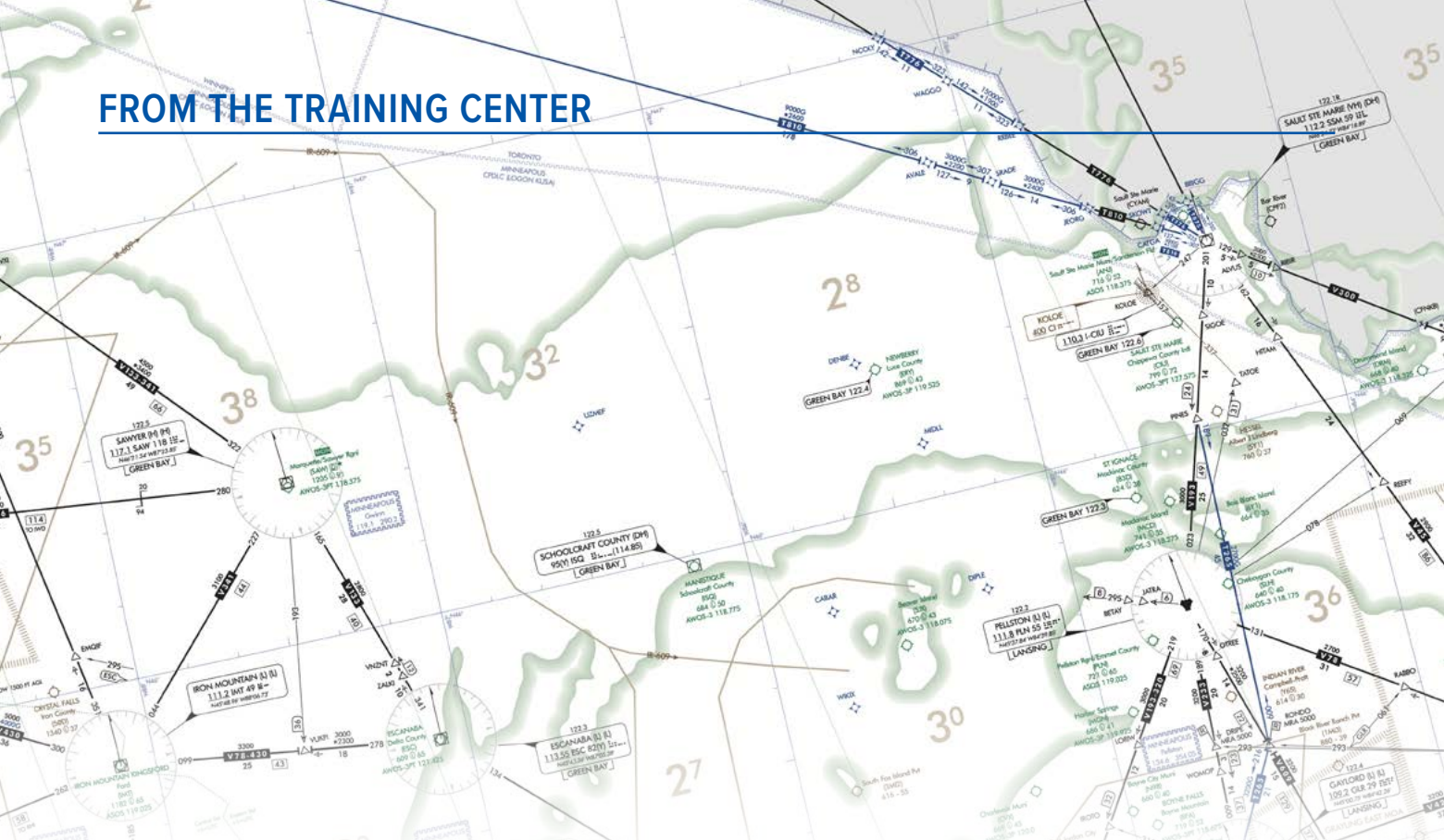
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What Is This MON Thing Anyway?

With the VOR minimum operational network as a backup, basic conventional navigation will be possible if GPS fails

by Pete Marx

For many King Air pilots, most of our flying utilizes the Global Positioning System. What would happen if the entire National Airspace System (NAS) relied solely on GPS and the system broke down due to technical issues or nefarious intent?

GPS is susceptible to interference, jamming, spoofing or solar events, any of which can disrupt aircraft navigation. Despite these vulnerabilities, we have been hearing for years that the Federal Aviation Administration is removing ground-based navigation equipment relying on GPS for the NAS.

In 2006, the FAA started the transition to performance-based navigation (PBN) primarily using GPS and area navigation, or RNAV. The FAA has been removing selected

VORs – stations emitting very high frequency omnidirectional range signals – from service and replacing them with flight procedures and route structure based on PBN.

The FAA realized that a VOR minimum operational network (MON) would need to be retained to provide a backup during GPS interference. With the MON as a backup, basic conventional navigation would be possible if GPS failed.

Navigation using the MON will not be as efficient as the new PBN route structure, but use of the MON will provide nearly continuous VOR signal across the NAS.

To repurpose the contiguous United States VOR network from the primary means of navigation to a backup, the VOR signal must be available starting at 5,000 feet above ground level. Coverage will exist below 5,000 feet but may not be continuous. To provide the required coverage, new VOR standard service volumes were established.

