

Siljan Air Park

by Russell Myles

In the forests of central Sweden next to Lake Siljan is the small airfield of Siljansnäs (ESVS). It is not very big, with just 850m of hard runway and a parallel 850m of grass, is daylight only and just has an air-to-ground frequency; no radar, approaches or ATC. It is however a great place to visit and if the weather means you need to exercise the privileges of your IR to get there then the nearby airfields at Mora and Borlänge both have ILS.

Siljansnäs is a lovely place to visit and has become a preferred destination for pilots touring central Sweden. It has one distinctive feature which sets it apart from almost all the other Swedish airfields. It is not the flying club, although that offers gliding and powered flying, a regular social calendar and a fantastic fly in and airshow in early August. It is not the flying club sauna (every flying club should have a sauna!), the guest cabins or

jet all over the world lives about 30 miles north of Charlotte in North Carolina. Danny's airpark house is his home and his chipmunk is for fun. Here in Europe it seems that airpark homes are more likely to be second homes, used for holidays and the weekends. The Pilot article's author found the Vendée Air Park to be very quiet, with only a few people in residence at the time of visiting. We found the same when we took time to visit Siljansnäs in late May. Beautifully

the car for hire. It is not the ever-helpful Ingmar Lind who runs the airfield. It is not the fact you can get both avgas and mogas from the pumps. It is not even the "Flying Brewery", located in the castle like building abeam the runway mid-point. No, the main thing you notice when flying in is the village at the northern edge of the airfield. With taxiways and hangars! Siljansnäs is home to the Siljan Air Park, the most northerly airpark in Europe.

The airpark movement in the US is well established and thriving. The variety is huge, from two lines of houses either side of a grass runway to the other end of the scale at Spruce Creek in Florida, with hard runways, instrument approaches, a dedicated real-estate office and everything from single-seat ultralights to bizjets using the field, with a bunch of warbirds and "normal" aircraft thrown in for good measure.

In Europe there is much less choice when looking at airparks. A couple of plans were floated for airparks in the UK but they did not get very far when faced with planning laws, NIMBYs and less-than-understanding councillors. Over the channel in France, with a much more positive attitude to general aviation from local government, the choice expands. A short hop from Le Touquet at Verchocq is Aero Delahaye and the Atlantic coast is home to two airparks developed by the same team - the Vendée Air Park and Atlantic Airpark. There are several others scattered about in various stages of development.

An article long ago in Pilot magazine about Vendée Air Park highlighted one major difference between both sides of the Atlantic; in North America airparks tend to be residential, with people living there full time and commuting – a friend who skippers a wide-body

situated near the shore in an area of rolling hills, forests and lakes, it is surrounded by forests, wildlife and scenery and is just a very relaxing place to be.

The airpark started around 2005 but the airfield has been around since 1959 when "Toffe" Tolförs landed in a field at Siljansnäs for the first time and he was airfield manager for many years before handing over to Ingmar. Toffe lives in the village but also has a house at the airpark and is the "go-to-guy" – if you are away for a month or two and need your grass cut, he is the man. If you are coming for the weekend and need your heating turned up a day or two before, call Toffe.

Toffe does not do all the grass cutting though. While wandering about we saw movement in the distance, which turned out to be an automatic lawn mower! Quite a few of the houses have them, little wheeled things which seem to wander aimlessly about the grass.

A hundred years ago you could not programme your mower and flight was in its infancy. The museum at the airpark is located in the castle; this year it only opened on the fly in the weekend of "Kräftstjärtsvängen" but Toffe does occasionally show people round. The exhibits are mostly from the history of flight in Sweden, with several being borrowed from the Technical Museum in Stockholm. Of the old engines and aircraft, the *youngest* is from 1917. Hanging from the ceiling in the upper level are two aircraft by early Swedish designer, E Thulin. The Thulin 'A' is a copy of

a Bleriot; it still has a certificate of airworthiness and has flown in the last few years; the Thulin 'B' was his next aircraft (and his first "own" design) - a biplane on floats. Various engines and bits of aircraft are displayed, including a balloon basket, a cockpit section and cylinder heads from WW2 fighters. Also hanging from the ceiling is an engineless Fokker DR1 Triplane replica in aluminium.

The castle-like building housing the museum used to be the site of the "Biggles Café" – the café is no longer but part of the building has been taken over by a brewery, so it is OK! And you can still get a coffee at the club if you need to. The Flying Brewery is run by one of the airpark residents and produces a range of beers to "aviation standards". Toffe gave us some samples, which we took back to our holiday cabin for scientific research purposes - they were very drinkable.



The museum also once housed the Siljan Flying Circus which used to operate replica WW1 fighters. These were built as part of a scheme called "School at Work", where youngsters who had left school early were given a chance to get started again and hands-on aircraft construction formed part of the schedule. A Nieuport and Fokker Eindecker were among the end products of this admirable scheme and they formed the basis of the Flying Circus. Today the aircraft sit in a hangar needing a little bit of TLC to get flying again. Having just bought an SDDR microlight 80% replica Fokker Eindecker as a low-wind warm-day toy, we spent some time taking numerous photographs for comparison.

