



SUMMER 2026

THE PATRICIAN

The Victoria Flying Club ~ Aviation Excellence Since 1946

PILOT'S PARADISE

GERNOT KRÄMER'S
BC TRAVELOGUE

UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN

PAUL RUTTEN IN ITALY'S
LAND OF DOLCE VITA
AND MORE!

THE PATRICIAN

"To promote flying and aviation in general, and to teach and train persons in the art and science of flying and navigating and operating all manner of heavier-than-air aircraft."
(Victoria Flying Club Incorporation Bylaws, 1946)

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PHOTO CREDITS

Front cover photo by Gernot Krämer.

NEED HANGAR SPACE?

Contact Marcel at the Club to see if a hangar spot is a good spot for your plane and to get on the waitlist.

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PARKING AVAILABLE!

Interested in prime paved parking spaces for your aircraft?

Good News: there are spots available!

Secure, pull-in/pull-out, easy access.

Call Dispatch at 250-656-2833 to arrange a spot or to get on the waitlist for hangar spaces!

NEWS Around the Club

EVENTS & HOLIDAYS

AUG 7-9 ABBOTSFORD AIRSHOW

SEPT 5 VFC SATURDAY COFFEE & DONUTS

SEPT 7 LABOUR DAY

SEPT 22 AUTUMNAL EQUINOX

SEPT 30 TRUTH & RECONCILIATION DAY

OCT 3 CAREERS IN AVIATION EXPO
IN ABBOTSFORD

OCT 24 BC AVIATION COLLECTORS EXPO

Did we leave any events out?
Let us know at vfcpatrician@gmail.com!

FROM THE EDITOR:

This has been a wild summer so far! The weather has been unpredictable, the interior is having trouble with wildfires, and we're having to say goodbye to some legends of Canadian aviation.

No matter how this issue reaches you: enjoy the rest of summer, stay safe, and send us some photos and stories!

We're always looking for ways to share the high-flying adventures of members like you!

—Kelly Clark, Editor of the Patrician

HOLD THE DONUTS!

We're taking a break from Saturday Coffee & Donuts this month. Between BC Day and the Abbotsford Airshow, we also had a feeling our membership might be a bit too busy to attend. Have a great August and we'll put a fresh pot of coffee on for September 5th!

WHAT'S YOUR FLIGHT SONG?

We're still collecting data about the songs that get you high! So what's your go-to song about aviation? What do you listen to when you're up in the clouds? It can't just be "Highway to the Danger Zone" all the time, right? Let us know so we can share it in the next issue!

GOODBYE SNOWBIRDS

The Snowbirds are wrapping up their final We really want your photos, stories, and articles to help commemorate this bittersweet moment in Canadian aviation. No submission too small!

WE NEED COVERAGE OF THE ABBOTSFORD AIRSHOW!

We're also looking for any and all coverage of the Abbotsford Airshow for our next issue! Sent photos, stories, or anything else to us at vfcpatrician@gmail.com!

"A mile of highway will take you a mile, but a mile of runway can take you anywhere."

—Unknown

MISS THE SNOWBIRDS?

You still have a chance to see them! Here's a list of their final dates in Canada and the US! They're presently at the Abbotsford Airshow, but you still have time to catch them in White Rock on August 12th, or elsewhere if you find yourself traveling between now and October.

WESTJET CUTS ROUTES BETWEEN US AND VANCOUVER

WestJet has announced that five routes between the US and Vancouver would be suspended because of declining demand. The decision affects travel options for B.C. passengers and is reflective of the significant drop in Canadian tourism to the USA.

BOMBARDIER SCORES BIG WITH NATO

In one of the biggest aerospace stories affecting Canada, NATO has selected the Saab GlobalEye surveillance platform—built on the Canadian-manufactured Bombardier Global 6500 business jet—to replace its aging fleet of Boeing E-3 Sentry AWACS aircraft. The 6500, which is constructed in Ontario, will be leading the way as Canada continues its role in advanced military aviation manufacturing



