

IF YOU'RE READY FOR INTENSIVE
TRAINING, AFIT WILL GET YOU AN
INSTRUMENT RATING IN 10 DAYS

BY MARC C. LEE



IMMERSE YOURSELF!

Mike Bundy

No rating in aviation carries more mystique and prestige than the instrument rating. Sure, the ATP is a pinnacle of sorts, but for most pilots, the instrument rating is the big jump that separates professional pilots from their more casual brethren. Called “blind flying” in the 1920s, the ability to fly solely on instruments became a much-sought-after skill, as it is today. It's no secret that most newbie pilots look to instrument-rated pilots as being just below Chuck Yeager in their aviation stature.

The traditional way to earn the instrument rating is based on the time-honored FBO model: You go to a local FBO, and they tell you it will take about six months to earn if you fly once or twice a week. You meet your certified flight instructor, instrument (CFII), who more than likely, is young, building time and aiming for a first-officer job with a regional. You dig in, and nine months to a year of rescheduling, maintenance

Eddy Rico



issues and different instructors later, you might earn your instrument rating.

There's another way that seems to be redefining the way pilots earn their instrument rating. With a 98% pass rate and gaggles of satisfied customers singing their praises, Accelerated Flight and Instrument Training (AFIT) is revolutionizing instrument training with an approach that's being proven time and again. So, what's their hook? Just give them 10 days.

Ten days to earn an instrument rating seems intense, and it is. But AFIT has the process down and accomplishes it over and over by employing some masterful tools: Each instructor is handpicked by Tony Montalte, president of AFIT, and must have at least 8,000 hours of time (most average 10,000) and 2,000-3,000 hours of instrument time. Each of his 46 CFIs is at least 58 years old, with the maturity and finesse that come with those years. Instructors don't work for airlines or corporate flight departments—instrument training is all they do. And they come to you; the training can be done at your airport or at airports across the nation, in your airplane or one from AFIT's extensive rental network.

Stories From The Front

It's a testament to the success of AFIT's program that pilots from countries all over the world have earned their U.S. instrument rating in 10 days, and sometimes less. We talked to a few of them, and thought it valuable to share their experiences.

Eddy Rico lives on remote Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar. The 63-kilometer-long (39 miles) French island is home to Piton de la Fournaise, one of the most active volcanoes in the world, rising 8,600 feet above the sea. Involved in the tourist industry, Eddy Rico lives in this paradise of beauty. With 110 hours in his logbook as a private pilot, Rico decided to earn his instrument rating. "I wanted to become a better pilot and to extend my knowledge," he says in his charming accent.

Rico was impressed by AFIT's 10-day approach. Having previously lived in the U.S., he signed up to come to Boulder, Colo., (one of AFIT's core locations) to devote all his time to training. "The unique thing is that my instructor, John, took the time to work with me and understand my heavy French accent," explains Rico. "That gave me great con-

than anything, John made all the difference," adds Rico. "I believe that what really puts him on top is his ability to always find the right words to preserve the balance between confidence and humility. I may not be a perfect pilot, but I have confidence."

Cirrus In Mexico

Alberto Bremer lives in Mexico and works with Cirrus Aircraft's Mexico sales representative. He earned his Mexican private pilot certificate in 2006, and because he needed an American private pilot certificate to earn his instrument rating here, he acquired that in 2007. Bremer flew his Cirrus SR22 as a VFR pilot for about a year—often with a safety pilot—



Robert McEwan



There's a beauty to AFIT's approach. By devoting an exclusive 10 days to training, clients put off distractions (like work). Instrument students have found that leaving their local environs and traveling to an airport served by AFIT gets them away from family obligations and forces them to concentrate on nothing but training. Also, AFIT assigns one instructor to the client for all 10 days. There's a rapport there that can't be underestimated. And ultimately, you fly like crazy.

fidence and put me at ease." Rico trained in a G1000-equipped Cessna, and passed his checkride after 10 intensive days.

Rico's advice to others is to find the balance between the time required to fully devote yourself to the training and what you want out of it. "It is a little bit more expensive to do it this way, but your time is expensive, too." Seven months after passing his instrument checkride, Eddy Rico earned his commercial certificate. Today, he flies passengers around Reunion Island. "More

to become familiar with the airplane. After reading about AFIT and with 300 hours under his belt, Bremer decided that the total-immersion approach was exactly what he was looking for.

