



Learning To Fly Floats; Take Your Skill To A New Level

Most pilots first learn to fly in a landplane but Air-Hart's Chief Flight Instructor, Trevor Erhardt says once you've done that there is nothing like the experience of learning to fly floats.

"We get a lot of students who have taken landplane flight training, then want to experience the excitement of floats. Whether for a hobby for their very first bush job, it's a great skill to have and in some cases a requirement," says Erhardt.

Erhardt says flying a floatplane is quite easy to learn, and typically takes about 7 hours to receive your rating/endorsement.

Operating most of the year out of the beautiful City of Kelowna, Air-Hart Aviation teaches pilots how to fly on floats, focusing on floatplane ratings and the 50 hour bush course.

"You can put together a number of reasons to justify a seaplane rating, but the bottom line is that it's fun. Just imagine flying in and landing on a deserted lake, fishing for a while or just hanging out," said Erhardt. "For those looking for a bush pilot career, we offer the more intensive 50 hour program, which takes about a month to complete."

Although Transport Canada's floatplane/seaplane rating is currently a minimum of 7 hour, many bush operators require their junior pilots to have a minimum of 50 hours of float experience, for insurance purposes.

A seaplane rating is a simple add-on to your current pilot license and Transport Canada doesn't require a written test. You also don't require a written test for the 50 hour bush course.

"Unlike most operators, our 50 hour course includes 25 solo hours. I see two advantages to this. One, you really get the best experience and two, it can

save you money when you consider that dual time is going to cost more by bringing your instructor along for the ride. "

Erhardt says most students don't have any trouble learning to fly floats. "It's fairly simple; all you do is take off, land, taxi and sail. There isn't that much more to it."

Air-Hart Aviation puts a strong emphasis on instruction. "Our ground briefing are an important component. Our instructors ensure students are well prepared before they fly." Erhardt discusses some of steps involved in learning to fly floats:

'You have to know how to idle taxi. One thing you should never forget about flying off the water is that unless you're tied up, you're going somewhere. The 'where' part depends on the wind. If the engine is running, even at idle, there's enough thrust to get you

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Where Are They Now?



FORMER AIR-HART STUDENT

Heather Rozmus Captain, Perimeter Air, Winnipeg

I really enjoyed my time at Air-Hart Aviation. Learning to fly a floatplane was by far the greatest flying experience I have had. The instructors were great and I enjoyed my time in Kelowna. I took away some great skills that helped me advance my aviation career.

going, so you had better have a plan on where you want to go."

Erhardt says takeoffs come in several forms as well. "It's easy to see where the wind is coming from, you push the power up and get on the step. From that point, rough water and glassy water takeoffs are the challenging skills."

He adds that rough water is best avoided.

"It pounds you and the airplane. Remember that there are no shock absorbers or oleo struts on a floatplane. It's also always wise to avoid boat wakes and of course the boaters."

Erhardt says to keep the control column(stick) slightly aft and fly off the water at minimum speed, accelerate in ground effect and fly away.

"A glassy water takeoff is a little harder. The water has this physics thing called surface tension that makes the water want to stick together."

He says that the challenge with surface tension is that it makes breaking a float free from calm water difficult to accomplish. "Once you're on the step, throw an aileron over and pull a float out of the water to reduce the drag. Keep it a few inches above the water and then get the other one out. Voilà, you're flying."

Normal landings are accomplished with a slight descent rate, power on or off. "Just don't forget to kill any sideways drift to avoid getting wet. Rough-water landings are similar but made with a high-idle power setting, with the aircraft pitched in a full-stall attitude. The slower you touch down, the better."

Erhardt adds that glassy water landings are the hard in that smooth water makes it nearly impossible to judge your height above it.

"Depending on your airplane, configure for a power-on, constant-speed descent at 100 fpm and just fly the airplane onto the water. Don't forget to reduce the power quickly and keep the stick aft to keep the prop out of the water."

Aviation Humour

An airline pilot with poor eyesight had managed to pass his periodic vision exams by memorizing the eye charts beforehand. One year, though, his doctor used a new chart that the pilot had never before seen. The pilot proceeded to recite the old chart and the doctor realized that she'd been hoodwinked.

Well, the pilot proved to be nearly blind as a bat. But the doctor could not contain her curiosity. "How is it that someone with your eyesight can manage to pilot a plane at all? I mean, how for example do you taxi the plane out to the runway?"

"Well," says the pilot, "it's really not very hard. All you have to do is follow the instructions of the ground controller over the radio. And besides, the landmarks have all become quite familiar to me over the years."

"I can understand that," replies the doctor. "But what about the take-off?"

"Again, a simple procedure. I just aim the plane down the runway, go to full throttle, pull back on the stick, and off we go!"

"But once you're aloft?" asks the doctor.

"Oh, everything's fully automated these days. The flight computer knows our destination, and all I have to do is hit the autopilot and the plane pretty much flies itself."

"But I still don't see how you land!" says the doctor.

"Oh, that's the easiest part of all. All I do is use the airport's radio beacon to get us on the proper glide path. Then I just throttle down and wait for the copilot to yell, 'AIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!' pull the nose up, and the plane lands just fine!"

For more information on getting your floatplane endorsement or the 50 hour Bush Course, call 250.762.9830 or visit the web site @ www.air-hart.com.

Where Higher Learning and Adventure Soar

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