Radio Class Designations		
VOR/DME/TACAN Standard Service Volume (SSV) Classifications		
SSV Class	Altitudes	Distance (NM)
(T) Terminal	1,000' to 12,000'	25
(L) Low Altitude	1,000' to 18,000'	40
(H) High Altitude	1,000' to 14,500'	40
	14,500' to 18,000'	100
	18,000' to 45,000'	130
	45,000' to 60,000'	100

Figure 1: previous standard service volumes

See Figure 1 for the previous standard service volumes and Figure 2 for the current list of SSV classifications. NAVAIDs with a single component SSV (VOR, DME, TACAN, NDB, NDB/DME) classification depict the name of the NAVAID first then the classification of the SSV in parentheses next on the IFR low-altitude en route charts, as shown in Figure 3. NAVAIDs with two component SSV (VOR/DME, VORTAC) classifications depict the name of the NAVAID first then the classification of the two SSVs in parentheses for each component on the IFR low chart. Figure 4 shows the VOR SSV in the first set of parentheses followed by the DME or TACAN SSV in the second set of parentheses.

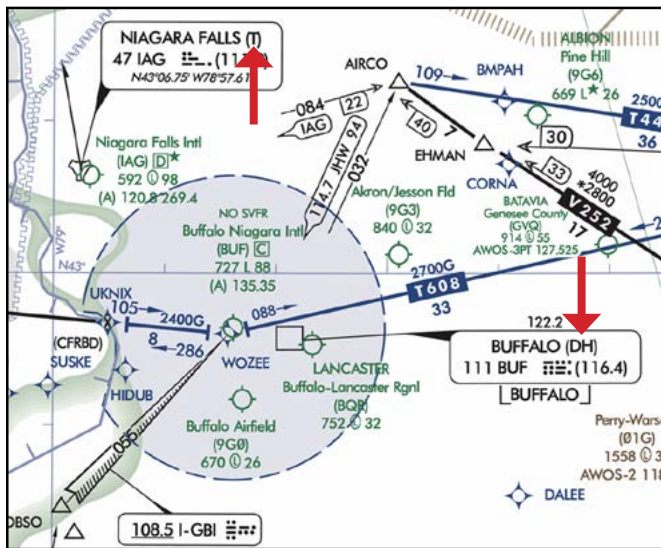


Figure 3: NAVAIDs with a single component SSV

Radio Class Designations		
VOR/DME/TACAN Standard Service Volume (SSV) Classifications		
SSV Class	Altitudes	Distance (NM)
(T) Terminal	1,000' to 12,000'	25
(L) Low Altitude	1,000' to 18,000'	40
(H) High Altitude	1,000' to 14,500'	40
	14,500' to 18,000'	100
	18,000' to 45,000'	130
	45,000' to 60,000'	100
(VL) VOR Low	1,000' to 5,000'	40
	5,000' to 18,000'	70
(VH) VOR High	1,000' to 5,000'	40
	5,000' to 14,500'	70
	14,500' to 18,000'	100
	18,000' to 45,000'	130
	45,000' to 60,000'	100
(DL) DME Low & (DH) DME High*	1,000' to 12,900'	40 increasing to 130
(DL) DME Low	12,900' to 18,000'	130
(DH) DME High	12,900' to 45,000'	130
	45,000' to 60,000'	100

*Between 1,000' to 12,900', DME service volume follows a parabolic curve used by flight management computers.

Figure 2: current SSV classifications



Figure 4: NAVAIDs with a two component SSV

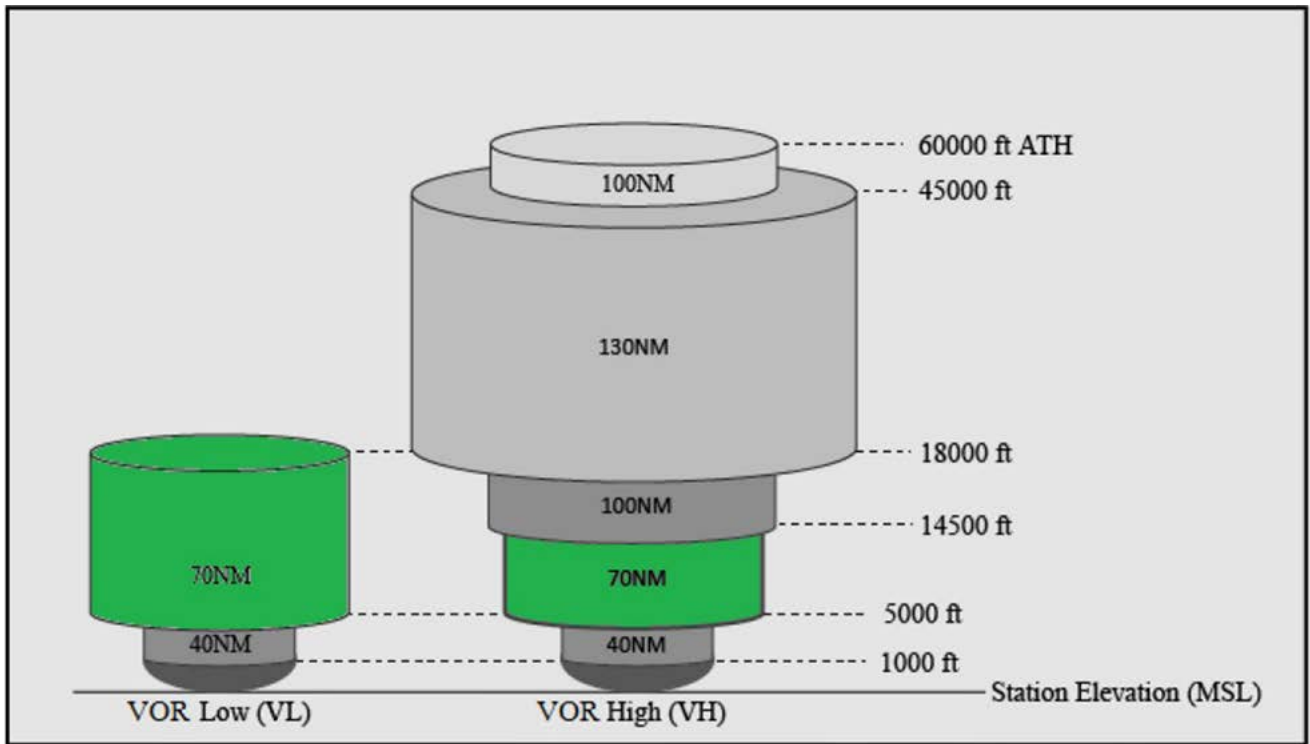


Figure 5: New VOR service volumes

Mean Sea level (MSL)
Above Transmitter Height (ATH)

