

| Please indicate which airport(s) you think are among America's most challenging:-Airport 1: | Please indicate which airport(s) you think are among America's most challenging:-Airport 2: | Please indicate which airport(s) you think are among America's most challenging:-Airport 3: | What features contribute to the airport(s) being one of the most challenging? |
|---|---|---|--|
| 9B1 Marlboro | | | 9B1 Marlboro - The AFD is incorrect about the trees at the Eastern end of the singular and 1659ft runway. 75ft tall and 50ft from the threshold is more like it. The chainlink fence 100ft from the western end will barely catch you from running onto the highway. Your shortfield technique had better be immaculate. If not down by the warning stripe across the runway - GO AROUND! Don't even contemplate launching to the east unless you are in a helicopter! |
| 2NCO | | | Mountain Air, Burnsville, NC. This mountaintop runway is short, slopes significantly, dissects a golf course and the wind currents at each end of the runway are tricky. At an elevation of 4800' an understanding of your aircraft's density altitude performance is vital . Try not to get distracted by the beauty of the scenery. |
| KTEX | | | Altitude, winds, and terrain. |
| ogg | | | wind on runway 02 especially in a taildragger landing on runway 05 makes for to long a taxi especially in a taildragger..... / / |
| Mountainair, NC | | | Terrain, short runway, elevation |
| TJCP | | | Like St Barths but with less fame |
| KASE | KHSP | KCDK | 1. Terrain, bi-directional operations, elevation / 2. Terrain, winds, length / 3. Length, water at both ends, no visual horizon taking off to the west into the sun. |
| 76N Skyhaven Airport Tunkhannock PA | | | 2000 ft length. Trees north end, Road south end, Mountains on all sides some above pattern altitude. All types of traffic from No radio Cubs in flight school, Multiple Piper Vagabonds and homebuilt / LSA to Gullwing Stinsons then up to Beech 18 and Queen Air airplanes, Cessna 421, 310, 337, Piper Apache all based on the field. Beech 18 and C-182 used for local Skydive club. Fog on summer mornings, wind changes turbulence areas depending on direction, Grass taxiways and ramps. No approaches. IFR use Seamans 9N3 to the east and break it off to circle to 76N. Night IFR and Infrared survey flights depart and arrive. |
| Wv12, Mallory, WV | Wv08, Chesapeake, WV (Island Airport) | CRW, Charleston, WV (Yeager Airport) | Wv12, Mallory airport, is 2,000 feet long, 24 feet wide with a dog leg in the runway and a mountain at one end. This causes aircraft to land on 33 and take off 15 only. On approach there is a mountain in front which causes some tree top level finals. / / Island airport in located on the Kanawha river about ten miles SE of CRW. Due to the mountains in either side of the runway downwind is much higher than 1000 agl. The runway is grass and 1900 long but has trees on either side making for a huge pucker factor thinking your wingtips will hit. The only way to access the airport is by boat. / / CRW wasn't on my list until they closed runway 33. The prevailing winds are out of the SW but when they swing they are typically 90 degrees from the runway and strong. Being located on the top of a mountain there is zero over run. CRW now has EMAS on the end of 23 which was already tested by a CRJ within two months of being installed. CRW may be one of the foggiest airports. With the Elk river located just north of the airport fog typically causes 600 foot via ability or less in the morning. To make matters worse the approach lights have been out of service for almost 4 years. |
| W24 Lynchburg VA | | | Built on the side of a fairly steep hill. Runway goes up and over the top. Can't see much of the runway from the wry 10 end. Standard procedure is to land up hill on 28 and takeoff on 10 regardless of what the wind direction is. |
| Clearview 2W2 | | | Short and narrow. 1800 x 30 feet. A substantial grade in the runway as well. |
| Kavx | | | Hump in middle causes optical allusion that it's short. Also, perched on mountain |
| DCA | MDW | | |
| Glenwood Springs, CO | | | You don't see the airport as you start your pattern, and then it appears and you have to land. It's in a canyon, and when taking off you have to be careful to rotate at the halfway point on the runway or abort. But, beautiful scenery! |
| DXR | | | Terrain, airport is surrounded by hills. |
| Las Vegas executive | | | Departure procedures for a non local pilot |
| Spruce Pine Avery County | | | Terrain |
| Telluride (KTEX) | | | Terraine and elevation |
| Danbury, CT | Nantucket, MA | | Danbury, obstacles including attenea towers and terrain. Also sits In a bowl that brings fog. Only instrument approach is a VOR approach through a valley and circle to land 24. / / Nantucket- most IFR landings in the country. |
| W24 | | | A major hill between the ends of the runway |
| Kdab Daytona Beach | Chicago Executive | Aspen Colorado | Air Traffic congestion, density altitude, Dense Flight training with hvy radio traffic. |
| vg18 | | | 50'x2240' Runway sets low in a valley - no touch and go's |
| Culebra, P.R. | | | Angling approach between two hills and a 500 foot distance within which to fly wings level before the touchdown area. |
| Aspen | Juneau | | Limited options if you have problems |
| Marlboro, MA (9B1) | | | Short runway, 1659 feet, with high trees almost up to the edge of the runway and no displaced threshold. The other end of the runway is a chain link fence with a road running perpendicular on the other side of the fence. |
| 58N | | | short, road crossing approach end, corn field at other end |
| Leadville, CO | | | altitude, box canyon, |

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------|---|
| Mathis, Cumming, GA | Pelzer, South Carolina | | "Paved Runway" being the specified requirement, Mathis (GA27) certainly ranks at the top. Advertised as 1800 ft, it is shorter with dropoffs at both ends. The width of the runway is the problem, advertised as 35 feet. On one side is the gas pump and some parked airplanes; on the other side is a dropoff. You stay focused on that runway or else! Years ago my Stearman was based at Mathis. / / Non paved runway, Pelzer, S.C. gets my vote. I looked it up and it is no longer on the chart, so it may be now gone. Near Anderson, it was one way in and one way out. Approached only from the south, one threaded below the tops and through trees in an S turn arrangement to get to the threshold. You must touchdown on the threshold, then roll upwards 60 or so feet to stop at the end of a 1200 foot runway. A ditch and highway insured that you stop at the end. The owner ran a maintenance base for small planes. I flew in and out in a Cessna 172 and Cessna 140. / McDonald AOPA 344480 |
| Freeway Airport, W00 | | | Trees at approach and departure end of the runway forcing a steep approach of 6.0 degrees for runway 18 and 5.5 degrees for runway 36. High voltage power lines crossing the final approach and departure end, Causing pilots to have to dogleg the final to runway 18 and departure from 36. There is a six lane highway that passes just underneath the approach end of runway 18 within about 20 yards. Also the runway itself is 2420 feet long by 40 feet wide with a perpetual crosswind. |
| Telluride | Truckee | Aspen | Windshear, depending of time of day for Teeluride. / Truckee is challenging if you fly a jet due to terrain proximity, while circling or even in the pattern VMC. / Aspen due to the rate of descent on the IFR approach. |
| DCA | CGS | | The political landscape and the paperwork effort to get in there. |
| 58n | | | Short runway |
| HNL (class B) | | | To help you visualize this, type HNL into GOOGLE EARTH. For a class B airport, the controllers are pretty friendly to small GA aircraft and are very adept at mixing cherokees and skyhawks in with the big boys and the fighter jocks from Hickam AFB. That said, it is still a challenge. The typical arrival from the north or west starts at the H1/H2 highway interchange over Pearl City at or above 2000 feet, then and descend to 1500 at Ford Island (inside Pearl Harbor) and switch to tower frequency. Then proceed to the Navy/Marine Golf course north of the airport and descend to 1000 feet, followed by a right turn onto left downwind for runway 4L or 4R (it usually starts out as cleared 4L and then can switch to 4R on base or final). On downwind you cross over the big boys landing on 8L. The tricky part is that anywhere after Ford Island you can be told to "enter left base for 4L" in order to speed things up. This cuts off the trip to the Navy/Marine golf course but beware that you don't make the turn to base immediately, just because the tower told you to do it. If you turn too soon, you will cross the airport before the threshold of 8L and that will cause you to encroach on the flight path of the big boys on short final to 8L.... the tower doesn't like that. They assume you are going to fly closer to the tower before you make that turn onto the base leg for 4L. As you approach base for 4L, you can get switched to 4R on short notice. The threshold for 4R is 2000 closer than the threshold for 4L so that can mean a change to your glide path, unless you just want to land long (which is OK in a small Cessna). If you are fortunate enough to get cleared to land on 4R, don't make the mistake of exiting the runway on taxiway Foxtrot even though it is easily done. Foxtrot is used mainly for departing traffic and the tower gets ansie if you pull off on Foxtrot without asking for it. In the mind of the tower controllers, Foxtrot is a one-way taxiway for departing traffic. They are expecting you to pull off on Delta or Echo, further down. Now if someone is coming in from the south side of the airport at the same time that you are on downwind, then you will have to land on 4L. This will mean that you will have to negotiate another trap that is waiting to bite you. The landing on 4L is pretty straight forward. The trap comes after you land. My copy of Jeppesen's Pivot Pilot text (figure 4-21) states that: "When exiting the runway, do not stop until you have cleared the hold line." Well you better not follow those instructions when landing on 4L with traffic landing simultaneously on 4R. 4L and 4R are so close together, that it is impossible to get off of 4L without being cleared onto 4R. The temptation is to exit 4L at Delta or Echo and taxi in between the two hold lines on the taxiway between the two runways. If you do that, then you are NOT between two runways, like you would expect; but you are actually on both runways if you stop between the two hold lines to contact ground control. This may be the only instance of this in the United States and it creates runway incursion problems. You have to stay on runway 4L until cleared across 4R. There is no way to exit 4L and wait between the two runways (unless you taxi all the way down to taxiway Kilo which is another unique taxi trap. At Kilo, small aircraft can barely squeeze between the two hold lines, but larger aircraft are invariably hanging over one line or the other. I believe these taxi traps are unique to HNL, but I am not sure. Can you tell that I have learned these lessons the hard way? |
