

Aviation Consumer Response - Cessna 310

Our organization, The Twin Cessna Flyer, has represented 310 owners since 1988. The 310 was a great airplane then and today, in 2010, it has never been a better value. Prices are depressed, it's a buyers market and bargains abound.

You can buy a well maintained, classic "Sky King" model for less than \$50,000. It will carry 4 people, some baggage, and decent fuel. Best of all you'll own part of aviation history with tremendous "ramp appeal". Get ready to answer questions as people approach you with a big smile on their face. And, they are a blast to fly.

On the other end of the spectrum, for around \$150,000 you can buy a turbocharged 310R that will hit 215 to 220 kts in the flight levels, and fly 800 miles or more with 4 large adults and plenty of baggage. Some are known ice equipped and have been upgraded to glass panel status.

310's are fast and have wide cabins. You sit tall in the cockpit and visibility is great. Performance is the airplane's strong suit. Auxiliary nacelle fuel tanks can give a 310 up to 7 hours of range.

Like any aircraft, if you buy one that's been neglected, prepare to spend a small fortune to make it right. These are not airplanes that tolerate minimal maintenance. Your article no doubt mentioned the three key areas for special attention on 310's:

1. The Landing Gear. There is nothing wrong with the design but it must be rigged annually or at 200 hours flight time. It's an 8 hour job at least and, unfortunately it is widely ignored by owners and mechanics alike. Swinging the gear just doesn't do it and neglected gear eventually results in a gear related incident.
2. The Exhaust System on Turbocharged models. AD 2000-01-16 addresses this and compliance is critical. People have died because of neglected exhaust systems. It's not an onerous AD - and frankly just mandates how any exhaust system ought to be maintained on any airplane.
3. Corrosion: with the newest airplane being 26 years old now, corrosion must be monitored and treated. Again, many owners find this an easy item to defer. It should be a standard item at every annual. Corrosion treatment is the key to longevity of the fleet.

The two long term concerns for 310 owners are Cessna's Supplemental Inspection Document program (SID's) and fuel availability, given the likely phase out of 100 LL. SID's, of course, are the industry's way of addressing the aging GA aircraft fleet. It's likely SID's will be developed for all legacy GA aircraft, not just twin Cessna's. Currently, SID's are not mandatory for piston powered aircraft which, of course, includes 310's. No one has a crystal ball, but the conventional wisdom is that the FAA will continue to address specific safety concerns via AD's and not resort to the broad brush approach of mandatory SID's. This opinion is bolstered by the fact that the reports we are getting from overseas, where some countries require SID compliance, is that not many age related issues are being found. Some corrosion here and there, the occasional manufacturing or maintenance defect but nothing common or widespread. The 310 fleet appears to be aging very well.

Solutions are in the works for the 100LL problem although we don't currently know which one will prevail. The key will be cost effectiveness whether the solution is an alternative fuel like Swift Fuel or GAMI's 100UL - or some sort of electronic ignition system. This is particularly critical for turbocharged 310's and an expensive solution could drive up the cost of operation.

Finally, we often hear that the piston twin market is dead, squeezed by high performance singles on the low end and turboprop singles on the high end. We respectfully disagree. You will not find a single example of either that can do what a 310 can do for the money - fly 4 to 6 people at up to 200 kts for 800 miles with the security of a second engine - all for a purchase price of less than \$150,000 and in many cases, well below that. For many people, the 310 is the airplane for their mission. Many of our members are former owners of high performance singles. They've simply outgrown their airplane.

The two pieces of advice we give every perspective 310 owner are to get a thorough prebuy and to have the aircraft maintained by a shop that specializes in Twin Cessna's. Both actions will save the owner money in the long run.

Any of your readers interested in learning more about 310's are welcome to contact us at 704-910-1790 or editor@twinessna.org

Bob Thomason, President
The Twin Cessna Flyer