Snowbirds 1971 2026 2026 Calendar	
May	August
24 Montreal, QC	1-2 Grande Prairie, AB
June	7-9 Abbotsford, BC
6-7 Chesterfield, MO	12 White Rock, BC
10 North Bay, ON	22-23 Charlo, NB
13-14 Barrie, ON	29-30 Saint John, NB
20-21 Niagara Falls, NY	September
24 St-Georges, QC	5-7 Toronto, ON
27 Fatima, QC	12 Kapuskasing, ON
July	13 Spencerville, ON
1 Ottawa, ON	18-20 Gatineau, QC
4 New York, NY	October
5-6 Jones Beach, NY	3-4 Huntington Beach, CA
11 Moose Jaw, SK	10-11 Sacramento, CA
15-16 Villeneuve, AB	
18-19 Cold Lake, AB	
25-26 Red Deer, AB	

FLOATPLANE CRASH NEAR BC-WASHINGTON BORDER

On July 24, 2026, a Kenmore Air DHC-3 Otter floatplane crashed on Sucia Island, just south of the Canadian border. The plane's 11 occupants survived and were saved by the rapid rescue conducted by nearby boaters and the U.S. Coast Guard. The survivors were sent to nearby hospitals with non-life-threatening injuries.



Reports state that the pilot deviated around thunderstorms before the accident, but the cause of the crash is still under investigation.

AIR CANADA LAUNCHES COMPLAINT-RESOLUTION PILOT

Have a problem with Air Canada? (Who doesn't?) Well, you may be in luck. Air Canada has begun testing a pilot program intended to reduce the backlog of passenger compensation complaints. While the project is national in scope, it affects travellers throughout B.C. using Vancouver, Victoria, Kelowna, and other airports. Whether this will be successful in addressing customer concerns and dispensing adequate compensation will have to be seen, so this might be the perfect time to let Air Canada hear about any complaints you might have. For testing purposes, of course.

HISTORIC ODYSSEY DC-3 GROUNDED IN KELOWNA, MISSING ABBOTSFORD AIRSHOW

Sad news for anyone hoping to see the Odyssey DC-3 at the Abbotsford Airshow: it's grounded at the KF Centre for Excellence in Kelowna following a post-flight inspection issue. Because of that, the aircraft's planned ceremonial return to the 2026 Abbotsford Airshow has been canceled. A 90-year-old beauty, the Odyssey DC-3 became famous after its around-the-world



flight during Expo '86. As sad as we are to not be able to see it at the airshow, there will be other opportunities thanks to hard working mechanics and that careful inspection.

AIR CANADA RATIFIES MAJOR UNION CONTRACT & ADJUSTS YVR SCHEDULES (

Air Canada finalized a new four-year collective agreement that will cover 11,000 maintenance and technical operations workers. The four-year collective agreement is retroactive to April 1 and will run until March 31, 2030.

The airline says it now has new collective agreements with all of its major unions following the expiration of the previous long-term contracts. Six new collective agreements have been ratified at Air Canada this year. Air Canada chief executive Michael Rousseau says the airline is well-positioned to advance its strategic plans.

Concurrently, the airline has been in the process of adjusting frequencies and route capacity out of Vancouver International Airport (YVR) as global jet fuel price fluctuations force broader schedule realignments.

BC GOVERNMENT INVESTS \$8.2 MILLION IN 18 REGIONAL AIRPORT UPGRADES

The Province of BC has announced over \$8.2 million in funding through the BC Air Access Program (BCAAP). The grants will cover infrastructure

upgrades, airside safety improvements, and runway repairs across 18 regional airports to better support wildfire suppression, medevac operations, and local connectivity.

With the way that wildfires have gone in 2026, let's hope that these improvements provide the help our firefighters need to get on top of the wildfires next summer.

HAVE ANY MORE AVIATION NEWS? LET US KNOW!



A great aerial shot by Cale Sterloffon posted to our Google page!

GROUND SCHOOL SCHEDULE

PRIVATE PILOT LICENCE GROUND SCHOOL

PPL #26-09: JUNE 21, 2026 TO SEPTEMBER 6, 2026

Sundays (09:00 - 16:00)

Instructor: Neil Keating

(Zoom attendance possible by arrangement)

PPL #26-14: SEPTEMBER 13, 2026 TO DECEMBER 6, 2026

Sundays (09:00 - 16:00)

Instructor: Neil Keating

(Zoom attendance possible by arrangement)

COMMERCIAL PILOT LICENCE GROUND SCHOOL

CPL #26-15: JULY 25, 2026 TO NOVEMBER 7, 2026

Saturdays (09:00 - 16:00)

Instructor: Ken Kosik, Neil Keating

Individual scheduling requests are available for Private Pilot Licence, Commercial Pilot Licence, Mountain Awareness Training (MTA), Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (Drone) Courses (RPAS) by request.