Progress on new VOR standard service volumes

MON VORs will be flight inspected (see Figure 5) and their class codes changed to the new SSVs. To date, the majority of the 499 new VOR SSVs have been published.

VORs that do not meet the VOR MON criteria are targeted for discontinuance. By the end of 2024, 194 VORs of 303 targeted VORs were scheduled to be discontinued. By 2030, the FAA plans to reduce the total number of VOR stations in the contiguous United States to 580.

During a GPS disruption in the contiguous U.S., the MON will enable aircraft to navigate through the affected area or to a safe landing at a MON airport without reliance on GPS. Pilots can tune and identify a VOR at or above 5,000 feet AGL and navigate VOR-to-VOR or along airways through the interference or navigate to an airport within 100 nautical miles to fly an ILS, LOC or VOR approach.

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What are MON airports?

The FAA has designated certain airports as MON airports as part of its plan to modernize the NAS and ensure the safety and efficiency of air travel. MON airports are strategically selected airports that maintain specific navigation and approach capabilities to support aircraft operations during GPS disruptions. The FAA considers several factors when designating MON airports, including:

Location: Airports are strategically located throughout the country to provide adequate coverage and accessibility.

Airport infrastructure: The airport must have the necessary infrastructure to support instrument approaches, such as runway lighting and communication systems.

Air traffic density: Airports with higher air traffic volumes are more likely to be designated as MON airports.

These airports have instrument approach procedures that are not reliant on GPS technology, such as ILS, LOC and VOR approaches. Users can navigate through an interference event or land at a MON airport without GPS, DME, ADF or surveillance. By providing a reliable backup navigation system, MON airports help mitigate the risks associated with GPS disruptions and maintain the

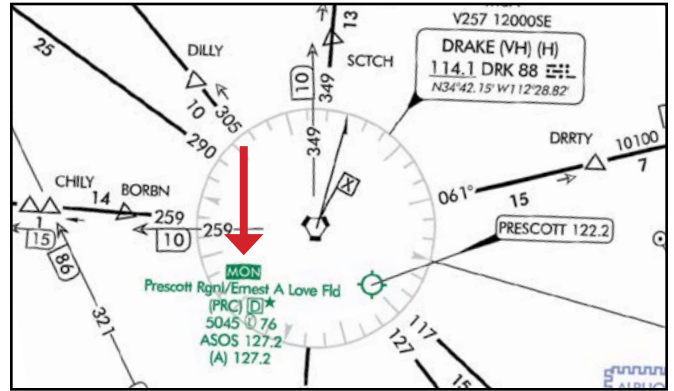


Figure 6: MON airport depiction

continuity of air traffic operations. Users not equipped with GPS can still operate in the NAS, but likely with reduced efficiency. There are no changes to current equipment or flight plan filing requirements.

The FAA publishes a list of MON airports in the chart supplement (formerly known as the airport/facility directory). This publication is available in both printed and digital formats. You can also find information on MON airports through various online resources, such as FAA websites and aviation publications.

See Figure 6 for how the IFR Low Chart depicts MON airports with green “MON” text. Pilots are responsible

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“During a GPS disruption in the contiguous U.S., the VOR minimum operational network (MON) will enable aircraft to navigate through the affected area or to a safe landing at a MON airport without reliance on GPS.”

for familiarizing themselves with these airports and their approach procedures. The FAA encourages pilots to use all available navigation resources, including GPS and ground-based systems, to maintain situational awareness and ensure safe flight operations.

Keep conventional navigation top of mind

The King Air is a very capable aircraft. It allows us to fly during the day, night, VFR, IFR and in icing conditions. Use of GPS is commonplace when flying in the King Air. It is a great, reliable tool. Loading an IFR flight plan into the GPS navigation unit is secondhand to us. Often “Cleared direct to ...” after takeoff is heard from the controller. It seems like flying “direct to” is the only way we fly now. This can lead to dependency on GPS and complacency of conventional navigation. What happens when the GPS suddenly gives you a message “LOI” (Loss of Integrity) or “DR” (Dead Reckoning)? Now what?

Knowing that the FAA has a backup to GPS in the form of the VOR MON, how do we stay proficient with conventional navigation, using VOR, ILS and LOC in case we lose GPS?

One way to keep conventional navigation in the front of mind is to periodically file an IFR flight plan using Victor airways. In the note section of the flight plan state that you would like to remain on the filed route,



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no shortcuts. After loading the flight plan into the GPS navigation unit, review it and take note of any VORs on your route. Set up your NAV radios with the pertinent ground-based NAVAIDs for that flight. Try to keep up with the NAV frequency changes enroute. If you can display a bearing pointer, use that to verify the VOR course. It is interesting to see the difference between GPS and VOR course. When the controller gives you a clearance “direct to ...” you can reply that you would like to stay on the filed route. If you don’t have a bearing pointer, try navigating using VORs only. Obviously this would be a flight in which you were not in a hurry to get to your destination.

