



# Living ON THE Runway

BY LYN FREEMAN

THE ANSWER TO EVERY PILOT'S DREAMS.

To the uninitiated, it would at least seem, well... *un-usual*. After all, you don't find many cowboys who want to bring their horses into the bunk house at night, not many hockey players who flop out a bed roll on the ice rink, nor many golfers who would just as soon set up house keeping in a fairway bunker. So who are these people who want to live with their airplanes?

"There is a huge upswing in the number of people interested in living in residential airparks and in the number of people who are developing them," says Dave Sclair, who has followed this market phenomenon for the past three decades. "In our database we have 598 residential airparks, but my guess is that there are actually somewhere between 700 and 800 of them." Sclair publishes an on-line newsletter dedicated to airport living ([livingwithyourplane.com](http://livingwithyourplane.com)). According to Sclair, the average size of residential airparks is about 25 to 40 homes, but there are some rather remarkable exceptions.

**Ginn sur Mer** is an amazing 1,957 acres of tropical paradise now under development on *Grand Bahama Island*. A quick 55 miles east of Palm Beach, Florida,



Tropical splendor of Grand Bahama Island's Ginn sur Mer. Victory Lane's race-track airport with straight-away runway.



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ARRIVAL AND THE STAFF WILL  
MAKE SURE EVERYTHING YOU  
DESIRE IS WAITING IN THE  
REFRIGERATOR



Aero Estates Airpark on Lake Palestine in Frankston, TX beckons *live here*

this 5,500' paved private strip gives pilots access to the resort's planned 4,400 condominiums, 1,800 single family homes, a Monte Carlo-style casino, two signature golf courses (one designed by Jack Nicklaus and the other by Arnold Palmer), 900 private boat slips and of course the de rigeur collection of spas and salons. It's enough to catch the eye of any passing sultan. Public relations manager Lauren Skowyra confirms that interest from both the fishing and flying community is brisk. The runway is already operational but the first guest facilities are probably a couple of years away from completion, she adds. Homesites are in the \$500,000 range, moving toward \$850,000 if you'd like deep-water access for your boat—forgive me—yacht.

Another unique fly-in community, **Victory Lane**, is under construction 75 miles SE of Savannah, Georgia, where Formula One racing legend Phil Hill is

building a 6,000' paved runway around 122 homesites. That may not sound so unusual, but this is: the runway itself is in fact a straight away for a 4.5 mile race track that's available any time day or night to Victory Lane residents.

When you're not flying or racing, Victory Lane offers world class bass fishing, golf, equestrian facilities and a lot, lot more. "There's no other compilation of these kinds of facilities anywhere else in the world," says Andrew Groggin, a member of the Victory Lane development team. "Families don't have to change locations in order for everyone to have something fun to do." Apparently quite a few people agree. Victory Lane sold more than a third of its total homesites within the first few months of its marketing.

Why are developers throwing so much effort into building these ultimate fly-in communities?

"Because airparks sell for a premium of about 10-20% more than similar properties without a runway," says Sclair. "The average customer is in what I refer to as the 'middle phase' of their lives. Well established in their business, usually empty-nesters, and financially in the middle or upper class." Airparks also make sense on paper. For a hangar in a metropolitan area, pilots can pay several thousand dollars a month just for rent. "For that kind of money, they can own a home and hangar in a fly-in community," Sclair adds.

The typical fly-in community member is between 45 and 65 years of age with an annual income of more than \$100,000, according to Sclair's statistics. The largest group of residents own homes valued between \$350,000 and \$500,000, and the average airpark usually sports 25 to 40 homes.



Fantasy hangar at the Afton Airpark. There's something to interest everyone at the Afton Airpark. The Afton Airpark is a covered area where you can connect your home to the Afton Airpark. The Afton Airpark is a covered area where you can connect your home to the Afton Airpark.

A perfect example is **Sandy's Farm**, a 13 lot fly-in community just off the 3,700' paved runway at *Batavia, Ohio*, also home to Sporty's Pilot Shop. Homesites at Sandy's start at around \$250,000, and AOPA president Phil Boyer chose Sandy's Farm as his retirement venue.

"This is an ideal location in the center of the United States," says Hal Shevers, developer of Sandy's Farm and of course, godfather of the legendary Sporty's. "We're just outside of Cincinnati, so we've got professional sports, symphonies, museums... the area has 1.7 million people so there's just about anything anybody would want. And yet they can live in this wooded, park-like setting at Sandy's Farm." Shevers has also acquired some additional land to allow a 15-lot expansion of his original development.

But for every aviation community near the big city, others are popping up for those who long for the country.

**Aero Estates Airpark** sits on the huge blue Lake Palestine in *Frankston, Texas*, 100 miles east of Dallas, a perfect place to arrive by floatplane. But if your airplane isn't prone to water landings, at least more than one, these folks also have a 3,200' Bermuda grass runway, and a helipad. "We're ready to take you however you want to arrive!" says Aero Estates facilities manager Michael Raiche. The idyllic, verdant Texas setting has already 'set aside' additional acreage to meet a growing demand for this getaway runway destination. This airpark has ideal year round weather for boating, fishing and camping, with a boat-ramp and seaplane dock right on the property in a private protected cove.

Another knock-your-eyes-out gorgeous fly-in community sits on the shores of *Flathead Lake, Montana*, the largest naturally occurring body of water in North America. South of Glacier National Park and north of Missoula, the **Lakeside Club** has a 3,300' private strip, a clubhouse, marina and a planned championship golf course. This family-oriented airpark truly sits in one of the most beautiful spots in the country, in an unspoiled area Montanans often call 'the Last Best Place.'

