

Spotlight - *Tavares, Florida*

SPLASH IN FOR SEAPLANE-A-PALOOZA & EXPERIENCE THE PROP SHOP

by Matt Elia

Heading to Sun 'n Fun in April? Make sure you get a jump start on your ultimate aviation adventure by stopping in Tavares, Florida, "America's Seaplane City" for SEA-PLANE-A-PALOOZA on April 1st & 2nd!

Seaplane pilots will have the opportunity to compete in a series of flying contests Saturday afternoon, with the top performers earning the opportunity to compete again on Sunday in the contest finals! The contests will include shortest takeoff, spot landing, accuracy landing and watermelon bomb drop.

Shortest takeoff is a demonstration of how fast a pilot can get their seaplane safely off the water and into the air. Judges on the docks will utilize stop watches as each seaplane takes off, ranking the planes from shortest to longest time from full power being applied to separation from the water.

The spot landing event is exactly what you would think. Pilots are aiming to touch the water exactly at a specific point. Two large buoys are used to provide an aiming point and pilots can use any engine power and flap setting they chose to get their seaplane to make a splash at exactly the correct spot. Judges will grade each landing based on distance beyond the aiming point buoys. A series of smaller buoys is placed in the water to provide distance context for the judges. This is usually the most competitive contest, during the 2016 Monster Splash seaplane fly-in at the Tavares Seaplane Base the winner of this contest splashed into the water precisely at the aiming point on both of their attempts.

Accuracy landings allow pilots to demonstrate their mastery of the flight controls and energy management! This event, similar to a "Power off 180" approach and landing requires the highest level of skill and only the most proficient pilots can master this one! The main difference between this event and the spot landing is that this event requires pilots to manage their energy to a higher level of accuracy as they make an approach with



power idle. Pilots will again plan to splash into the water at the aiming point. The judges will be grading based on where the seaplanes make the first splash at or beyond the buoys.

The fan-favorite contest during SEA-PLANE-A-PALOOZA is the watermelon bomb drop. Bombardiers in the seaplanes will take aim at a large buoy, while their pilots fly two hundred feet above the lake. The crowd cheers and claps as watermelons rain from the passing seaplanes, with their all-out assault on the buoy. In the years since Tavares started holding fly-in events only one buoy has been lost as a victim of the produce bombings that occur each spring and fall, though there have

been many close calls...

This two day seaplane themed festival will have something for everyone! Including Sun 'n Fun inspired camping for visiting pilots. Those that don't want to "rough it" will find hotels, one within walking distance, for a better night's sleep. On Saturday evening there will be a welcome event and visiting pilots will be able to enjoy the Tavares Waterfront Entertainment District with a wide variety of dining options all within a couple of blocks from the seaplane base in downtown Tavares.

Pilots and visitors will be able to get involved in other ways too. New to the event

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this year is a plane beauty pageant, where seaplanes will be judged on a variety of fun categories by the public. Don't have a seaplane? The Leesburg International Airport is just five miles away and rental cars are available.

For information about the event, visit <http://www.tavares.org/1062/Seaplane-A-Palooza-Fly-In>

When you visit for SEAPLANE-A-PALOOZA don't forget to check out the newly reopened seaplane base store, the Prop Shop! Here's why...

Being a seaplane pilot is all about fun and freedom! The Tavares Seaplane Base has been a favored destination among seaplane pilots since opening in 2010. The facility offers anything and everything a seaplane pilot might be looking for whether it is apron parking, ample docks, on-the-water fuel, well-kept beaches and much more. There has always been a gift shop at the seaplane base and after months of planning, followed by a significant

"re-imagination," the Prop Shop has been transformed from a shop to an experience!

On Thursday, February 9th the City of Tavares opened the doors to the "re-imagined" seaplane base store, known as the Prop Shop! Visitors who stopped into the Prop Shop before the transformation will be in awe with the all-new look and vibe. Not to mention the new merchandise! The fresh atmosphere can be described as a cross between Cape Cod and Key West, with a splash of seaplane.

The innovative atmosphere is the result of a committee charged with creating a plan to make over the store to serve as the center of operations for the Tavares Seaplane Base & Marina as well as for an aeronautically and nautically themed shop for visitors to America's Seaplane City.

Visitors can find the Prop Shop in the historic Woodlea House replica immediately next to the aircraft apron at the seaplane base.

The structure, unique in its own right, is a replica of the oldest home in Florida's Lake County. The revitalization of the store has highlighted the historic structure with new hanging plants along the porch and brightly-colored rocking chairs where shop patrons can enjoy the view overlooking the water runway.

The Prop Shop offers a wide range of merchandise which contributes to the uniqueness of the facility. The shop has something for everyone, boaters and pilots can grab a cold soda or Tavares water and a quick snack. Children can take their pick from a variety of seaplane-themed toys in the kid's section. Visitors of all ages will find a wide variety of America's Seaplane City logoed gear and other unique Tavares Seaplane Base novelties.

The Tavares community takes a great deal of pride in being "America's Seaplane City." From park benches to fire engines, seaplane images and silhouettes are everywhere in the



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Prop Shop offers a wide-array of aviation products & supplies, there is something for everyone!

community. Now, thanks to the cool new product line at the Prop Shop, everyone can find a unique way to show off their love of sea-

planes. From custom decorative seaplane base throw pillows to Tavares hoodies, there is something for everyone.

Also new, and something completely necessary given the shop's name, visitors can now purchase (replica) decorative propellers at the Prop Shop!

You don't have to be a seaplane pilot to enjoy the new shop either, the inventory includes a wide-array of aviation themed items too, so make sure whether you're splashing in or driving in that you stop by the Prop Shop!

Matthew Elia is the Aviation Manager for Tavares, Florida. During SEAPLANE-A-PALOOZA visitors will hear Matt's voice as the emcee for the fly-in contests and activities. Matt provides a mixture of flight instructor and seaplane pilot insight with comedy and sound effects to engage the crowd in the activities.



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