I have experienced the dreaded LOI and DR messages. There was panic at first but then the relief of knowing I was already set up with the VORs in the background. I continued using the VORs almost seamlessly. I didn’t have to scramble to find the proper VORs, frequencies or courses. Since I had been keeping up with the flight, situational awareness was already in place. I was lucky the outage happened while I was on a Victor airway.

As VORs are being decommissioned, more and more Victor airways are disappearing. They are being replaced with GPS-based RNAV routes called “T” routes (low-altitude RNAV routes). Jet routes are being replaced with “Q” routes (high-altitude RNAV routes). Remember, the MON system will retain enough conventional routes to cover GPS outages.

If my outage happened during a flight when I was off airway, I would have had to ask for a vector, possibly to the closest VOR. Maybe surveillance was out; I would now have to fly directly to a VOR and navigate using a Victor airway from then on. I may have had to shoot a VOR approach because the closest MON airport with an ILS was too far away.

When was the last time you intercepted and tracked a VOR radial, entered a holding pattern without the GPS or shot a VOR approach not using GPS? Asking your training provider to cover some of these topics in your next recurrent visit is another good way to stay proficient with conventional navigation.

The FAA’s plan to reduce ground-based navigation equipment is happening now. The MON system and our training to be proficient in conventional navigation gives us the knowledge, confidence and reassurance that we will need to be able to navigate our King Air in the event of a GPS disruption. ☑

Pete Marx has more than 30 years of experience in the aviation industry, from flying as a captain and first officer on Beech 1900s, Jetstream 42s and Dash 8s for commuter airlines to flying cargo as a flight engineer and check airman in the Airbus 300 and DC-8 for DHL. He has been instructing in King Airs for the past 13 years and is currently an instructor at King Air Academy in Phoenix, Arizona.

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Collins Aerospace Upgrades King Air 200 & 300 Series Flight Decks

by MeLinda Schnyder

In December, Collins Aerospace announced a comprehensive avionics upgrade and modernization program for Beechcraft King Air aircraft and two of its most popular systems. Designed to enhance aircraft operability, safety and efficiency, the initiative introduces several new safety features to both avionics suites and makes it possible to convert King Air 200 and 300 aircraft from the Pro Line 21 system to the Pro Line Fusion flight deck.

According to Nathan Voight, vice president and general manager of Business and Regional Avionics for Collins Aerospace, the program includes:

- **Comprehensive system upgrades for factory-installed Pro Line Fusion King Air 200 and 300 series aircraft.** These aircraft can receive the latest Fusion software release, aligning with the newest production aircraft. This includes Collins' MultiScan weather radar that provides real-time weather data and threat detection, giving pilots a holistic view of weather conditions without the hassle of needing to manually adjust the radar. This Fusion upgrade also includes improved communication, navigation and surveillance

capabilities to meet the latest standards, inclusive of FANS 1/A+ and ATN-B1. CPDLC datalink capabilities are also included, enabling reliable text-based messaging and satellite connectivity to ensure communication is possible in areas where ground-based systems may be unavailable.

Confidentiality is enhanced with the implementation of Privacy ICAO Address (PIA) for aircraft ADS-B anonymity, enhancing aircraft position anonymity.

Finally, the latest Pro Line Fusion software update supports various combinations of engines and propellers, most notably the Pratt & Whitney PT6A-52 engines and PT6A-67A Blackhawk engines.

- **Upgrading Pro Line 21-equipped King Air 200 and 300 series aircraft to Pro Line Fusion.** This upgrade includes all the above plus Fusion's enhanced user interface, intuitive controls and fully integrated 14-inch touchscreen displays.
- **Pro Line 21 modernization upgrades for King Air 200 and 300 series aircraft.** This includes

many of the above, inclusive of MultiScan weather radar, FANS1/A+, ATN-B1, CPDLC datalink and PIA, while also providing Dual FMS and GPS options that provide redundancy and enhanced navigational capabilities for flight operations.


Collins' Pro Line Fusion advanced avionics system became factory standard equipment for the King Air 90, 200 and 300 series in 2015. Textron Aviation announced this upgrade in late 2014, with deliveries beginning in early 2015. The 250 model was the first to integrate Fusion as part of Textron's factory-issued modernization initiatives. The 350 system became standard later that same year.

The Pro Line Fusion suite features intuitive touchscreen displays and advanced communication, navigation and surveillance tools, integrating synthetic vision, enhanced navigation and simplified flight planning for greater pilot control and efficiency.

The Pro Line 21 system provides a fully integrated, reliable digital cockpit with high-resolution displays and

streamlined communication, navigation and surveillance capabilities designed for enhanced situational awareness and workload reduction.

"Thousands of King Airs were installed with Pro Line 21 avionics during the turn of the century and through the mid-2010s, with the system still the most widely used avionics suite for King Air aircraft," Voight said. "Fusion installations have also steadily increased with new production King Air models offering Fusion avionics as standard equipment beginning midway through the last decade, amounting to around 600 installed aircraft. Additionally, Collins has offered King Air operators various system upgrades to existing Pro Line 21 and Pro Line Fusion systems throughout the years, maintaining Collins' position on the initial install base."

Collins said this modernization initiative, which also encompasses several Hawker aircraft, is supported by a customer service program that includes a dealer network and install base. Collins is based in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and is a division of RTX. Learn more at collinsaerospace.com. 



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Unspoiled

Flying to and touring Isle Royale National Park

by Matthew McDaniel





The author and his family with the Isle Royale Seaplanes' De Havilland DHC-2 Beaver after arriving at Tobin Harbor. Seaplane service from the UP of Michigan is offered in Beavers and Cessna 206 aircraft.

