



Benchmark, Montana

A Gentleman's Backcountry Airstrip in the Northern Rockies



by Greg Illes
photos by George A. Kounis

Deep in the embrace of the northern Rocky Mountains of Montana lies one of flying's more appealing enigmas: a 6,000-foot, *paved* backcountry airstrip. This oxymoron of a destination allows virtually any general aviation aircraft to experience the wilderness without the worry of contending with short, rough surfaces. If you have been drooling over wild-and-woolly destinations, but your small tires, retractable gear, high landing speed, or

moderate power have prevented you from taking the plunge, this strip may make the difference. It seems almost too good to be true, but there it is, shouting from the sectional with a solid magenta circle announcing its asphalt surface, miles from the nearest town or paved road.

This area offers a land little touched by Man's impertinence, where literally thousands of square miles are available for exploration by foot or on horseback. Benchmark is at its doorstep.



Top: Wade Cebulski on final to Rwy 12, landing uphill.

Left to right:
Landing on Rwy 30;
The south ramp is adjacent to the pilots' campground;
View of the runway from the north.

