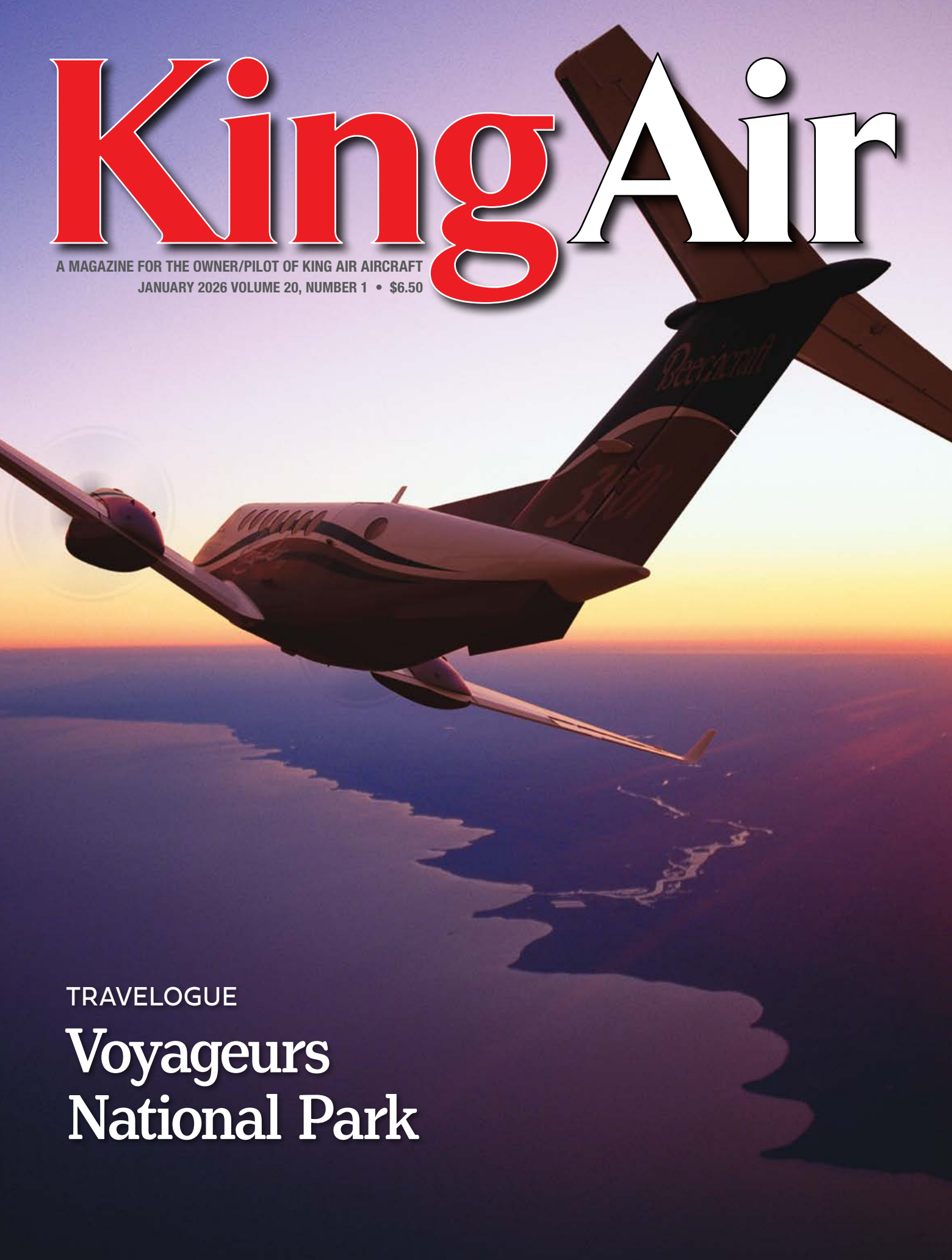

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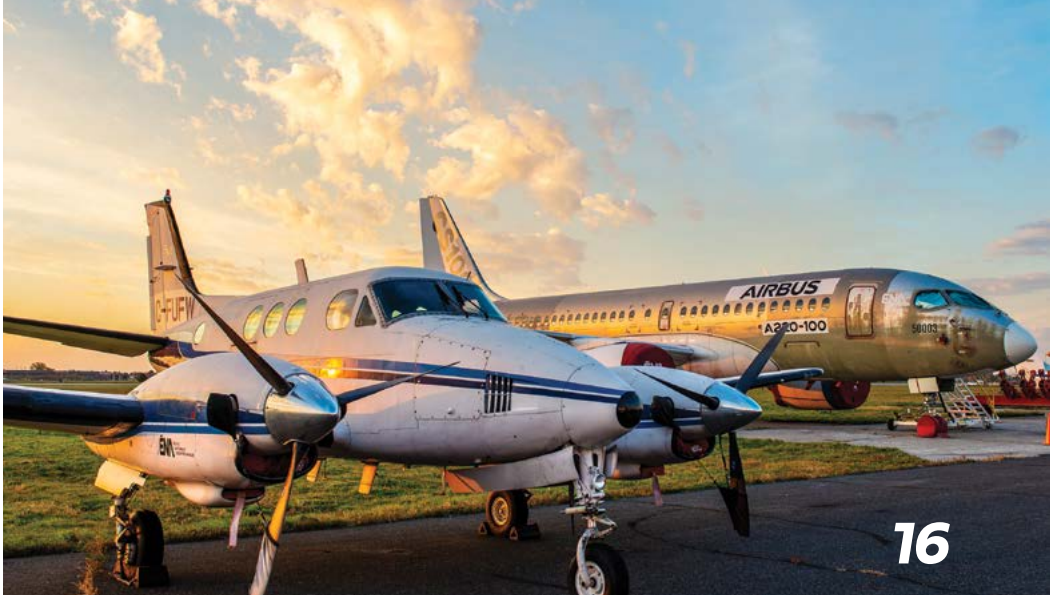

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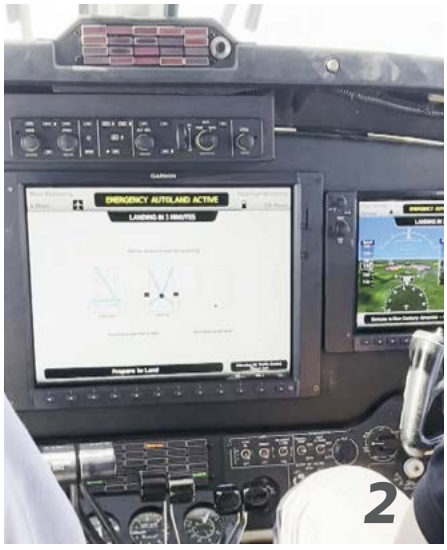
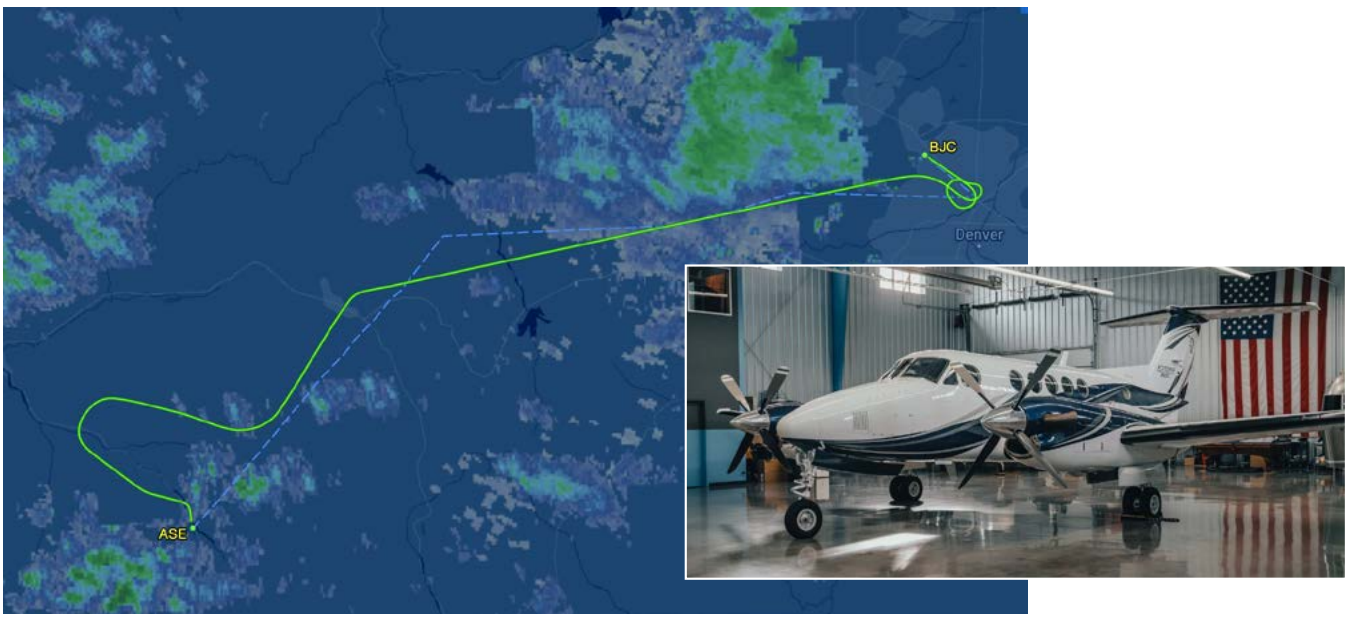


AVIATION NEWS

Garmin Autoland Achieves First Confirmed In-service Activation

King Air B200 pilots consciously allowed automated landing after pressurization event in Colorado

by Grant Boyd



This 1984 King Air B200 took off from Aspen-Pitkin County Airport (KASE) and a pressurization issue triggered Garmin Autoland. The automated landing system took the airplane and its two pilots to Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport (KBJC).

PHOTO CREDIT: FLIGHTAWARE (MAP) AND BUFFALO RIVER AVIATION (INSET)

The first confirmed in-service activation of Garmin's Autoland set the general aviation community abuzz in late December and offered confirmation that the automated landing system can deploy as designed in an actual emergent situation.

A 1984 Beechcraft King Air B200 (N479BR, serial number BB-1179) unexpectedly demonstrated the technology that won the 2020 Robert J. Collier Trophy as "the world's first certified autonomous system designed to activate during an emergency to safely fly and land an aircraft without human intervention." Blackhawk Aerospace said it installed the Autoland feature on BB-1179 in February 2025 at Blackhawk's Performance Center in Columbia, Missouri, and in a statement posted on Facebook the company said this historic maneuver moved the technology from theoretical to proven.

Garmin confirmed via a statement that "This was the first use of Autoland from start-to-finish in an actual emergency."

BB-1179's circumstances

According to the operator of the aircraft at the time, Buffalo River Aviation of Bentonville, Arkansas, BB-1179 experienced an in-flight emergency on Saturday, Dec. 20 after departing from Aspen, Colorado (KASE) on a FAR Part 91 reposition flight. There were two pilots and no passengers on board.

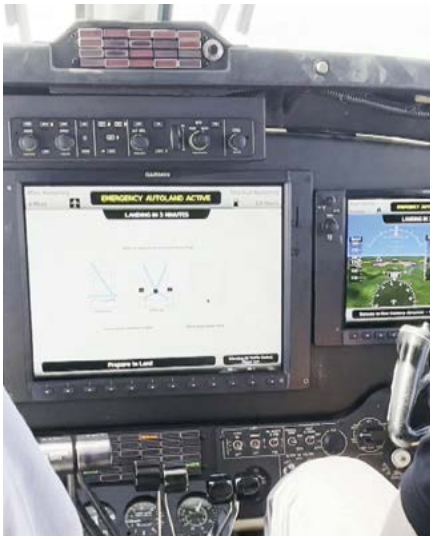
"Climbing through 23,000 feet msl, the aircraft experienced a rapid, uncommanded loss of pressurization. As per standard procedures, the two pilots immediately put on their oxygen masks," the company's CEO, Chris Townsley, said in a statement sent to media.

The statement went on to explain that "The aircraft, equipped with Garmin Aviation's latest Emergency Descent Mode (EDM) and Autoland systems, automatically engaged exactly as designed when the cabin altitude exceeded the prescribed safe levels. The system selected a suitable airport per Garmin criteria (KBJC, Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport), navigated to it, and communicated automatically along the way."

That automated communication included "November Four Seven Niner Bravo Romeo, pilot incapacitation, 2 miles south of Kilo Bravo Juliet Charlie. Emergency Autoland in 19 minutes on Runway Three Zero Right at Kilo Bravo Juliet Charlie."

The Autoland activation was quickly shared on social media due to other pilots hearing the aircraft squawking 7700 when inbound to KBJC. Online comments speculated on what may have caused the system to be initiated, which Townsley eventually cleared up in his statement: "Reports of pilot incapacitation are incorrect and result solely from the Garmin emergency system's automated communication and reporting functions. In this case, the crew consciously elected to preserve and use all available tools and minimize additional variables in an unpredictable, emergent situation, prioritizing life and a safe outcome over all other factors, as they are trained to do."

While many cases reference pilot incapacitation as an expected reason for engaging Autoland's functionality, it is designed as a tool to assist in other emergency scenarios as well. The system cannot be used in nonemergency situations, and if the Autoland system is



Tom Clements flew this Garmin Autoland demonstrator King Air in 2023.

There are now more than 1,700 aircraft across eight aircraft models operating with Garmin Autoland installed. The technology is certified in the King Air 200 and King Air 300 series, including retrofitting on select King Air 200, 300 and 350 series aircraft equipped with G1000 NXi.

activated, a pilot can later deactivate it at their discretion.

"Due to the complexity of the specific situation, including instrument meteorological conditions, mountainous terrain, active icing conditions, unknown reasons for loss of pressure and the binary (all-or-nothing) function of the Garmin emergency systems, the pilots, exercising conservative judgment under their emergency command authority (FAR 91.3) made the decision to leave the system engaged while monitoring its performance and attempting communications as able within the constraints of the system," Townsley stated. "While the system performed exactly as expected, the pilots were prepared to resume manual control of the aircraft should the system have malfunctioned in any way."

BB-1179 was flown to Wiley Post Airport (KPWA) in Oklahoma City the next day and has continued to operate since without incident. Buffalo River Aviation praised its pilots for their judgment, as well as personnel at Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport and Denver Center Tracon for their support.

Award-winning technology

Garmin first introduced Autoland in 2019 and achieved FAA type certification for equipping the system on Piper M600 single-engine turboprops, Cirrus SF50 Vision Jets and Daher TBM 940 single-engine turboprops in 2020. It is now certified for eight aircraft models, with eight more coming soon per the company's website. There are now over 1,700 aircraft in service equipped with the technology, which is currently certified in the King Air 200 and King Air 300 series. Garmin Autoland and Autothrottle are available for retrofit on select King Air 200, 300 and 350 series aircraft equipped with G1000 NXi.

The National Aeronautic Association awarded its prestigious Collier Trophy for 2020 to Garmin Autoland; the award recognizes the year's greatest achievement in aeronautics or astronautics in America with respect to improving performance, efficiency, safety in air or space vehicles.

An article titled "First Impression: Wow!" by Tom Clements in the October 2023 issue of *King Air* magazine shared the author's positive experience flying Garmin's demonstrator/test King Air B200 equipped with the company's Autothrottle and Autoland systems. As he explained, the Autoland sequence can be triggered by a pilot or passenger pushing the installed red Autoland button or the system can take over autonomously if it detects a pressurization loss or determines a pilot has become incapacitated.

"Since a lot of King Airs are flown with only one pilot, incapacitation of that person can have deadly consequences," Clements wrote. "Autoland totally changes that! It is absolutely mind-blowing to read or hear about how the system works and all the actions it takes, but even more amazing to watch it happen! My hat is off to the Garmin engineers and test pilots: They seem to have hit a home run in the design and functionality of this never-before-seen option. Of course, the need to use this system should be and will be almost nonexistent. But when the pilot becomes too disabled to function, Autoland can turn a deadly tragedy into a nonevent." KA

Grant Boyd holds a doctorate of education and is a private pilot and business aviation professional with a passion for writing. His background includes aviation marketing, communications, customer service and sales roles.