Individual tutoring is also available for PPL and CPL upon request.

Confirm your attendance with Neil Keating on cell at 204-291-9667 and VFC Operations (Russell) at 250-656-2833.

VFC MENTOR PROGRAM

Do you want other pilots to fly with, split flight cost, share knowledge, or get help getting to a new airport for the first time? Find potential mentors and their resumes posted on the Mentors bulletin board beside the Dispatch counter. Contact details are on each mentor's resume or you can email mentors@flyvfc.com for more information.

Interested in becoming a mentor?
There's always room for more experienced pilots! Send an email to mentors@flyvfc.com for more information on how to join up!

FIRST SOLOS

"Without disruption of air traffic, these fearless, forthright, indomitable and courageous individuals did venture into the wild blue yonder in flying machines.

Furthermore, these skillful individuals did safely land said flying machines at Victoria International Airport, incurring no significant damage to self or machine, thus completing first solo flights."

THIS ISSUE WE CELEBRATE THE FIRST SOLOS OF THESE PILOTS:

Darin Herle
Kirsty Marshall
Brody Wilson
Ethan Kerr Beens
David O'Hanley
Kai Kovacik

Levi De Bruin
Benny McGuire
Richard Van Leeuwen
Keenan Rancier
Maxwell Christoff

We want your first solo or achievement in the Patrician!
Send your photos to vfcpatrician@gmail.com or tag us on Instagram.

MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

PPL WRITTEN TEST

Jacob Di Battista
Jane Pico Villamizar
Shrijan Paudel

PPL FLIGHT TEST

Gael Cruz Martinez
Paul Cortens
Victoria Wood
Devin Antoniazzi
Julian McLachlan
Ryan Sutton
Jacob Di Battista
Sergii Vozniak
Marino Dejula
Noah Di Battista