PHOTO CREDIT: MATTHEW MCANILIE



It's late June and we're standing on the dock of Isle Royale Seaplanes' home base, Torch Lake, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Our pilot is chatting with his six waiting passengers while passing out life vests. He's trying to sort out who should be seated where within the vintage De Havilland DHC-2 Beaver that will carry us across Lake Superior. Noting my aviation-themed hat, he asks if I am a pilot. When he learns I'm an airline pilot, he quips, "I usually put all airline pilots in the back row!" Learning I'm also an active general aviation pilot and instructor, he softens his stance though the teasing continues. Meanwhile, the baggage is loaded into the stowage areas within the floats.

In the end, I'm assigned the copilot seat (which has rudder pedals but no yoke due to the Beaver's single throw-over yoke design). Behind, my wife and our two teenagers occupy the middle row, while a young couple has the three-seat aft row to themselves. As we don headsets, the Pratt & Whitney R-985 radial starts and falls into a gentle chugging idle. Without brakes, we are immediately water taxiing to the takeoff area while completing pre-takeoff checklist items. As the throttle is opened for takeoff, all 450 horsepower are unleashed and the corresponding noise and vibration envelop us. Climbing at a sedate 500 feet per minute, we're soon crossing the southern shoreline of Lake Superior on our way to one of the least developed, most remote and most pristine national parks in the continental U.S. – Isle Royale.

The unique Isle Royale archipelago

Situated in the northwest corner of Lake Superior, Isle Royale is within Keweenaw County, Michigan, despite being more than 50 miles across the water from the Keweenaw Peninsula. Oddly, the island is closer to Minnesota and Ontario, Canada, than to the state it is officially part of. Some of its associated islands are less than 10 miles from small Canadian islands also within Lake Superior.

Over the course of roughly a million years, hundreds of eruptions from deep within the earth released lava here, which hardened into basalt. Thereafter, equally powerful

geological forces cracked and shifted the basalt, creating the tilted layers that today protrude from Lake Superior to form the Isle Royale archipelago. Copper and wooden artifacts and tools found within Indian mounds have been carbon-dated to more than 6,500 years old. Ancient people appear to have used the island for hunting, fishing and copper extraction for millennia. Reaching the island would have required a canoe journey (or an ice crossing during winters cold enough to create ice bridges). For such journeys to have been as short as possible, they would have landed on the island's northwest shores after no less than a 13-mile crossing from modern-day Minnesota or Ontario mainland. Nonetheless, cross they did, leaving evidence of their copper mining activities in the form of hundreds of pits and trenches, some dozens of feet long.

In more modern times, Indigenous people referred to the island as Minong, as noted in the writings of visiting missionaries as early as 1669. Ojibwa and Chippewa tribes both laid claim to Minong, while Great Britain became the first non-native nation to do so and named it Isle Royale. Great Britain gave Isle Royale to the United States in 1783, but it wasn't until the mid-1840s that the Ojibwa and Chippewa officially ceded all claims to the island to the U.S. via a series of treaties.

Neither Native Americans nor early Americans settled on Isle Royale year-round. Both used the island for copper and fish, but mainly during the short summer season. While industrial copper mining was attempted in the mid-19th century, small deposits combined with harsh and

Isle Royale is an island in the northwest corner of Lake Superior. It is part of Michigan, though it's closer to Minnesota and Canada.



PHOTO CREDIT: ADAM JOHNSON | BROCKIT INC.



The red fox is often seen on trails and near campgrounds within Isle Royale National Park.

holds many freshwater lakes of its own, some of which have islands within them as well. Protection exists as a national park, as a national wilderness area and as a UNESCO biosphere reserve. As a result, the island rebounded from deforestation a century ago and now hosts roughly 20,000 visitors a year.

So close and yet so far

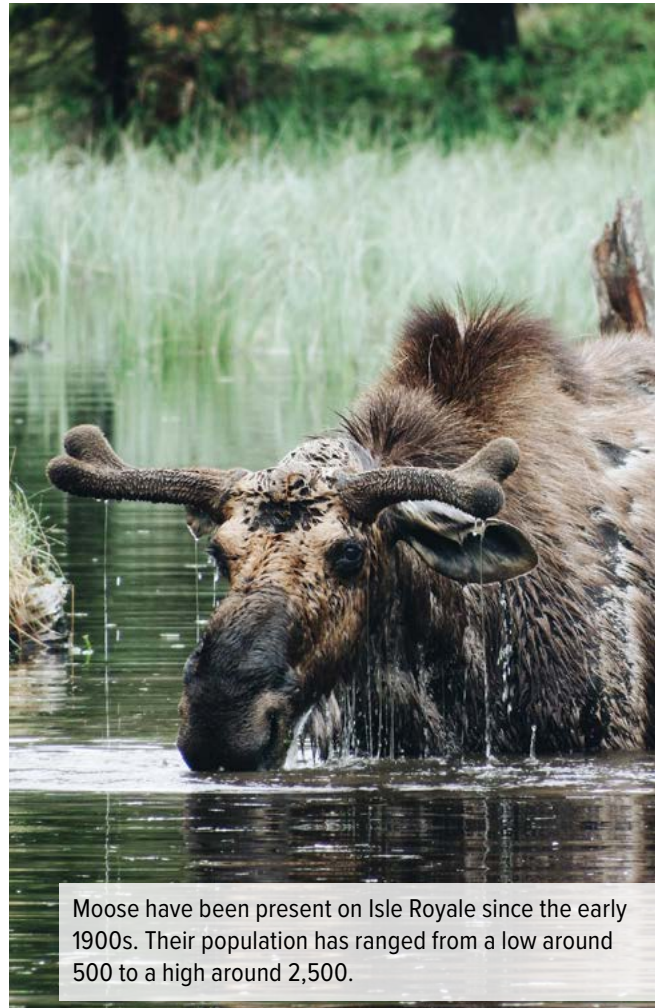
Early in our parenthood journey, my wife and I agreed it would be great to get our two kids to all the official national parks within the continental U.S. However, one of the closest to our Wisconsin home kept eluding us. We were 18 years and 46 parks into our journey before neighboring Michigan's Isle Royale National Park finally fell into place for us.