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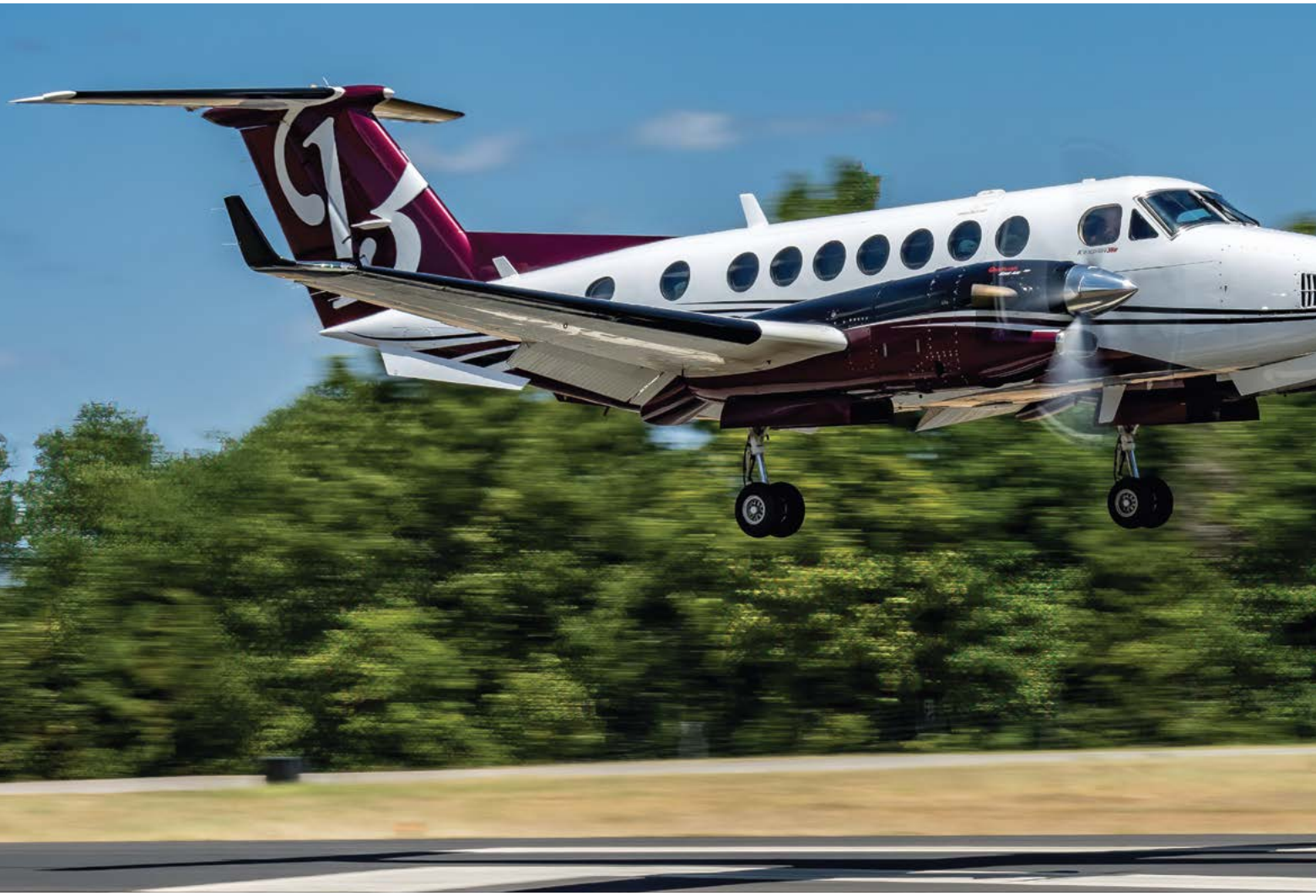


Props Forward or Not?

Know why you do what you do

by Joe Casey • Photos by Clint Goff

Every King Air pilot has been there. We are on a stable approach, the gear is down, the flaps are down, the power is set perfectly and the approach speed is dialed in with a perfect torque setting. We then look at the Caution/Advisory Panel and see the RVS NOT RDY amber caution light illuminated. There's then the pause for the question that we all recognize, "Should I move the prop levers forward?"

Come on, admit it! You have landed with the prop levers back, set at whatever cruise setting you had for most of the flight, right? You know you were taught to push the prop levers forward during initial training, but you also know that to do so adds a bunch of noise, changes the stable approach you had set up so perfectly and is basically a pain in the rear. You've made

> "It is simply good practice in any aircraft to have no caution lights during a critical phase of flight, and putting the props forward jibes with this overall good approach to flying any airplane."

the call to land with the prop levers at a cruise setting and noticed that the airplane landed just fine, no recognizable difference.

Then, you tried it again and had the same results. You noticed no real difference in the landing performance, so you tried it again and again and again – each time with no apparent difference. So, this has become your way of doing business when you are flying with no CFI, DPE or other credentialed accomplice onboard. You've drifted from what you were first taught and started a new practice that seems to work.

Training versus reality

When I train with a refresher training client, I usually have a spiel that includes, "Show me what you always do. Don't put on a show for me." I want my clients to show me their normal day-to-day way of doing business as opposed to doing it like they think I want it done. I give enough check rides as a DPE; refresher training is supposed to be a fun (maybe?) training event, not a check ride. It works much better if a client shows me what they always do instead of coming in with an examination mindset about refresher training.

I bet 50% of my refresher training clients who take my spiel seriously do not push forward the props on final approach. When I query them about it they say, "You did advise I show you what I always do, and I don't always push those props forward." I appreciate their honesty, and we usually end up with a nice discussion. I almost always mention a Tom Clements article in the July 2016 issue of *King Air* magazine.

Before we go any further, it needs to be said that I think Tom has done more for the King Air lineup of airplanes than anyone on the planet. His depth of writing, writing style and approachability have made him the go-to instructor for a half-century. You'll never hear me counter Tom in anything. In fact, I have tried to emulate Tom's approach to flight instruction every day, and I probably appreciate him more than any other instructor in any airframe. He figured out how to be relevant for half a century. He's worthy of emulation!

In Tom's article from July 2016, he writes that it is an acceptable practice to wait until after touchdown to push the prop levers forward on a normal landing. The key phrase in that guidance is "normal landing." So, I began to include this practice in my King Air flying. I discovered that Tom was right, there was no difference in the landing experience if everything was normal. For a while, this became my normal practice.

Now, if things are not normal – if there is a short runway, a strong crosswind or a POH-guided flight control parameter – then absolutely ensure that the props are pushed all the way forward.

Improved performance

I began to wonder whether the pushing forward of the props was really required under normal conditions. What difference does it really make? Pushing the props

forward is listed as a step in the POH, and we always follow the POH, right? Having the props full forward on climb causes the aircraft to have a slightly better climb rate, usually a 200-300 fpm difference in any King Air variant. But the noise level is certainly higher. Pick your King Air – it doesn't seem to matter which model – a prop full forward climb translates into about 200-300 fpm better climb than a book-recommended prop climb setting, and there's a lot more noise.

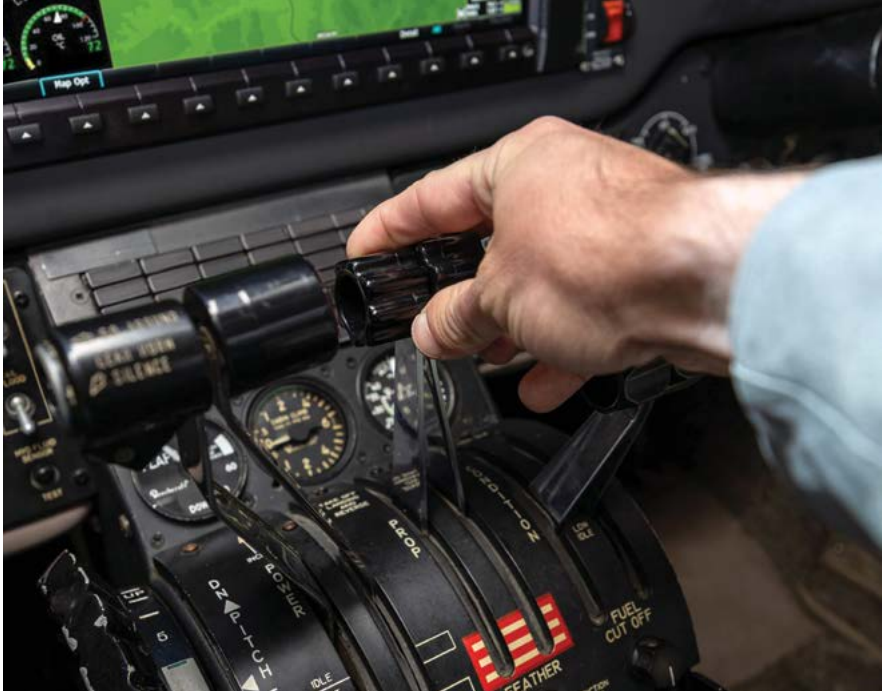
I value quiet props and I've grown as a pilot to climbing with the props pulled back significantly, usually at the lowest POH-allowed settings in the climb for that particular variant. But I value noise reduction, and I get to make the choices when I'm the pilot-in-command.

How can this improved performance help when landing a King Air? Use of reverse. On landing roll out, if deep reverse is required, the fuel control unit schedules more fuel to the engine, ramping up engine performance. Prop RPM increases and we effectively get more reverse thrust available. Hence, the amber caution light that reads RVS NOT RDY. When landing, you get more reverse thrust with the props spinning faster.

But do we really need that much beta/reverse thrust on landing? Not normally. I find one of the biggest faults in a newbie King Air pilot to be the excessive use of reverse thrust on landing. I think most new pilots think using reverse is a cool new capability, and they love shoving the power levers into deep reverse in their early days of flying a King Air. Once they realize that deep reverse causes the potential for excessive yawing from imperfectly rigged props or engines, and that there is a far greater potential of having a FOD event from the disturbed debris on the runway, they eventually figure out that beta/reverse thrust is a tool to have in the toolbox, but not a tool that is used regularly with gusto. Simply put, the minimal amount of beta/reverse thrust is probably your best bet when landing.

My current approach process

What is my strategy to setting up the approach today? I push the props forward shortly after dropping the landing gear and adding my first notch of flaps. This way I know my



torque settings for every single approach, whether a normal approach or otherwise. I get more prop noise, but I have no need to make adjustments other than fine adjustments on the approach phase, and after landing I have no need to touch the prop levers, which requires me to remove my hands from the power levers on the roll out.

If the prop RPM is increased from cruise setting to full forward on approach, the power levers will also need to be moved to obtain desired torque. My practice is to push the prop levers forward early in the sequence, while the airspeed is still slowing down, and set the torque to a known setting that creates the performance I desire. An errant flow that I see regularly is to position the controls perfectly, obtain the desired airspeed on final, and then push the power levers full forward while on short final (last 500 feet of an approach). I think this destabilizes the approach as the airplane is approaching the runway. In general, the FAA (and just about every high-level flight instructor I know) teaches that destabilizing an approach in any aircraft below 500 feet is a recipe for disaster. It is important to establish stability and then only make minor adjustments as the airplane approaches the runway.

As a bonus, setting the prop levers forward removes an amber light from the Caution/Advisory Panel. When on the landing approach, I'll often glance down at the panel and make sure there are no caution lights. I like a blank panel on landing as I want an advisory light to catch my attention. To me, this is the biggest reason to put the prop levers forward. It is simply good practice in any aircraft to have no caution lights during a critical phase of flight, and putting the props forward jibes with this overall good approach to flying any airplane.

What is interesting, is that my wife, Deanna, is the opposite of me, especially when flying King Airs. During the climb she climbs with the prop levers much more forward than I operate, and she keeps the prop levers at the cruise setting on the landing roll. We are different, having prioritized different aspects of the flight experience. We are both soundly in agreement with the POH, both know our systems well, and both of us have never had an accident or incident in a King Air. We are both VERY safe King Air pilots. We just fly the airplanes a little differently.

We decided early on that when we share a cockpit, whoever is in the left front seat is the PIC and makes the decisions for a flight. It has proven to be quite difficult for me to be in the right seat and not instruct, not examine, not be the PIC. I effectively get to watch, monitor, make radio calls and hand out drinks and snacks. I keep my mouth shut when it comes to nuanced differences, but I'll chime in when I see something that impacts the safety of flight (a bird, a forgotten checklist item, traffic that may conflict, etc.).

The bottom line? Be intentional when operating your King Air. Know the systems, know your performance numbers and know what normal looks like. Whether you put the props forward early in the approach phase of flight or on the ground means little. Knowing why you do what you do is what matters. KA

Joe Casey is the owner of Casey Aviation, Inc. based at Angelina County Airport (KLFK) in eastern Texas. The company manages four King Air aircraft and provides flight training in many models of airplanes. He has 19,300 hours of total flight time, over 4,500 of which are in King Air airframes. He is a certified ATP-ME/SE commercial pilot with ASES, Rotorcraft-Helicopter/Instrument and Glider ratings. Casey is also a Designated Pilot Examiner (DPE) with many authorizations from Sport Pilot through ATP, CFI-Initial and the BE-300 type rating issuing authority up to the ATP level and holds CFI, CFII, MEI, CFI-H, CFI-IH and CFI-G certificates. He has flown 83 North Atlantic crossings in King Air aircraft.

INSURANCE

When Winter Strikes: Lessons from the 2010 Dulles Hangar Collapse

by Kyle P. White

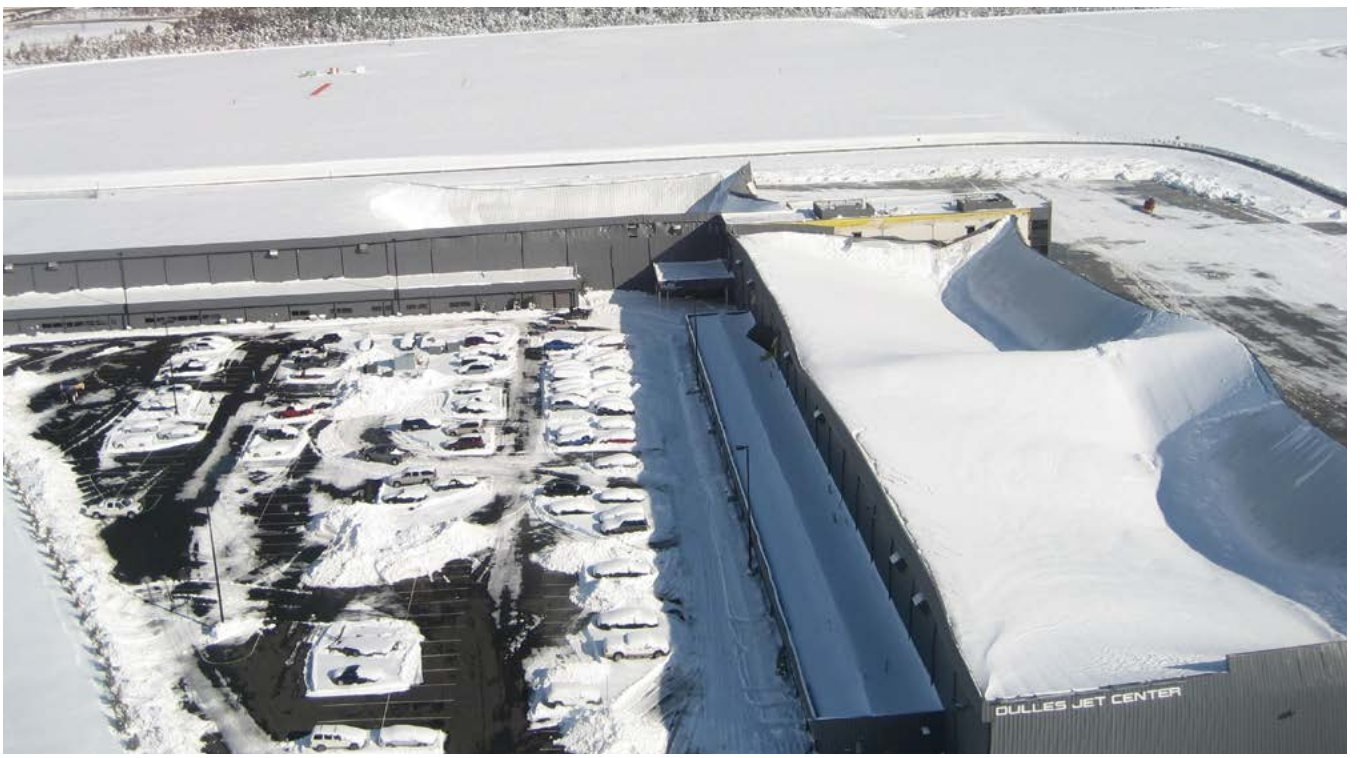


PHOTO CREDIT: KCESTRUCTURAL.COM

Winter is a season that every King Air owner and pilot operating in North America knows well. The question each morning is often: Did it snow enough to justify firing up the snowblower or was it just a light dusting that will melt away with a bit of sun? While snow is often a manageable inconvenience, sometimes winter's impact can be catastrophic – especially when it comes to protecting your King Air.

A severe snowstorm at Washington Dulles International Airport (KIAD) in February 2010 demonstrated just how devastating winter weather can be. The snowfall was so intense that even industrial-grade snow removal equipment couldn't keep pace. Snow accumulated rapidly, adding tremendous weight to the roofs of several hangars. Tragically, some of these roofs collapsed under the burden, crushing or severely damaging approximately $440 million worth of aircraft housed within. This event remains the largest aviation loss in the history of general aviation (non-airline), and it left a lasting impact on how aircraft insurance policies and hangar agreements are structured today.