CPL WRITTEN TEST

Gene Fedderly

CPL FLIGHT TEST

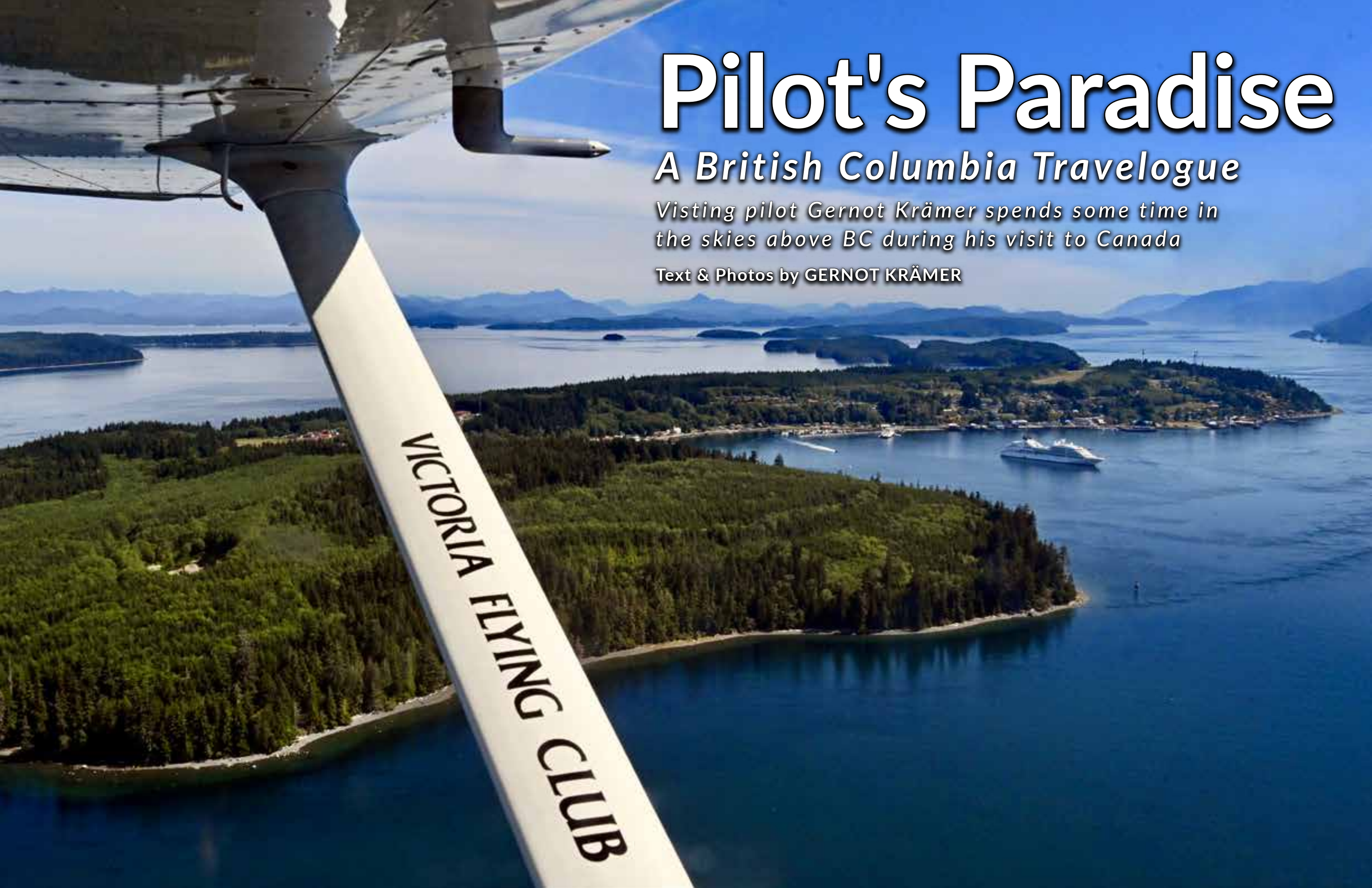
Chapman Chen
Jose Pablo Sandoval Sandez
Daniel Wang
Kartik Sharma
Aya Hammond
Levi Hoepfner
Sui Shing Chung
Helen Lu
Navi Macknack

MULTI-ENGINE RATING

Chapman Chen
Taiyo Forsyth
Kanaru Takaoka

WELCOME NEW VFC MEMBERS

Benoit Berube-Brandt	Garth Racicot
Ailbe Bartlett	Amol Kamath
Dominic Stewart	Rajan Manak
Huillin Shan	Seung Kyun Choi
Evan Myers	Sullivan Ford
Chad Van Unen	Yohannes Tamene
Brittany Steinwand	Toan Krauskopf
Daniel Pade	Norimasa Morita
Michael Dagasso	Ezechel Jazlyn Meriel Laceda
Alejandro Snead Trejo	Valerie Bustros
Yuma Yagata	Curtis Carlow
Gavin Wright	Trevor Howarth
Ryan Tomas Suleman	Tanner Gilbert
Zahra Akbari	Shawn Gaunt
Gabriel Golchin	Bowdrie Mulholland
Tyler Thuma	Joshua Christian Margaux Gili
Mitchell Kirk	Alex Labrie
Emilio Hinzmann Hernandez	Jack Gilfillan
Timothy Croft	Michelle Schulte
Jason Terfloeth	William Gunsolley
Gina Joseph	Hayden Schilasky
Bruce Phillips	Benjamin Cowen
Joshua Lovan	Andre Blanchard
Mitchell Miller	Amanda Cormier
Souvivun Naomi Lovan	Dimitris Tasos
Evan Davis	Christopher Kroeker
Tomass Auzans	



Pilot's Paradise

A British Columbia Travelogue

Visting pilot Gernot Krämer spends some time in the skies above BC during his visit to Canada

Text & Photos by GERNOT KRÄMER

It's an unusual perspective: from 5,500 feet, we look down on airliners flying deep below us at VFR cruising altitude over the Strait of Georgia, apparently because a longer climb isn't worth it for the short hop between British Columbia's capital, Victoria, and the metropolis of Vancouver. They aren't the only ones: helicopters, seaplanes, business jets, and a flying boat are all bustling about in the heavily trafficked airspace—and almost all of them are flying lower than we are!

