

Challenger 30th Anniversary

Vignettes of a Pilgrimage

by Bryan Quickmire



Every pilot should experience the glories of a cross country adventure in a flock of small planes. Days are spent in your plane with your flying buddies just off your wingtip. Together you hopscotch from place to place, taking in new sights, meeting new people. Together you deal with whatever issues arise.

Each morning when you wake up you know where you are but you don't know where you will be that evening. Weather, wind and whatever will determine your route and schedule. Flexibility is paramount. You must be fluid and go with the flow for you can't win a battle with nature.

You bond with your plane – each time you put it on you morph into a cybernetic organism with the power of flight. You bond with your companions - the sharing enhances the experiences far beyond going alone.

Expanding horizons together...

In 1999 an intrepid group of voyageurs from Ontario and Quebec headed north for an eight day, 2,000 km trip in their amphibious Challenger ultralights. This was the first of what has become the Annual Challenger Float Tour. Flocks of Challengers have since explored the majestic fjords of the Saguenay, the rugged shores of Lake Superior and the sand beaches of Lakes Huron and Michigan. They have ventured east to the Atlantic and migrated south to the Gulf of Mexico.

2013 marked the 30th anniversary of the Challenger line of aircraft. It was only fitting that the 15th annual Float Tour was a pilgrimage to the Challenger 30th Anniversary celebration, near Quad City's factory in Moline, Illinois. To visualize the location, find Chicago on the map then look west 250 km to the Mississippi River and the Iowa border.

Challenger 30th Anniversary: Vignettes of a pilgrimage

By Bryan Robinson

Every year, thousands of people flock to the shores of Lake Superior to witness the annual Challenger 30th Anniversary celebration. It's a time of joy, camaraderie, and shared experiences. The event is a testament to the enduring legacy of the Challenger line of aircraft, which has inspired generations of pilots and adventurers.

Each year, the celebration draws a diverse crowd of people, from seasoned pilots to first-time flyers. The event is a chance to connect with like-minded individuals and share stories of adventure and exploration. The atmosphere is one of excitement and anticipation, as everyone looks forward to the various activities and demonstrations that will be taking place throughout the day.

One of the highlights of the celebration is the air show, where pilots showcase their skills and the capabilities of the Challenger line of aircraft. The air show is a thrilling experience, with spectators watching as pilots perform stunts, loops, and other maneuvers. It's a chance to see the aircraft in action and appreciate the engineering and craftsmanship that went into their design.

In addition to the air show, there are also several other activities and demonstrations that are part of the celebration. These include ground school sessions, where pilots learn about the history and development of the Challenger line of aircraft. There are also opportunities to meet with the designers and engineers of the aircraft, and to see the manufacturing process up close.

The celebration is a time of shared experiences and camaraderie. It's a chance to connect with fellow pilots and adventurers, and to share stories of adventure and exploration. The event is a testament to the enduring legacy of the Challenger line of aircraft, and to the spirit of adventure and exploration that has inspired generations of pilots and adventurers.

The making journey

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This pilgrimage entailed a round trip by a flock of amphib Challengers from Quebec and Ontario which flew more than 3,000 km up and over the Great Lakes then down the other side through Oshkosh to the birthday party. A solo voyage to the party by an amphib Challenger from Edmonton, Alberta racked up over 4,500 km!

These birds of a feather gathered the collection of images and captions presented herein. These are vignettes of the pilgrimage rather than being a minute by minute travelogue. We hope they convey a sense of our experience.

