

What is the Air Race Classic, and why is it so special this year?

The Air Race Classic (ARC) is an annual all-women cross-country airplane race. Some people will say the ARC is THE annual all-women cross-country airplane race. More than 100 women pilots from around the country and the world will compete in this year's ARC, which begins Tuesday, June 19, 2018, in Sweetwater, Texas, and ends Friday, June 22, 2018, in Fryeburg, Maine.

The oldest race of its kind in the United States, the ARC traces its roots to the 1929 Women's Air Derby, in which Amelia Earhart and 19 other daring female pilots raced from Santa Monica, California, to Cleveland, Ohio. That contest, which Will Rogers called "the Powder Puff Derby", marked the beginning of women's air racing in the United States. And, by the way, Louise Thadden finished first. The ARC continues to test the piloting skills and aviation decision-making for female pilots of all ages and from all walks of life.

The course for this 42nd ARC will cover 2,656 statute miles, from the West Texas flatlands, where the **Women Airforce Service Pilots** trained for military service during World War II, through the American heartland to the pine forests of Maine. Intermediate stops for this year's ARC are Alva, Oklahoma; Beatrice, Nebraska; Faribault, Minnesota; Galesburg, Illinois; Auburn, Indiana; Cadillac, Michigan; Newark, Ohio; and Penn Yan, New York. Yep, I really did say Penn Yan, NY. There's an air race stop practically in our own back yard.

Up to 60 teams of two or three pilots will have four days to complete the course, flying normally aspirated, piston-powered airplanes in visual flight conditions during daylight hours. Pilots and copilots must have at least 100 hours as pilot-in-command in order to qualify for the race; one pilot must have at least 500 hours as pilot-in-command or a current instrument rating. If they wish, the pilot and copilot may bring along a teammate, who must hold at least a student pilot certificate.

The race will begin at 8 a.m. June 19 at Avenger Field, with teams departing the runway one after another, 30 seconds apart. From there, the field will spread out as faster planes move to the head of the pack. At each stop, teams will execute high-speed flybys over a timing line as they race against the clock. The timing line is usually 200' above ground level (AGL) and is flown at full throttle. Faster planes may cover the course in only two days; slower teams may not arrive at the Terminus at Eastern Slopes Regional Airport until moments before the arrival deadline at 5 p.m. on June 22.

Because each plane receives a unique handicap, teams are racing against their own best time rather than each other. This creates a level playing field so slower planes can compete against faster aircraft on an equal basis. A handicap flight must be flown by one team member and an ARC handicap pilot at an altitude of 6,000 feet density-altitude in a square pattern. Teams strategize to play the elements, holding out for better weather or seeking more favorable winds, to beat their handicap by the greatest margin. After all, beating your handicap by the greatest margin is how a team wins. Official standings aren't determined until after the last team has crossed the finish line – the last arrival at the Terminus may, in fact, be the winner!

Currently, the ARC does not allow Experimental Amateur-Built (E-AB) airplanes to enter in the Competition Class. However, ARC officials are looking for qualified E-AB airplanes to race in the Non-Competition Class in order to gather data for further evaluation. It's both a handicap and an inspection issue. For certified airplanes, officials have a rough idea of the expected handicap, and have standard methods for inspection and review of airworthiness directives (AD). For E-AB airplanes, the handicap and inspection issues are more complicated. Thus, gathering data over time will permit ARC to answer many questions, with the goal of including E-AB airplanes in the Competition Class.

The Air Race Classic Inc. is an all-volunteer, nonprofit 501(c)3 organization with a mission of encouraging and educating current and future female pilots, increasing public awareness of general aviation, demonstrating women's roles in aviation, and preserving and promoting the tradition of pioneering women in aviation.

The Finger Lakes Chapter 99s and Seneca Flight Operations, the Fixed Base Operator (FBO) at Penn Yan, are co-hosting the Penn Yan race stop. As you can imagine, there are many jobs and opportunities that need to be taken on. The items below are certainly not an exhaustive list of volunteer opportunities.

- 1) Timing Chair or head timer. This person will need to commit to being on site from Wednesday afternoon through Friday afternoon to oversee the timing teams and submit the data to ARC officials.
- 2) Timers will be working in teams of 3 per shift to ensure that the race is accurately timed. Racers can take off as early as 6:30 AM and land as late as sundown which will be around 8:30 PM.
- 3) Volunteers are needed to transport racers who stay overnight from the airport to hotels and back. Again this could be very early and quite late in the day.
- 4) A person to take fuel request slips from race teams in the order they land, and give them to Seneca Flight Operations personnel.
- 5) Seneca Flight may need additional people to help move planes to the fuel pump.
- 6) Cooking and serving food for racers and volunteers. They're talking about running a grill and serving hamburgers and hot dogs.
- 7) Setting up and maintaining equipment.

For more information and to register as a volunteer, go to airraceclassic.org. Click on the login button on the top right of the page and create an account. From there you can explore the website, sign up to volunteer at the Penn Yan race stop and/or become a sponsor. Come out to meet and support the racers. It promises to be a great time.

For more information about the Air Race Classic, take a look at this article:

<https://generalaviationnews.com/2018/04/09/121-women-pilots-to-compete-in-42nd-annual-air-race-classic/>