| KTEX | KSBS | KSKX | Terrain, wind, DA, rapid and unpredictable changes in wx. |
| KTEX | KRNO | KDVO | KTEX - 9,000' field elevation, strong vertical winds at both ends for the field, rising terrain in all directions and snow and ice conditions many months of the year. / / KRNO - Heavy turbulence and crosswind conditions coming off the mountains. / / KDVO - AM fog with crosswinds 90 degrees to the runway most every day. / / |
| fes | | | Short runway on tricky plateau. River bottom east of airport creates illusion of being "high" on downwind. Towers and power plant create conflicting visual clues in pattern. |
| KAVX | Avalon on Catalina Island | | Top of mountain / Runs uphill / Low end is a cliff / Depending on wind direction / Downdrafts at cliff end when approaching from ocean / or / runway is dropping away from you when approaching from land / / |
| Leadville KLXV | Telluride KTEX | Temple Bar U30 | 1. Leadville is challenging because of the altitude. / / 2. Telluride, because of the terrain and altitude. / / 3. Temple Bar, because of the approach to the runway is over Lake Mead and the landing is up hill. / |
| NC06 Elk River | | | NC06 is difficult to find initially. The final approach course is more of a dog leg. There are trees lining the runway which requires a steep approach and precision maintaing the runway centerline. By design there is only one way in and out of this field due to its slope. It's a an exciting challenge that keeps you on your toes! / / |

| | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| KHSP, Ingals | | | They cut off the top of a mountain to make the runway. It has a 5,600 runway. The altitude is 3,793. In a Cessna 150 on a 97 degree day I had the wheels up 1/2 way down the runway but by the end I still didn't have the speed to climb. Flew off the top of the mountain still in level flight. Then the wind was from the west and there was another mountain I had to get over to the east to head home. So edged over as close as I could to the other mountain to get the updraft. Interesting! |
| KTEX- Telluride, CO | KSUN- Sun Valley, ID | KASE- Aspen, CO | All three are mountainous locations, with possibly very high density altitudes to cope with, and sport one way in and out procedures in place with lots of jet traffic present. Stabilized approaches are difficult to maintain. / / KTEX-Approach is close to surrounding high terrain. Many operators have a one way in and out policy here- to reduce maneuvering near high terrain. (Approach to east- depart to west) The runway has a significant dip in the middle. / / KSUN- Approach leads one through a valley with the requirement to approach on one side of the valley while other planes (many jets) are departing towards you! The approach is also noise sensitive so the required track helps you avoid the town of Ketchum, ID / / KASE- High mountains in close proximity, mixed with business jet traffic, with the occasional added challenge of winds and weather helped Aspen make my list. (Also a one way in and out airport. Land 15 - depart 33 towards arriving [often jet] traffic. |
| Washington National | Chicago Midway | Charleston, W.Va. | / The river approach into Washington National with vis down to 3 miles and rain, with rail lights on both runways makes for a night almost carrier type approach!! / / Midway at night is a small spot of darkness in a sea of lights!! Takes all four eyes to find the runway!! / / Charleston on West Va. landing on a windy day makes it become the USS Charleston!! Don't get low or you will buy the farm!! |
| Glenwood springs co. | | | Narrow canyon |
| SNC2 - Sugar Valley Airport | | | This is a private/paved airport. Used heavily for fly-ins, etc. It's a 2,400 foot strip (paved) as well as a 1,000 foot grass strip, and a 1,500 foot lake for Seaplanes. The Runway is 30 feet wide, sloping up on from Rwy 02 to Rwy 20. If landing on 20 due to wind, the trees (40-60 feet high), are virtually right at the arrival end of Rwy20. You must make an aggressive slip over the trees and promptly put in on the runway, which is now sloping away. Do it all the time, but it's very unnerving for the novice pilot, or even the experienced that has only been landing on 5000 feet or more. During Fly-Ins, watched many an airplane go around multiple times trying to get into the airport. |
| MSO | RNO | JFK | |
| Culebra, PR | | | Mountain at the approach end of the runway. You have to turn left before you hit the mountain, then right to get to the runway, then back left to get on runway heading. All the while descending, and slowing. And, at the departure end, the runway drops off into the water, immediately at the end. The runway is 2600 feet long. |
| O79 | | | |
| Phoenix PHX | | | |
| C74, Cassville, WI | KHBN, Hillsboro, WI | | Both: rising terrain, hard to spot, very close to town, heavily wooded, C74 approach at Mississippi River with water fowl. |
| 2W2 | KVKX | KAVX | Clearview Airpark (2W2) in MD is Short , narrow (1840x30), and sloping (2.1 degree gradient) with Obstacles. 57 ft. trees, 858 ft. from runway, 168 ft. left of centerline, 11:1 slope to clear +30 FT TREES 171 FT L OF THLD. / / Potomac Airfield (KVKX) - also known as Rose Valley. Displaced Thresholds, Obstacles, Short Field, and very steep approach. 77 ft. trees, 1342 ft. from runway, 93 ft. left of centerline, 14:1 slope to clear APCH SLOPE 27:1 AT CNTRLN TO DSPLCD THLD / / Catalina (KAVX) - no visual reference to ground on landing because there are cliffs on both approach ends that drop off over 1,000 ft. Also there are often down drafts flowing across the runway. |
| lincoln park airport, lincoln park, new jersey | | | short runway with 50 foot trees at the end of runway 19 and a steel guard rail at the end of runway 1. many days there are cross winds that make take offs and landings very hard. lincoln park airport has more then it's fair share of accidents. if you check the FAA records you will see what i mean. i always say that if you can land at lincoln park airport, you can any where. i have flown over much of America and landed at many airports so i think i am am corrcr. thank you George De Canio AOPA #00967037 |
| Falwell (W24), Lynchburg, Va. | Sky Bryce (VG18), Basye, Va. | Clearview (2W2), Westminster, Md. | At Falwell, you don't expect a 3000' runway at a large city to only be a "oneway strip". / / Sky Bryce has high terrain at the south end which is a big factor during climb out / / Landing at Clearview to the north you don't expect a downhill, displaced threshold on a already short runway |
| KDFW | | | World,s largest over-controlled airport. |
| KMDW, Midway, Chicago IL | | | Two sets of parallel, intersecting runways, lots of traffic, compressed area, urban setting. |
| KGWS | | | Terrain, high density altitude |
| KTHP - Hot Springs County, WY | | | Runway slope, field elevation, surrounding terrain. |
| ASE | | | For turbojets....terrain, runway slope, lack of good approaches, visually deceptive, high traffic count, bad weather, departure/arrival conflict, controllers mislead crews about weather conditions, high/hot operational difficulties, and most difficult of all: high airport/FBO fees. This one is a stinker for jets. |
| telluride | sedona | bullfrog | |
| Falwell Apt at Lynchburg VA | | | Runway is sloped, then a level section, then it drops off with another slope. Land uphill and takeoff downhill, in which case the runway is not visible beyond the drop off so you have to be careful that no one has landed the opposite direction while you were taxing up to the top to takeoff. / / It's owned by Jerry Falwell's cousin. |
| 28A Goose Creek Airport | | | 28A has only one runway (4/22) that is short and narrow 2350 x 35 ft. There are tall trees on both approaches. The first 400 ft of runway 4 is unlighted, so the runway appears even shorter at night. Even with these challenges, it's a great place to fly. It's home to a great flight school and there's a real community feeling among pilots that are based there. / |
| kavx | | | kavx - airport built on a removed mountain top; steep cliff on approach; bow in runway makes it look a lot shorter on roll-out than it is |
| KDUH | | | Constant mechanical turbulence due to high trees 350° around the field. Displaced thresholds. And on nice days, lots of traffic to combat. |