But why are we flying so high? It has to do with the fact that life jackets are not required in Canadian private aviation and virtually no one wears them. Although most flights here on the West Coast involve flying over water for varying lengths of time, the simple rule is: always fly high enough so that you can reach shore dry if necessary. At first, I have trouble getting used to this concept, because landable terrain is rather rare there; almost everywhere you'd have to deal with rocks or forest.

For my friend Andrew and me, this was supposed to be our first flying vacation together on another continent. Planning began six months before the trip in August 2025, which I'm combining with a visit to relatives in Victoria. We had a few criteria for finding a charter company:

- 1.) The location shouldn't require any major travel from there.
- 2.) We wanted a familiar aircraft type, since so much else would be new to us.
- 3.) There should be as many aircraft of that model as possible to minimize the risk of a breakdown.

We chose the Victoria Flying Club with its twelve Cessna 172s, especially since the club already has experience with pilots from overseas. They even offer IFR and CPL training. It quickly became clear that, in addition to the checkout, we would need mountain training, because otherwise club aircraft are not permitted in areas above 4,000 feet. And a glance at the map shows that this significantly limits the options in mountainous British Columbia, even on Vancouver Island.

After Transport Canada validated our EASA licenses—a process that took a few weeks—we became club members for 150 Canadian dollars per calendar year (equivalent to just under 95 euros) and signed up for the one-day Mountain Flying Ground School. A month and a half before our arrival, I booked an aircraft for the desired eight days as well as an instructor for the initial checkride and the mountain checkride. Just as we've



always done in Europe, we planned to take an extended round-trip and be somewhere different every day.

I arrive in British Columbia three weeks before Andrew and acclimate during a family vacation in a motorhome. Before his planned arrival, we're traveling through the remote Strathcona Provincial Park and have no cell service for several days. When we come down from the mountains, I'm shocked to read that Andrew had to cancel the trip at the last minute due to a serious illness in his family. So I'm on my own, or at least that's how it seems at first.

I show up at ground school alone—and am the only participant, since the training is offered only as needed, and

I am the current need. This, however, allows for truly intensive guidance from Neil, from whom I learn an enormous amount. Over lunch together, he offers to accompany me for two days. Of course, I gladly accept.

First, though, I have several flights lined up with the friendly Keiichiro (Kay), who is in charge of my practical training. The checkout includes a written portion, through which you demonstrate that you have familiarized yourself with Canadian aviation regulations and local conditions. Victoria Airport (YYJ) is a bustling regional airport with scheduled flights as far as Mexico and Alaska. Above all, I have to get used to the relatively complex radio procedures during approach and departure

(Clearance, Ground, Inner Tower, Outer Tower, Terminal...). The American pronunciation doesn't sit particularly well with me either.

After an initial round of airwork, we fly along the east coast to Nanaimo, which has a reputation as a retirement town due to its mild climate, and return after a short stop. The big mountain flight is scheduled for the next day in the Coast Mountains northeast of Vancouver. It takes us over the Strait of Georgia (see right) and through U.S. airspace, but ends in Chilliwack (YCW) in the Fraser Valley: smoke from wildfires is impairing visibility, and Kay doesn't think it's advisable to fly into mountain valleys under these conditions. But there is a consolation: We take a spectacular sightseeing tour over downtown Vancouver and get clearance for a midfield crossing over the international airport.

On the third day, Kay is busy, but lets me fly alone to the Sooke Training Area west of Victoria, which is designated for training flights. The agreement is that if the procedures go smoothly and I feel confident with the radio, I can then go off on my own and choose a destination. I choose Qualicum Beach (CAT4), a relatively quiet airfield with a 1,000-meter asphalt runway further north on the Strait of Georgia. The weather is flyable





only along the coast; inland, the clouds are hanging low.

In the meantime, I've decided against taking a longer round-trip flight, as I would have done with Andrew, especially since hotels in Canada are quite expensive and I'm staying with relatives very close to Victoria Airport. This also balances out the fact that the costs of the flying vacation aren't being split as they usually would be. Since I'm not a regular member, I'm assigned a different plane almost every day at the Flying Club. But so what: the twelve 172s are identically equipped; only one has a glass cockpit.

