

AVSIM Freeware Aircraft Review

Aero Commander 520 - Update



Product Information

Publisher: Milton Shupe; Scott Thomas; Joao Paz; Andre Folkers; Urs Burkhardt

Description: An even better Aero Commander.

Download Size:
10 MB plus updates

Format:
Download with auto installer

Simulation Type:
FS 2004

Reviewed by: [Chris Kiehl](#) AVSIM Staff Reviewer - July 8, 2006

Introduction

This team of great minds, has been bringing the Flight Simulator community, some truly great planes... For Free. They've filled an important niche; historic and rare planes that were missing from Flight Simulator. Together, they have produced some of the highest quality add-ons for Flight Simulator, period. Before a planned retirement, the team has decided to update a few of their "Oldies but Goldies", and this review focuses on the Aero Commander 520 Update.

Installation

As with all of this team's excellent planes, a seamless self installer does all of the work for the user. Simply double-click, it will find your FS9 Installation, and the plane is ready to be warmed up for takeoff.

Documentation

This is an area the team excels in, along with several other areas. They consistently provide detailed "readme" files, and have several images included showing the exact function of the different systems in the aircraft.

2D Panel

The 2D Panels are done as nicely as the excellent Virtual Cockpits, providing all the functionality one could ask for. Everything for realistic startup, in-flight operations, and shut down is easily located eliminating the need to switch to several other sub-panels. Of course, Radios, GPS, and other sub-panels can be accessed just as easily, at any time.



The Aero's 2D Panel includes everything needed, it can all be clicked and manipulated easily.

Virtual Cockpit

I must be honest, I didn't fly the original Commander 520, it was rather difficult for my system to run. The update has changed everything; innovation is the key word here. They've managed to reduce the polygon count in the detailed Virtual Cockpit allowing it to run more smoothly on all system configurations. The animations from inside the Virtual Cockpit are the greatest source of joy in this aircraft. The Prop spinners are expertly done, and look as close to the real thing as I've seen compared to real spinners. When looking back to your 4 o'clock, you can even see the flaps when fully extended and see the gear extend and retract.



The complete Virtual Cockpit, and almost everything is clickable.

External Model

The external model's lines are very crisp, including the wires running from the fuselage up

to the top of the rudder. Everything is nicely animated, from all of the flight surfaces to the tires.

The wheels simply roll. What I mean is, the tires actually show a small 'bulge' on the bottom portion of the tire, as if the tire walls were slightly stressed from the weight of the aircraft and the air pressure. This is another great innovation that adds that much more to the simulator. If you've seen real aircraft tires on the ground, they all have this 'bulge'.



My third or fourth flight in the 520, landed out in the desert of Blythe, California.



A nice close up of the front to showcase some of the great detail and the Commander's clean lines.

One thing I really look for on the external model, are extra animations. The main cabin door along with the cargo door, are both very well animated. This adds to the enjoyment and use of your imagination, allowing you to imagine loading cargo into the plane and boarding before takeoff.

Two textures are included and the default is my favorite. Also included is Pegasus Airways, for a unique look. For anyone who enjoyed the older texture sets on this plane, you won't be disappointed. Any older texture sets are complete in compatibility with the new updated version of the plane.

Flight Dynamics

These are also done with the same level of expert skill as the rest of the aircraft. The Commander 520 looks like a big, lumbering giant. However, in the air the Commander floats along gracefully at around 160 MPH in an economy-cruise engine setting. Takeoff is gracefully easy, especially when keeping the plane down the centerline, the tall rudder helps here.



Nice angle of attack takeoff, at speed it just comes off the ground.



Flying out of Jackson Hole during the summer, decent high altitude handling.



The Commander's approach speed of around 65 kts. is very comfortable, easy to keep on the glidepath.



Landing again in Jackson, after a great practice pattern.

The Aero Commander is one of the best twin engine touring aircraft I could ask for, it cruises along on rather small engines for such a large airframe. Also, I've heard of Aero Commanders doing aerobatics, which can easily be duplicated in Flight Simulator with this high fidelity flight model.

Sounds

The Sounds included aren't unique, but they fit the engine type flawlessly. The Aero Commander 520 uses horizontally opposed Lycoming GO-435 engines, which are very similar to the horizontally opposed six cylinder engines of the default Beech Baron 58. I believe the sounds are very fitting, and do well with this plane.

Performance

Test System

Pentium III 1.8 Ghz
1024 mb PC2100 DDR
Nvidia GeForce FX 5600

Flying Time:
10 hours

This is one of the greatest qualities of all planes produced by this Team. The performance is nearly silky smooth on my system, from all viewpoints. The 2D panel; the Virtual Cockpit; and the external model, all run very smoothly with very few jitters even on my system. For that kind of performance, it can be hard to believe the amount of detail all around

Conclusion

This is another outstanding package, by an outstanding team. They care about the small details, but the performance cost for those details is minimal. Everyone can enjoy this great plane, it's one of the best medium twin engine touring planes I've come across.

Whether you want to go from big city to big city, or want to bring it in amongst tall pine trees in a remote wilderness, the Aero Commander 520 is most certainly up to the task.



Approach into the desert.

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