

Oshkosh – the airshow!

Nov'20

Quote from Piaggio Aerospace:

"There's really no place in the world like the EAA's AirVenture. It is the "Spirit of Aviation," dedicated to keeping aviation fun, accessible, and safe".

Oshkosh is truly the enthusiast's airshow.

It is, undoubtedly, the hadj of aviation.

Every pilot must attend, at least once in a lifetime. At least.

At Oshkosh, you are in the company of only like-minded enthusiasts.

Almost all here have something to do with aviation.

Only Oshkosh!

There is nothing – absolutely nothing – to distract you from your devotion to flying. No scenic attractions, no Mickeys, no Goofies, no anything!
Well, maybe a beer or two at the day's end.

And there is no talk of rugby, or cricket, or THAT either!

Only talk concerning what was seen today, and what will be seen tomorrow.

Latest news on the Airventure event, direct from the EAA - [Airventure](#)
A Video Preview of the Event - [Youtube](#)

These were the official statistics for the 2019 show:

Attendance: 642,000 (6.8 percent above 2018's record total).

Commercial exhibitors: 863

More than 10,000 aircraft arrived at Wittman Regional Airport in Oshkosh and other airports in east-central Wisconsin. T

Showplanes: 2,758 including 1,057 homebuilt aircraft, 939 vintage airplanes, 400 warbirds, 188 ultralights and light-sport aircraft, 105 seaplanes, 62 aerobatic aircraft, and 7 in other categories.

Camping: 12,300+ sites in aircraft and drive-in sites - +/- 40,000 visitors.

Forums, workshops & presentations - 1,500 attended by more than 75,000

Guests registered at International Visitors Tent: A record 2,772 visitors registered from 93 nations, also a record total (actual counts are higher since international visitor registration is voluntary).

Top countries represented by registered visitors:

Canada (561 visitors), Australia (386), and South Africa (177).

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The most attended day of the show is the sixth day, Saturday. On this day the Warbirds take to the sky en masse. The drone of literally hundreds of piston engines is positively orgasmic.

The sight of Mustangs, Spitfires, Harvards (some in SAAF colours), Gullwings, Bearcats (all the Cats for that matter) and many others, taking to the air, three abreast every fifteen seconds, cannot be imagined. And the subsequent formation fly past will leave you convinced that, somehow, you've arrived in airman's heaven.

When so many attend on one day, how do they cope? More to the point, how will you cope? After all, we South Africans can claim maybe 50,000 at Loftus as our experience of a crowd. Well, rest easy. They have it taped. You won't even notice that there are 200,000 plus at the show on the Saturday!

Roads are set up as "one-ways" – mornings "inwards", afternoons "outwards". At the gates, you will stand in a quick moving line on the first day only.

Now you are a member of the EAA, you have a week's pass to the show in the form of a wristband. Better get used to showering with it, if you remove it, you will have to cheat to get in!

There are so many toilets that, if you have to wait, it will be for a minute or two at the worst. Clean and tidy. They even smell clean. In fact, "clean and tidy" is the general impression you have about Oshkosh and Wisconsin. With all of the disposable food wrapping and drink containers about, you would, being South African, expect to see litter. But there is no litter, no waste paper, no rubbish. Makes a change!

Food and drink vendors abound. Wisconsin, as a result of its largely German descended population, is the sausage (Bratwursts – called "Brats") capital of the USA. Sausage and beer!

But, no beer or any alcoholic drink available, or even permitted on the grounds. The nearest bar is some 150 metres outside of the main gate.

Between the locals, taking their once a year chance to earn some extra bread, and the EAA taking their share of the profits, prices at the show tend to be high. The wise and experienced amongst you will have fruit, fruit juices, and sandwiches in your backpacks.

The same wise and experienced will have their collapsible chairs and will have set them up on the flight line on arrival each morning. They will not grow legs and disappear. Yes, believe it. They will be there when you return to watch the afternoons flying from your chosen prime position.

Crowded it is, to be sure. You are aware that there are many people around. But your space is, somehow, never invaded. You do not have that Loftus-on-a-test-afternoon feeling. At the exhibits, at the museum, at the flymarket, on the flightline, all is flowing; no crowd jams.

Friday is foreign visitors' day. We all meet at the foreign visitors' marquee. A great venue – shade, tables and chairs, a place to meet, a place to rest – your headquarters for the week. We all march behind our national flags to the president's tower. A short speech from the EAA Chairman, and it is back to the business of Oshkosh.

Same evening is the foreign visitors' party. Beer at last! And, FREE at that! From 1700h to 2100h. The EAA thank us for attending the show, and then we are at the free beer, wine and food. "Brats", of course!

Remarkably, despite the frantic attempts made by the Australians and South Africans, the box-car trailer - yes, that's right, the box-car trailer - of beer on tap, runs out at exactly 2100h. Closing time! Some South Africans (no names provided), have developed a system: join one of the four tap lines, fill your mug, go to the back of the line. By the time you get to the front, you can fill up again. Who needs food?

Oshkosh as a town is probably no larger than Paarl. It has only about 1000 hotel rooms, and those are taken in perpetuity by the EAA themselves, and allocated to the performing pilots and other senior show staff. Accommodation-wise, therefore, you have three options.

(a) Camp out on the premises (so to speak). Contact Neil Bowden.

Neil has operated the camping tours annually since 1998, and they are good value for those who appreciate camping, and of course, for the not inconsiderable convenience of being on the spot.

Neil1@telkomsa.net Ph 084-674-5674 or <http://www.airadventure.co.za/>

(b) Hotel accommodation. Attendees accommodate in towns up to 80 miles away and commute daily. First prize is where we are based, Appleton, 18 miles – twenty minutes – away, with some 3000 rooms. Being so close, competition amongst the FAA, NASA, tour operators and other exhibitors for these rooms is fierce, and allocations are contracted for years ahead. Room rates for this week are very high.

(c) Bunk down in one of the university residences. These are ad hoc tours, operating one year, and not the next. They are organised by individuals not wanting to join either of the tour operator organised groups described above. The drawbacks are communal bathrooms, no air conditioning, and some 50 miles each way daily in vehicles shared by six, and parked up to two km from the gates. Travelling to and from the show is at fixed times.

Most hotels do not have restaurants, but do offer a quaintly named "American Continental" breakfast. Coffee? Yes, well it is hot and black and smells somewhat like coffee. Awful. Americans drink coffee non-stop all day. As a consequence, their coffee tends to be weak and watery and alien to our palates.

Be assured that, unless this is your third visit, you will not have had enough time to see the entire Oshkosh Airshow. Even if you have devoted every hour of all of your five days.