And while you're in that neck of the woods, take a long look at the **Afton Airpark**, just sixty miles south of *Jackson Hole, Wyoming*. You can



Top: The awe-inspiring beauty of Flathead Lake, Montana's Lakeside Club Airpark. Bottom: Spectacular Afton Airpark thrives outside Jackson Hole, WY.



The Blue Ridge Mountains of Northeast Georgia offer aviators heaven on earth at Heaven's Landing.

taxi right off the Afton Municipal runway to the 54 homesites created especially for those of us who live to fly, or vice versa. And with a runway exceeding 7,000' (longer than Jackson Hole Airport) you can live with almost any aircraft you desire. This airpark is unique, having a full service FBO with 100LL, Jet A, and indoor hangars for everything from a Mooney to a Gulfstream GV. If this is a second home for you at Afton Airpark, call prior to your arrival and the staff will make sure everything you desire is waiting in the refrigerator and pantry. It's also the perfect base camp to visit Wyoming attractions like Yellowstone, Grand Teton National Park and some of the best fly fishing in the world.

**Sunriver Resort** is a virtually self-contained Camelot in sunny central *Sunriver, Oregon*. Sunriver Resort has a 40-year legacy of operation, and sits inside 400 forested acres- including acres of recreational lakes and miles of walking and bike trails. A full-time activities director keeps a buffet of exciting things to do on the calendar. Wandering through the main lodge you'll stumble onto a wide variety of fun activities, from a gathering of cowboy poetry writers to families on their way to watch a pee wee rodeo and greased pig chasing contest.

Situated along the Deschutes River just 15 minutes from Mt. Bachelor Ski Area, Sunriver Resort has three golf courses including the private Crosswater Golf Course ranking in the Top 100 in *Golf Digest*, a new world class spa, and countless amenities and activities for the entire family. Caldera Springs is the newest real estate development on the property. It will be limited to 320 wooded homesites and 50 luxury cabins situated among a Community Village with 8 acres of lakes, an incredible pool area, lakefront clubhouse and health club, sports courts, and restaurants.

In the *Blue Ridge Mountains of Northeast Georgia*, a hundred or so miles from Atlanta is another pilot's paradise called **Heaven's Landing**. The 300+ homesites are surrounded by National Forest. A 5,069' paved runway attracts those who come for unlimited water sports, including water skiing, wake boarding, fishing, swimming, rafting, tubing and kayaking. Plus, play golf or ski and snowboard in the winter months. Lake Burton, Lake Rabun and Lake Seed, as well as the Chattooga and Tallulah Rivers are all nearby. Locals will tell you the climate is absolutely perfect, where "spring spends the summer," they say, refer-

**Live the Dream**

**Aero Estates Airpark (TX27)**  
Frankston, Texas  
AeroEstatesAirpark.com  
903.876.5151

**Afton Airpark (AFO)**  
60 miles south of Jackson Hole, Wyoming  
AftonAirpark.com  
866.452.2082

**Ginn sur Mer**  
Grand Bahama Island  
GinnSurMer.com  
386.246.6672

**Heaven's Landing (GE99)**  
Blue Ridge Mountains of Northeast Georgia  
HeavensLanding.com  
877.207.0017

**Lakeside Club (not assigned yet)**  
Flathead Lake, Montana  
LakesideClub.com  
877-525-3252

**Sandy's Farm (I69)**  
Batavia, Ohio  
Sportys.com/sandysfarm  
800.868.1434

**Sunriver Resort (S21)**  
Sunriver, Oregon  
Sunriver-Resort.com  
800.801.8765

**Victory Lane**  
75 miles S.E. of Savannah, Georgia  
UnlimitedSpeed.net  
310.550.1757

**RAND McNALLY RATED RABUN COUNTRY, WHERE HEAVEN'S LANDING LANDED, AS THE SECOND BEST PLACE TO LIVE IN THE UNITED STATES**

ring to the pleasantly mild temperatures even in the warmest months. The travel experts at *Rand McNally* rated Rabun Country, where Heaven's Landing landed, as the second best place to live in the United States.

An architecturally stunning three-story community clubhouse is being built with a beautiful private lounge, dining room, fitness center, racquetball, tennis and recreational areas, steam and sauna, dressing rooms, and a large swimming pool and Jacuzzi overlooking the runway and its pristine mountain vistas. An equestrian stable with bridle and hiking trails will also grace the community.

One of the best places to live in the US is opening its doors to aviation. At a time when runways are under attack from the pressures of urban sprawl and the greedy eyes of municipalities and

land developers, it's great to know there are still people out there who want to build new runways. Along with them, they're building us nice communities where almost everyone knows everyone else, there's virtually no crime, it's generally quiet, often idyllic, and best of all, your airplane is right out the door. It just doesn't get any better.

Trevor Schaefer, Lakeside Club founder and airpark visionary, remembers clearly when one of his buddies told him, "There is nothing like walking to your plane in your slippers." Having an airplane in the garage means, in moments, you can be traveling quickly to a business meeting, visiting friends and family, flying to hundreds of choice golf courses, fishing destinations, resorts, spas, or just flying for the joy of flight. Reaching out to the world in a way most people never experience—flying right from your home! Ah, this is life. ✈️



Sunriver Resort, Sunriver Oregon.



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