Immediate aftermath: Claims and challenges

The claims process was complex, lengthy and fraught with challenges for aircraft owners affected by the Dulles hangar collapse. These unlucky owners fell into three categories: those who would have their aircraft totaled, those

who faced lengthy repair periods and the few who wanted their aircraft totaled but faced a legal battle to do so.

The event highlighted several key issues that remain relevant for King Air operators today:

- **Total loss or repair**

Many owners immediately wanted to know if their aircraft was totaled – and if so, when they would receive their insurance payout.

- **Diminution of value and extra expense**

For those whose aircraft were repairable but significantly damaged, questions arose about compensation for the loss in market value (diminution of value) and coverage for supplemental lift while their aircraft was out of service.

- **Emotional and practical considerations**

Some owners simply did not want to fly their repaired aircraft again and preferred a total loss settlement.

Access and assessment delays: The cost of waiting

The first step in any claim is assessing the damage. However, this was delayed at Dulles because the site was unsafe for days. For aircraft owners, this delay meant that the clock on extra expense coverage – insurance that helps pay for things like chartering another aircraft while your aircraft is being repaired – started ticking without the ability to begin repairs. Depending on your policy, extra expense coverage may start on the day of physical damage or the first day you charter a replacement aircraft.

If your King Air is declared a total loss, extra expense coverage typically ends or, at best, it continues only until the insurance company issues your settlement check. This creates a delicate balance: Insurance carriers want to avoid paying extra expenses unnecessarily and delays in damage assessment can inadvertently increase costs for both parties.

The importance of an accurate insured value

For King Air owners, one of the most critical lessons from the Dulles event is the importance of maintaining an accurate insured value. The insurance payout for a total loss is based on the amount stated on your policy's declarations page, minus any deductible. If you are underinsured, your settlement check may not be enough to replace it with a like kind and quality aircraft. Conversely, being overinsured can make it harder for the insurer to declare a total loss, potentially prolonging repairs and depleting your extra expense coverage before the repairs are complete.

Practical steps for King Air owners and pilots

Sixteen years after the Dulles hangar collapse, the lessons learned remain relevant for King Air operators. To protect your investment and ensure business continuity, consider the following steps:

- **Review your insured value:** Confirm that your policy accurately reflects your King Air's current market value, including upgrades and modifications.
- **Understand your extra expense coverage:** Know the limits, waiting periods and duration of your coverage to avoid surprises if your aircraft is grounded.
- **Check for diminution of value coverage:** While extremely rare, some policies or endorsements may offer limited protection – ask your broker.
- **Consider a constructive total loss endorsement:** This can provide peace of mind and financial protection in the event of severe damage.
- **Examine your hangar lease and contracts:** Look for unfavorable clauses and seek legal or insurance advice before signing.
- **Maintain open communication with your insurance carrier:** Submit contracts for approval and keep your insurer informed of any changes to your aircraft or operations.

Regularly review your insured value, especially after major upgrades or modifications – such as avionics enhancements, engine overhauls or interior refurbishments – to ensure your policy reflects your King Air's true worth.

Extra expense coverage: Know your policy details

Extra expense coverage is a vital component of your King Air insurance policy, but it varies widely between insurers. Some policies offer limited coverage with daily caps and short durations, while others provide more generous terms – sometimes up to 180 days of coverage without a per-day limit.

It's essential that King Air operators who rely on their aircraft for business understand the nuances of their extra expense coverage. If your aircraft is grounded for repairs, will your policy cover the cost of chartering a replacement aircraft? How long will that coverage last? Are there waiting periods or caps that could leave you exposed?

Diminution of value: The hidden cost of repairs

One of the most challenging aspects of aircraft damage claims is the issue of diminution of value. When your King Air undergoes major repairs, the damage history is recorded in the logbooks. This history can reduce the aircraft's market value, even if repairs restore it to a better-than-airworthy condition.

Unfortunately, most aircraft insurance policies exclude coverage for diminution of value. The only way to recover this loss is typically through a third-party liability claim, such as when another party was negligent and both sides agree on a settlement amount. This is why it's crucial for King Air owners to carefully review any contracts they sign with fixed base operators (FBOs) or maintenance providers. Many contracts include clauses that waive your right to pursue diminution of value claims or subrogation rights, which can limit your ability to recover losses.

Always submit contracts to your insurance carrier for approval before signing, especially if they include indemnity or hold harmless provisions.

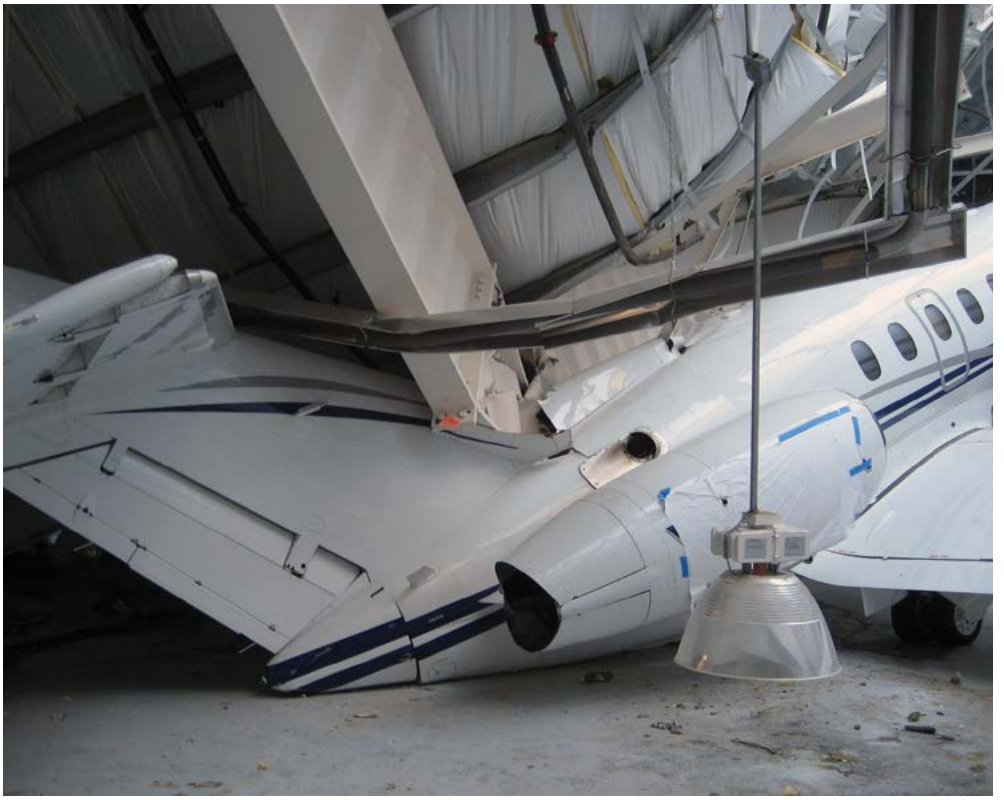
Hangar lease agreements: Watch for unfavorable language

The Dulles collapse also underscored the importance of reviewing hangar lease agreements. Many leases contain hold harmless clauses that shift liability to the aircraft owner, potentially leaving you financially responsible for damage caused by hangar failures or other incidents.

King Air owners should scrutinize their hangar contracts for language related to:

- **Hold harmless agreements**

These may limit your ability to recover damages from the hangar owner or operator.



The 2010 Dulles Jet Center hangar collapse remains the largest aviation loss in the history of general aviation; it damaged nearly $440 million worth of aircraft housed within.

PHOTO CREDIT: KCESTRUCTURAL.COM

- **Diminution of value waivers**

  These clauses waive your right to claim loss in market value.

- **Maintenance and repair responsibilities**

  These provisions could impose unexpected costs on you.

Negotiating favorable terms or seeking legal advice before signing can save you significant headaches down the road.

Constructive total loss endorsement: A valuable tool for King Air owners

One of the most difficult situations for aircraft owners is when the insurer opts to repair an aircraft that the owner believes should be totaled. Repairs can be lengthy and complex, especially for King Airs with specialized equipment and OEM-approved modifications. Extended repair times can exhaust extra expense coverage, and the complexity of repairs can exacerbate diminution of value concerns. Fortunately, some insurers can provide a constructive total loss endorsement that can help avoid this scenario.

Traditionally, insurers decide to total an aircraft if the cost to repair plus the salvage value equals or exceeds the insured value. This formula can make it difficult to total an aircraft that is expensive to repair but still technically repairable. A constructive total loss endorsement modifies this threshold. For example, if the combined cost to repair and salvage value reaches 80% of the insured value, the insurer agrees to total the aircraft. This endorsement gives King Air owners more certainty and can reduce the financial and operational burdens of prolonged repairs.

"By proactively managing your insurance policy, reviewing contracts and considering endorsements like constructive total loss, you can protect your King Air investment ..."

Conclusion

Winter weather will always pose risks to aircraft owners and operators, and understanding your insurance coverage and contractual obligations can mitigate those risks. For King Air owners who rely on their aircraft for business, the financial and operational impacts of an event like the Dulles hangar collapse can be devastating but doesn't have to be.

By proactively managing your insurance policy, reviewing contracts and considering endorsements like constructive total loss, you can protect your King Air investment and ensure you're prepared for whatever winter throws your way.

Remember, the cheapest insurance option is rarely the best when you need to make a claim. Invest in coverage that matches the value and importance of your King Air to your business. 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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March 26-28
Horseshoe Bay Resort in Texas Hill Country
Registration and more info: *kingairgathering.com*

We're moving the 2026 King Air Gathering to Horseshoe Bay Resort. While it's a new venue, expect the same exceptional gathering hosted by King Air Nation and BLR Aerospace. Set in the serene Texas Hill Country, this resort offers top-notch meeting space, amenities and a seamless experience for attendees, sponsors and exhibitors.

Registration and the most up to date information for the King Air Gathering is available at *kingairgathering.com*. The cost is $995 per person for all attendees (companions are encouraged!) and the lodging rate is discounted at $289 per night plus fees if you use the KAG room block, available until Feb. 24.

We'll kick off the gathering with an evening welcome reception on Thursday, March 26. Over the next two days, attendees will enjoy a full schedule of presentations, hands-on learning and expert-led sessions focused on strengthening pilot skills and deepening knowledge of the King Air aircraft. It's the perfect setting to learn, explore, ask questions and be part of a community that shares your passion for flying.

This unforgettable three-day experience is designed exclusively for owners, pilots and operators. Horseshoe Bay Resort offers stunning Texas Hill Country scenery paired with a private airport and world-class resort amenities – golfing, spa services, lakeside activities, dining and more. The resort is situated along Lake Lyndon B. Johnson, approximately 50 miles northwest of downtown Austin and near Marble Falls and Llano.

Whether you're in the classroom, on the ramp or relaxing with fellow aviators, the 2026 King Air Gathering promises a memorable experience from start to finish.

New this year: Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6 Connect at KAG

Pratt & Whitney Canada is bringing its PT6 Connect event to the King Air Gathering. Presented in collaboration with KAG organizers and Horseshoe Bay Resort Jet Center, this event will offer PT6 operators and maintenance pros direct engagement with P&WC experts on Thursday, March 26 at the Horseshoe Bay Resort Airport (KDZB). There is no additional cost for registered KAG attendees to participate in this activity, though registration is required.

PT6 Connect events embody P&WC's commitment to its customers and the broader aviation community. Since inception, they have offered a valuable forum for learning, networking and knowledge sharing while highlighting the latest PT6 capabilities and support solutions. Attendees can expect hands-on demonstrations – including borescope inspections, hot section inspections and rigging – along with practical insights into maintenance practices and operational considerations.

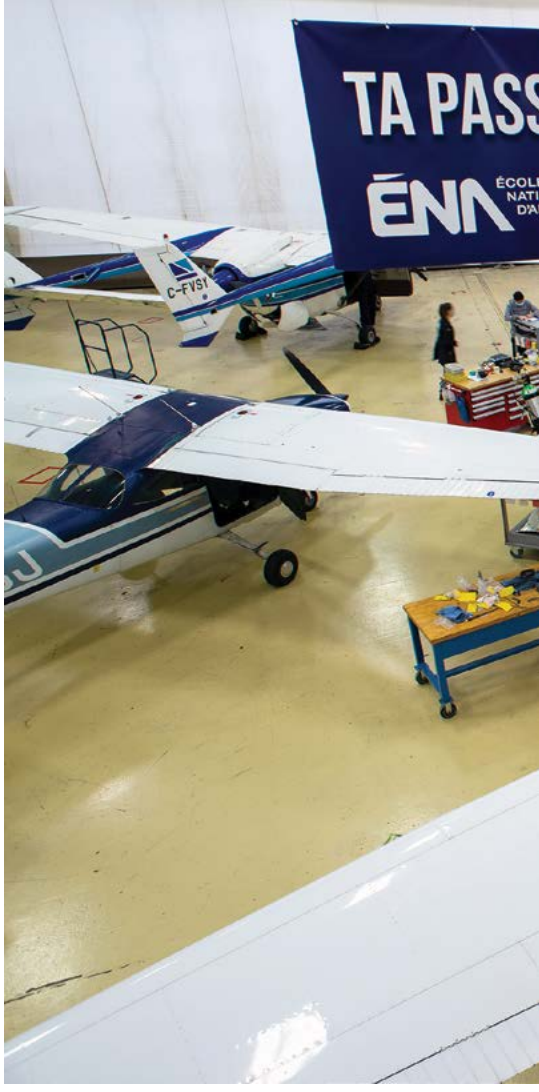
Look forward to an engaging experience designed specifically for the King Air community. The event provides an ideal setting to meet fellow operators, exchange experiences and strengthen connections within the PT6 network. Find PT6 Connect registration info at *kingairgathering.com*. KA

FEATURE

BUILDING SKILLS + PASSION

North America's largest college-level aerospace technical school has two King Airs among its nearly 40 aviation maintenance instructional platforms

by Robert S. Grant • Photos by Pierre Gillard/Passion Aviation unless noted



Passengers waiting for the whisper of airline tires touching tarmac at Montreal-Pierre Elliott Trudeau International sometimes glimpse another series of runways as they turn final. Few realize that six buildings across the fast-flowing, freighter-packed St. Lawrence River host an assortment of fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft that belong to École Nationale d'Aérotechnique, or ÉNA.

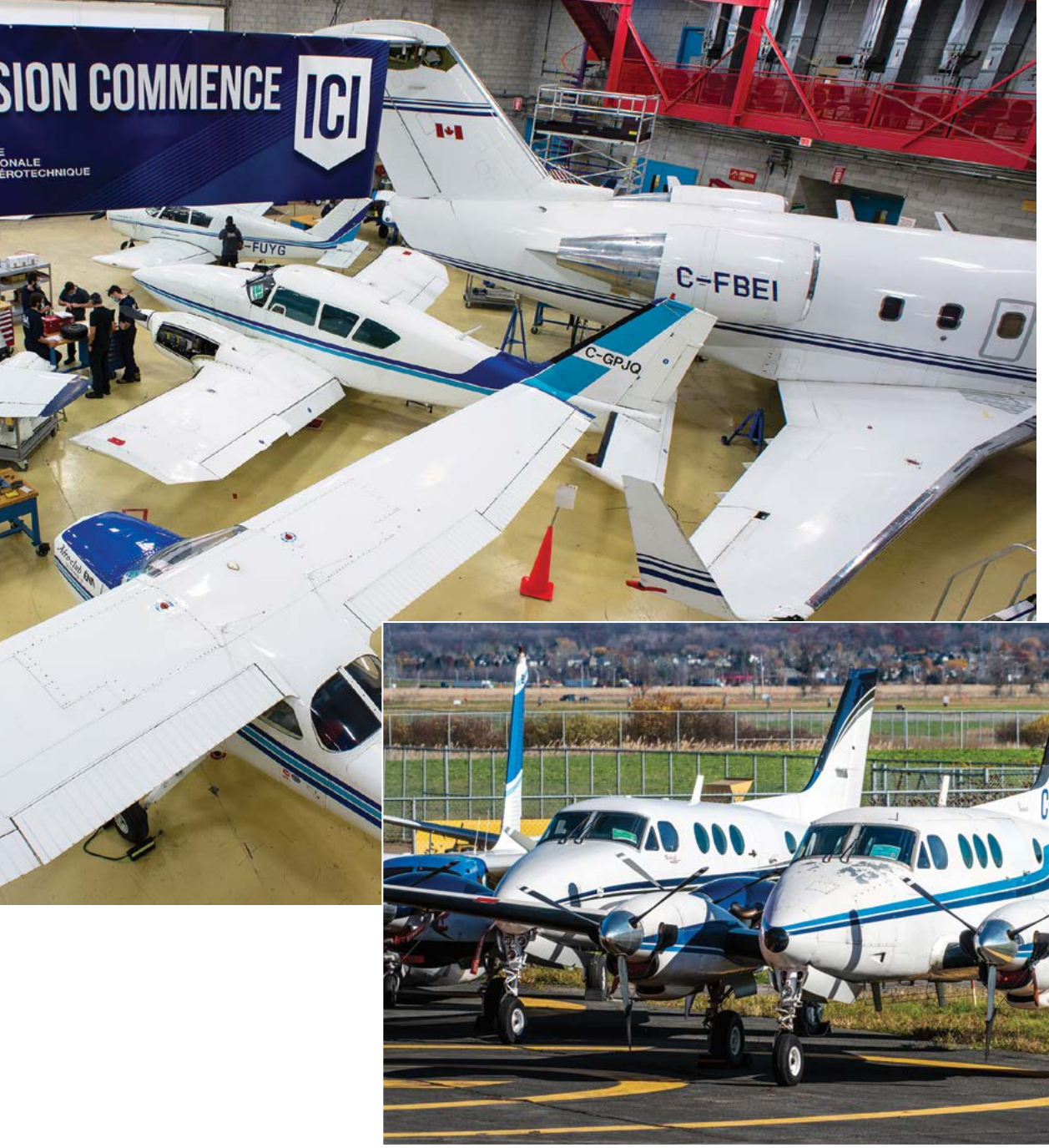
ÉNA is a prestigious technical training institution at Montreal Metropolitan Airport (CYHU) – known as Saint-Hubert Airport until 2023. It is affiliated with the province of Québec's largest college: Cégep Édouard-Montpetit (Cégep is the acronym for collège d'enseignement général et professionnel, or what the U.S. would call a general and vocational college). The school's 208 instructors specialize in introducing 1,200 students annually to the world of aviation maintenance. A three-year aerospace technology program leads Canadians and international trainees into every factor involved with keeping commercial, government and private aircraft safely aloft.