| 9B1 Marlborough, MA | | | |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| GWS (Glenwood Springs, CO) | LVX (Leadville, CO) | TEX (Telluride, CO) | Glenwood: short (3300) foot runway, at bottom of very narrow valley with no room to maneuver, cliff at approach end of runway, fairly high altitude (5800 feet), one way in/one way out, / / Leadville: extremely high altitude (9927 feet msl), rising terrain off departure end of runway 34, power lines off the departure end of runway 16, mammoth snow drifts on/adjacent to runway during winter (September through May) months. / / Telluride: high altitude, one way in/one way out, surrounded by 14000 foot mountains with little room to maneuver, difficult approach due to being surrounded by high terrain on three sides. |
| W13 Eagle Nest fly in community | | | Eagles nest is the shortest paved runway in Virginia. |
| L35 | KLGB | | L35: terrain and very high summer density altitude. / KLGB: confusing runway crossings and taxiways |
| KTEX | | | Approach, Runway, Terrain, Altitude, No go around |
| 7S3 Twin oaks | Ktex | Ksez | Twin Oaks is a short field, in a hole with trees at each end. / / KTEX for the canyon, slope and elevation. / / KSEZ on a very windy day because of the strong up/down drafts on short final. |
| Skypark 15G | | | Narrow, short, hilly, and bumpy runway; congested traffic at times (both in the air and on the ground); ditch and road on one end and trees, hillside, and interstate on the other. |
| KASE, Aspen, Pitkin county | KTVL, South Lake Tahoe | KDCA, Washington Reagan | |
| KSEE | | | YOU LITERALLY LAND BETWEEN TWO MOUNTAINS WITH A HOME ON TOP OF ONE. THE NORMAL PATTERN IS TO GO AROUND THE ONE MOUNTAIN WHERE TURNING BASE YOU CAN LOSE SIGHT OF THE AIRPORT. THE LOC APPROACH IS A CIRCLE TO LAND BUT MOST JUST DO A STRAIGHT IN IF VMC WHICH TAKES YOU RIGHT BETWEEN THESE MOUNTAINS. |
| Marlboro Airport (9B1) | Catalina (AVX) | Elizabeth (0B8) | Marlboro field is 1,600 feet long with a 50' obstacle on either end. / Catalina can have major downdrafts on the approach end that can push you below the runway, making a very steep approach necessary. / Elizabeth has two very short runways right on the water and always has strong sea breezes. |
| sedona, az | telluride, co | | terrain |
| KAVX | | | Dropoffs at both ends, slope and crown in runway, capricious winds that almost always provide surprise up-down or sidedrafts 150' before the TDZ |
| KLXV - Leadville, Colorado | KASE - Aspen, Colorado | KTEX - Telluride, Colorado | KLXV - Field Elevation 9928 - density altitude constraints, surrounding high terrain. / KASE - One way airport, surrounding high terrain, significant jet traffic. / KTEX - Location on a mesa, turbulence on approach, surrounding high terrain, runway gradient. / |
| LL10 | KPWK | | LL10 - private strip, short narrow north/south runway, 15-20 ft tall hedges located at southern end of runway, zero room for error due to 3 story building 1/3 mile north of airport / / KPWK - congested airspace with ORD, all runways intersect, busy airport with no room for error (trees/buildings on approach to each runway) |
| W00 | VKX | | W00 has a dogleg final due to power lines, followed by an almost at the threshold crossing of a busy freeway, hence it's name. It is also short and narrow - 2400/40. / / VKX is surrounded by the DC FRZ, short, and in a valley, with low level burbles at both ends. |
| Butter Valley, PA (7N8) | | | Paved portion is 1500' x 24' with undulation and severe upslope. Approach is over trees and road with displaced threshold. Winds are almost always crosswinds. Runway is in the middle of a golf course. |
| Lee Airport, Annapolis, MD. KANP | | | Very shortened useable runway for landings. Very bad approaches and departures both directions. Tall trees Departure end 30. Tree directly in short final for 12, requires a dog leg. Departure 12: heavy traffic rte 2 just off end. no overruns or margin for error or abort. / Many crashes and deaths there, especially higher performance singles and twins. Several high performance aircraft have crashed through fence off 12 on landing recently; one ended up in parking lot behind Ledo Pizza, another ended up with fuselage in drive through lane at what used to be Farmers Bank. the SR 22 that hit the tree on short final for 12: killed. / One of these days some airplane will have an engine failure right after take off from 12 and go right into the rush hour traffic on rte 2. that will be a major disaster. / this is a high risk, high tension airport. pilot better have all his skills together. i have been in there with an A36, summertime, loaded. Dont need any more heart in my mouth flying. wont go in there anymore. / That airport is actually a public hazard and should be closed. |
| KCUT, Custer County SD | KDYT, Sky Harbor MN | | KCUT, Custer County / First, the airport is in the Black Hills which makes it interesting due to the mountains and landmarks such as Mt Rushmore, Crazy Horse and "The Flintstones Bedrock City" / / Here is the question that has stumped a few CFIs and why I think it is challenging (and a lot of FUN!). / / Facts first; the airport is a 5,600 feet. Runway goes East and West (8 / 26). Runway 26 has a 1.3% slope up (26 threshold is 5,549 feet, runway 8 is 5,619 feet). The runway is 5,550 long. / / Lets take a day where the wind is straight down 26 at 6 knots. It is a typical density altitude day, adding a 1,000 feet. You are flying a low powered airplane, say a Cessna 152 or Cardinal (as I did). / / Then question, should you take off into the wind on 26, but up hill OR taxi to runway 8 and take off downhill with the tail wind? / / KDYT, Sky Harbor / A short 3000 foot runway with water on three sides, seaplane traffic and a stiff cross wind on most days. What is not to love? |
| 06C | | | While the airport itself is well maintained and has a good FBO, the position of the Schaumburg airport makes it a challenge. The airport is squished in between arrival paths to ORD and sits under the low shelf of the O'Hare class B and adjacent to the DuPage class D. The runway alignment...11/29...is out of sync with the dominant winds in the area, giving the airport an almost continuous crosswind, which can sometimes get rather gusty. / / It might not be the "the" toughest airport, but it's always an interesting day flying at Schaumburg. |
| KCUT | | | Normally high density altitudes, crosswinds that vary in intensity due to trees on each side of the runway and a valley at the 1500' mark on runway 26. |
| Telluride, CO. KTEX | New Orleans Lakefront. KNEW | | 1. Telluride is located on a Mesa and it's precision approach takes you into a box canyon. Missed approach is very challenging. / / 2. Lakefront departure over Lake Ponchartrain requires instrument use in bright sunshine as you normally lose all visual references at takeoff since the runway extends out into the Lake. |
| glenwood springs CO. | | | one way in and out, over a river on a cliff, short by mT. standards. |
| 4V8 mount Snow VT | Bryce Resort Bayse, VA | | Mount Snow--see this link: http://airfactsjournal.com/2011/07/skunked-at-mount-snow-again/ / / Bryce is short, surrounded by hills |

| | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| KASE | KEGE | | The mountainous terrain coupled with the constantly changing weather conditions, windshear, thunderstorms, icing conditions, snow storms, etc. |
| KAVX | KTEX | KLXV | / KAVX - RUNWAY FAR FROM LEVEL, PLANES AT EACH END CAN NOT SEE EACH OTHER, SHEAR CLIFF AT BOTH ENDS OF RUNWAY OFTEN CAUSE STRONG DOWN DRAFTS WHEN WINDY, NEARBY MOUNTAINS MAKE THIS A DAY TIME ONLY AIRPORT. CERTIFICATE AVAILABLE TO PILOTS WHO LAND HERE. / / KTEX - ELEVATION 9,070 FT, SURROUNDED BY 14,000FT MOUNTAINS, TREACHEROUS WINDS CAN MAKE THIS PLACE VERY DIFFICULT. BEST FOR SMALL NONTURBOCHARGED AIRCRAFT TO DEPART FROM HERE EARLY IN THE MORNING WHEN IT IS COOL AND THE WINDS ARE CALM. HIGHEST COMMERCIAL AIRPORT IN THE USA / / KLXV - ELEVATION 9,927 FT, TERRAIN, WINDS MAKE THIS ONE A CHALLENGE. CERTIFICATE AVAILABLE TO PILOTS WHO LAND HERE. HIGHEST AIRPORT IN THE USA. |
| Aspen, CO (KASE) | Angel Fire, NM (KAXX) | Los Alamos, NM (KLAM) | High density altitudes, high nearby terrain, usable runway restrictions (one-way airports for ASE and LAM). Particularly stressful instrument approaches. |
| Leadville, CO | Telluride, Co | Los Alamos, NM | Leadville, 10K' MSL is a challenge on a hot afternoon; a Bonanza feels like a 172. Telluride is an eye opener in the late afternoon. Los Alamos is pretty tight too. |
| k76n Tunkhannock, PA | n57 New Garden, PA | KSBS, Steamboat Springs, CO | 1. Short, narrow, hill to south, drop off to north over river with loss of lift over river / 2. narrow, trees on south, center of runway lights is actually the left edge of pavement / 3. short for its elevation, terrain rises rapidly on approach to runway 32, in area of very high terrain |
| Dxr | | | It is surrounded by terrain to the south. To land on runway 35 you have to fly through a valley. It is extremely challenging at night and covered with obstruction lights. We tragically had a pilot die on short final to 26 when he impacted on of the obstruction lights. |
| KASE | KTEX | KLXY | High Altitude |
| KSNA | KORD | KGUC | KSNA-short runways coupled with traffic mix of dissimilar aircraft. |
| KTEX | KEGE | KSUN | Terrain & mountain weather |
| Glenwood Springs (KGB) | Telluride (KTEX) | Aspen (KASE) | 1) Glenwood Springs, CO in a canyon with a blind approach,short runway,most often there is one way in and one way out. / 2) Telluride, CO is on a bluff with the runway close to edge of the bluff and has strong updrafts. / 3) Aspen is in the same canyon as Glenwood Springs, CO with a steep instrument approach, and one way in. At this point of the canyon it becomes a box canyon. |
| Sedona, AZ KSEZ | Avalon, CA KAVX | | Airports sit on a mesa giving illusions that one is higher. Both are in beautiful locations though. |
