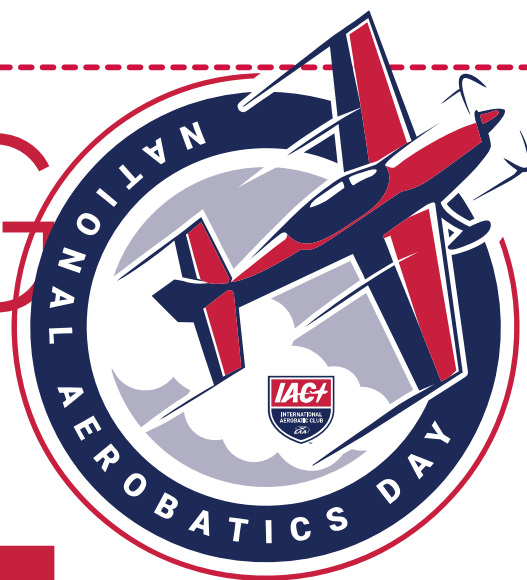




# FLYING FOR FUN



## Celebrating International Aerobatics Day

By Jim Bourke

**O**n the fourth Saturday each June, aerobatic enthusiasts from around the world take time off for International Aerobatics Day — a day to celebrate, promote, experience, and share the joys of aerobatic flight.

This special day came about during a moment of introspection on my part, after finishing a busy aerobatic contest and air show season. I sat exhausted, finally home after months of crisscrossing the country in my air show plane and mused about why I put so much time into such a humbling, financially draining, and physically demanding activity. In that quiet moment, I started to remember. I thought of all the people I've met and how exciting it has been to develop as a pilot along with them. I reflected on how much fear I felt when I started out. I relived the intense passionate feelings of freedom I felt the first time I soloed an aerobatic plane, and the first time I flew as an air show performer.

It occurred to me that aerobatics had become about 90 percent work and 10 percent fun. When I started all of it was fun, even the work. But eventually as I took on more responsibilities, a lot of time became dedicated to repacking parachutes, scheduling annual inspections, filling out FAA waiver forms, maintaining my event calendar, and doing other administritivia. I realized that other people were in the same place I was in. I thought I should set aside time for some *fun*, for Pete's sake, and I should make sure others do the same thing.

It also happened that the International Aerobatic Club (IAC) needed some advertising but had no money in the budget for it. I was hopeful to find a cheap way to get our message across. By coincidence, I had met the progenitors of Talk Like a Pirate Day a few years earlier. Yes, this is a real day (celebrated on September 19 this year). They are a couple of funny guys who take it seriously, making TV, internet, and radio appearances in support of their special day, complete with lots



### ABOUT THE IAC

The IAC, a division of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA), is the world's largest aerobatic club, dedicated to promoting and enhancing the safety and enjoyment of aerobatics. The IAC is the governing body for aerobatic competition in the United States. About 30 contests are held across the country each year. The IAC holds the U.S. National Aerobatic Championships in September in Salina, Kansas. It is responsible for selecting and managing the Advanced and Unlimited category U.S. aerobatic teams that compete at the World Aerobatic Championships in powered and glider aircraft.





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of arrs and catchphrases based on pirate stereotypes such as walking the plank or drinking rum. I thought, if there can be a Talk Like a Pirate Day, there can be a day for aerobatics. I prepared a press release in 2021, and IAC staff sent it out.

The first International Aerobatics Day was a profound success, far more than my dreams. I had deliberately kept the day unstructured — the only rule was that people should have fun and take photos or videos and post them. People put this lack of definition as an opportunity to get creative: They gave people rides, they did some formation flying, they choreographed flights to music, they had contests, they held practice sessions, and they had lots of fun doing all of it. The IAC got a lot of great content out of it, and we hope that each year can be even bigger than the year before.

Introducing your students to aerobatics via International Aerobatics Day will give you many opportunities to introduce important aviation topics, such as the importance of understanding (and working within) aircraft limitations, mission prep and debrief, risk management, and aeronautical decision-making. Giving your students experience with aerobatics firsthand will help them avoid getting caught up in stereotypes about “hero” air show pilots. It will teach them about how much discipline it takes to handle an aircraft near its margins. Your “Five Hazardous Attitudes” lesson plan will be absorbed much better if you give it context through aerobatics.

If you have a nervous student, exposure to aerobatics can help them build confidence. I’ve seen firsthand many

times how people have become much more assertive on the controls after a bit of spin training. Aerobatics teaches pilots how important it is to keep speed under control as well. Most aerobatic planes are taildraggers, which a lot of pilots aren’t familiar with. Exploring this avenue with your students will give them exposure to something that is probably new and challenging to them. Who knows, you may have a fledgling student who will someday become an aerobatic champion! If you ask me, aerobatic pilots are often interesting to talk to. Who doesn’t like sitting around in a hangar talking about airplanes? That’s an important part of what we do on International Aerobatics Day.

This year’s celebration will be on June 24. I hope you will participate. If you don’t know how to do that, get in touch with your local IAC or EAA chapter and ask for someone who can point you in the right direction. If you’ve never flown upside down in an airplane, International Aerobatics Day is a great opportunity for you to check that item off your bucket list. 🇺🇸

*Jim Bourke is the president of the International Aerobatic Club. He is an air show pilot, coach of the U.S. Advanced Aerobatic Team, and an Unlimited category competition pilot in both powered and glider aerobatics. Bourke has an extensive background in aviation modeling and is an inductee in the Model Aviation Hall of Fame. He has three children and lives in Scottsdale, Arizona, and Corvallis, Oregon. Bourke has several businesses, including Knife Edge Software, which makes flight simulators. When he isn’t flying, Jim is busy working on The Hall Bulldog Project ([HallBulldog.com](http://HallBulldog.com)). More information may be found at [JimBourke.com](http://JimBourke.com).*

### IAC CHAPTER INTERNATIONAL AEROBATICS DAY EVENTS

**IAC 1:** Cookout and practice day, Dekalb, Illinois (KDKB)

**IAC 3:** Meet and greet, Williamson, Georgia (GA2)

**IAC 26:** Practice day and lunch, Lancaster, California, (KWJF)

**IAC 34:** Barbecue and practice day, Bellefontaine, Ohio (KEDJ)

**IAC 58:** Practice, critique, and hangar party, Tunkhannock, Pennsylvania (76N)

**IAC 67:** Apple Cup aerobatic contest, Ephrata, Washington (KEPH)

**IAC 80:** Midwest Aerobatic Championships, Seward, Nebraska (KSWT)

**IAC 88:** Practice day, presentations, and static display, Romeo, Michigan (D98)

Updated events may be found at [IAC.org](http://IAC.org).