According to KSAK, the Royal Swedish Aero Club, the annual fly-in and air show at Siljansnäs on the first weekend in August is the country's biggest. 2015 was its 26th year and featured displays by a Swedish Air Force Gripen fighter, formation RVs and a C130. Even if the Flying Circus is unable to fly these days, there are plenty of flypasts and parked aircraft for the public to see and enjoy. The flying club puts on shuttle buses for the village residents: just

one example of engagement with the local community which has also included model aircraft design and build competitions for local youngsters. The flying club served breakfast Saturday and Sunday, with typical fly-in food but the yearly highlight is the crayfish party which takes place after the Kräftstjartsvängen. This involves a stream of aircraft flying around the southern end of Lake Siljan, via Rättvik, the "Dalhalla" concert hall, in a giant abandoned quarry and the local town of Leksand. We were puzzled as to the name, which roughly translated means crayfish tail turn. The mystery was possibly cleared up when we met local estate agent, Ragnar "Ragge" Valin, who said the bottom end of Lake Siljan looks like a crayfish tail. Personally I think it looks like a cat but you know those crazy Scandinavians...any excuse for a party

Right: Flying club BBQ

Top Left: Swedish Air Force Museum

Centre: Museum exhibits

Bottom: Mass fly out!



and the crayfish party is a traditional summer event. This one just has added aircraft.

Ragge showed us one of the houses for sale. There are several houses up for grabs and a few plots still available. One plot for sale has foundations already installed and there is also a hangar on two



plots combined; just add house! If you do want to do that there are a few rules. Houses are required to have an outer surface of wood. How this is done varies; some have cladding and some are made of logs. Roofing material should be of reddish colour. There are a few more restrictions; nothing too onerous or restrictive and the result is a variety of houses and hangars from the small wooden “stuga” through log cabins to a large one with a little control tower feature on the roof (that one is for sale). The plots are laid out so that the roads and taxiways do not cross each other – no “Give Way To Aircraft” signs here.

In terms of the airfield and flying in, there are a few rules to avoid annoying the locals. Air traffic is basically day only and should arrive by one of three reporting points: STORÖN, ÅKMYRAN or SILJAN. Circuits are to the south of 14/32 and “advanced flight” with powered aircraft must not take place within 5nm so take your aeros away a bit.

Anna, one of the British owners, says “Flying in Sweden is always very uncomplicated”; she even owned an SE-registered amphibian for a while. Siljan Air Park is quite close to the edge of the “Mountainous Area” where there are a few extra rules for single-engine aircraft. Mostly common sense safety stuff like filing a flight plan, carrying maps of the area, having suitable survival equipment, signalling equipment and appropriate clothing and aircraft markings. There is no need for a repaint if you are planning to visit Siljan, as it is outside the area and there are plenty of destinations for a tour.

Most airpark residents seem to fly in, have a relaxing few days and then fly out again. Although most owners are Swedish, there are Danes, Finns, Norwegians, Germans and a handful of other nationalities, including British. Wandering around the airpark we found a few people in evidence, walking the dog or tinkering in the house. It was very quiet and peaceful.

Siljansnäs village itself is also quiet. Situated about 2km from the airpark, it is mostly composed of traditional looking red-painted wooden houses around a white church and boasts a small supermarket, hotel, holiday cabins, petrol station/car dealer, bicycle shop and a kiosk. There is also the Siljans Pizzeria, with sit in or take away service. As in most small rural communities, it seemed to be a congregation point for the local teenagers; that the pizzas being fantastic may have something to do with it as well! At the top of the hill is a café and *Naturum Dalarna*, a nature museum with trails to viewpoints overlooking Lake Siljan. Inside there is a large selection of displays of local wildlife, history and geology. Lake Siljan forms part of the Siljan Ring, a meteorite impact crater

Top: Taxiway to the houses

Centre: Cabin in winter

Bottom: Trees, hills and lakes



52km in diameter and the largest in Europe, on the map you can make out the circular structure of the ring with the lake at the 6-7 o'clock position. About 17km from the airpark is Leksand, with a couple of larger supermarkets as well as more variety of shops. It is the seat of the *Leksandskommun* (the local municipality) and the headquarters of the department store chain Clas Ohlson. Slightly

Useful Web links:

Siljan Air Park <http://www.siljanairpark.se/>

Siljan Flying Club <http://www.siljansnasfk.com/>

Siljan AirPark Museum <http://www.airparkmuseum.se/>

Plot for Sale <http://www.airpark-plot-for-sale.co.uk/>

Summer house to rent <https://www.airbnb.co.uk/rooms/5938863?s=r76U>

Flying Brewery <http://www.flyingbrewery.com/>

further away and well worth a visit are the Orsa bear park, Falun world heritage site copper mine and the town of Mora, home to the famous Vasaloppet cross country ski race.

My Jeppesen VFR guide Sweden page for Siljansnäs states “irregular snow removal” so you may not be able to fly in or out during the winter but a winter sports enthusiast has plenty to keep them occupied. There are several ski hills nearby; not like an alpine mega resort but enough for a day trip. And there is cross-country skiing in abundance, even round the airfield. A recent local headline was “Car hits tree, no injuries”. It is not a vibrant hub of nightlife or a dizzy social whirl (except barbecue night at the *flygklubb* on Wednesdays and the yearly Kräftstjärtsvängen) but if you prefer peace and quiet with nature, trees, wildlife, cycling on quiet roads, kayaking on the lake and getting away from the big smoke in your own aircraft, Siljan Air Park could be the place for you. We are in the market for a tourer again... that house we looked at with Ragge the estate agent? We bought it. Come and visit!



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