| 9f9 | | | Narrow strip with an apartment complex wall about 30 feet of runway center line on north end. It's like landing on a neighborhood street. If you're raised there, like i was, you don't think much about it. Makes normal runways a piece of cake. |
| Pacific Beach, Or | | | Short narrow runway with power lines and a tall tree on the north end and water at the south end. Caution: Drift wood |
| MMH - Mammoth Lakes, CA | | | High altitude airport with high terrain surrounding the airport, extreme cross winds, and the fact that the airport goes out of sight on the base turn. |
| KDTS | | | Challenging cross-winds / No control tower / An abundance of traffic / Close proximity to Eglin AFB / Restricted areas in every direction / Transient military aircraft and helicopters to/from Eglin, Tyndall, and Hurlburt Fields. / Low flying banner tow aircraft along the approach/departure end of runway. / Multiple parasailing boats with passengers within approach/departure ends of runways. / Helicopter tours. / Home-built/experimental aircraft in the area. |
| 4V8 Mount Snow Airport West Dover, VT | | | Airport is located on the east side / at the base of Haystack Mountain so that, when the wind is out of the west, there can be some dramatic downdrafts rolling over the mountain, sometimes making landings / take-offs very exciting. |
| KEB | | | |
| PAJN | PAOH | | PAJN: mix of traffic from Boing 737 to Piper Cub, plus frequent helicopter traffic. The summer is a bee-hive of activity, with challenging terrain (mountains adjacent and higher elevations on one approach). There is also a busy seaplane base parallel to the runway. The activity is largely due to almost a million cruise ship visitors arriving each summer season who want to experience the beauty of this lush Northern rainforest, including sightseeing over the ice fields and glaciers emerging from the adjacent mountains, or even riding on a sled pulled by dogs up on the glacier itself. The photo ops in April and May (generally more sunny than later in the summer) are manifold. Some of the activity is due to the summer fishing season, with traffic coming and going to other nearby communities, like PAOH, that keeps its paved runway hidden behind some rising terrain until you are on final approach from the West. Hoonah is a quaint little village that sits in a small inlet on a large island - accessible only by boat or small plane. |
| tex | | | |
| 2NC0 - Mountain Air, NC | | | Carved out of the side of a mountain near the highest peak East of the Mississippi, Mountain Air lacks visual cues to the end of the runway and over runs are drops of thousands of feet. The airport is well managed and the operator requires extensive briefings before allowing pilots to use the facility. The location is just beautiful and a terrific escape from the summer heat (due to altitude). I fly a lot in Central America and fine 2NC0 to be even neater than Bogota, Quito, and Tegucigalpa. |
| Glenwood Springs, CO GWS | | | Entry to right base for 32 is blind, no way to see the runway as you descend for approach into the valley, at least from the East. Left base entry for 14 is impossible as the entry would mandate approach down and into Glenwood Canyon. Runway is paved - good news - elevation 5916 with a 7000' pattern altitude - bad news - runway is only 3305' long (with summer density altitudes 9000' and above) is darn short. You better be able to "land at a point (the #!) beyond and within 200' " Minimum Private Pilot Standard, right? Oh, yes, the approach end of 32 is a cliff over looking the river below - the the "beyond and within" is mandatory! And another Oh yes, it is one way in and one way out - 32 arrival and 14 departure - so no downwind/crosswind sissies need apply! |
| 9b1 | | | Rwy 32 has +72ft trees 200ft from centerline of thld along with a 1659 x 45 ft rwy is sure to bring problems with the flare if one has excess speed on final, when you do land one will find nearly half of the runway used and a fast approaching in your sights . |
| Aspen, Col. | | | |
| KDCA | | | Landing to the south, from over the Potomic River, very tight right turn, at low altitude and a short runway. |

| | | | |
|--|--|---------------|--|
| TEX - Telluride Regional | | | Rising terrain all quadrants, airport elevation (9,078 msl), runway slope (in this case a dip in the center), rwy length, possibility of rapidly changing weather conditions during fall and winter months. |
| Aspen, KASE | Glenwood Springs | Telluride | Mountain location, high altitude, blind canyon that makes for a one way in and a one way out (Glenwood) |
| L53 | 106 | | L53 is known for it's short (1900 foot) runway, but most importantly that it's only 22 feet wide, that actually becomes narrower for the second half. You have to put the plane right on the centerline, or you are on dirt. / / 106 Is a one-way strip because of terrain on one side. That means that you often have to land with a tailwind of 10-15 knots, on a runway that's 2700 feet long. What's worse, the airport is in a ridge so the traffic pattern is too tight. When we landed there we could see people's faces on the trail next to us. |
| Danbury, CT KDXR | Elizabeth airport, Fisher's Island, NY | | KDXR - High Terrain immediately south of the airport and obstructions close in on several approaches. The approach to the north requires flying through a gap in the terrain below the hilltops, and the approach to the west features high terrain and light towers within 1/2 mile of the threshold. There was a fatal accident last year at DXR when an aircraft struck the light tower on final to rwy 26 / / Elizabeth - short runways (2000 feet) with water just off the ends requires real short-field expertise in anything much larger than my Thorp Skyskooter. / / |
| Aspen, CO | Teluride, CO | Leadville, CO | High density altitude, short runways, box canyons, limited space to work with, landing into oncoming traffic, unpredictable winds and weather make for a nasty cocktail. |
| KGWS | 7V2 | | 1. Narrow, short, in a canyon, no local weather info, river just before threshold, one way in and out, high density altitude, hug a cliff on departure, can't see the airport on arrival until in canyon (this one makes KASE look like a beginner's field). / / 2. Narrow short, on top of a long narrow mesa (cliffs off all sides) runway angles to one side about mid length (you can't believe your eyes when you roll out onto final), high density altitude, no local weather info (the Mesa looks like it could be a runway and some dang fool actually put one there). |
| KSEZ | KTVL | KEGE | KSEZ, slope of the runway and it is built on a mountain top. / KTVL, tight departure to the south. / KEGE, mountaintop and high altitude. |
| kase | | | |
| Glenwood Springs, CO | Leadville, CO | Salida, CO | #1. RH pattern, very close to mountains in very residential area. / #2. Altitude density problems / #3. One way in, one way out usually with a runway that runs uphill toward the west and the mountains. |
| vg18 | w24 | w18 | Tight quarters, short runway / / Elevation change / / Short displaced runway, tall trees |
| Culebra, Puerto Rico | | | Hill near approach end of runway, requiring a steep dive for landing. Alternate is a ravine with a steep left turn to land only about 200 feet off ground. |
| Kmmh | Ktel | Ktrk | |
| KVGT | | | First, its reputation for having the most runway incursions in the country. Add the intersecting runways and taxi ways, and no clearly defined run-up for 12R, and an instrument departure procedure which often confuses transient pilots and miss the correct turns and end up busting the class Bravo for KLAS. Oh, and did I mention the high terrain to the west, Nellis AFB to the northeast, and one of the busiest class Bravo airports, KLAS to the northeast? |
| Ktex | kgws | kdca | First two have to do with terrain and weather (KTEX and KGWS). KDCA is challenging due to traffic and tight proximity to restricted airspace. |
| Dillingham Airfield Aspen | | | Heavy turbulence in strong crosswinds |
| Catalina Island, CA Big Bear California | | | |
| Pacific City (PFC) | Oakridge State (550) | | Pacific City (PFC) - Short, narrow runway with close obstacles at the north end and high ocean winds. / Oakridge State (550) - Rising terrain surrounding the airport with tall trees lining the runway on both sides (also shielding the wind sock) |
| Trinity Center, O86 | | | There are tall trees at one end (approach end of calm wind runway), and although the other end is at the edge of the lake, there is terrain that necessitates limiting the downwind leg of the pattern. Although the runway is not "short" it is not long, either (about 3,200 feet). / |
| Ktex | Kase | Khto | Terrain and traffic |
| S68, Orofino, Id | | | The airport is located on the Clearwater river. The terrain on both sides rises steeply more than 700 feet above the airport. The approach from the east requires either rapid descent over a hill and the town or a blind approach with sharp turn on short final if you follow the river. The approach from the west requires requires a sharp turn on final with the runway hidden from view until on very short final. |
| o16 | | | strong down drafts and wind |
| Roosterville, MO (0N0) | | | Narrow, twisty, short and hilly! / / |
| Catalina Island | | | Due to prevailing winds, final approach is toward a tall cliff. After touch down (or on takeoff) because of a hump in the runway grade the pilot cannot see the full runway. |
| kdca | | | klga |
| UT25 - Monument Valley Airport | KSEZ - Sedona Airport | | UT25 - No go arounds here! 2000ft cliff beyond end of runway. HUGE downdrafts coming over cliff when wind is out of south or southwest. / KSEZ - There is a reason they call it the USS Sedona. Too many fatalities when people run off the end of the deck. |
| Culebra Island, Puerto Rico | | | Surrounded by hills on three sides, with regular gusty crosswinds and 2700 of runway it requires concentration. |
| Woodland State (W27) | | | Pacific City State (PFC) |