Visiting IRNP can be challenging because one cannot simply drive through its gates. No major airline hubs are nearby and even proximate general aviation airports are limited. The challenge is compounded by the very short season in which the northern Lake Superior park is open. Officially open April 16 through Oct. 31, it is more realistic to consider the typical tourism season to be early June through Labor Day. Outside of those dates, services are still spooling up or are already winding down for the

remote conditions soon caused the copper companies to leave. Commercial logging was beginning around the same timeframe. The island became heavily deforested by the early 1900s.

Fisheries have been Isle Royale's most lasting commercial endeavor, with lake trout, lake herring and whitefish plentiful around the island. The industry remained active on Isle Royale for nearly 200 years. Evidence is still present all around the main and surrounding islands. Old fishing boats, shanties and fish houses sit abandoned, slowly succumbing to the elements. Today, one fishery is preserved intact for historical reasons (Edisen Fishery, which operated commercially from 1910 to 1975).

In April 1940, under the Franklin Roosevelt administration, Isle Royale officially became a national park. The park encompasses 850 square miles, of which 209 square miles are land consisting of Isle Royale itself (206 square miles) and more than 400 small surrounding islands. At 50 miles long and 9 miles wide, Isle Royale dwarfs the adjacent islands in the archipelago. In fact, it is the fourth largest lake island in the world and the second largest within the Great Lakes. The main island



Moose have been present on Isle Royale since the early 1900s. Their population has ranged from a low around 500 to a high around 2,500.



PHOTO CREDIT: MARINA ALEXANDER/ISLE ROYALE SEAPLANES

season. This is true of the limited accommodations on the island and the various boats and seaplanes that can get you there. Thus, it is not unusual to call before the park is even open for the year and learn that everything was booked months ago. We learned that lesson the hard way in years past.

The first challenge is getting to a point where you can launch across Lake Superior to the island. To do so means getting to one of two areas: the north shore of Michigan's Upper Peninsula (situated above Wisconsin, not lower Michigan) or the eastern point of Minnesota's Arrowhead region (the extreme northeastern portion of the state). If airlines are your only option, you really only have one choice: Upper Michigan's Houghton County Memorial Airport (KCMX). There are also no interstate highways in those regions; rather, there are mainly U.S. or state highways and most are two-lane roads. Thus, GA is the key to easing the pain of reaching Isle Royale. Still, even your personal or chartered King Air will only get you so close. Realistically, the King Air will take you to one of two airports and you'll have to choose how to make the final leg out to IRNP from there.

The Michigan choice: KCMX is the only full-service airport available in the area. It offers 6,500-foot and 5,200-foot runways, multiple instrument approaches (including ILS and LPV options), full FBO and fuel services, and rental cars (plus other ground transportation options).

Isle Royale Seaplanes offers the most scenic way to get to Isle Royale NP. They operate in Michigan during the summer, then the team and some aircraft relocate to Marco Island, Florida, where they transform into Salt Island Seaplanes.

Plan now for Isle Royale travel

Transportation and lodging reservations are limited and fill quickly for Isle Royale National Park. Seaplane, ferry and camper cabin reservations open in early January each year. Upper Peninsula Travel and Recreation Association (UPTravel.com) suggests booking your Rock Harbor lodge rooms and cabins six months to one year in advance.

