

A little piece of flying heaven



Icelandic landscape – the cost of renting a Cessna 172 is similar to UK prices

The nice thing about Iceland is that the community is small, with a total population of 320,000, of whom 150,000 live in Reykjavik, and they all seem to know one another. This means that the GA community there is a very close-knit group of people. The main airport at Keflavik, built by the Americans, is 45 km (27 miles) from the capital and it's the only place which has controlled airspace. In many ways Iceland is perfect for GA – a little piece of flying heaven. The country is stunning, simply wonderful to fly over!

The Apache sets out to check on the otherwise difficult-to-inspect dam



By Martin Robinson

As I mentioned in my diary, I travelled to Iceland for the Board meeting and AGM of AOPA Iceland, luckily before the latest volcanic eruption affected the island. After the official meetings I visited an airfield in the northern part of the country called Akureyri to meet a gentleman known affectionately as Artu, a former airliner owner and pilot whose passion for aviation had led him to develop Iceland's only dedicated aviation museum. He asked Valur, the President of AOPA Iceland, to bring me to meet him, see the museum and talk about EASA Part M, which is causing much concern for all owners in Iceland. The interesting thing is the many of his aircraft are still flying, from the first tailwheel air ambulance service up to the Fokker 50. The hangar is home to 70 years plus of Icelandic aviation. I was really honoured to be taken flying by Artu in his de Havilland Beaver – we even landed on the water – doing a bit of sailing for awhile before Valur informed us that he heard the Fokker 50 returning, so we made our way back to the main airport.

Reykjavik airport was built by the British 70 years ago this year. Today it serves as the main domestic hub, with Fokker 50s and Twin Otters. While I was there I saw many business aircraft, Falcon 900s, Cessna King Airs, and there are a number of flying clubs and at least 50 privately-owned aircraft. As it is also near to the main hospital in Iceland the airport plays a vital role in saving lives. However the Mayor wants to close the airport and build



**Left: Artu's beautiful de Havilland Beaver, in which we made a water landing
Above: Horst, an airline pilot during the week, is building an aerobot under EAA rules**

residential properties on the site. Since the banking crisis the plans seem to have been put on hold! Let's hope it doesn't come back.

There are many aircraft being built in Iceland under an EAA scheme which seems to get around the problems associated with EASA. I also flew with Jo in his 55-year-old Apache with a National Park ranger to visit a dam, the state of which was causing concern. As it was too difficult to reach by car, the Apache was perfect for the task.

Fuel seems to be a little cheaper than the UK and as they use the JAA system (soon to be EASA) renting an aircraft is straightforward, by all accounts. With Iceland Express offering low cost airfares Iceland is definitely a destination you should consider if you like to mix your activities. In June, July and August the salmon are jumping and it's a terrific place to fish if that is one of your other pursuits. One thing you can be sure of is a warm welcome from a very friendly group of aviation people. ■