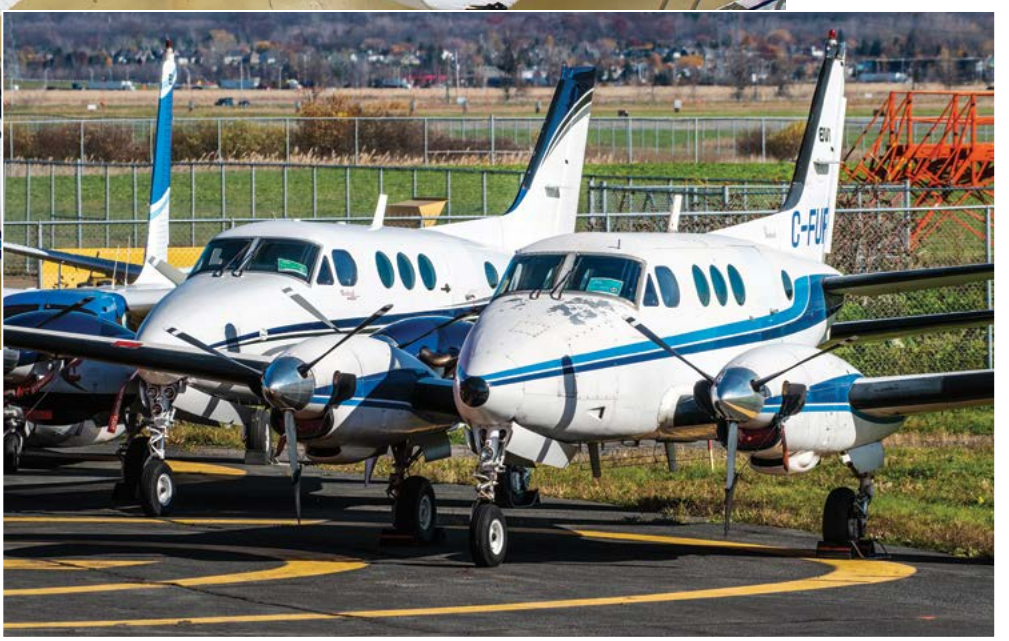
Integral within ÉNA are two Beechcraft King Airs: C-FUFW, a 1966 C90-1 model that rolled off the production line as serial number LJ-84, and C-GYLZ, a 1982 C90 model with serial number LJ-1014. Neither of the former corporate carriers will fly again, though they serve an important role as instructional platforms.

Spreading the joy

Stored outside in mild weather within sight of air traffic inbound to Montreal and hundreds of student aviators manipulating flight school Cessna trainers at CYHU, C-FUFW arrived as a gift to ÉNA in 1995. Sister ship C-GYLZ followed in 2022 as a direct fair market value purchase from the state of Georgia. Both unflyable aircraft remain in pristine condition and sport the eight side window trademark of the species first delivered in 1964. In continuous production since then, nearly 8,000 units have been delivered across all models of the turbine-powered series. Textron Aviation's current production models include the King Air 260, 360 and 360ER.

Close to aeronautical perfection as any mechanical contrivance can be – thanks to innovations like digital pressurization, touchscreen avionics or autothrottles – the agile and long-range King Air 360 encompasses commonalities with ÉNA's silent C-FUFW and C-GYLZ. Every airplane departing



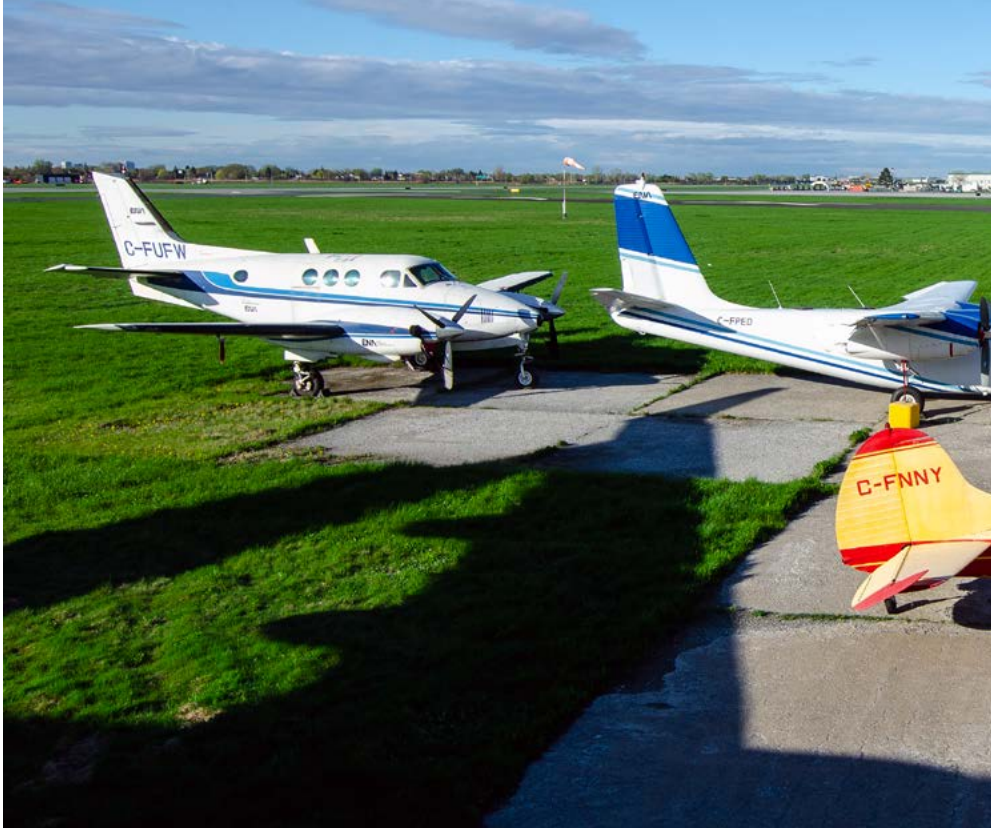


The phrase Ta Passion Commence (The Passion Begins) summarizes École Nationale d'Aérotechnique's mission of helping students find their passion and develop aviation maintenance careers.

assembly lines will need skilled and knowledgeable airframe and powerplant (A&P) mechanics (in Canada they are known as AMEs or aircraft maintenance engineers). Also, ÉNA's King Airs contribute to bringing old-timers into line with recent modifications and improved techniques.

"King Airs are versatile and will be in service for many years, so we introduce students to piston airplanes and move to basic turbine types which include the C90s," explained instructor Marc-André Farkouh, who came to ÉNA in 2018 after a fulfilling career with Pratt & Whitney Canada. "During the program's first semester, tasks are simple but as experience increases, projects become complex and we know they'll probably maintain King Airs some time in their future."

The college does not teach type courses or issue specific endorsements. Tutelage focuses partially on Beechcraft products as well as 36 other airframes. En route to



ÉNA has a variety of aircraft for academic training at its Montreal Metropolitan Airport complex.

graduation, neophytes gain unmatched experience on everything from basic homebuilt types to a complex Airbus CSeries CS100 passenger jet.

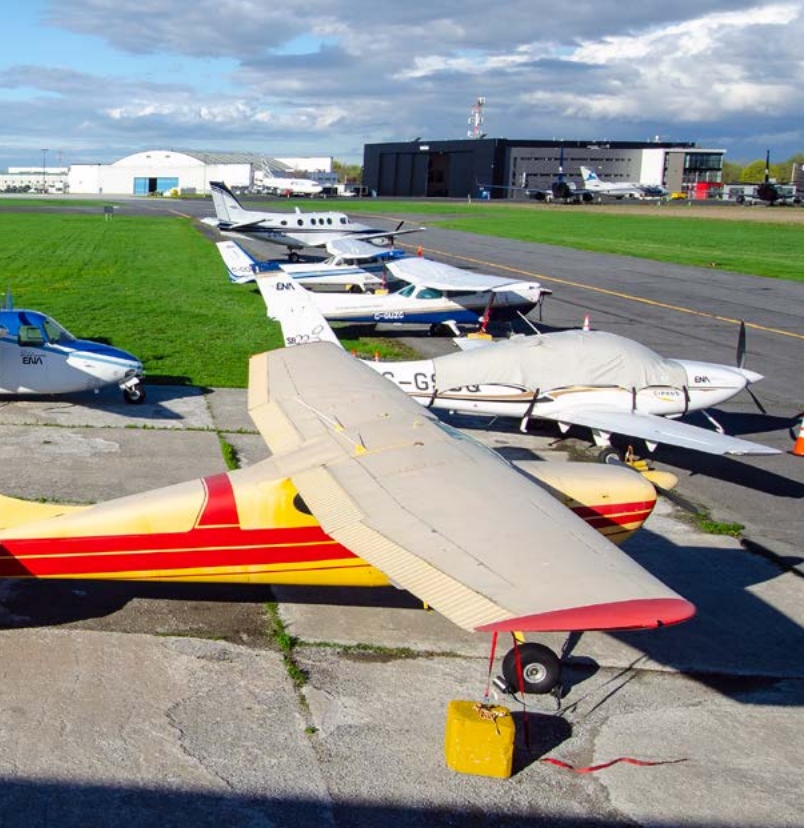
"We try to spread the joy and foster good aeronautical practices," Farkouh said.

The King Air's relevance

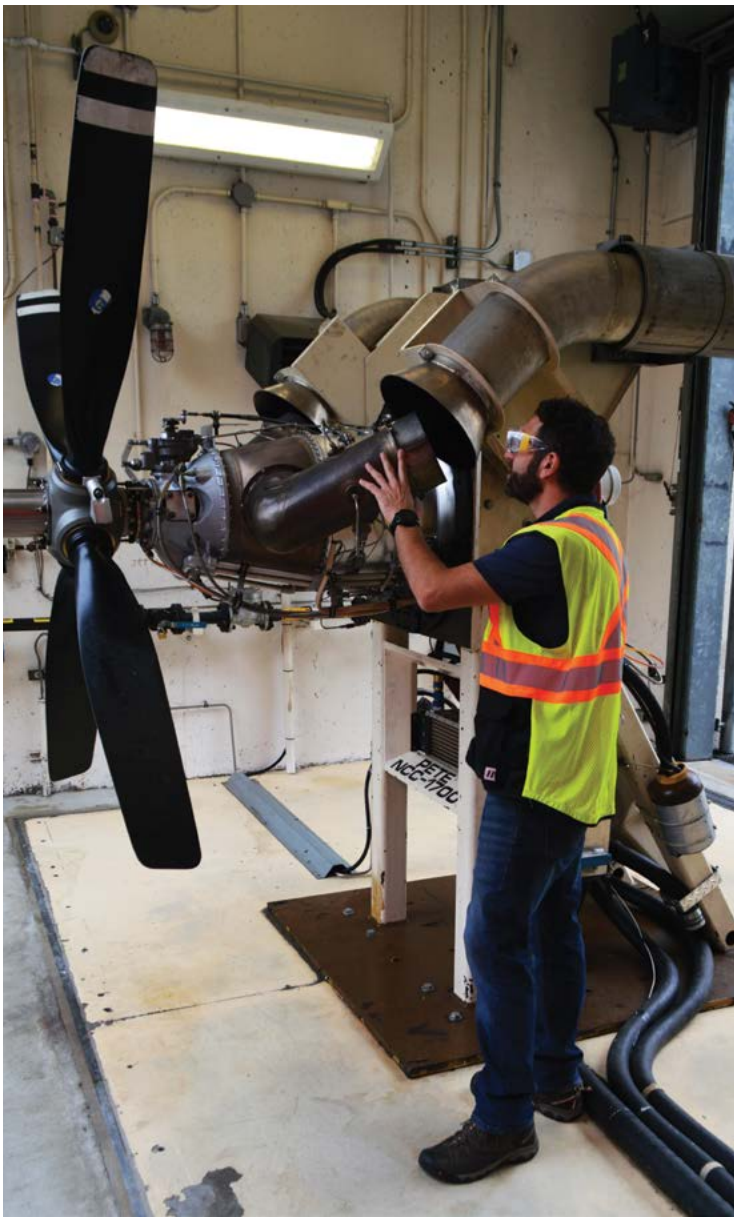
Engine removal and component studies remain critical especially since upgraded Pratt & Whitney units power most King Airs, apart from Garrett TPE331-powered King Air B100 models. Coincidentally, ÉNA's gate guardian happens to be the tri-motor Beechcraft 18 (CF-ZWY-X) that carried out the first flight of the ubiquitous PT6 on May 30, 1961. Today's King Air 360 operates with a descendant 1,050 shp PT6A-60A and owes ancestry to CF-ZWY-X.

A glance at any assortment of wing parts and Plexiglas would instantly discern differences such as gross weight and propeller blades. However, besides window count, wooden cabinets or flushing toilets, industry-proven Beechcraft share similarities such as pressurization, flight control systems and landing gear components. Students at ÉNA start with basic lock wiring of fuel pumps, filters, generators and other critical devices. Some critics consider these 90 models ancient by present standards yet they continue enabling access to terrains like ant-infested Colombian jungle, remote Australian outback and arctic tundra.

"Our students are shown how to perform preflight inspections on C-FUFW and C-GYLZ," Farkouh said. "They follow with engine starts and eventually taxi to designated areas for power checks as knowledge and respect develop. They have the opportunity to disassemble whole or in part engines using specialized tools. All these skills become critical in post-graduation workplaces



This Beechcraft 18 at ÉNA's entrance is CF-ZWY-X, the former test bed that flew P&WC's first PT6A turboprop engine on May 30, 1961. P&WC donated the aircraft to the school in the early 1980s.



Instructors including Marc-André Farkouh bring industry experience to the ÉNA classrooms. Future A&Ps begin in-depth study of turbine engines with 550 shp PT6A-20s and progress to larger versions.

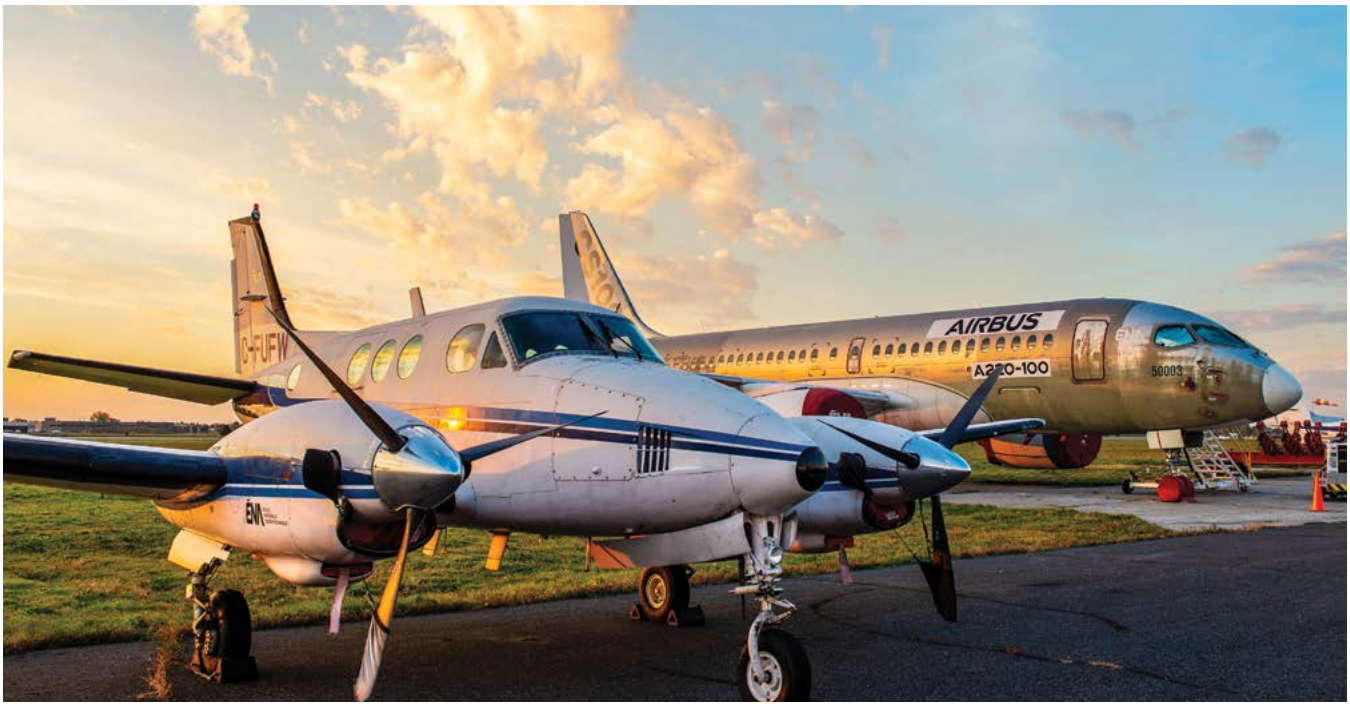
PHOTO CREDIT: ROBERT S. GRANT

and so will oil changes, tire rotations or any procedures in the world of working King Airs."

