

FIVE WAYS UP

Learning to fly can be one of life's greatest rewards – here are five deluxe ways to get airborne on your own.

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It sounds romantic. Flying over hills and water, able to casually look down and see the scenery from up on high. The reality can be that, but mostly, the reality is a lot more. Learning to fly engages all your senses and faculties, and is a constant exercise in multi-tasking. Checking engine performance, aeroplane performance, air traffic and weather all at once can be stressful. But after taking off and touching down for the first time, on your own, it's hard not to be giddy about it either.

Amateur pilots used to learn at dusty old airfields in Australia, Canada or the US, or at schools that train pilots in the clinical manner befitting a future airline pilot. A few have increasingly dedicated themselves to providing a unique and exhilarating learning experience, be it on-the-seat-of-your-pants thrills, or flying in a more luxurious surrounding.

SKIES OVER ASIA

With a mission of being Asia's dedicated private aviation concierge service and lifestyle membership, Wings Over Asia (WOA) is no doubt the region's first to achieve that dream, serving private aircraft owners, pilots, and enthusiasts with an operational focus on Southeast Asia.

Headquartered in Singapore's famous Seletar airport, WOA offers flight concierge services, aircraft acquisition advice, and an unmatched aviation social networking platform for aviators and enthusiasts in the region. While WOA does not rent out aeroplanes to the public, within the WOA subscription membership plans, there are internal aircraft-sharing schemes among members. WOA does provide in-house flight instructors as mentor pilots or instructors for members to gain proficiency on any type of aeroplane.

WOA's flight proficiency programme activities for members are also audited and approved by the US Transportation Security Administration, making it the only flight training organisation in Singapore, other than Boeing Altheon, to have such seal of approval, should any of the students later wish to continue or finish their flight training in the US.

WOA members also enjoy regular flight excursions to regional exotic locations, some of which have included hops to destinations on the Malaysian

peninsula, such as Langkawi. Staying at the Four Seasons, complete with a BBQ on the beach, is definitely the way to take in private aerobatics show performed by members.

AIRPARK IN THAILAND

Best Ocean Airpark is an innovative concept in luxury living for the passionate aviator, including first-class lodges, hangars for private aircraft complete with an adjacent runway, all within a 40-minute drive from Bangkok. The concept is certainly new to Asia, though it most closely resembles the fly-in communities, where residents can purchase houses with private hangars, allowing them to taxi out to private runways for their own amusement. John Travolta is perhaps the most famous such resident.

This little aviators' gem in Southeast Asia was brewed from the friendship between the founders of WOA and Best Ocean Airpark, both of whom shared the passion for developing new private aviation concepts. WOA became the pioneering tenant and operator at Best Ocean Airpark with the opening of a members' lounge and parking facilities for WOA members.

The private airpark is situated next to a resort and clubhouse that is adjacent to a private 860-metre runway, enabling visitors to taxi in and conveniently park their plane in front of their own resort. With full access to the hangar and airstrip, the visitor can experience ultimate freedom and splendid adventure known only to the most elite and well-wheeled VIP travellers. The club features a classic Piper Warrior aeroplane among various other Light Sport Aircraft in the hangar, in addition to a Robinson R22 helicopter. As if that is not enough, the club's chief flight instructor is a captain from the Royal Thai Navy who flies the Harrier fighter jet. The airpark ensures that if you come to learn, you'll be learning from the best, and in the most customised manner.

Exploring outwards from the club, there are resort villas amid the golf greens, and Bali-themed air-conditioned rooms with five-star hotel amenities, including a personal Jacuzzi in each room. With a large swimming pool inside the compound and golf buggies on standby 24 hours, visitors can relax after a flight while looking over the lush greens nearby.

01 The Cirrus 2015 Accelero, the wings of choice among some of the world's leading flying schools.

FLYING OVER PALO ALTO

Situated next door to the Facebook headquarters of the affluent community of Palo Alto, and conveniently adjacent to the Palo Alto Golf Course, West Valley Flying Club (WVFC) has been operating for over 40 years. It has been one of the top favourite spots for aviators to fly in from all around the US and Asia.

The club's well-maintained fleet of owner leaseback aircraft for rent is impressive, to say the least, featuring a wide selection of Cessna 172s and 182s, Piper Archers, the luxurious Cirrus SR20 and SR22s, as well as the tailwheel-equipped Citabrias and American Champion Super Decathlons for the more adventurous and challenge-seeking aviators.

WVFC offers three types of membership – the Regular category allows full flying and club privileges, Family gives the same privileges as Regular but for a family member of a regular member (application fee is waived plus a discount on monthly fees), while Associate has no flying privileges but allows access to social activities and flight simulators. The club has helped more than 10,000 members get their first licence. It has also assisted experienced pilots to get checked out in the plane of their choice.

The airport also sports various on-site aviator's restaurants, including classic American cafes and diners serving hearty breakfast, lunch and dinner overlooking the Palo Alto Golf Course. What's better than a day of leisure flying followed by an afternoon on the fairway?

GET THE JET EXPERIENCE

Located in the eastern edge of the San Francisco Bay Area, Attitude Aviation's extraordinarily diverse and well-maintained fleet of rental aircraft will eliminate boredom and challenge any aviator to grow aeronautically. If you want to learn to fly well in some of the fastest, most expensive jets, this is the place to go.

Attitude is owned and managed by Rich Perkins, a retired US Air Force lieutenant colonel. He is also an internationally renowned air show performer and award-winning instructor pilot. If you have reached a plateau in your flying, Attitude can help you stretch your wings to get just a bit higher.

Attitude has one of the most exclusive fleets in the West Coast, with Citabrias and the ultra-aerobatic Pitts S-2C, to its most prized bird, the Aerovodochody L-39C fighter jet, converted for civilian use. The L-39 jet is actually a Czech-made fighter jet that is popular with wealthy private pilots who want some extra oomph to their ride. At Attitude, the rental rate on the L-39 Firecat is US\$2,500 per hour, excluding instruction. Introductory flights are available in many different kinds of aircraft and for all different kinds of aviators, and with their fleet they can easily

accommodate all customers in trying out their menu of services, from basic flight on the client's chosen aircraft to aerobatics in a competition-level aeroplane or jet.

In addition to flight training, Attitude offers a wide range of one-off packaged "adventure" flights with themes such as "Your First Flight Lesson" and "Golden Gate Biplane Tours". For thrill-seekers, they have "Barnstormers", "Aerobatic Adventures", "Jet Fighter Fantasy", and "Air Combat Attitude" – perfect for those who'd like to push the envelope a little more.

EDUCATION IN AVIATION

Located in the Greater Boston area just west of the city is a quiet little retreat with a concierge flying club and flight school – Executive Flyers Aviation. The school is run by the family of Michael Goulian, an internationally

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03 The L-39 jet Firecat is available for jet fighter-style training with Attitude Aviation in California.

known American aviator who races in the Red Bull Air Race World Series under the number 99. Goulian, who was born into a family of aviators, first flew solo at age 16. Executive Flyers Aviation, founded in 1964, is now one of the largest flying schools in northeastern US.

With its focus on tailored, concierge flight training, Executive Flyers Aviation offers a decent traditional set of aircraft types, including the standards from Cessna, the luxurious Cirrus, and speciality aircraft, including the Piper Seminole for multi-engine training as the aerobatic Super Decathlon.

If you are one of those looking for a quiet, lush summer getaway of leisure flying above New England with a solid selection of aircraft and some of the best, most tailored concierge flight training services run by an well-known aviation family – look no further than this hidden gem in the town of Bedford. 📍



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