With Ground School Teacher Neil, who also speaks a smattering of German, the agreed-upon two-day trip is now just around the corner. The trained parasitologist and classical philologist (yes, Latin and Ancient Greek!) is an impressive figure: he was a military transport pilot, test pilot, and captain at Air Canada and has 18,000 hours logged in his flight log. He no longer flies himself due to a lack of a medical certificate, but his invaluable experience and local knowledge give me added confidence.





But even he has never been to the airfield I'm suggesting as our destination: Alert Bay (YAL) is located on a small island off the north coast of Vancouver Island. As I've read, it is inhabited by the Namgis First Nation. We reserve rooms by phone—there are only a few accommodations on the island—then we get to work on our preparations.

Flight plans are required in Canada as soon as you fly beyond the immediate vicinity. Electronic filing, as we know it, is uncommon; this is handled with a phone call to Pacific Radio in Kamloops. There, you receive an individual transponder code that air traffic control already has on file, so you can skip all the introductory formalities that are standard in European VFR flying. In addition, the friendly staff provide more detailed weather information than you'd normally get—the weather charts available online are very broad in scope and correspondingly imprecise.

After much deliberation, I decided to use the familiar SkyDemon for

navigation, even though the Canada map is labeled "Experimental." A query to the developers clarified what that means: The terrain rendering isn't yet as refined as in countries that have been covered for longer, and there's a lack of AIP-based aerodrome information and weather overlays (rain and flyable conditions).

I figured I could live with that, and I was right. Charterers receive a copy of the brick-thick Canada Flight Supplement from the club, which is published every two months and contains data and charts for all Canadian airfields. Fortunately, the book isn't as heavy as it looks.

Neil kindly takes over the radio, which takes some of the load off me. Once again, sunny weather with clear visibility prevails along the Strait of Georgia and the narrower Johnstone Strait, while clouds hang in the mountains on both sides—a fascinating panorama. The further north we go, the rarer signs of human habitation become. Below us spreads a stunning fjord



landscape with thousands of islets and islands.

When we call Alert Bay after two hours, as expected, there is silence on the radio. We orient ourselves by the windsock and land on runway 09. Infrastructure here is virtually nonexistent. To moor the C-FGIM, we search the bushes for objects to tie it to and find an old ceiling beam as well as a baroque cement column that may once have supported a balcony railing. It's a sight for the gods.

Then we call the hotel, whose owner picks us up in his SUV. It's not far—Cormorant Island is really very small—but it was worth the trip! The former fishing village, with its colorful wooden houses and totem poles, has a museum worth seeing, where you can learn a lot about the indigenous culture. Day-trippers arrive by ferry, and sometimes a cruise ship anchors in the bay, but in the evening the island becomes truly quiet. I walk around it on the deserted beach, which is visibly narrowing as the tide comes in. Just in time, I find a path through the undergrowth. A bald eagle watches me from its perch and flies over my head.



The beautifully situated Nimpkish Hotel, where we're staying, used to be on the other side of the inlet. Because the owner couldn't get a liquor license there, he had the entire building moved onto a pontoon and towed to the island by a cutter. Fitzcarraldo in British Columbia! A photo in the hallway documents the incredible story that took place around 1925 (see above).

For the return flight the next day, we've planned a stopover in Campbell River, where we also intend to refuel. By now, the last clouds have cleared, visibility stretches as far as the eye can see, revealing nothing but mountains and, beyond them, even more snow-capped mountains, some of which must be well over a hundred kilometers away.



After the stopover in YBL, we leave the coast and fly through the mountains and Strathcona Park in the interior of Vancouver Island. With the Mountain Flying Teacher on board, nothing can go wrong.

A few days ago, at the Dakota Café, the VFC's cozy club restaurant, I met Darius, a young Canadian of Lithuanian descent who comes from a family of pilots. Both of his parents were pilots; he is currently working toward his CPL and holds down a part-time job with the "Line Crew," which is responsible for preparing the aircraft for flight. I learn that all of the club's roughly two dozen employees fly themselves—whether they work in "Dispatch," where bookings are managed and flight documents issued, or in the hangar, for example.