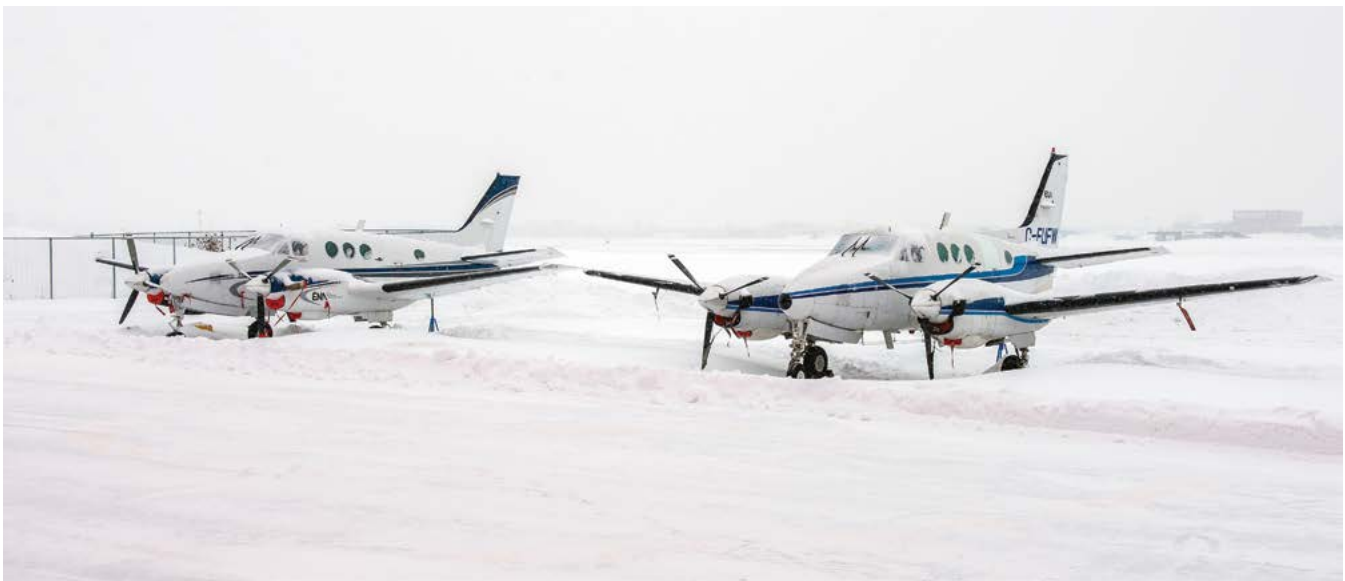
Repetitive instruction enhanced by questioning, testing and hands-on agendas "pulls everything together," Farkouh added, and Wichita, Kansas-provided factory manuals become less intimidating. Propeller blades seem less dangerous but from the moment a student learner enters ÉNA's multitudes of laboratories and workshops, no rusty pipe wrenches or paint-splotched ladders appear. All components and tools must be treated with respect. Instructional staff at ÉNA come industry-experienced and understand field life far from air-conditioned classrooms.

In addition to technical mentoring, recipients of knowledge within the school buildings need enthusiasm – detailed studies demand dedication. A stroll through the halls and inside C-FUFW or C-GYLZ reveals that plenty of fervor exists.

When not experiencing hands-on or face-to-face instruction, goals must shift from airplanes to seemingly unrelated practical and theoretical aspects. Disciples must be competent in French



The Bombardier CSeries CS100 provides commonality with ÉNA's Beech King Airs for students learning aircraft maintenance. Student A&Ps will leave the college with experience on aircraft of all sizes.



More often kept in warm hangars for year-round use by students and instructors, C-GYLZ came to ÉNA in 2022 as a fair market value purchase and C-FUFW arrived as a gift in 1995.

and English. Mandatory humanities, physical education and philosophy make up curriculums distant from engines and airframes to earn a Diploma of College Studies in Aviation Maintenance, Aviation Technology or Avionics Technology. If inclined, they may enter the workforce directly, pursue engineering studies or become on-the-job apprentices with 19 months credit towards an A&P license.

Clipped wings, new purpose

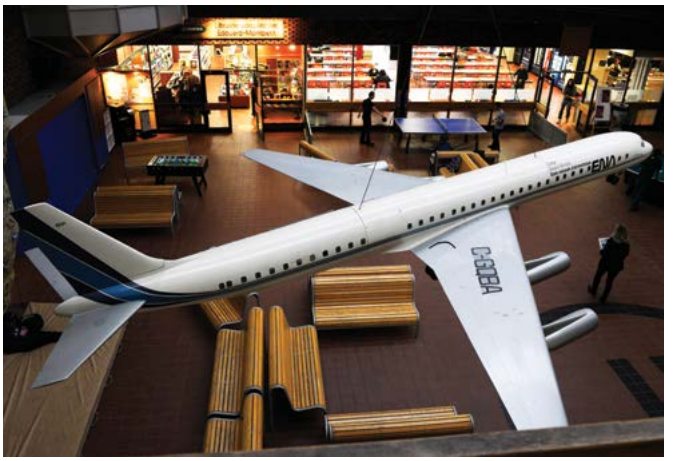
Questions often cross Farkouh's desk concerning the possibilities of C-FUFW and C-GYLZ returning to Quebec skies. He points out that ÉNA ensures the continually used King Airs remain weight-on-wheels. Costs to re-fly either would be prohibitive and each has a purpose as a teaching tool.

However, ÉNA operates an in-house aero club with two Cessna 172Ns that enable students with private pilot licenses to add flying time or night ratings to future A&P resumes. Farkouh holds a commercial pilot license with instructor rating.

Recent analysis indicates expanding workforces direly need young mechanics from training organizations such as ÉNA. Retirees cannot be quickly replaced nor A&Ps trained overnight. No matter what contributions of a pair of airplanes from Kansas wheat fields, newbies enter the profession matured with licenses to learn. Fortunately, ÉNA's variety of airplanes alongside C-FUFW and C-GYLZ contribute to a positive picture.

"Each year, we hear appeals to 'train more, train more.' Before our undergraduates leave, they've already had several job offers so employment's not an issue," Farkouh said. "Nobody can predict the job landscape but the same basic configuration with continued refinement will still be out there. There will always be a place for King Airs."

École Nationale d'Aérotechnique publishes tasteful brochures for dissemination to potential enrollees. A double-sided pamphlet justifies the immense complex's purpose on busy Montreal Metropolitan Airport. King Air C-FUFW appears below the yellow-lettered statement "There's a promising future in the air," and it is no coincidence that an accompanying 12-page booklet includes a photo of graduates tossing mortarboards with a blue and white King Air in the background.



École Nationale d'Aérotechnique offers cutting-edge equipment and facilities, from pristine hangars to a variety of laboratories, specialized workshops and common spaces.

Diplomas awarded by ÉNA have never been easy to obtain nor should they be. Since founding in 1964 as the Institute Aérotechnique du Quebec, the organization has become a leader in terms of training nurtured by a pair of motionless twin-engine airplanes. Sixty-one years ago, when test pilot James D. Webber flew the first King Air prototype, serial number LJ-1 registered N5690K, he believed the line would prosper and it has exceeded expectations.

King Airs C-FUFW and C-GYLZ will never stand useless in museums or waste away as crumpled scrap. They are functional classics supporting the longest production run of any aircraft on the market. KA

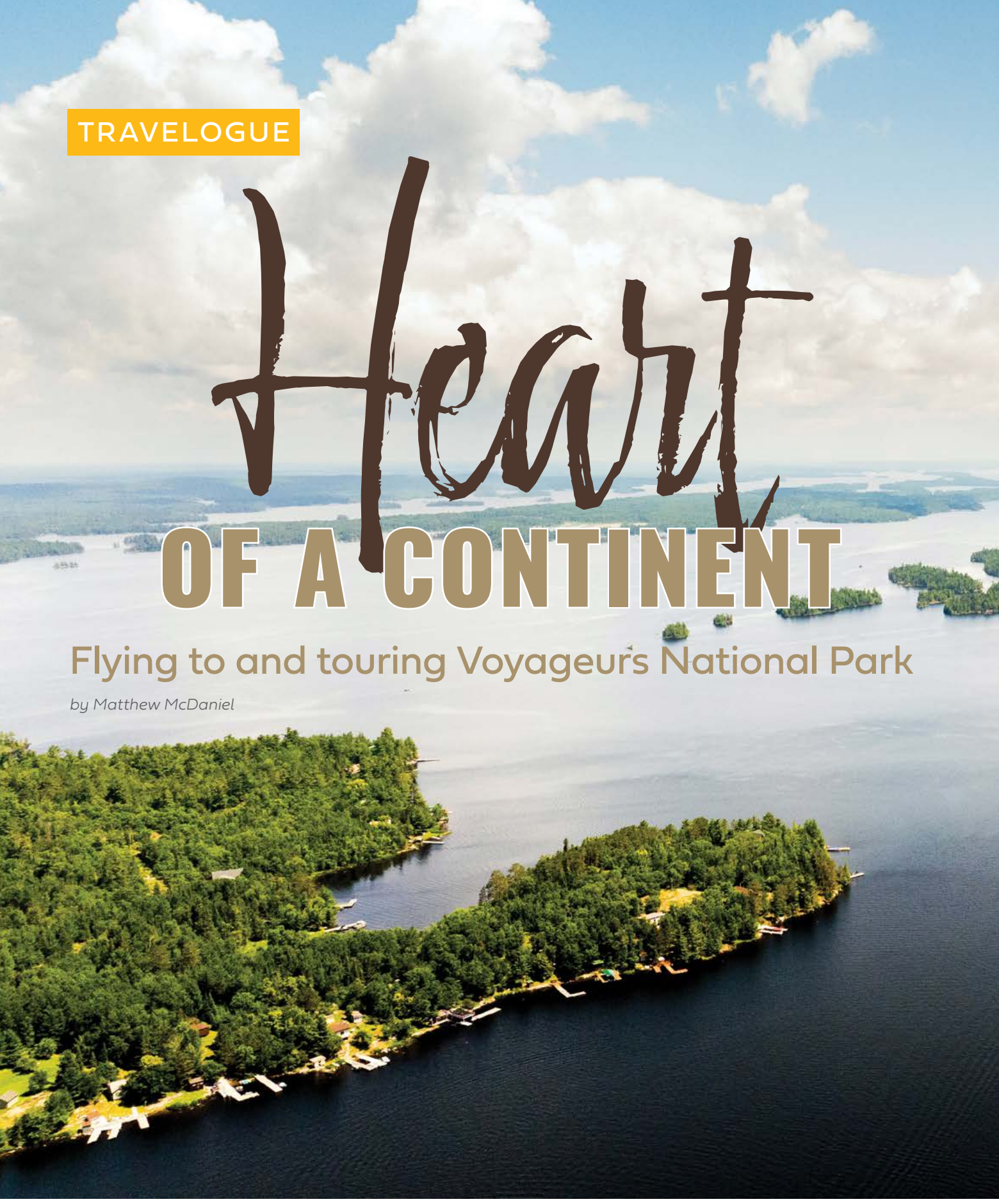
Robert S. Grant has published more than 2,500 articles in six countries as well as a bimonthly column for a Canadian west coast magazine. He has accumulated 20,200 accident-free hours in his flying career including 5,300 on seaplanes, beginning in a fabric-covered hand-started Aeronca Champion. He operated Beechcraft King Air A100s in central and eastern Canada as well as during a five-month contract for Yellowknife's Buffalo Airways. Grant also spent 15 years in African nations and flew his first King Air 200 in Chad for U.S.-based humanitarian organization Air Serv. He lives in Ottawa and hopes to fly again in a Beechcraft.

TRAVELOGUE

Heart OF A CONTINENT

Flying to and touring Voyageurs National Park

by Matthew McDaniel



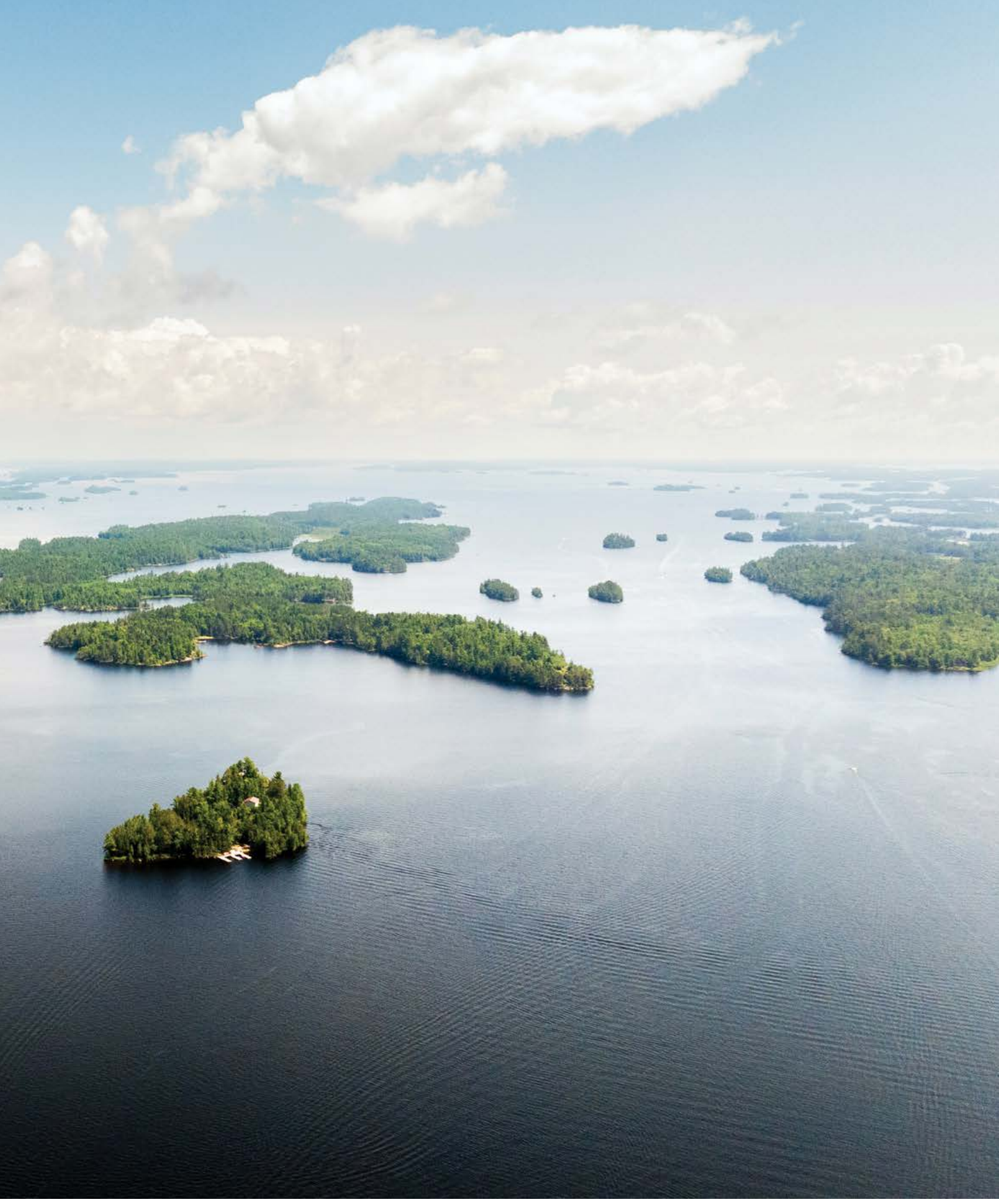
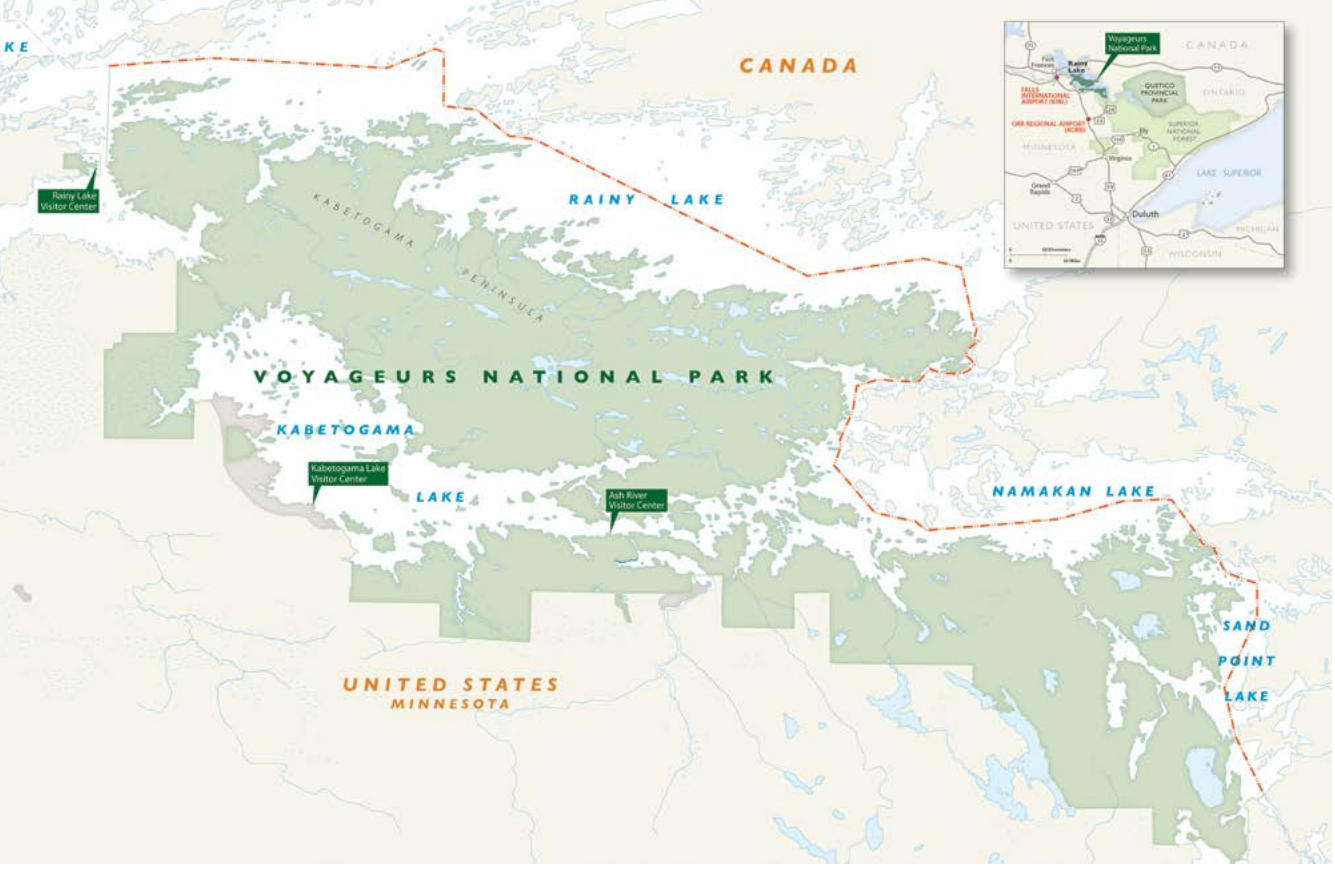