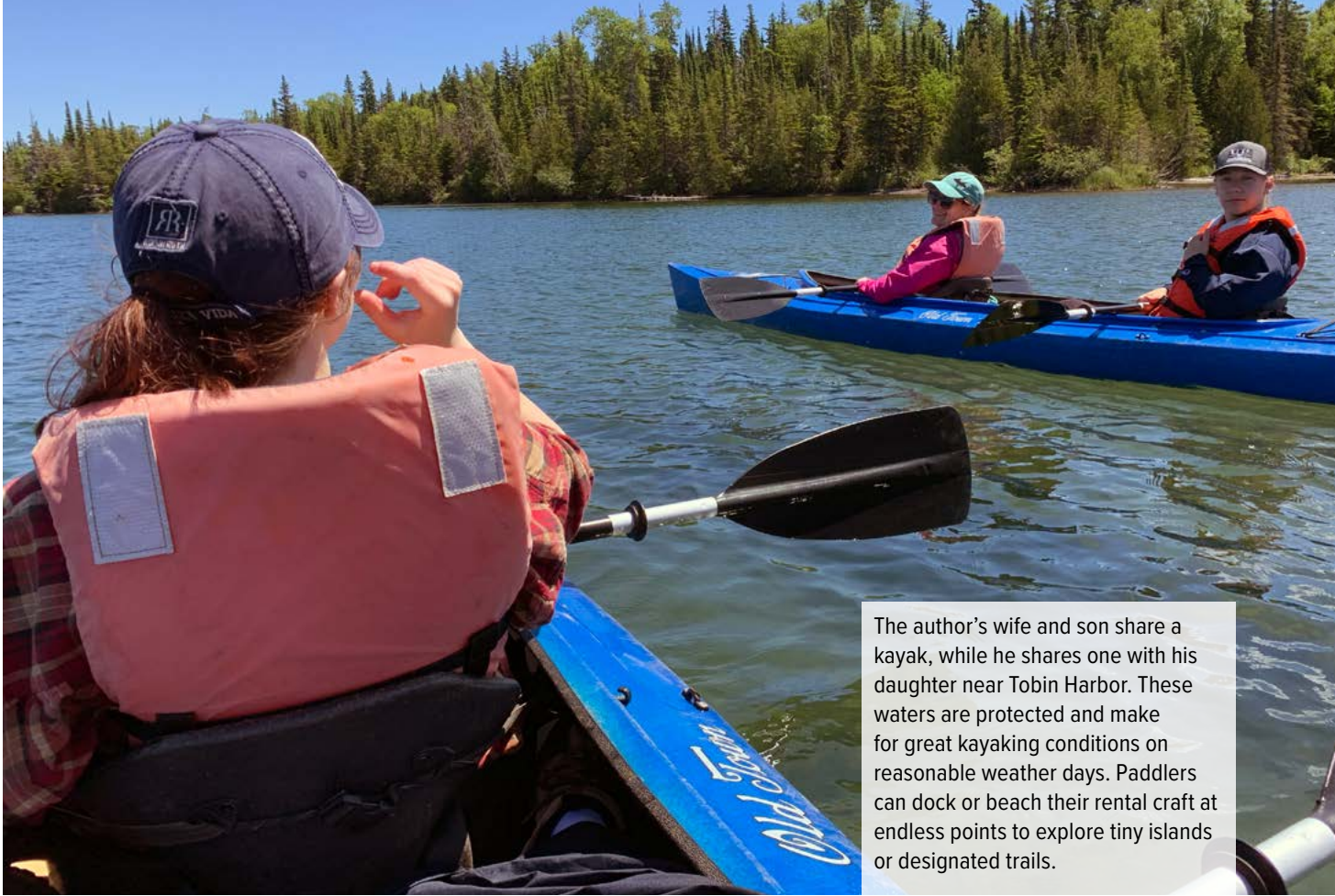


PHOTO CREDIT: MATTHEW MCDANIEL

The author's wife and son share a kayak, while he shares one with his daughter near Tobin Harbor. These waters are protected and make for great kayaking conditions on reasonable weather days. Paddlers can dock or beach their rental craft at endless points to explore tiny islands or designated trails.




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Additionally, it is only minutes from Torch Lake Seaplane Base, where scheduled flights to IRNP depart for the 30- to 45-minute crossing to the park. A few additional minutes down the road, in downtown Houghton, is the mainland IRNP headquarters and the home port of the IRNP ferries.

If using seaplane services to/from IRNP – which I highly recommend – Michigan is your best bet. While Isle Royale Seaplanes have historically flown to/from the Minnesota shores to IRNP, those flights will be discontinued as of the 2025 season. However, flights are scheduled and predictable from their Torch Lake base in Hubbell, Michigan. Using both Cessna 206 and Beaver seaplanes, they operate throughout the park's open season, conditions permitting. Be advised though, they book up early and each passenger is limited to 45 pounds of baggage (yes, your bags will be physically weighed at check-in).

The downside of the Michigan choice is if you've decided to take one of the park ferries for economic reasons or because weather has scuttled seaplane operations for the day, only one ferry operates to/from Houghton. While it accommodates the most passengers, it is also the slowest and typically takes six hours to cross. Another Michigan ferry option is the four-hour cruise to/from Copper Harbor. However, doing so requires that you have ground transportation arranged (rental car or for-hire car service) to get you to/from KCMX, roughly an hour's drive.

The Minnesota choice: In the Arrowhead of Minnesota, the Grand Marais Cook County Airport (KCKC) is a pilot-controlled field offering a 5,000-foot runway and a RNAV-GPS approach into both ends (each with WAAS minimums for aircraft appropriately equipped). The field has a full-time FBO (not 24-hour) with maintenance services and Jet-A fuel available. Rental cars are not offered, but various car services are available, which you'll need to reach the ports in nearby Grand Portage.

From the Minnesota side, some lake ferry routes have significantly less distance to travel. Ferry rides are only 90 minutes from Grand Portage to IRNP's western port of Windigo. However, it'll take an additional five-plus hours on the ferry to continue to IRNP's southeastern port of Rock Harbor. Yet, the routes from Minnesota do tend to be in more protected waters and, thus, less likely to induce seasickness.

Limited lodging options

IRNP offers two choices for overnight stays: Rock Harbor Lodge & Marina on the southeastern shore or camping.

Hardy outdoor folks flock to IRNP, all too happy to carry their lodging on their back. They explore the island by pulling up stakes in the morning, hiking, then pitching their tent at another of the park's 36 campgrounds at the end of the day. By doing so, many hike the nearly

Decarbonizing IRNP

The National Parks of Lake Superior Foundation, in partnership with the National Park Service, has launched the Decarbonize the Parks Project to transition Isle Royale National Park and four other nearby national park units from fossil fuel to clean electricity.

With 10% of the world's freshwater, Lake Superior is vulnerable to climate change; it is one of the fastest warming lakes in the world. As a remote wilderness park, IRNP relies on fossil fuel-powered generators for most of its power. The project team is working with park facilities managers and electricians to plan for rebuilding a previous solar system at Rock Harbor, the main access point for visitors to the island, and installing new solar at Mott Island, the summer headquarters and operations center for the park. Read about their progress at nplsf.org/decarbonize-the-parks.

Funded through grants and private donations, the foundation provides financial support for projects and programs that preserve the natural resources and cultural heritage of the five National Park System sites in and around Lake Superior: Isle Royale National Park, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, Grand Portage National Monument, Keweenaw National Historical Park and Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore.

50-mile length of the island, departing at the opposite end from which they arrived. That itinerary is not for the day hiker or the casual tourist, though. Isle Royale is true wilderness, where moose and wolves roam year-round, bald eagles soar overhead, beavers work busily



PHOTO CREDITS: MATTHEW MCDANIEL

Wildflowers bloom throughout the summer in many areas of IRNP.

in the lakes and streams and mosquitoes can make a night outdoors miserable for the unprepared.