| | | | W27 is short & narrow (1953' x 25') and, when landing on runway 32 (into the prevailing wind), you need to fly a 45 degree left dogleg final over an I-5 bridge to avoid a hill immediately south of the approach end. / / PFC is short & narrow (1875' x 30') and has notes in Airguide's Flight guide which states "for experienced pilots only", "call before using" (due to the possibility of driftwood on the runway) and "the runway may be flooded due to high tide". |
| kcdk - Cedar Key, FL | | | short, little or no overrun before water at both ends / taxiway is also a road / no tower, no weather, no services / paved surface is deteriorating, runway markings are faded / trees and buildings on each side cause crosswinds to 'burble' |

| | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------|--------------------|---|
| Oliver Springs, TN | TN08 | | | One way landings and take-offs. Steep approach. Cannot see airport while on base leg of approach. Final approach leg goes through narrow gap in mountain ridge. Short grass strip. |
| Jackson, Wyoming | Aspen, Colorado | Sun Valley, Idaho | | Only one runway and proximatey of mountains |
| MYF | Montgomery Field in San Diego | | | 1. Parallel runways with very little lateral separation and identical landing thresholds. Final can be a real adventure. / 2. Many opportunities for airspace violations. Class B is just south of the airport. Class B has an airborne sliver just west of the airport that you must go over or under when departing to the north or northwest. Miramar MCAS is just north of the airport. North pattern must be kept very tight or you will be in the Marine's traffic pattern. / 3. Lots of traffic conflicts beyond the pattern. Inbound and outbound from and to the northwest must dodge each other through the small areas left by the Class B airspace and the local terrain of Mt. Soledad. Inbound and outbound from the east must dodge each other, stay out of Class B and watch out for traffic coming and going from SEE (Gillespie). / 4. All this is because due to Class B to the immediate south and MCAS to the immediate north, east and west are the only directions in and out of the airfield once you leave the pattern. / 5. And once you do depart the pattern to the east and west, there are fairly narrow vertical areas in which to stay out of Class B and avoid the terrain below. There are hills to the east that rise to several thousand feet above MYF elevation while still under the eastern portion of the SAN Class B. / 6. Just for fun there is a decent mix of student pilots along with various multi-engine planes and the occasional Citation jet. |
| NH16 | Brookline, NH | | | 1. Short, narrow, prominent tailwinds and downdrafts, no go around option due to trees. One way in one way out. But it's a ton of fun and can be done safely with proper training and adhering to limitations of you and your airplane. / / |
| Morgan, ut | | Jackpot nv | | Morgan is located in a narrow canyon, surrounded on 3 sides by terrain. Smart pilots only takeoff in one direction, unfortunately, the wind does not always agree. / Jackpot nv doesn't seem too challenging, but when you look closer, it becomes just that. The runway has a pretty good slope. Takeoff uphill uses a lot of runway and you need to continue the climb to avoid terrain. Takeoff downhill is good, until your airborne and realize there is a huge ridge/cliff that you must climb over. Time to turn 180' don't think so! / Did I mention, both fields are above 5000 ft. |
| KPFC, Pacific City, OR | KNUQ, Moffett Field, Mountain View, CA | E36, Georgetown, CA | | KPFC has a short and narrow runway, crosswinds off the ocean, and is in the center of town, so going off the end is a very unpleasant situation. / / KNUQ may have two very long runways, but is challenging because (a) it is a government facility and getting permission to land there defines "challenging," (b) the runways are in deplorable condition, making every landing seem like your worst. (The e-pilot blurb about this survey didn't say the airports have to be public, just paved.) / / E36 is short given the elevation (2900' at 2600'), and is surrounded by terrain. The approach to the runway is either dropping in over tall trees (and don't overshoot or you go over a cliff) or coming in over the cliff, subject to a very strong downdraft on short final. |
| Aspen, CO | Rutland, VT | Franklin, NC | | #1 Mountains & altitude, #2 Terrain & winter conditions, #3 Terrain & lack of nav aids |
| Albert Whitted | | | | Runway Length and downtown/bay location |
| Butter valley pa | | | | Approach over big ridge, road bisects beginning of runway, asphalt very narrow, short runway...challenge for a hi-speed twin (Aerostar) |
| Avalon, Catalina | | | | Half the runway is inclined, the other half flat. Aircraft on either end can't see each other and the varying slope makes you think you only have half a runway of length. / / It's elevated on an island, part of the downwind and final are way above the sea. / / Downdrafts on final approach to push you into the cliffs. / / Crappy condition paved runway. / / No FBOs for repairs. |
| Telluride, Colorado (KTEX) | | | | Terrain, density altitude, winds |
| Krhp | | | | Surrounded by mountains |
| CA51 | | trk | | CA51 is short and has tremendous cross winds from the ocean. The strip is lowest at both ends so the runway looks to be shorter than it really is. / TRK is at nearly 6K' with strong winds and turbulence in the afternoons. |
| | | | | Surrounded by mountains |
| KLAM | Los Alamos NM | | | Non-towered airport with one 5000' runway situated on top of a mesa at 7171' MSL. Density altitude in summer is an issue. Prevailing wind is from SW, creating crosswinds on the E-W runway. Due to residential area on W end, pilots may only take off to the east and land to the west. No rectangular pattern. R-5101 (Los Alamos National Laboratory) is on the south boundary of the airport. Downdrafts around the mesa are not uncommon; a pilot I know once found himself below the edge of the mesa on final. Because of the mesa/canyon terrain, a rough emergency landing strip is located in the canyon next to the airport. Local pilots say KLAM has "all the disadvantages of an aircraft carrier and none of the advantages" i.e. steep dropoffs on 3 sides and not being able to point it into the wind. |
| Sedona, Arizona | | | | Bad enough with density altitude issues, but it's end to end on a mesa above the city where if you do run out of runway, you fall 500ft onto Bell Rock! You can only approach from the south, and depart to the south, as it's rapidly rising terrain north east and west. Other than that, the scenery, which is absolutely awesome. One of my favorite places to fly, but very unforgiving. Bill |
| Clearview Airport (2W2), Westminster, MD | Upolu Airport (UPP), Hawi, HI | | | 2W2: It is short, narrow, uneven, sloping downhill to prevailing winds, and has unforgiving terrain on both approaches. OTOH, that tends to keep the ruff out and makes it an excellent training airport (both primary and IFR). One of my favorite places to visit. / / UPP: It is short, along a shoreline cliff, constant and prodigious ground-level turbulence and salt spray, near-constant crosswinds, no services or facilities. |
| KTVL | South Lake Tahoe | | | Field elevation, high summer temperatures result in a very high density altitude. Mountainous terrain surrounding the airport requires maximum climb performance, particularly for take offs to the South. |
| Transylvania Community Airport, Penrose, NC 3NR3 | | | | Mountainous terrain immediately to the North and East, narrow and short runway (40'x2,900'), a high berm on the ramp side adjacent to the North side of the runway, no lighting, all complemented by variable and difficult Western North Carolina weather. |
| KSEZ | Sedona Arizona | KTEX | Telluride Colorado | KSEZ--one runway. Land uphill, takeoff downhill unless strong winds dictate otherwise. Depth perception challenged as the airport is on a mesa and the terrain drops off on the North and South approach sides and the East side. Uncontrolled. Helicopter, jet and vintage aircraft activity. High density altitude on hot days. / / KTEX- Pattern altitude=10,484 feet. High density altitude. One runway. Biz jet traffic. Uncontrolled. Left pattern & right pattern by entering from a South downwind only. |
| KTEX | KSEZ | KASE | | |

| | | | |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Moultonboro NH | | | The airport is nestled in a valley at 571 feet, surrounded by a 2,990 mountain on the east plus Yankee 2 and a 2,029 mountain on the west. Norbett L Mintz 781-863-0817 |
| KLAM (Los Alamos NM) | KAXX (Angel Fire NM) | 1V0 (Navajo Dam NM) | KLAM - Routinely high DA, one-way in and one-way out, hard-to-predict wind patterns due to location on a mesa, and few options for go-arounds, if needed. Add restricted airspace a few feet away on one side and mountains on two other sides... exciting approach during the day and even more incredible at night! Your heartbeat will double, at least! / / KAXX - Twenty knot crosswinds routine, high DA year around, sitting low in a bowl surrounded by mountains. Landing's a challenge... taking off causes sphincter reactions! / / 1V0 - Runway takes up the entire length of an 800' tall mesa above the lake. Winds swirl and eddy on approach from either direction and it's easy to under/overshoot the proper glide path due to visual illusions. Take-off's a breeze - get to the end of the runway and gain speed while falling off the mesa's ledge! |
| KTEX Telluride, CO | KASE Aspen, CO | KSBS Steamboat Springs, CO | The old Telluride, CO had a "banana" sloped runway. It's been redone but like Steamboat (below) has about a 1000 ft. drop at end of runway. / Aspen, CO is one way in and you have to turn left at Shale Bluffs for base to final. / Steamboat Springs, CO has a drop off/cliff at the end of the runway of about 5-800 feet. |
