

FLYING



ISSUE 943

MACKINAC ISLAND VOR/DME-A

An approach to a modest runway at a popular Midwest bucket list island

BY JASON BLAIR

A IAF AT PELLSTON VOR

A pilot flying this approach might expect to start at the PLN VOR for it. While they might be able to continue from the enroute environment directly inbound as the chart indicates, “NoPT for arrivals on the PLN VORTAC airway radials 131 CW 219” (meaning in general from the south), they should expect a turn in the hold otherwise. Coming from other directions would require the pilot to conduct a course reversal to establish inbound. A hold is depicted to do this.

B VOR COURSE WIDENS AT DISTANCE

This VOR isn’t on the destination field, but instead at the point where the approach starts. Traveling 14 miles to the missed approach point at MABEH, a pilot

MACKINAC ISLAND AIRPORT (KMCD) in Michigan is close to home for me, and it’s one I visit a few times a year. Many pilots who fly in the Midwest have this historic tourist destination on their GA bucket list.

The runway isn’t long—a mere 3,501 feet—so depending on your aircraft performance, it might be shorter than many runways you use regularly. That being said, once you arrive and park, your aircraft may be the last motorized vehicle you use until you leave an island where time appears to have stood still. Enjoy the horse and buggy or bicycle ride into town or to the historic Grand Hotel. But before you get to relax, you just might find yourself in need of an approach to this airport where clouds often develop even in the summer months, thanks to the cool waters of Lakes Michigan and Huron that surround the island.

During one personal experience on an IFR flight to Mackinac, I found myself needing the VOR/DME-A approach and a circle-to-land because of GPS system testing (signal blocking), thanks to a summer military exercise conducted to the south of the island.

should expect this VOR course to widen as they travel farther from the VOR. This might mean they won’t be perfectly aligned with the center of the airport.

C CIRCLING IS THE ONLY OPTION

With only circling minimums published, and an

approach to the runway on a south-to-north line for a runway that is generally east-west, a pilot is going to need to circle to land. Relatively low minimums are present—well below a normal traffic pattern altitude at 579 feet agl. Plus, if you are going to attempt this approach

at night, a note indicates it would not be allowed for Runway 8.

D DME IS THE MISSED

A DME point at MABEH is noted at 14 nm from the PLN VOR for the missed approach point. No other time or cross radials are given on this approach, so make sure you have the DME tuned properly. An IFR GPS can substitute for this normally, but if you were in the scenario I had to use this approach for when GPS was being blocked, the GPS in your aircraft could not substitute for DME. If I didn’t have a separate DME receiver, I wouldn’t have been able to fly this approach because of a lack of ability to identify the missed approach point under those NOTAMed conditions.

● JASON BLAIR is a flight instructor, FAA examiner, and author in the general aviation and training communities.

KMCD/MCD MACKINAC ISLAND

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MACKINAC I, MICH
CAT A, B & C VOR DME-A

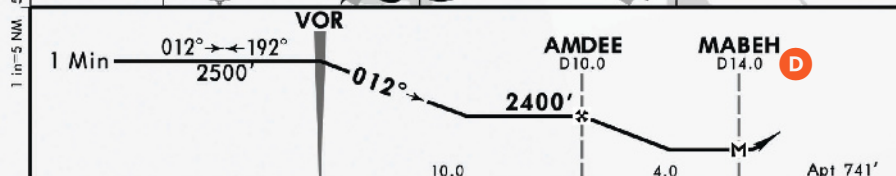
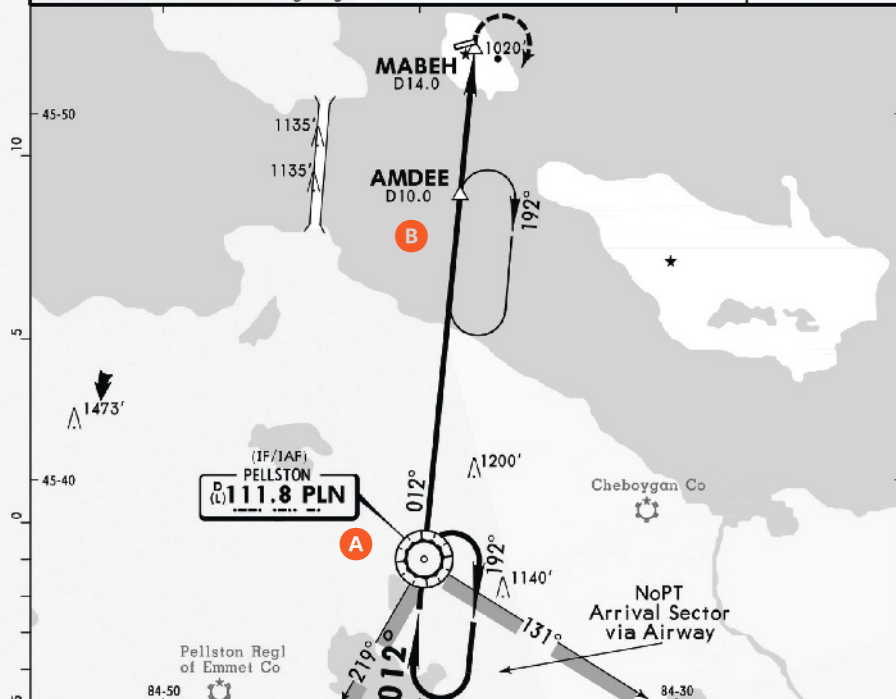
FOR TOWER USE ONLY
FOR ATIS USE ONLY

AWOS-3 118.275		MINNEAPOLIS Center (R) 134.6		MACKINAC ISLAND UNICOM CTAF 122.7	
VOR PLN 111.8	Final Appch Crs 012°	AMDEE 2400' (1661')	MDA(H) Refer to Minimums	Apt Elev 741'	<div style="border: 2px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 150px; height: 150px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">3200</div> </div> <div style="margin-top: 10px;">MSA PLN VOR</div>
MISSED APCH: Climb to 1400' then climbing RIGHT turn to 2400' direct AMDEE/D10.0 and hold.					
Alt Set: INCHES Trans level: FL 180 Trans alt: 18000'					
1. Use local altimeter setting; if not received, use Pellston altimeter setting. 2. Night landing: Rwy 8 not authorized. 3. Visibility reduction by helicopters not authorized 4. Pilot controlled lighting 122.8.					

BRIEFING STRIP 12

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MAP at MABEH									
Lighting - Refer to Airport Chart									
<div>1400'</div> <div>2400'</div> <div>AMDEE</div>									
CIRCLE-TO-LAND									
With Local Altimeter Setting MDA(H)									
With Pellston Altimeter Setting MDA(H)									
Max Kts									
A 90	1320'(579') - 1				1380'(639') - 1				
B 120	1320'(579') - 1 1/2				1380'(639') - 1 3/4				
C 140	NA				NA				
D	NA				NA				

CHANGES: Circling icon, chart format.

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