



# Mid-Atlantic Pilot Field Guide

Your CFI helped you get your license...this guide will help you use your license.

Strange as it may seem, once you get your private, one of the hardest things you can do is to go fly somewhere new. More pilots than you would think stick to the same places they flew to during training, get bored, and move on.

This guide is meant for the VFR pilot who is looking for interesting places to fly to—perhaps someone new to the area, or a student pilot building their 50 XC hours for their instrument rating. It is 1,000 percent subjective and biased, so YMMV. And though this should go without saying, this guide should never substitute for genuine preflight planning. Things change, NOTAMs, TFRs, etc. Be a pilot; do pilot things...

## Cross Countries that Rock

**First Flight (KFFA)** – Absolutely a rite of passage type flight for any pilot in the mid-Atlantic Region. There are many ways to skin this cat, but the most enjoyable for me (approaching from the north) is to make your way to

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Currituck (KONX) and then fly over Currituck Sound down to KFFA. There can be traffic and military aircraft in the Norfolk/Virginia Beach area, so getting flight following is not a bad idea, but I have also come here several times just pure VFR without talking to anyone. It's your monument to flight so do it your way, but remember there's no fuel. Budget some time to marvel at our forefathers of flight and your own god-like pilot characteristics. Not a difficult landing though there are trees and winds can sometimes be shifty. This is a true privilege of living in the area. Driving here just feels lame now.

**Tangier Island (KTGI)** – Another rite of passage and bucket list flight. My go-to place when I take a coworker or family member who wants to experience the adventure of GA. From the north, rather than fly direct over the water and Smith Island, I prefer to fly to Cambridge (KCGE) and then Crisfield (W41), which is also a fun airport to land at. From there, follow the peninsula southwest to Tangier. I find this route visually more interesting and a slightly thicker security blanket in case you lose an engine. You can walk the whole island in not much time. I have never spent an afternoon at the beach but it's there. Get some crab soup or a crab cake to complete the experience. It's a different world and a singular flight. Do your research and bring some cash to pay the landing fee.

**Hudson River** – Another bucket list experience. There's a course from the FAA explaining the procedures and it's absolutely necessary. Preparation is key, but this is totally doable for a competent, new-ish private pilot. I was intimidated by this for years and really shouldn't have been. If you can hold an altitude, multitask a bit, and talk on the radio then you got this. Admittedly, this is probably best experienced with another pilot (or passenger) who can help look for traffic or at least soak in the views and take photos and videos for your influencer lifestyle, but I have only done this flying solo. Don't be worried; but do your research and be a professional. I usually fly to Monmouth Executive (KBLM) and fuel up and gather my wits before heading into the belly of the beast. Once you fly here you will know...much respect to Sully.

**Sky Bryce (VG18)** – Unique field with a ski resort, golfing, mountain biking, lakes, and a public library at the airport. Just an awesome approach. It is a private field (though open to the public) so call ahead and get the briefing from the contact listed in Foreflight who will give you best practices. This is not a massive runway so stay sharp and be comfortable slipping. Every time I fly here I tell myself that I have to buy a vacation

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home here. Then I remember I can't afford vacation homes; I spend too much money on avgas.

**Williamsburg, VA (KJGG)** – Maybe not the most epic flight ever, but beautiful scenery crossing famous rivers. Easy to navigate. Restaurant at the airport is great and there's all of Colonial Williamsburg if you want to make a day of it. Getting flight following is a good idea.

**Ocean City, NJ (26N)** – You can land here and walk to the beach. That is all you need to know. Not to be confused with Ocean City, MD (KOXB).

**Shenandoah Leaf Peeping** – Not strictly for leaf peeping, but a beautiful flight. From Front Royal (KFFR) follow the river above the valley, flying over Luray (KLUA) and Shenandoah Valley Regional (KSHD). Amazing views of two mountain ridges and a valley below.

**Eastern Shore Roundabout** – For the low and slow crowd... Adjust the first leg of this journey to meet your 50nm requirement to make this an XC and then go on a tour of the Eastern Shore. No towered fields here (though you could easily add KSBY to the itinerary). But this roundabout has the Bay, the Atlantic, grass strips, challenging approaches, and a few nice long wide runways to keep it all interesting. Mix and substitute airports according to your preference.

KCGE – 1N5 – KOXB – KGED – 33N – MD1 – KEVY – 58M

## **\$100 Hamburgers**

**Annapolis (KANP)** – I'm biased but this is woefully unappreciated as a flying destination. Within walking distance from the airport is Ledo Pizza (ignore the haters), Pop Pop's Ice Cream, Sonic, a supermarket and several restaurants at various price points. If you cross Route 2 on foot, Saigon Palace has solid Vietnamese food and is next door to Blondie's Doughnuts, which also serves decadent sandwiches. Car access unlocks Bayside Bull, with Maryland pit beef sandwiches; Full On for sandwiches and salads (legit delicious, great value, expect to wait); and the Pennsylvania Dutch market with all sorts of wholesome but unhealthy delicacies at affordable prices, though it has limited hours. Uber takes you to all that Annapolis has to offer—high-end dining, history, maritime vibes, shopping. Truly one of

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America's great small cities. Lee Airport (KANP) is a short field with an active flight school so pay attention, particularly at quarter to the hour when students are bringing the planes back from their lessons. No fuel on weekends.