| Angel Fire, NM (KAXX) | | | One runway with persistent cross winds. This airport sits in mountain valley with high terrain in three quadrants. |
| KSQL - San Carlos, CA | | | Just outside the SFO Class B surface area (you'd better turn cross wind pretty quickly off 30), and with varying Class B floor heights above in all quadrants (down to 1500 over the airport), airspace makes this a tricky airport to fly in and out of well. Especially from the South or East when multiple other airport traffic areas and Class C and B airspace makes a patchwork through which one must "thread the needle". And once you get there, the wind is frequently a gusting direct cross wind that rolls over the multi-story building along the upwind side of the airport. This is the only airport at which I have found myself simply unable to land. I got down to 5 feet and couldn't hold the wings level enough to let me touch down safely -- I executed a goaround and flew away. Same airport, different day, I _ran_out_ of rudder authority in the Cherokee Six I was flying trying to maintain runway alignment. On that day, as I recall, I landed in a bit of a crab and learned very quickly about the need to center up the rudder when lowering the nose to avoid an unplanned excursion. All that said, SQL remains a frequent destination because of it's convenient location and good facilities, including a great breakfast dinner. |
| KEGE | | | Mountains around the airport, high volume of commercial traffic and private jet traffic, military helicopter training in the area. |
| kcrw | ksan | | |
| Hite airport Utah, UT03 | Monument Valley Utah, UT25 | | Both of the runways have sufficient gradient to limit them uphill landing, downhill takeoff, and both have terrain issues to consider. There is a cliff located about where one would turn base to final at Hite while Monument Valley has a large cliff straight ahead on final. A go around at Monument Valley is probably a bad idea due to the steep gradient of the runway and the cliff straight ahead. Hite is probably the more challenging airport overall considering the substantially shorter and not quite straight (has a couple of minor kinks in it) runway. |
| E67 | E24 | | The Kearny, Arizona (E67) airport lies in a small valley. Flying a normal traffic pattern south of the airport 1000 feet above runway elevation would put you pretty close to the ground. / / The Whiteriver, Arizona (E24) airport lies in a canyon. Winds are typically coming down the canyon wall west of the airport. One second it could be 80 degrees off the nose and then the next second it could be 100 degrees off the nose and you're flying out of the canyon to set yourself up to land on the opposite runway. |
| Flying J (A dirt strip on the north side of the Grand Canyon) | | | Always must land up hill even with a huge tailwind because of a steep slope, and no turn around spots on the bottom of the strip, at least the last time I landed there in 1994. |
| Eagle, Co KEGE | Aspen, Co KASE | Glenwood Springs, Co KGWS | Mountains surrounding them, high elevation, density altitude, winter issues and one way in. |
| az82 Mogollon airpark | | | It is high in middle and trees are tall at the north end / |
| Catalina - Avalon, CA | | | Overwater approach to 1600 ft airport elevation, runway crowned at the middle with an up slope at the approach end (when you touch down you only see half the runway ahead) and winds which create a down draft on final approach. |
| KSEZ - Sedona, AZ | | | KSEZ - Like landing on a land based aircraft carrier. Huge drop off on the end of both runways. Airport sits atop a mesa just large enough for the runway to fit. |
| 2nc0 | | | Altitude terrain cliffs at each end |
| ase | | | one way in and one way out, high terrain |
| HSP Hot Springs, VA | I35 Tucker-Guthrie, KY | DCA Reagan National, VA | HSP - I've been told this is the highest airport east of the Mississippi, so density altitude is a factor. Winds can get very strong. It is up on a ridge, so the approach can be hairy and it is easy to mis-judge your altitude. / / I35 - Again winds and terrain make this airport tricky, but it is beautiful and well worth the trip. It is located on a small rise of land (reminiscent of an aircraft carrier) between two taller ridges. The wind can beat you up on final. On base and crosswind your GPS will be screaming at you as you are heading directly into the side of a ridge. / / DCA - How many general aviation pilots have been in there in the past 10 years? I think that's proof enough that it is America's most challenging airport. |
| Clearview Airpark (2W2) | | | Approach over trees to a short and narrow runway (1,799' x 30') plus a 2 degree downslope, making the approach visual glideslope more difficult to judge due to altered sight picture. |

| | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Truckee (KTRK) | Quincy (201) | San Carlos (KSQL) | 1) This airport has extreme weather conditions. Located at 5,900' MSL, the airport is subject to high density altitude conditions. Updrafts, downdrafts, extremely high winds, severe turbulence, thermal activity, and icing in virtually any cloud formation make this airport a killer, literally. The GPS-A approach goes over terrain that is so inhospitable that those who fly it in visual conditions choose never to fly it in IMC. In fact, you could argue that the best way to approach this airport is VFR only. If you are not familiar with flying into this airport, DO NOT ATTEMPT IT! (Look at the NTSB accident stats to verify this claim). / / 2) You'll probably never end up at 201, but if you do, there's only one way in, and one way out. A straight in for runway 6 works, but if you fly the pattern, you'll end up on the other side of a ridgeline losing sight of the airport. There is no feasible way to depart runway 6 safely, which makes 24 the only choice for departure. The winds generally blow out of the southwest, forcing downwind departures that can be a real challenge. / / 3) Located 9nm from SFO, this airport is at the edge of the surface class Bravo airspace. But wait - it gets better. Getting into or out of SQL is an airspace challenge the likes of which most people will never experience. OAK Class C is a few miles north; SJC is only a few miles southeast. This critical reliever airport is buried in the San Francisco airspace on all sides. There used to be a VFR corridor to the east of the airport, allowing people to fly in & out with some ease. That has since been removed. Add to the airspace challenges the stratus layer that lingers over the water accompanied by occasionally strong winds at the surface, and you'll have your hands full getting in or out. Further, with a small runway (2,600' in length), and located in a densely populated area, this is one airport that is hard to find from the air. If you've never been here before, take a flight lesson to familiarize yourself with the airspace. The good news is that there is a great GPS approach and the tower operators are fantastic. |
| Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome | Washington County Airport | | |
| Aspen, Colorado KASE | | | Field elevation, runway gradient, runway position relative to high surrounding terrain, high minimums approaches. Coupled with landings on 15 and departures on 33 almost 100% of the time. That about covers it. |
| KORD | KJFK | KASE | |
| 1n2 | | | 22 feet wide, <2000 feet long with 75 ft trees at the end. shares north departure end with grass field next door that's hidden by trees until airborne (and is on a separate unicom!). Heavy parachuting at both airports during summer. |
| KAVX | KPTV | L52 | |
| Greenwood Lake NY (4N1) | | | Trees, wind, short runway |
| TJCP | | | Blind approach between two hills, sudden 45 degree turn on short final, landing downhill, 2400 ft. |
| Ranger Creek 21W | | | Located in a narrow mountain valley with tall trees lining the runway. |
| 13w | w10 | 8w5 | 13w-1700 feet significant slope road used by semi's at approach end / / W10- tree lined almost one way in one way out difficult but not impossible to land south / / 8w5- sloping tree lined within 5 miles of P-51 / |
| 9ao | | | Approach over hills, diving to the runway, with hills on all four sides and the funky winds caused by the terrain. |
| X23 Umitilla Municipal Airport | KTYL Taylor Airport | KORD Chicago O'Hare | X23 - Runway length, obstructions, airspace / KTYL - Density altitude, winds / KORD - ATC, airspace, weather / |
| K3A4 (Greensboro Southeast) | | | Runways 17 / 35 asphalt paved ;total length is 3,030 feet by 30 feet wide ; trees at both ends ; approach end of 35 is 40 feet higher than approach end of 17; winds from the northwest , north , or northeast greater than 5 knots swirl causing severe turbulence within 25 to 50 feet of the runway surface . |
| KASE -Aspen | | | Terrain, cloud layers, no precision approaches, one way in and one way out, no suitable "outs", no crosswind runways, steep approach path, snow & ice, high altitude |
| Block Island, RI (KBID) | | | 2,500 foot runway (10/28), coastal fog, strong and gusty crosswinds, no fuel, minimal approach lighting, seagulls and deer on the runway, 11 miles offshore. / / The good news...no jets! And a great airport diner. |
| Telluride, CO | Aspen, CO | | Mountains, weather |
| ksez | kavx | | DA, Wind, Visual weirdness. |
| ksez | khii | 1Z1 | KSEZ - Up on a plateau like a aircraft carrier / KHII - Wind, Mountains, Electrical wires on approach / 1Z1 - In Grand Canyon, narrow valley. Fun... |
| 8OR 5 Pilot Butte | 12S Monument Airport Oregon | 550 Oakridge Oregon | 8OR5, paved but narrow (20 feet) and surrounded by very tall trees. Can not see the runway on most of either downwind. Can not see runway 36 on base and you are below treetop level on base. / / 12S, paved and 90 degrees to the river. one way due to 3.7% gradient, with a dog leg / / 550, paved, on a tall sliver of land more than 1,000 feet steeply up from the fork in the river it is nestled in. Surrounded by tall ridges. / |