I've arranged a day trip with Darius. We're heading to the mainland, first to Sechelt (CAP3) on the Sunshine Coast and then on to Boundary Bay (ZBB) on the U.S. border. Sechelt is a nice airfield, but a bit remote. With 732 meters of asphalt, the runway is considered short by Canadian standards and is recommended for "short takeoff practice." Kay had told me that the next stop, Boundary Bay, is the busiest general aviation airfield in Canada and that even his CPL students don't like landing there. That doesn't deter Darius, though, and I'm happy to let him take the left seat for this leg.

After taking off from Sechelt, we fly into the branching Salmon Inlet and gradually climb higher. The view over the Coast Mountains



stretching to the horizon, including several three-thousand-meter peaks, is absolutely breathtaking. Near Squamish, we turn into Howe Sound, colored green by glacial water, and approach Vancouver from the north.

A fly-by over the skyscrapers is a must this time as well; we get the necessary clearance from Vancouver Harbour. Almost every minute, Otters, Twin Otters, Beavers, or Caravans take off from

the seaplane base in front of the skyline. After a bite to eat at the airport restaurant in Boundary Bay, we head home.

And just like that, the last day of my flying vacation in Canada has arrived. So far, the west coast has been shrouded in clouds and fog—"August, Fogust," my Canadian cousin quotes a saying apparently well-known on the island. But finally, the weather has cleared up there too, and I fulfill my wish to



hours watching the waves and the driftwood scattered around. Happy and deeply relaxed, I board the return flight to Victoria.

And what did the whole thing cost? For a good 17 flight hours plus one day of ground school plus maps plus the annual fee, I'm looking at the equivalent of 2,970 euros. Without factoring in the instructor hours, that works out to an average price of about 175 euros per flight hour. Perhaps an alternative for those who are no longer so comfortable with the U.S. under Trump.



UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN

FLYING ITALY'S LAND OF DOLCE VITA.

BY PAUL RUTTEN



Monteriggioni Castle

ITALY

had been our favourite destination for over a decade, but never had I taken the opportunity to fly a single-engine craft over this historic, sun-soaked landscape. The spring of 2024 gave me that chance, when my wife Donna and I chose to spend over three months in the lower half of “the boot”.

We rented a home in Caviglia, just 65 kilometers south of Florence and about 245 north of Rome. Judging by the number of annual tourists, books and movies, Tuscany must be the most popular of Italy's 20 major regions, and its small wonder. Tuscany is known for “la dolce vita” (the sweet life). Having seen most the A-list sites in Italy, it was time to us to slow down and become temporary locals, and that included some flying.



PAUL RUTTEN
UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN

Inside the P92

Given the immense legacy of the Roman Empire, it's easy to overlook that this region was once home to the more ancient and Greek-like Etruscans, who finally succumbed to the up-start superpower to the south in 264 BC.



A closeup of Monteriggioni Castle

Rome made sure that little remained of this relatively advanced civilization, but we can thank the Etruscans for the "Tuscan" name and their love for fine living.

The Tuscan landscape is dotted with hill towns that appear to be tailor-made for tourists but served a strategic function during the tumultuous years before complete Italian unification in 1870, just a handful of years behind Canada. We had strolled many of these towns in previous years, but now I had the



The Italian trainer

opportunity to see them air, and not at 36,000 feet.

Following a challenging phone call using my novice Italian, I managed to arrange a flight with Scuola Di Volo Arezzo (Arezzo Flying School). I'm constantly amazed at the camaraderie I experience within the aviation community, and Italy was no different.

After poking around a static Aermacchi MB-326, an Italian jet trainer and light attack aircraft developed in the late 1950s, I made my way over to the box of a building bearing the school sign. I introduced myself to the lady I spoke with on the phone, dispatcher/manager/line staff; a bubbly lady with far better English than my Italian. My



The Piper Cadet

co-pilot (ok, instructor) was a pleasant middle-aged gent named Andrea, who would be there shortly, having to leave his day job at a local construction supply company. After more introductions and a flip through my licence, arrangements were quickly made for our departure in the club's Piper Cadet, a training variant of the Warrior.