Rock Harbor Lodge offers lodge rooms and cabins. Lodge rooms have one or two double beds and offer lakeside views via relaxing balconies. The cabins are more secluded, in wooded areas away from the main lodge and with views of Tobin Harbor. The cabins are popular with larger parties or for longer stays. All choices are rustic, lacking telephones, televisions or Wi-Fi. Cellphones typically don't work anywhere on the island and Wi-Fi is only available in a couple of public buildings at the lodge. One of the best things about visiting IRNP is the ability to truly unplug from the world and reconnect with nature.

There is one in-between option, which is a step up from tent camping. A few camper cabins on the southwest end of IRNP at Washington Harbor lack indoor plumbing but offer access to shared outdoor facilities and public toilets.

Soaking it in

Planning far enough ahead was challenging, but choosing which way to go was easy. We traveled directly to KCMX, then we enjoyed a smooth 35-minute seaplane flight to IRNP's Rock Harbor. It was a short walk to the lodge from the dock. Our bags were already waiting for us, and it wasn't long before we were enjoying the views south and east across Lake Superior's pristine waters from our room.

Isle Royale is not your typical national park, though stays in the park can be tailored to match individual fitness levels and interests. There are no trams, buses, scenic drives or museums. IRNP is wilderness – unspoiled and untamed. The gift of such a park is the ability to go out and be among natural beauty, far from crowds. This can be achieved via long or short hikes, water taxi rides to various points on the island or personal water exploration using rental kayaks and canoes. We



Tilted basalt layers make up most of Isle Royale.

only had two full days on the island and knew it would be impossible to see it all. Thus, we elected to sample a bit of each activity. Maybe that was just to feel more accomplished after the long travel just to get there. More likely, it was to allow us to determine what we enjoyed most so that we might narrow our focus should we ever return for subsequent visits.

IRNP is a hiker's paradise, whether casual day-hiking or through-hiking the island's full length. There are more than 165 miles of trails on Isle Royale. After our morning arrival, we had enough time to complete the 5-mile Stoll Memorial Trail, which heads east from the lodge to Scoville Point. Along the way we spotted bald eagles in flight, an eaglet high in a massive nest awaiting dinner, a lone moose and ancient copper mining pits. All but a half-mile of the trail can be done as a loop, and around every corner is a new sweeping vista of varied spits of land jutting out into Lake Superior.

On Day 2, we took advantage of the calm, clear morning to kayak across Tobin Harbor and then hike up to Lookout Louise, where you can see Minnesota and Ontario on a clear day. We then connected with the Greenstone Ridge Trail. After about 6 miles of hiking, we were back at the dock for a leisurely picnic lunch before getting back in the kayaks for more water touring within the protected harbor. This included many opportunities to stop and watch seaplane arrivals and departures from only a short but safe distance. After returning the kayaks, we headed west from the lodge on foot to Suzy's Cave and other points of interest along connecting loop trails. The network of trails makes it easy to avoid backtracking. By the end of the day, we'd put in well over 10 miles on foot and many more miles paddling. The quaint Lighthouse Restaurant at Rock Harbor Lodge quelled our appetites. They will even cook your day's catch.

Day 3 dawned cool and drizzly. While not ideal, it allowed us to enjoy water taxi rides to points farther west. We paid attention to the location of the various water taxi docks as we hiked. Timing was critical, as missing a boat could mean a long wait for the next one or many more miles on the trail than planned. We joined a crowd of damp campers and hikers for lunch back at the lodge's Greenstone Grill. Many were checked out of the lodge, like us, and waiting for rides back to the mainland.

We'd been unable to secure seaplane tickets for our return to Michigan, so we boarded the "faster" ferry option to Copper Harbor. After pitching and rolling in moderate waves for four-plus hours, we finally arrived with two of us feeling fine and two wishing not to see a boat again anytime soon! The car service we'd arranged had waited patiently for our ship's late arrival. Less than an hour after arriving, we were back at the seaplane base and our rental car.

Departures

Isle Royale's terrain varies dramatically from the bare and tilted basalt rocks of the east end to the highly vegetated glacial till of the west end. In a single hike of only an hour or so, you'll likely experience ridges and uplands, valleys and steep slopes, swamps and lakes, warm open fields of wildflowers and cool densely shaded forests. The peaceful surroundings, filled almost exclusively with the sounds of nature, seem to be enhanced beyond your ability to absorb them fully.

Conditions can vary dramatically from day to day, even at the height of summer. Carrying clothing for wide temperature ranges is a must. Lodging is a throw-back experience whether you choose the lodge, cabins or tent camping. Transportation can be challenging, exciting, unpredictable and exhausting. However, when you add it all together, the total experience is certainly greater than the sum of its parts. Isle Royale is worth the wait – and the effort. 📷

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Matthew McDaniel is a Master & Gold Seal CFII, ATP, MEI, AGI/IGI and Platinum CSIP. In 35 years of flying, he has logged nearly 23,000 hours, including 6,000+ instruction-given hours and 2,500+ hours in various King Airs and BE-1900D. He owns Progressive Aviation Services, LLC (progaviation.com), where he specializes in technically advanced aircraft and glass cockpit instruction. He also is a Boeing 737-series captain for an international airline, holds eight turbine aircraft type ratings and has flown more than 140 aircraft types. Matt is one of fewer than 15 instructors in the world to have earned the Master CFI designation for 11 consecutive two-year terms. Reach him at matt@progaviation.com or 414-339-4990.

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-Henry Maier, President and CEO, FedEx Ground



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