**Cambridge (KCGE)** – 'Twas a time when Saturday/Sunday breakfast at Cambridge was an institution and you had to wait for a seat along with a bunch of hungry pilots. When Kay's at the Airport closed, a void opened up in my flying. Verdict is still out on the new establishment, but they are following the same time-honored strategy that worked before—big American breakfast and lunch. And all the positives about KCGE remain unchanged—great runway, easy to navigate to, competitively priced fuel. Perhaps my most visited airport.

**Frederick (KFDK)** – Everything about this place is solid. Airport is solid. Restaurant is solid. People are solid. AOPA is solid. But I'd rather go to HGR. However, I recognize that I hold a minority opinion, and so I concede that this airport belongs on this list.

**Delaware Coastal (KGED)** – Multiple long runways and the restaurant Arena's serves up better-than-average bar food. One of my regular stops and I'm not the only one. The traffic pattern can get busy during the weekend so consider flying in a bit early. If the season is right, Panchito, the B-25 may be at its hangar (or following you on final!). The plane's caretakers are friendly and will let you check out their projects.

**Hagerstown (KHGR)** – If you're thinking of breakfast at Frederick (KFDK), you may as well just fly a little further to HGR and avoid the crowd. The flight gives you a taste of the vistas of Maryland mountain country. Bathrooms in the FBO are weirdly luxurious. The menu at the Grille at Runways is comforting but varied, prices are sane—remind me again why you wanted to deal with KFDK...

**Lancaster (KLNS)** – This is in the mid-Atlantic pantheon of restaurants with affordable and generously portioned Italian food—the mini loaf of warm bread is a carb loading delight. But what I also appreciate is the option to get half portions of some dishes so I don't fall into food coma somewhere over the Susquehanna. Every time I fly here I wonder why I don't fly here every weekend. Beautiful scenery, good airport. Read the briefing on the airport website about procedures to fly in. The FBO is also super slick.

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**Cape May (KWWD)** – Damn this place gets busy. But you can call ahead and make a reservation. The appeal is clear—fairly priced, delicious, gut busting comfort food American style baby! Fun coastal flight and easy to navigate to. Multiple nice long runways are helpful if you're still “refining” your crosswind landing technique.

## Logbook Scalps

**Clearview (2W2)** – Perhaps the most prized scalp on this list. Short, narrow, upsloping, with drop-offs at the end. Dial in your short field skills. Mind your airspeed. Always land into the wind—to the point where I might even consider another airport when winds are light and variable. Just kidding (or am I). For your efforts you can buy a commemorative mug. And while much is made about the difficulty of landing here, Clearview is home to an active flying club, and there are student pilots who learn to fly here, so this is not the widowmaker it's made out to be. But man you will feel good when you add this to your logbook. Also, the aircraft supply store is a trip.

**Claremont (58M)** – This is where I go to test my landing proficiency. Plenty of optical illusions from the upsloping runway. You may have to slip after crossing the trees. In some conditions you may be in gently descending slow flight as you cross the trees. Just control your airplane and be ready to go around early if you're not feeling it. I have only landed downhill once when the wind made it totally necessary.

**Baltimore Washington International (KBWI)** – Kind of an oddity on this list since it's not a short field. But for those seeking the Bravo experience, BWI is a good place to start. No landing fees as long as you don't pull into Signature. File your SFRA flight plan and let Potomac Approach guide you in (or go IFR). The GA runway is 33R and 15L, and I might consider staying away on days when they are sending you to 28/10 with all the airliners—more out of good manners than anything else, but that's just me. If you are staying for a while, there are a few good restaurants a short uber away—G&M for steaks and crabcakes, Willy's Kitchen for elevated diner food, but my weapon of choice is the unassuming Korean noodle joint Ja Kum Sung in Glen Burnie.

**Ingalls Field - Hot Springs (KHSP)** – You're just coming here for the logbook scalp because there is literally nothing else here. No restaurant. No

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town. Nowhere to go unless the resort is sending a car for you. But you get to land on a mesa-like mountain for the poor man's Sedona experience. Consider coming in a bit high if there's wind to avoid any weird rotor from the drop off. Know your airplane.

**Freeway (Woo)** – Tall trees to the south. Route 50 to the north. 2400' by 40'. Know how to slip and mind your airspeed. But before you get too intimidated, generations of pilots learned to fly here and called it their home. I was one of them. It's a shadow of the airport it once was and one day it will all be housing developments. But it's still a good place to work on your short field techniques.