| W27 | | | Dimensions: 1953 x 25 ft. / Obstructions: 40 ft. pole, 245 ft. from runway, 114 ft. right of centerline, 1:1 slope to clear / 30 ft. trees, 800 ft. from runway / Approach is over a highway bridge |
| 7A8, Avery Co. Morrison North Carolina | Walkers Cay, Bahamas | | Surrounding mountain terrain, 3000 ft runway, in a valley. Land to the north and slip down to the runway since the the runway is next to the rising terrain. Land to the south, and one has to clear a church steeple and lose about half the runway descending and slowing. I used to land here with a Cessna Golden Eagle (421) and a Cessna / Conquest II. I preferred the turboprop aircraft for this. / / Walkers Cay had clean approaches with the water at runway edge, but the 2100 foot length gave a fun challenge to the Conquest II. Most of the time I was stopped in half the runway. / / All used the performance of the aircraft to the max. Thanks, Emil Pucci 281-852-8073 |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Flying M in Oregon (OR05) | Pacific City State in Oregon (KPFC) | | [Airport 1] The Flying M Airport (Private has a great restaurant on the property) is a short field grass runway that has a road crossing the runway and a one way in approach and it is down in a valley with tall trees so once committed to landing your landing unless your airplane can climb vertical like a Helicopter. / / [Airport 2] The Pacific City State Airport is a short runway with buildings close to both sides and power lines at the north end of the runway. It also can have the south end of the runway under water during high tides and storms which can severely limit the usable runway surface, not uncommon to have driftwood on runway due to flooding and a fine layer of sand which hinders braking. |
| Benjamin Rivera Noriega, TJCP | | | Dogleg approach between two sets of hills, or the "chorera" (slide) down the contour of the hill straight in to 13. When winds are from the northeast winds passing over hills cause rotors and windshear. Not unusual to find your wheels touching down and suddenly be lifted 20 ft into the air when winds are gusty. |
| Makanak Island Airport, MI | | | Carrier Landing, Cliff landings, High trees, invokes all your Skills, Oracle. . . |
| Leadville - Lake County Airport (KLXV) | | | Density Altitude! |
| KAVX | | | Avalon, CA has one of the hardest airports in fly into because of the Westerly winds that blow over the runway. Since this airport was build by shaving off two hills there is a rise in the middle of the runway. Further there are shear dropoff at both ends of the runway so if you attempt to land on glide path you will find yourself into the side of the hill because of the winds. |
| TVL | | | Confined by terrain and high altitude, and always high density altitude in the summer, coupled by tricky winds and mountain drafts. High incidence of fatal accidents due to proximity to large supply of flat land pilots without mountain flying experience and a propensity to take off over gross and without leaning the mixture. |
| Airharbor airport, greensboro, NC- W88 | | | one way run way, trees at both ends, lake at the down hill end of runway, short, narrow. |
| 4G4 | | | Runway 28 runs down a steep grade. |
| kgoo | | | |
| Telluride | Aspen | Leadville | High altitude and terrain. Telluride is on a plateau which makes it especially difficult. |
| Leadville CO | Sedona AZ | | 1. High elevation=high density altitude. Runway isn't too long, either. / 2. Sedona airport is on top of a Mesa. There are lots if downdrafts, shifting winds. Also, it's usually one way in and the opposite way out. (This applies with wind up to 10 knots.) |
| Fargo nd | | | |
| Phjh | | | Altitude restriction due to noise abatement, with an upsloping then a down sloping runway combined super gusty x- winds which are usually 60 to 90 degrees off the runway heading which are coming down the leeward side of a mountain. |
| Fayetteville, WV | | | Fayetteville has trees on the approach, 2600 feet of broken pavement, a dogleg and hill in the middle.Takes real skill to get in there. |
| Fayetteville wv | Mallory field, wv | | Fayetteville has trees on the approach, 2600 feet of broken pavement, a dogleg and hill in the middle.Takes real skill to get in there. |
| Valdez Pioneer Field (PAVD) | Sierraville, California | | Valdez Pioneer Field (Alaska) is noted for windssocks at the ends and center of the runway, which often show winds from different directions. The latest construction moved the runway a bit closer to the mountain alongside, too. / / Sierraville, California is narrow and approaches and departures are made at the same runway end. Like Whittier, Alaska, which I believe is unpaved. |
| Telluride, CO | Aspen, CO | Reagan National Airport, Washington, DC | Telluride & Aspen: high altitude in "only-one-way out" valleys, with surrounding even higher terrain, complex approach and departure procedures. / Reagan National: complex approach and departure procedures to short runways, requiring steep low-altitude turns, and power reductions for noise abatement. |
| 3NR3 (Transylvania Community Airport) | | | Terrain in close proximity and short runway (2903 ft). When a pilot flies downwind for runway 27, the aircraft is flying toward a mountain. The turn from downwind to base has to be made very close to the terrain so you have enough time to dissapate your altitude on base and final. When flying downwind for runway 9 you have terrain off your right wing at pattern altitude. Noise abatement procedures requiring a roll out to the right when departing from runway 27. Terrain requiring a roll out to the right for most aircraft when departing runway 9. |
| Kege | Klga | Kdca | Eagle Vail Terrain / DCA airspace and short rwys / LGA Short rwys |
| Telluride | | | High altitude and mountain surronds |
| KASE | KPWK | | KASE, ASPEN COLORADO, One way in for landing and one way out. High terrain, high minimums IFR challenging missed approach procedure, the required climb gradient for departures. even if you departed VFR. / / KPWK, AIRSPACE ISSUES circling approach landing NORTH or departure procedure when departing SOUTH / / |
| Cashmere-dryden Airport (8S2) | | | Dimension: 1800 x 50 ft / This is a small airport with paved runway. Geography surrounding airport is tall mountains prone to swirling winds. Rwy 25 is uphill and has rising terrain on departure. / Rwy 07 has tall football field lights that are taller than departure altitude and must be dodged. / 15 ft trees, 438.0 ft from runway, 10 ft right of centerline, 15:1 slope to clear / +4 FT FENCE 90 FT, 40 FT L&R; RD AT 90 FT; 25-30 FT TREES AT 150 FT, 60 FT R. |
| 5S4 | | | River, trees, crosswinds, short runway and steep surrounding terrain. |
| catalina | telluride | | mountain top runway, winds, up and downdrafts |
| Cascde Locks, OR (CZK) | | | Airport is in the Columbia River Gorge, 30 miles east of Portland/Troutdale. There are frequent high winds. 150 ft. trees on Rwy 24 appch end. Moderate to severe turbulence on short final due to trees blocking wind flow (rotor effect). 1,800 ft. long/narrow runway. |
| Catalina's airport in the sky....AVX | | | Located on the edge of an island, the approach is over water with the threshold at top of a flattened mountaintop. |

| | | | |
|---|------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Butte, Montana | Washington, DCA | Kodiack, Alaska | Mountains on all sides of airport. Winter operations very demanding. / / DCA Short runway, river approach at night very demanding / / Kodiack Alaska very windy most times of year. |
| Clearview 2W2 | | | Extreme downhill runway, Short runway, Hard to see alignment bars Trees on both sides, Narrow runway |
| W24 | | | W24 - One way in and one way out, this airport has a difference of 136.6 feet from the end of 10 to the end of 28. The slope is a nice 4.7%, but it will trick you. |
| Aspen, CO | | | This is a sit up and take extra notice field. Departing and arriving continuous terrain awareness is a must. Everything is steep at this airport, including physical terrain but also aircraft performance requirements; in almost all but the most benign weather is on the edge. |
| ells field o28 | gnoss dvo | angwin 2o3 | the wind comes from all directions a person landing at any of these airports must be on there toes here on a windy day |
| AVX | Crested Butte | Shelter Cove | AVX is on a plateau/mesa at 1600ft MSL and has an uphill grade. / Crested Butte is high altitude / Shelter Cove has weather/fog issues |
| Sedona, AZ | Leadville, CO | | 1. Air currents around this "island in the sky" keep you on your toes! / 2. Density altitude is always a factor in Leadville. |
| montauk, ny | | | |
| O79 - Sierraville, CA | | | 1) Short runway at high altitude - 3250 of cracked pavement at 5000 feet altitude. / 2) Runway sits in V shaped valley. V opens to north, runway runs east-west at small part of V. So takeoff requires a hard crosswind turn at very low altitude to avoid canyon walls. Landing requires low base lag for similar reason. / 3) Winds usually run along runway. Thus canyon walls create strong downdraft on takeoff/upwind leg, and a strong updraft on base and final legs |
| kVKX | | | INSIDE FRZ washington DC three, in valley. Can not see VKX till u are there |
| 7N8 Butter Valley golf port | | | Located in the middle of a golf course, with trees on both sides. Runway is part turf, but mostly paved. The mountains close to the runway make for a dodgy approach. / |