PHOTO CREDIT: EXPLORE MINNESOTA



We are sitting sidesaddle along the port side of the wheelhouse. My daughter and I share this space, while my wife and son relax below deck in the main passenger cabin. The *Voyageur* is the flagship of the small Voyageurs National Park (VNP) fleet of boats. Nearing the end of our six-hour round-trip tour, we strike up conversation with the young couple sitting beside us. We learn they are young professionals, currently in the middle of a yearlong van life tour of the U.S., centered mainly around visiting national parks. They learn we are touring our 47th national park, deep into our quest to visit all within the continental U.S. (at least).

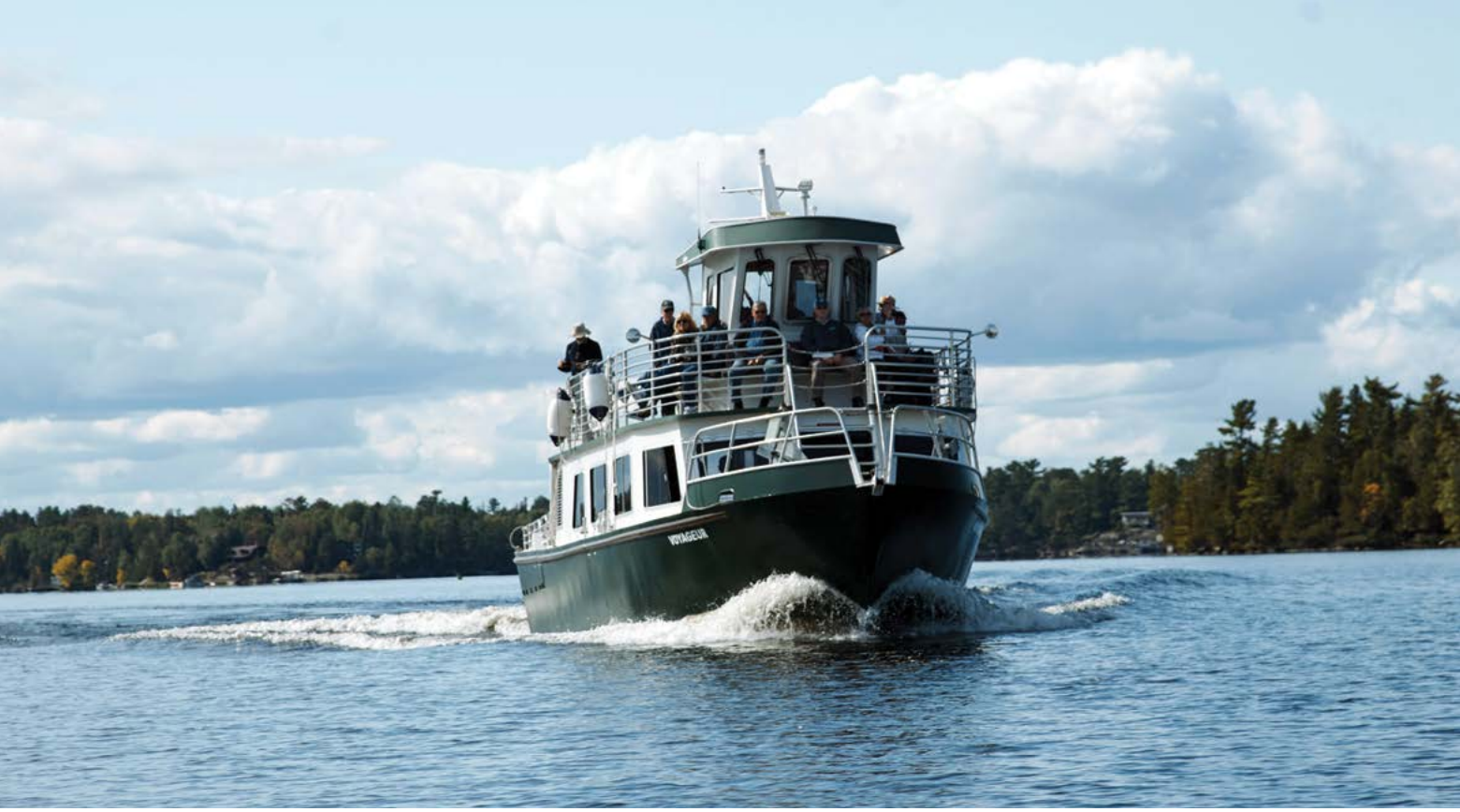
While the childless couple is traveling via terrestrial means alone, we've been using aviation whenever possible for the past two decades and always have two kids in tow. Soon we are comparing notes on favorite parks and travel tricks. The conversation makes the last hour of our voyage pass quickly, much like any impromptu chat with aviation people can easily lead to a delayed departure. Such are the joys of travel and exploration, which are only enhanced by incorporating aviation into the equation.

Named for historic French-Canadian fur traders

Along the north-central border of Minnesota, the Kabetogama Peninsula juts into Rainy Lake, separating it from Kabetogama Lake (to the south) and Namakan and Sand Point lakes (to the east). As part of the Canadian Shield, the peninsula is made up of the volcanic bedrock that forms the ancient core of North America. This rock is about half the age of the Earth itself, or around 3 billion years old.

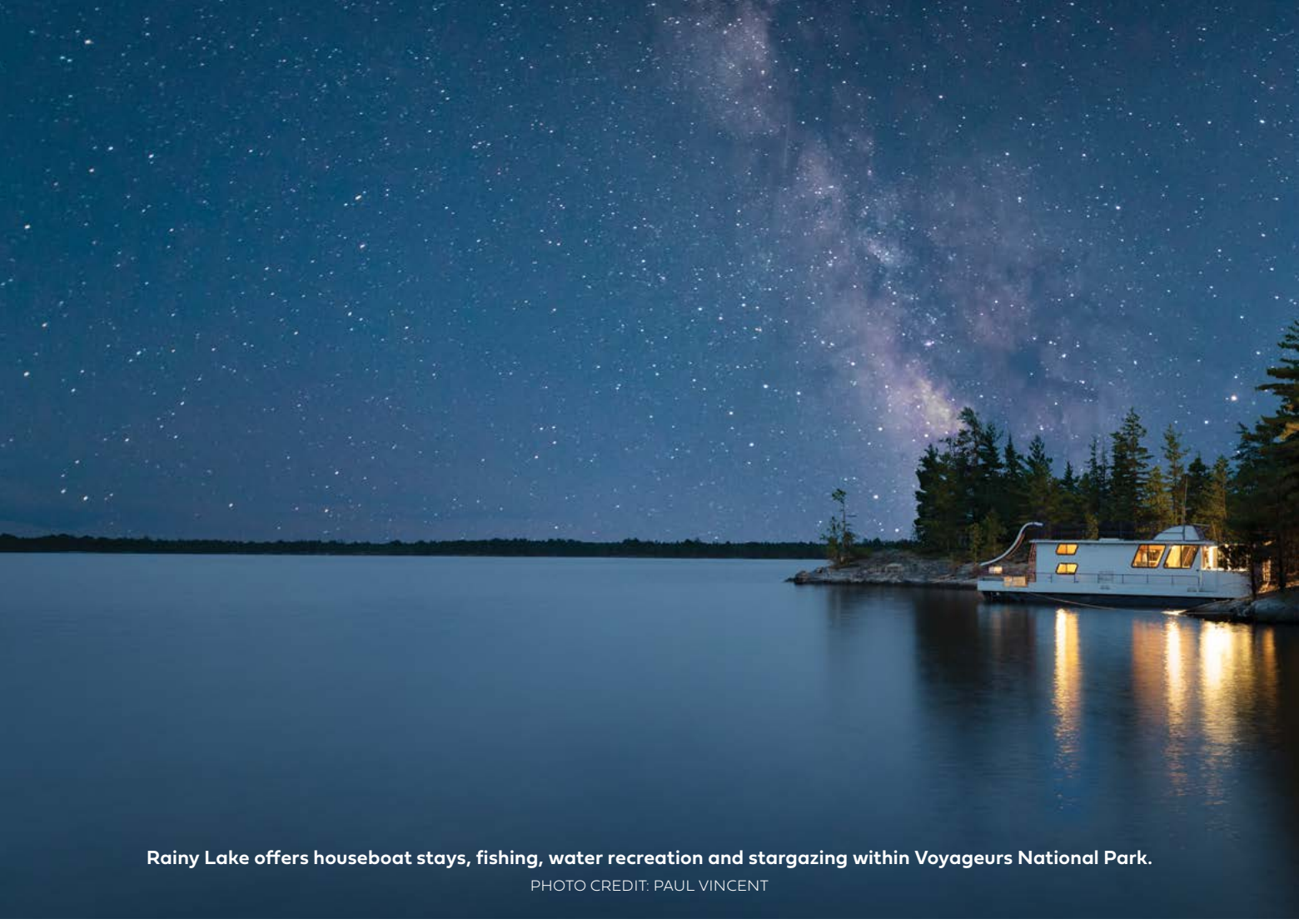
VNP is one of the few places where this heart of the continent is visible, deposited there by massive volcanic eruptions that transported it from deep within the Earth as lava and ash, layering it upon the surface. Add in a few eons of erosion to wear down the volcanoes, a few ice ages to scrape away the younger rock on top, wait patiently for the glaciers to retreat, and today we can walk on and touch this ancient rock that once pulsated within the chest of Mother Earth.

Rainy Lake is a massive body of water bisected by the U.S./Canada border. The western tip of its 360-square-mile surface area is Rainy River, situated between International Falls, Minnesota, and Fort Frances, Ontario. Unlike the Great Lakes to its southeast, Rainy Lake isn't particularly deep (with a maximum depth of only 160 feet). Nonetheless, it is a major part of an extensive ecosystem of lakes, peninsulas,



Rainy Lake tours aboard the *Voyageur* range from 2.5 to 6.5 hours.

PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL VINCENT

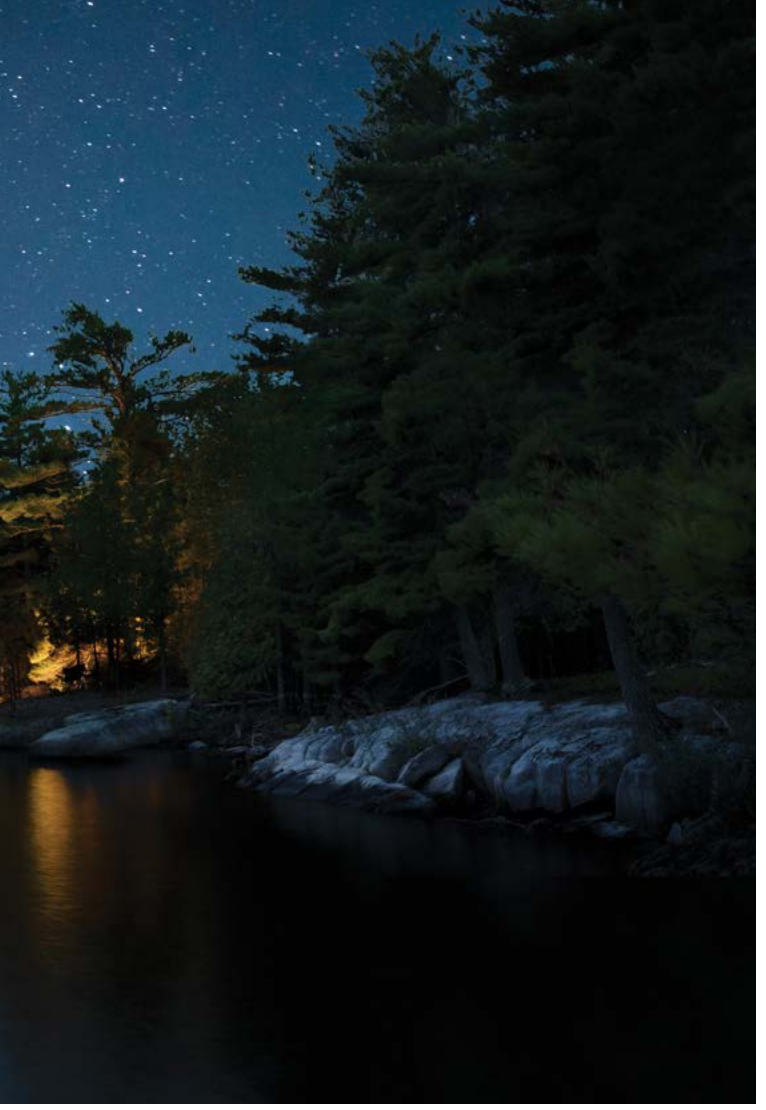


Rainy Lake offers houseboat stays, fishing, water recreation and stargazing within Voyageurs National Park.

PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL VINCENT

The sheer granite cliffs of Grassy Bay rise 125 feet above the surface of Sand Point Lake; it's one of the highest points within Voyageurs National Park.

PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL VINCENT



One of the resident black bears visitors can see at the North American Bear Center near Ely, Minnesota. All bears are rescues unable to return to the wild.

PHOTO CREDIT: MATTHEW MCDANIEL

bays, forests and waterways in the center of historic fur trade routes of the 18th and 19th centuries, extending from areas as far north and west as British Columbia and the Northwest Territories to the eastern trading hub of Montreal.