"The benefit was not that the training was fast, but that it was available," says Bremer. "I had gone to flight schools that said I could do the rating in six months or so, but I knew that would stretch into more time." Bremer also had to study for the written, and came to Texas because it was closest to his home.



Alberto Bremer



Scott Dillion

Bremer finished his training in eight days in the Cirrus. "The Cirrus Perspective system is just beautiful for this," says Bremer. "You really don't exploit the capabilities of the Cirrus until you fly it IFR." Bremer attributes his success to his instructor. "Bill had me fly in every kind of weather you can imagine," he explains. "I had found instrument instructors at other places who didn't like to fly in actual IMC! Bill was fantastic."

German Connection

Robert Bailey McEwan is a VP for BMW

in Germany. He also owns a Mooney Acclaim, and found that he needed a U.S. instrument rating to fly effectively in Europe. As with Bremer, a U.S. instrument rating meant McEwan had to re-earn his private. Though AFIT offered to come to Europe to train McEwan, German bureaucracy didn't allow the American CFI to train in a German flight school. McEwan came to Texas instead and utilized AFIT for both certificates. "In two weeks, I earned both the private and instrument," says McEwan, "with a 98% and a 96% on the exams."

Such a feat meant grueling training. "My instructor and I were together eight to 10 hours every day for 14 days," he laughs. "We flew four hours or more every day, and I couldn't even eat without him asking me questions and going through the material. It was excellent." McEwan didn't bring his Mooney but chose to train in a G1000 Cessna 172. To meet the requirements for both certificates, McEwan would study and fly all day, return to his hotel at 10 p.m., then study for several more hours.

"I looked very hard at different schools

before deciding on AFIT,” McEwan explains. “But for a busy person with a business and limited time, this was the perfect choice for me.” McEwan uses his instrument rating all the time now throughout Europe. He advises that others do early preparation. “I used the King Schools course, and it was excellent. Make sure you do all the theory part first and be prepared.”

Windy-City Training

“I asked around and looked at many places to do my instrument training,” says Scott Dillion, “but AFIT was qualified in my airplane and came to me. That convinced me.” Dillion works in the travel industry and intended to do lots of flying for business. That meant getting grounded much of the time if he didn’t have his instrument rating. Dillion spent a year flying in his SR22T getting used to the airplane, and when he felt ready, he turned to AFIT to start instrument training in his home base of Chicago.

“It was pretty intense,” Dillion explains, “but John made it easy with solid lesson plans and total familiarity with my airplane.” Dillion had taken a three-day “pass your instrument written” course earlier, but found he lacked

depth of knowledge. This added to his burden while training. Dillion says he had to study six to eight hours a day, in addition to his eight hours a day of instrument training, to learn everything he needed. It ended up being a valuable exercise, since Dillion says his oral exam ran three and a half hours!

“I’d advise people to go in with a solid foundation of knowledge and to be sure you’re exceptionally prepared,” Dillion says. “And go in with lots of flexibility.”

42 Hours In Nine Days

With 235 hours as a private pilot, Mike Bundy had made a commitment to his family that he would train hard to become the safest and most capable pilot he could be. That path led Bundy to earn his instrument rating. “I just wanted to be better,” he says.

Bundy looked at many options, but was turned off at the “you can earn it in six months” approach of the local FBO and the heavy reliance of FTDs (flight training devices) at some of the other accelerated schools. AFIT appealed to Bundy’s ideal that his training time be spent actually flying. Another draw was training in his own airplane. Bundy had purchased a Cessna 182 Turbo that

was G1000 equipped. AFIT assigned Bundy an instructor named Hal who knew the 182 very well, and the two simply flew as much as possible. “We did 42.2 hours in nine days,” laughs Bundy. “That was intense.”

The training paid off, and Bundy earned his instrument rating. More important, Bundy has gained an obvious confidence and familiarity with the capabilities of his airplane. “Critics say you can’t possibly retain information with a 10-day course,” explains Bundy. “But I found it to be the opposite. The flows and procedures are ingrained in me. We flew our butts off.”

Getting It Done

AFIT is on to something here. Proving their critics wrong, AFIT is graduating quality instrument-rated pilots across the world using a nontraditional approach. With a growing menu of offerings that include not only instrument ratings but other courses including private and commercial, AFIT is proving that you can become a safe, confident and proficient instrument pilot in just 10 days. And they guarantee it. If you’re going to run with the big dogs, AFIT might be just the place to start. Give them a look at www.afit-info.com. P&P