Like many airparks, Arezzo had a short grass strip with few obstructions. In this pastoral setting, one is more likely to clip a tractor than a tree. The day was clear and warm, with only a few clouds around 3000 feet. Once at 2000 feet we headed south to Lago (Lake) Trasimeno, one of a few large, roundish lakes in central Italy. Our trip over the lake and through the valley took us briefly into Umbria, returning north along the eastern range of mountains which nestles the famous town of Cortona in one of the many pockets of rock. Cortona's medieval architecture was the backdrop for the 2003 film "Under the Tuscan Sun" and it's a treasure to walk and to fly over. The



View from the P92



The P92 cockpit

*"Posing next
to the plane
we looked
like giants!"*



town is partially built onto the rising mountain terrain to the east and features a dramatic defensive wall on it's northern flank. Flying counterclockwise around Cortona at relatively low level involves a climb with terrain then a rapid descent to follow the wall. To call this maneuver fun and scenic is a gross understatement. Our return and landing back at the field were dull by comparison. Our route for the trip kept us well outside the control zones of either Florence or Rome and well below any IFR airways, meaning our communications were solely with field staff and entirely in Italian (Andrea earned his keep).

Within weeks, I would have another opportunity to fly from another club, Scuola Di Volo Serristori. The school and airfield are run by a sports association and share the airfield with a restaurant and resort, complete with pool. The property has a relatively small street frontage, and signage relates to the resort, not the school. After a few wanderings back and forth across the entrance, I ventured further into the resort and discovered the airfield that was obscured from the road.

Besides having both paved and grass strips, this school has a unique distinction; it's the first in Italy to offer flight training to the disabled. Upon

meeting several club members and my instructor, Alessio, I was introduced to the P92 Echo Super, made by Tecnam in Capua, Italy. The P92 is powered by a 100hp Rotax and a belt-driven, fixed pitch prop. My flight in the Arezzo Piper was more recreational, but this flight would prove to be more of a check-out flight than a sight-see.

Alessio, a friendly, bearded young man in his thirties had excellent English and patiently took me through the pre-flight briefing. The side-by-side seating was more spacious than a C150, and surprising for a plane in this class. Posing next to the plane we looked like giants!

My “check ride” went well as Alessio took me through the paces of a few circuits and level flight over the green and sienna landscape. This plane introduced me to two new features; one, a stick (my first) and two; a ballistic recovery system (BRS). I know BRSs save lives, but I found it’s presence to be more unnerving than re-assuring. The



Paul Rutten: giant pilot, or tiny plane?



The P92 sure looks bigger without people around it for scale.



Ready to fly the model airplane.



BRS package is only feet behind our heads in the cockpit, with the business end facing up towards a frangible membrane in the cockpit ceiling. I can only guess what happens to your ears when that thing goes off! Next, the system trigger is a T-handle an inch

away from the push-pull throttle. The checklist includes removing the trigger safety pin before flight. Admittedly, I was a bit paranoid about letting my hand wander off the throttle.

My ride completed, I had an opportunity to enjoy a hangar tour

with Alessio and coo over his own build project; a Zenair CH701 STOL. Lastly, the biggest surprise of all was the cost of my flight. The Arezzo flight came in around 300 Euros, par with most rentals with instructor, but the Serristori flight was only 138 Euros. Serristori instructors are unpaid volunteers and fly solely for the experience and hours.

When you find yourself in Tuscany and have the time, fly. From the air, Tuscan towns look like glowing islands of stone, brick, and clay floating in

a sea of green. Driving the twisting backroads of Tuscany, you'll be lucky to visit more than a few such hill towns in a day, but by air, you can see many more. Even the major centers like Florence and Rome are little more than an hour apart by small plane. If you go, pack your licence. Although I was flying dual, both clubs were keenly interested to know that I was licenced and checked my docs.

Go and have fun under the Tuscan Sun.



Posing with the Zenair Stol



Go fly under the Tuscan sun!

THANKS FOR THE SHARE!



SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO TAGGED US ON INSTAGRAM!

From top, left to right: @kyla.kowalchuk.photography: Enjoying the Aviation Museum's open house; @nathanaelkorby: "Welcome to the mountains"; @victoriafestivalsociety: "This one is for the history books, Victoria."; @bcaviationmuseum: "The repainting of the Snowbird 1 is complete!"; @n._rooprai: "Fireworks! 2026 Canada Day! Bucket list wish fulfilled!" // Thanks for the share!

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