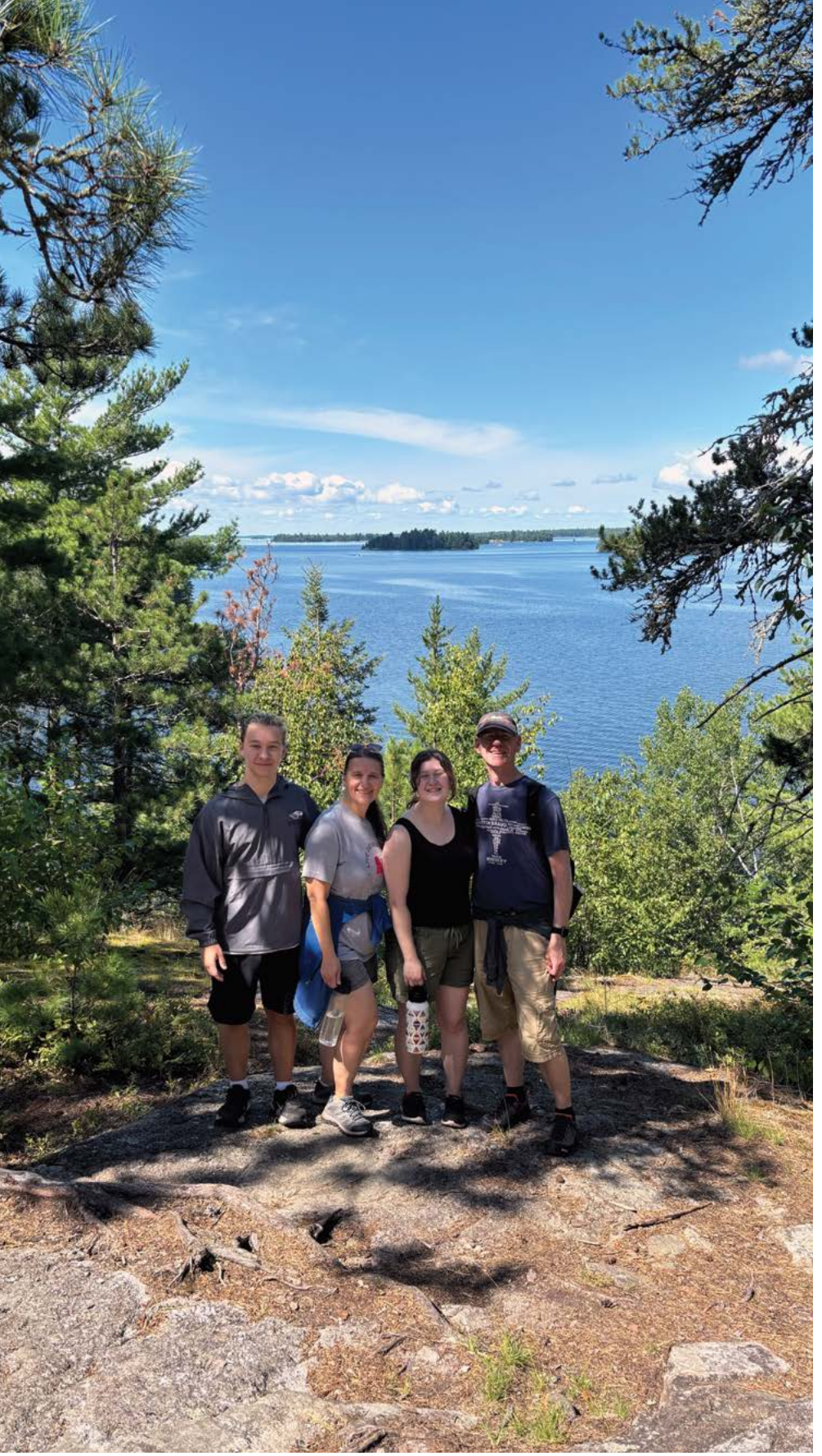
The VNP region has seen many industries rise and fall since the arrival of European traders and settlers. Gold mining, timber, commercial fishing and various mineral extraction businesses have settled into the area over the past 300 years or so. Some generated little boom towns, but none left the lasting impressions that the fur industry did.

The dense boreal forests, extensive wetlands and interconnected rivers and lakes allowed all manner of fur-bearing creatures to thrive. Indigenous people had established trading routes long before Europeans arrived. By the early 1700s, fur traders were moving farther inland to secure their products. The Ojibwe were the primary native people of the area and entered alliances with white traders and other Native Americans. The trappers, hunters, traders, guides, interpreters and clerks were all cogs in the fur trade machine.

However, none were quite as crucial as the voyageurs – the canoeists who deftly maneuvered their lightweight birch-bark canoes through the waterways of the North Woods while laden with pelts, supplies and themselves. The fur companies preferred their voyageurs to be young and strong because the routes included land crossings, requiring the travelers to pack cargo and supplies on their backs while carrying their canoe. They also preferred those unable to swim, rationalizing that non-swimmers would take fewer risks on the water, making the loss of the precious pelts less likely. They were only paid if the cargo arrived intact. Given the length of their journeys, payday could be as infrequent as once per season. If the haul was lost late in the season, a voyageur's only recourse was often to stay another season in hopes of earning a paycheck at the end of that one.

The industry grew to such importance that the treaty at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War in 1783 included as part of the new international boundary, the "customary waterway" used by the voyageurs. This 56-mile fur freeway today adjoins VNP. By 1891, people were already concerned enough with the encroachment of industry to propose a national park to protect the beauty, history and natural resources of the area.

It wasn't until 1975 that VNP was officially established as the 36th U.S. national park. Today, the park protects over



The author's family poses at a Kabetogama Lake overlook at the far end of the Blind Ash Trail.

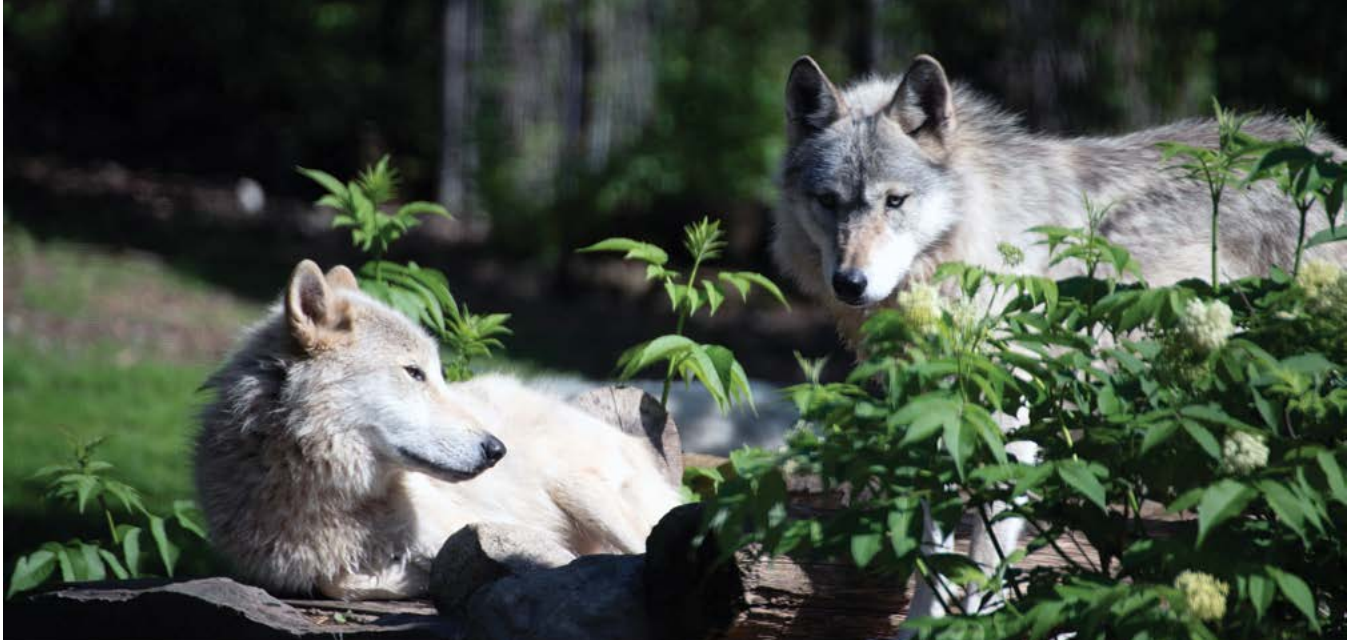
PHOTO CREDIT: MATTHEW MCDANIEL

218,000 acres, of which about 84,000 acres (or roughly 40%) are water. Along with the entirety of the Kabetogama Peninsula, the park also encompasses the south shores of Kabetogama, Namakan and Sand Point lakes, the north shore of Crane Lake, 900-plus islands and more than 500 miles of shoreline.

America's ice box

International Falls does not hold the record for the coldest temperature ever recorded on Earth, nor in North America or even in the continental U.S. It is, however, the coldest spot in the U.S. in terms of consistency. Average temperatures throughout the winter season are around -7 degrees Fahrenheit, while the city's daily high temperature is below freezing an average of 109 days annually (or 30% of the year). Temperatures in the -30 to -40 degree range are common in winter, while the record low is a breath-stealing -55! The title "Ice Box of the Nation" is claimed by other towns as well, but it is International Falls that holds both legal and practical claim to the title.

Despite these environmental challenges, International Falls is a welcoming place, considered the gateway to VNP. Falls International Airport (KINL) lies so close to the Canadian border that landing south requires flight in Canadian airspace to complete an instrument approach or to fly a standard traffic pattern. The airport is equipped to remain operational throughout the snowiest and coldest winter months or to manage the influx of aircraft common during the touristy summer months. Both ends of the 7,400-foot by 150-foot main runway (13/31) have ILS approaches certified to the lowest standard Category I minimums of 200 feet and one-half mile. If you prefer



Visitors to the International Wolf Center near Ely, Minnesota, can usually see the exhibit pack of ambassador wolves.
PHOTO CREDIT: INTERNATIONAL WOLF CENTER

GPS approaches, each runway end has a WAAS/GPS approach with LPV minimums below 300 feet. A small crosswind runway (04/22) is only 2,999 feet by 75 feet but would be welcome and suitable on the odd summer day when the winds howl out of the southwest. This runway is not maintained in winter, when strong northwest winds prevail.

Einarson Flying Service is the sole FBO on the field and provides excellent service with everything a turbine pilot would need. You'll also find everything necessary to start an extended stay as a tourist, including rental cars, valet services, hangars and tie-downs. As a commercial airport, KINL has full CFR services available on-site. If you call in advance, the FBO will have your rental car waiting to make the 10-minute drive to the Rainy Lake Visitor Center, the largest and most popular of VNP's three visitor centers.

The only realistic alternative to KINL is Orr Regional Airport (KORB), south of VNP and on the southeast shore of the picturesque Pelican Lake. KORB is perfectly suitable for most King Air operations with its single 4,000-foot by 75-foot asphalt runway, served by a single GPS/LP approach into Runway 13. It has Jet A fuel available, significantly cheaper than at KINL, though it lacks on-site rental cars and full-time services. It is slightly closer to the VNP's Kabetogama Lake and Ash River visitor centers.

Planning your voyage

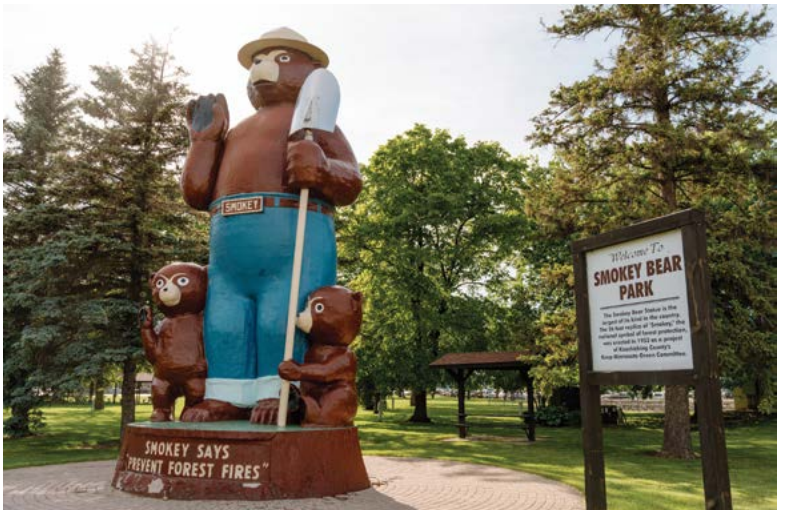
Like most far north parks, summer accommodations and some activities at VNP book up early. Planning well in advance is highly recommended. That is especially the case for Kettle Falls Hotel, the sole landside lodging within park boundaries. This historic and slightly kitschy hotel is only reachable via National Park Service cruise ship (roughly two hours each way), but it is well worth the effort for the most authentic experience. Multiple hotels, resorts and vacation rentals dot the western and southern shores of Kabetogama Lake and there are many other options within International Falls.

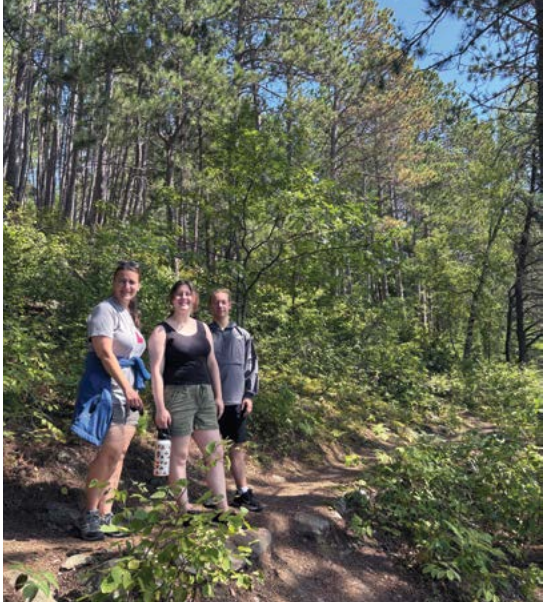
Camping is an option in many areas of the park (with a permit), but perhaps the most popular option is houseboat rental. This option allows touring the watery park at one's own pace, while enjoying solitude and the abundant opportunities for stargazing at night (and the common sightings of the aurora borealis, as well).

We settled on a roomy and full-featured rental cabin situated on a small lake just outside the park boundary. The cabin came with kayaks, a pontoon boat and equipment for enjoying the lake which we did before and after daily park touring. The drives to the various visitor centers were all relatively short and the solitude was at least as good as houseboat lodging without the worry of severe weather or temperature issues.

If you're a hiker, VNP won't disappoint, but it's also not a hiker's paradise. The entire park has 19 trails, as most of its landmass is considered remote and undeveloped. Much of the marked hiking is near or between the visitor centers, with only a handful of trails venturing deep into the park's backcountry.

Water recreation is the most popular activity. Kayak and canoe rental is available from the NPS and from outside





(Left) International Falls, the gateway to Voyageurs National Park, features a 26-foot-tall Smokey Bear. PHOTO CREDIT: MARY MATHIS **(Right) The author's wife and two young adult children pause along the Blind Ash hiking trail in Minnesota's Voyageurs National Park.** PHOTO CREDIT: MATTHEW MCDANIEL

vendors. Rainy Lake tours aboard the *Voyageur* range from 2.5 to 6.5 hours. Check the VNP website for schedules (*nps.gov/voya*). We chose the 6.5-hour Kettle Falls Cruise along the entire northern coast of the park, from west to east, with a couple of hours of ongoing tour commentary pointing out historical and natural points of interest. At Kettle Falls, you're allotted two hours for lunch, touring the historic hotel and grounds and visiting the Kettle Falls Dam. Our tour in August was in near-perfect weather with calm waters, with the return trip taking just 1.5 hours.

The entire adventure was worth the money and time spent for its immersion into the park's history and beauty. Shorter cruises are available from the Ash River Visitor Center, staying on the smaller Kabetogama and Namakan lakes. The most noteworthy boating experience is likely the North Canoe Voyages, 1.5-hour ranger-led paddle trips aboard 26-foot North Canoes, like the voyageurs would have used.

