



## French aviation chief gets taste of American GA

By Sarah Brown

Patrick Gandil just couldn't pass up the chance to fly in America. The inspector general of the French Civil Aviation Authority (DGAC) joined AOPA Foundation President Bruce Landsberg for a flight over the Maryland countryside May 5 during a trip to the Washington, D.C., area.

A pilot with a passion for general aviation, Gandil used the opportunity to get some flying experience in the aviation system that has inspired him to work on developing a French instrument rating tailored to private pilots. Equipped with his flight bag and jacket, he was eager for the opportunity to fly on that windy morning. French Embassy Sustainable Development and Transport Counselor Thierry Buttin joined him for the flight.

"It's the first time I will have a normal flight in the U.S.," Gandil said before the flight, explaining that he had had one other GA experience in the United States: taking the controls with a flight instructor in a TBM 700 on his way into Oshkosh, Wis. AOPA's Diamond DA40 was a lot closer to the aircraft Gandil has flown in France, such as the Diamond DA42 and Cirrus aircraft.

"I invited Patrick to go flying with us last winter and was delighted that he took me up on the offer," said Landsberg. "It was a chance to show him how simple flying can be and that it can be done in great safety without huge amounts of government oversight. He absolutely got it!"

The now-450-hour pilot started taking flying lessons after he was nominated for a position dealing with Paris airports. Once he learned, he said, "I never stopped flying." Since then, he's taken opportunities to promote GA in his home country: He joined some friends in a challenge to fly to 100 French airports in 24 hours in 2009, which quickly became an annual competition sponsored by Breitling.

"What other means of transportation allows, for example, leaving in the morning from Clermont-Ferrand for a meeting in Lille, having lunch next at Caen, attending a conference at Vannes in the afternoon before returning to Auvergne in the evening?" the [Breitling French-language site](#) notes.

While GA flying offers European private pilots some of the flexibility that American private pilots enjoy, extensive requirements for an instrument rating make flying in instrument meteorological conditions prohibitive: Most European Union countries, except the United Kingdom, require hundreds of hours of ground study to earn the instrument rating. Gandil said he was inspired by the instrument rating in the United States to work on designing an instrument rating for private pilots in France; he said he hopes to design the license in France this year, before the EU aviation system is fully integrated.

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