

You may not want to print this article since you rent certified planes, but perhaps your pilots would be interested for their aviation futures.

Experimental vs Certified Planes

The fleet of old trainers like C-152s or Cherokees are getting really ancient and pilots considering buying one may get a handful of problems related to wear or corrosion that costs many \$ to fix and maintain. And engines on such planes need much tender care and infusions of money to A&P mechanics and parts to keep them running reliably. Or you could buy a newer C-172 for close to \$250K if you are well-off. Another possibility is to look at the LSA category but those run up in price also. But there is an alternative for those considering owning a plane that is much less expensive and that is buying an “experimental” category plane already flying for somewhere between \$20K-80K.

With an experimental, you can fly anywhere a C-172 can go and the biggest advantage is that you as owner can do all maintenance yourself, except the annual condition inspection which needs an A&P to sign off. For those pilots interested in mechanical maintenance and with sufficient time available to do any maintenance work, keeping a plane flying can be fun and economical. There are many designs flying and a good source for reviewing what is available is Barnstormers.com. Everything from “low and slow” to “fast glass” is for sale all around the country. You would want to search methodically for the right plane and have a knowledgeable plane person with you during the looking period to assure you are getting a reliable machine. Many builders completed projects as retirement hobbies and as they aged and lost medicals, they put planes up for sale. Most have only a few hundred hours on them and long future lives.

Now I built my plane from a kit which took several years to complete and had the technical background to do so, but you can buy experimentals done, flying and ready for a new owner. My Pulsar uses a Rotax 912, four-stroke engine, that uses unleaded car gas at 3.5 gal/hr; that’s about \$13/hr. I cruise at 130 mph and that equates to 37 mpg, better than most cars.

The point of this writing is to make pilots aware that certified planes are not the only source for ownership and experimentals might serve you equally well.

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