| Sedona, AZ | | | Situated on a mesa, 5000' this single runway has a 3% upslope and in calm conditions planes depart and arrive in head on conditions. The upslope and mesa position of runway causes an arriving plane to be too high on final, with the ground coming up prior to touchdown. Monitoring frequency is imperative, for landing and departing planes to 'stay to the left' |
| Eagle, Colorado | | | High foothills on approach and departure |
| Piseco, NY k09 | | | Water at one end, mountain at other end. Several windsocks along the runway frequently disagree with each other, indicating headwind, crosswind and tailwind simultaneously. |
| DCA for commercial operations | | | 6850' long main runway; sharp right bank required just before landing on 18; area traffic and restrictions related to government operations; high number of commercial flights |
| Toledo, Oregon | | | Adjacent river; Adjacent mountains; short runway; narrow runway; Nearby power lines over river. |
| KLGA | KDCA | | High volume, complex approaches, controllers who talk constantly, usually long lines of waiting on each end (taxiing out and in), 1/2 the time poor weather or visibility |
| Clearview Airport, Westminster, MD | Falwell Airport [W24] | | Airport #1 Short runway [1,801 feet], 50 feet wide, virtually no extra runway at either end. / / Airport #2 What a ski slope, you could train Olympic Skiers here. |
| Sedona, AZ (KSEZ) | Lake County, CO (KLXV) | | SEZ: Sheer cliff on northern side, broken rock on east side, sloped runway, and an unusual updraft on the approach end that requires quick control changes on short final. / / LXV: altitude... |
| Lake isaballa | | | |
| Juneau International Airport | | | low scuddy weather, mountains in close proximity, wind |
| Kmmh | | | Airport lies just north of Sierra. High terrain all around. High winds that create high crosswinds and up/down drafts. High altitude creating high density altitude. Instrument approach with high minimums. Swirling weather comes through Mammoth Pass. |
| 3U7 | | | A USFS backcountry high mountain airport that is mostly a one way airport due to mountainous terrain. This airport is a typical difficult USFS runway. What is odd is that it is paved. Rumor has it that it got paved for a presidential visit. An approach from the south has you clearing 9400 ft mountains five miles out. Cut the power and plunge deep into the canyon and swirling winds to make this approach. |
| 2O3 | | | Altitude, Slope, width, turbulance, thermals, crosswinds |
| TJCP | | | TERRAIN, CROSSWINDS, SHORT RUNWAY, DOWNHILL GRADIENT. |
| Sedona, AZ | | | Sits on a Mesa making judging altitude and approach angle difficult. Hot temps and hi elevation make for challenging density altitude. |
| Glenwood Springs, CO | | | Altitude, terrain, length. |
| Oliver Springs Airport, Oliver Springs, Tennessee (might be considered Oak Ridge Airport now) | | | As I recall its 2,600 foot grass runway that is bumpy. On left downwind you can easily see the airport but when you make your turn onto base leg you have to descend behind a mountain (or very large hill) and lose sight completely of the airport. You begin to turn final before seeing the runway where there is a fairly small window or open space at the base of this mountain that lines up with the runway. You cannot make a tight base and turn before the mountain because there are power lines running along the ridge and there have been fatal accidents making this attempt (unfamiliar with the airport and turning early to attempt a very short final) . You cannot see the power lines due to the heavily wooded mountainside but you can see the cut in the terrain for the power lines. By flying to the proper base leg you are well above the power lines. On left base you descend well below the wooded mountainside in order to lose altitude for landing. Its quite fun really! I landed there several times in 1982 with my Piper Apache and got my orientation the year before from Guy Jones who was the airport manager at that time and flying in his trainer. I called the following year before my planned trip to make sure they had 80/87 available and was warned by the guy that handles the fuel that I should be careful. I was, it worked, just remember not to turn base before the mountain! |
| Aspen | | | One way in and out. |
| KSEZ | | | Mountains all quadrants. Significant wind in any direction causes turbulent arrivals/departures. Aircraft carrier like runway. Hard to focus on aviating when flying into such a beautiful place! |

| | | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Catalina Island | South Lake Tahoe | | SXC - Steep drop offs 360 degrees, and cliffs on either end. You are 4000ft AGL at pattern altitude, landing on a 2800 ft MSL runway. THEN - a change in pitch in the middle of it makes the runway look half as long as it really is on roll-out, takes true faith to not hit the throttle and chicken out on short final. And if you get a downdraft on short final, you'll become a splat on the side of a mountain. / / South Lake Tahoe - in anything short of a turbine, you can't climb straight out if departing into the prevailing wind. So you must circle climb over a golf course, with downdrafts on the west and updrafts on the east of the little basin. Many times you will be 300 ft over the trees and losing 500 FPM - NOT a good feeling! If not turbo-charges, plan on at least 3 circles to get above the pass back into CA. Add summer high density altitudes and it take good equipment AND skills. |
| 5M3 - Moultonboro NH | KLEB - Lebanon, NH | 2B2 - Plum Island, MA | 5M3 - Located in a valley between Red Hill and the Ossipee Mountains, with a 2 - 20 runway alignment, winds can be a very tricky factor. The typical fall/winter/spring months have strong winds out of the Northwest (usually about 45 degree X-wind), but due to the terrain effects, the wind is usually accelerated. Instead of the normal 25 kt winds, it can likely be 35 to 40kts. Take into account the 85-100 foot trees along the side of the runway (Turbulence) and a sweeping wind that scoots along Berry Pond and "reverses" back up the runway over the threshold to RWY 2 to produce a tailwind, it quickly meets my definition of one of the most challenging. Having flown there over the years - I have seen many airplanes make an approach, do a Go-around and never come back again. / KLEB - Let's see - In the Mountains, in some of the worst weather in the U.S., Non-Radar and oh yeah - the ICE - It's everywhere - on the ground and on the airplane. Having been an airline pilot based there, the approaches in the New England Nor-Easterns are something to behold. Such as flying the VOR Rwy 25 in the snow where the controlling obstacle is a antenna near the VOR with pulsing Red Lights that sets up an eery pulsing red glow in the clouds and snow as you pass over. Better yet, how about the ILS RWY 18 in a Nor Easter with winds out of the Northeast/East at 30 kts, no radar for the full procedure, in the snow & ice, to ILS Minimums of 1.25 miles viz at best, snow covered sloping runway, likely with a strong crosswind and slight tailwind, in the dark (Sunsets at 4pm in the winter), no VASI/PAPI and last but not least the approach end of Rwy 18 is on top of a ledge/cliff less than 500 feet from the abrupt drop-off. This is the airport/approach combination that is the quintessential study in Human Factors and Risk. / 2B2 - Plum Island - What can you say about an airport in which the neighbor effectively cut 500-700 feet off of the runway by placing a fence across the runway on the property line. And since has parked old RV's, boats and excavators to increase the "Challenge" factor - Go Ahead - Search on You Tube..... |
| Marion, Iowa, C17 | | | Paved, but very narrow. |
| St. George, UT | Rifle, CO | Leadville, CO | Terrain, Elevation, density altitude, crosswinds |
| Sedona, AZ | Moriarty, NM | Vaughn, NM | Sedona sits on a bluff and up and down drafts are a challenge. Moriarty and Vaughn have on ease/west runway and cross winds are a big factor. On one fly out to Vaughn, the pilots who had landed stood in the leeward side of a small garage [the only building there] and talked pilots down and initiated thumbs up or down. |
| kavx | | | The optical illusion created by the upslope of runway 22. The crown in the runway making it impossible to see the opposite end. Updraft from the cliff on the west and the corresponding downdraft on the east end. It's been likened to landing on an aircraft carrier 1600 feet off the water. |
| Morgan County, UT (42) | | | Airport is surrounded by mountains and homes. Lots of glider flights in the area, Bob Foxley |
| Falwell airport (W24) | | | Have to land on RW28 going up the sloping runway. Have to takeoff downhill. |
| Nantucket Memorial Airport, Nantucket, Massachusetts | | | As a pilot flying for one of the local airlines, and having thousands of landings at Nantucket; I think Nantucket's fog and high traffic flow, definitely makes it one of America's most challenging airports. |
| Angel Fire, NM KAXX | | | High elevation (8379' msl), high surrounding terrain (10,000'-12,000'), terrain follows glide path to runway 17, and prevailing strong westerly direct crosswinds on the 8,900' runway. |
| Kanp | Eagles nest, va | | KANP has a displaced threshold at both end making the useable runway approximately 2000 ft. Trees and water (south river) on one end and telephone poles at the other. The approach to runway 12 takes you over trees and then the south river right before you are over the field. You get a "balloon" on hot days from the heat off the woods and field and then a "dip" as you cross the south river on short final. Many, many accidents over the years at the airport. |
| KTEX | KSEZ | | On top of mesa, high density altitude |
| Mt Snow Vermont | | | Mt Snow sits in valley with venturi effect of the wind and down drafts that have caused crash on final. the airport has short runway as well. |
| Leadville, Co | | | Density altitude |
| 2N2 | | | surrounding trees and terrain, length, condition |