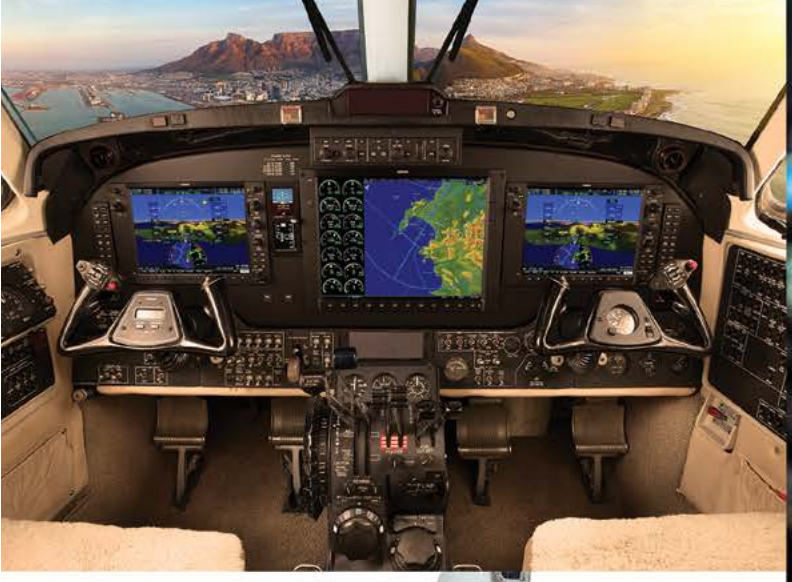
Alternates and departures

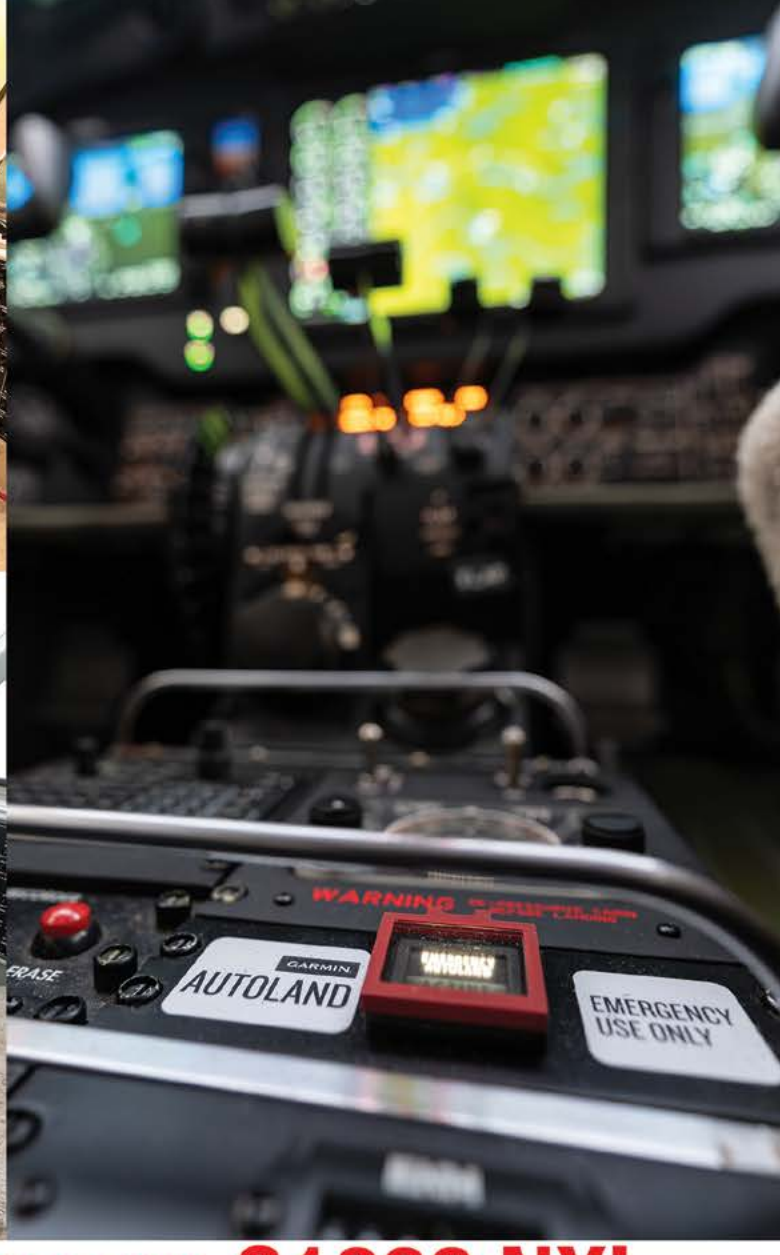
When in the International Falls and VNP areas, it's a good idea to map out alternatives. Even in summer, the weather is unpredictable and can turn chilly, rainy and blustery on short notice. You can tailor your visit to take advantage of outdoor activities on good weather days and divert to your alternate(s) if the weather sours. We'd picked out two wildlife centers, which house native rescue animals deemed unable to return to the wild. The indoor and interactive education centers at the International Wolf Center and the North American Bear Center, both near Ely, Minnesota, served us well on a nasty weather day.

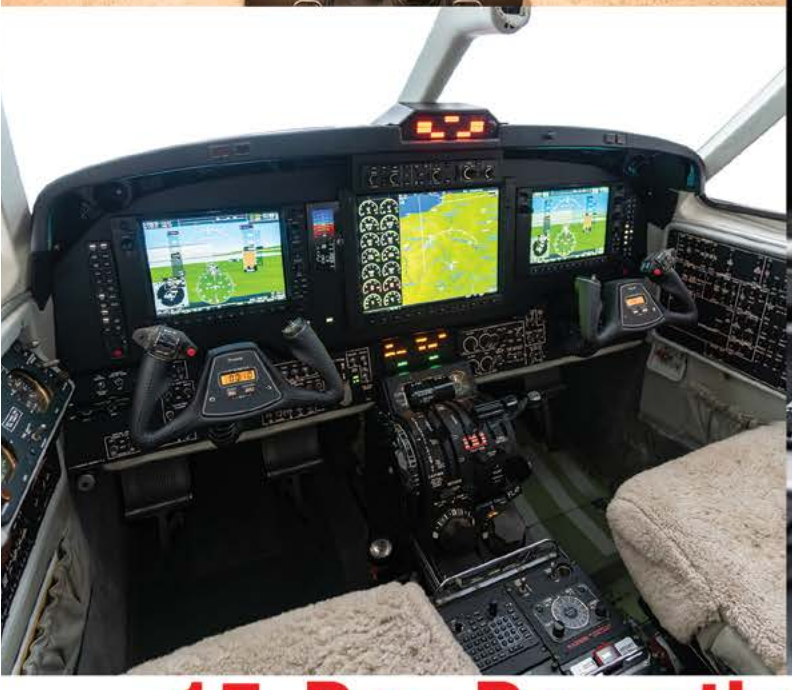
Unlike some northern national parks, VNP is not completely shuttered in the winter; activities such as snowmobiling, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing are likely possible. The lakes often freeze thick enough to create public-use ice roads beginning at the visitor centers.

A park like Voyageurs offers a variety of options for partaking in its splendor. There is no right or wrong way, there is just your way. There might be an on and off season, but there is no wrong season. Winter's activities, spring's abundant burst of new life, summer's long days and autumn's colorful displays all beckon. Choose the timing that suits you best and make the most of it, rerouting if necessary, just as any good voyageur would do. KA

Matthew McDaniel is a Master & Gold Seal CFII, ATP, MEI, AGI & IGI and Platinum CSIP. In 35 years of flying, he has logged over 23,000 hours total, over 6,100 hours of instruction-given and over 2,500 hours in various King Airs and the BE-1900D. As owner of Progressive Aviation Services, LLC (progaviation.com), he has specialized in Technically Advanced Aircraft and Glass Cockpit instruction since 2001. Currently, he is also a Boeing 737-Series Captain for an international airline, holds 8 turbine aircraft type ratings, and has flown over 155 aircraft types. Matt is one of less than 10 instructors in the world to have earned the Master CFI designation for 12 consecutive two-year terms. He can be reached at: matt@progaviation.com *or 414-339-4990.*







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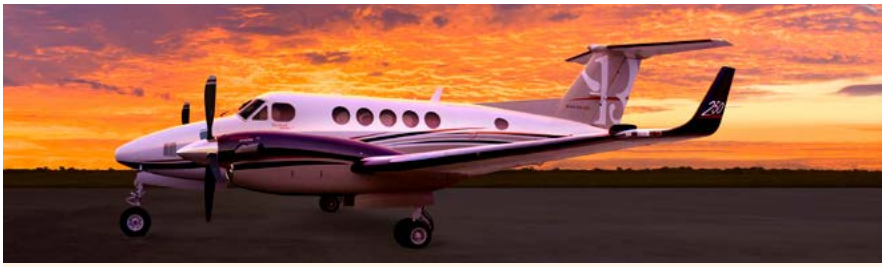

PHOTO CREDIT: TEXTRON AVIATION

- ***Feb. 13-15:*** AOPA Fly-In at Buckeye Air Fair, Buckeye, Arizona
- ***March 19-21:*** Women in Aviation International Conference, Dallas, Texas
- ***March 23-26:*** Aircraft Electronics Association International Convention & Trade Show, Dallas, Texas
- ***March 26-28:*** King Air Gathering, Horseshoe Bay, Texas
- ***April 14-19:*** SUN 'n FUN Aerospace Expo, Lakeland, Florida
- ***April 22-25:*** AERO Friedrichshafen, Friedrichshafen, Germany
- ***May 2-3:*** Great Alaska Aviation Gathering, Anchorage, Alaska
- ***June 2-4:*** European Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition (EBACE), Geneva, Switzerland
- ***June 19 & 27:*** Textron Aviation Special Olympics Airlift, across the U.S.
- ***July 20-26:*** EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, Oshkosh, Wisconsin
- ***Aug. 4-6:*** Latin American Business Aviation Conference & Exhibition (LABACE), São Paulo, Brazil
- ***Sept. 19-20:*** National Championship Air Races, Roswell, New Mexico
- ***Oct. 8-10:*** Beech Party, Tullahoma, Tennessee
- ***Oct. 20-22:*** National Business Aviation Association Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition (NBAA-BACE), Las Vegas, Nevada

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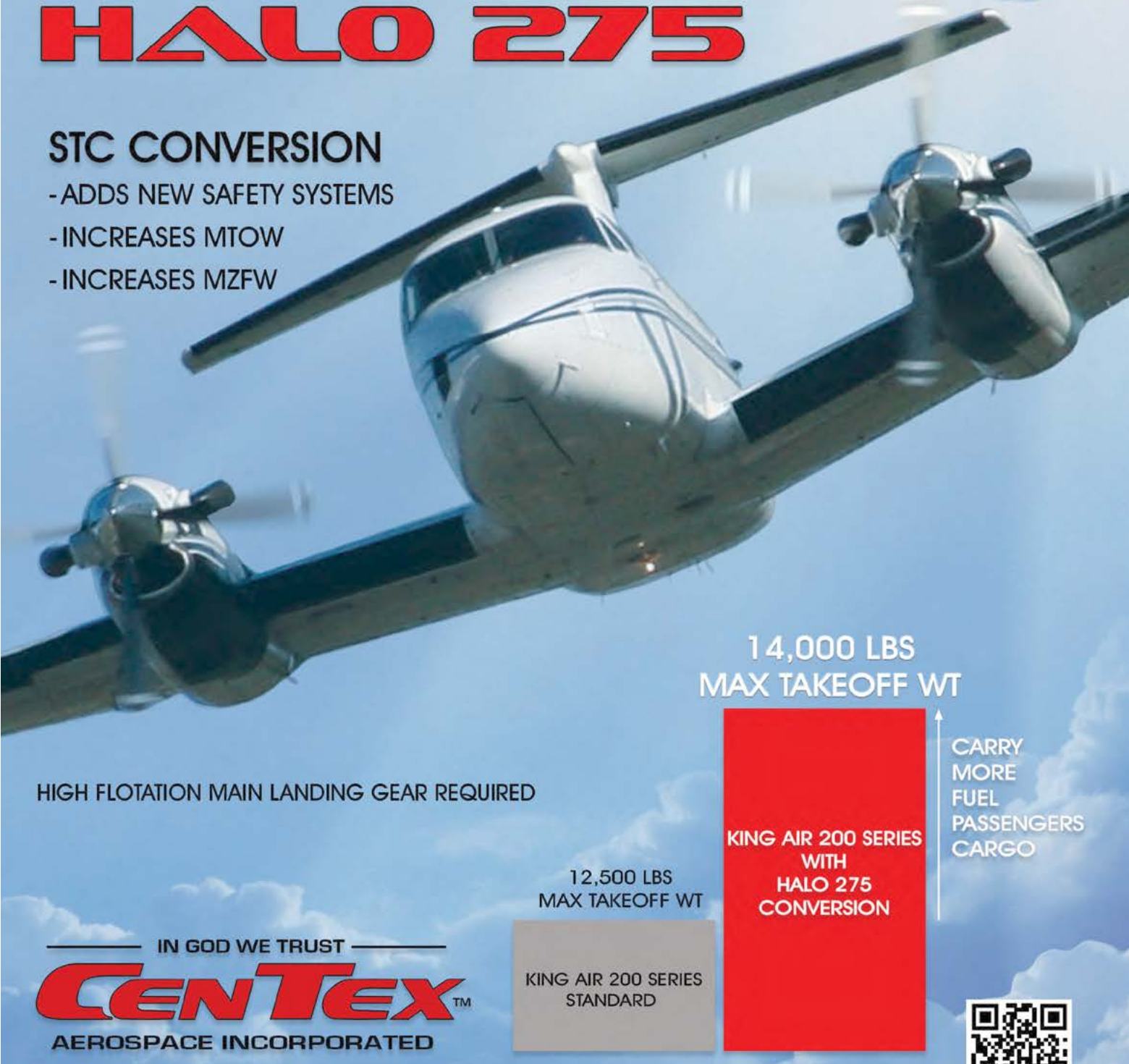

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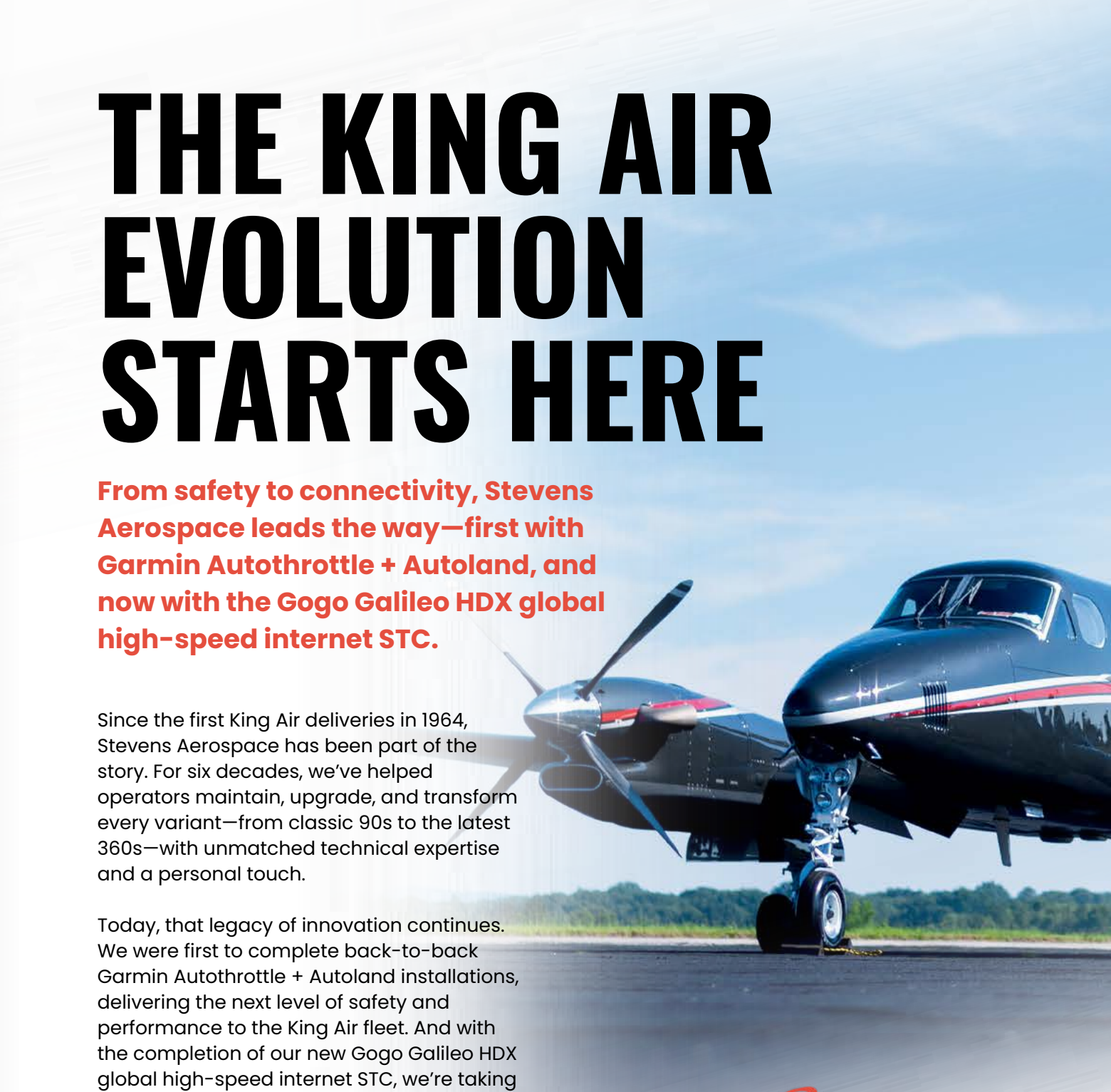

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