

Soaring!

There's nothing quite like the exhilaration of flying a sailplane into a strong thermal and circling up to the clouds. You have the freedom to soar as the eagles do, your sailplane's long wings silently slicing through the skies. Soaring gives pilots a sense of accomplishment to seemingly defy gravity and stay aloft for hours in a graceful aircraft with no need for an engine.

In Minnesota?

Minnesota is beautiful to see from the air, and it is also a wonderful location for soaring flights. Weather conditions that cause thermals—upward air currents that lift a sailplane—occur often during the season. A typical good flying day will have cumulus cloud bases (marking the thermals) that average 4,000 to 6,000 feet above the ground, enabling soaring flights that last for several hours. There have been flights in Minnesota longer than 400 miles, and it's not particularly unusual to reach altitudes of 10,000 feet. Our soaring season extends from early April through October (or later), depending on weather conditions.

How do they do it?

Sailplane pilots start each flight with a short tow behind a power plane like our Piper Pawnee. On a day without thermals, they will then glide gently down from 3,000 feet in about 20 minutes. But *soaring* pilots can stay aloft in columns of rising air, fueled by the sun heating the ground. Soaring is, in fact, an indirect way of harnessing solar energy. When pilots choose to land, they control their descent precisely with airbrakes and/or flaps, and return to the airport as safely as conventional powered aircraft do.



Membership Application

Applications are accepted via email. Please email the following information to us at this address:

mnsoaringclub@gmail.com

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Mobile phone _____

Work/home phone _____

Email _____

If applicable

Aviation experience (ratings, hours, etc.) _____

Soaring Society of America member # _____

Note: Membership is subject to approval by the MSC Board of Directors.

Useful weblinks:

MSC Website: <https://mnsoaringclub.com>

Stanton Airfield: <https://stantonairfield.com>

Soaring Flight Education Association: www.soaringfea.org

Soaring Society of America: www.ssa.org

About Us

The Minnesota Soaring Club, founded in 1959, brings together people from all walks of life to enjoy the amazing experience of motorless flight. We regularly bring in new members to learn how to fly gliders (also known as sailplanes). Currently we have about 90 members, ranging in age from 14 to more than 80 years old. FAA-certificated glider flight instructors volunteer their time to teach new members how to soar safely, and to help them achieve the skills, knowledge and experience necessary for each member to be licensed by the FAA as a Private Pilot-Glider.



Equipment

The club owns three sailplanes and a tow plane:
Schleicher ASK-21: *2-seat, fiberglass, 34:1 glide ratio*
Schleicher ASK-21B: *2-seat, fiberglass, 34:1 glide ratio*
SZD-51-1 (Junior): *1-seat fiberglass, 34:1 glide ratio*
Piper PA-25-235 Pawnee: *Our hardworking tow plane.*

Location

The Minnesota Soaring Club operates at Stanton Airfield in Stanton, Minnesota, midway between Northfield and Cannon Falls on Highway 19. From the Twin Cities, travel south on Highway 52 to Hampton, then head south on highway 56 to Highway 19. From Rochester, travel Highway 52 north to Cannon Falls, and take Highway 19 west. You can't miss the hangars near the intersection of highways 19 and 56.

Benefits and Obligations

The Minnesota Soaring Club is a working volunteer club: Members serve as ground crew, tow pilots, flight instructors, and they perform other tasks necessary for the club to conduct flight operations. Members contribute according to their individual abilities, interests and qualifications. An important benefit of belonging to the club is sharing the experience of soaring and pursuing individual goals. Instructors volunteer their time to student operations on weekend mornings; in turn, the students arrive early to prepare the sailplanes for the day's flights. New members should plan to attend club meetings and participate in club activities. All members must attend the annual safety meeting in March.

Flight Scheduling

The Minnesota soaring season typically begins in April and continues until late October or early November. During the soaring season, the club conducts an operation each Saturday and Sunday, weather permitting. An excellent flight-training program is offered on these weekend mornings. In addition, several weekday training camps are conducted during the soaring season. There is no charge for flight instruction, other than the normal flight charges.

Flights in club-owned gliders on weekends may be limited to one hour, if other members are waiting to fly in that glider; however, longer flights can often be negotiated. Weekday operations are arranged on good soaring days, when many of the 20 glider owners in the club turn out in force to fly cross-country.

The daily flight schedule is determined by a simple signup procedure. Members place their names on a signup list when they arrive at the airfield. When flight instruction is concluded, typically by noon, regular soaring operations begin. At that time, the member at the top of the list may elect to fly an available sailplane, or to pass (retaining the top spot on the list).

Other Events

The club conducts periodic meetings to discuss club business, to entertain, and to educate. Members have organized trips with club and private gliders to other airports, such as Sleepy Eye MN, and to more distant locations such as the Wasatch Mountains in Utah. Airport picnics and an annual banquet are enjoyed by members and guests. Club members also participate in special soaring events such as the Region 7 Soaring Contest in nearby Albert Lea, Minnesota. In recent years, the club has also hosted cross-country soaring camps for pilots interested in exploring beyond the bounds of the airport. The cross-country soaring camp is open to pilots of all abilities.

What does it Cost?

2025 Dues & Membership Fees

Cost to Join: The membership fee is \$1250 for adults over the age of 22. The membership fee for Youth members (ages 14 through 22) is \$1000. All new members pay 50% of the membership fee when joining the club. Adult members pay the balance 12 months later. Youth members pay the balance of the membership fee when they are age 18 or older and achieve Private Pilot-Glider certification, or when they convert to adult membership, whichever comes first.

Dues: Adult dues are \$750 per year. Youth dues are \$206 per year. Members are billed for their dues in January of each year. The club is a chapter of the Soaring Society of America (SSA), and club dues cover the required SSA membership, which includes a subscription to the monthly SSA magazine, *Soaring*.



Flight Charges

Each flight incurs a tow fee, based on altitude. Pilots who fly club-owned gliders pay a sailplane rental fee.

Aerotow Fees

\$34 hookup fee + \$1 per 100 feet of altitude
Examples: 2,000 feet = \$54; 3,000 feet = \$64

Sailplane Rental Fees

Flights are billed by the minute. The rental fees per 60 minutes are \$44 for the ASK 21 B, \$41 for the ASK 21, and \$32 for the Junior.

Flight Instruction

There is no charge for flight instruction. The club's FAA-certificated instructors volunteer their time to teach club members. Members pay only for the aerotow cost and sailplane rental.

Visit Us!

Would you like to learn more about soaring? Think you might want to join the club? We'd like to meet you at the airfield, where you can talk with club members about soaring, and watch gliders launching and landing. You might have an opportunity to experience glider flight with one of our club members.

Come to Stanton Airfield on a sunny weekend day in the early afternoon. Inquire inside the airport building about how to reach our staging area on the active runway. Once there, introduce yourself to the Field Operations Officer (wearing an orange vest).

Club members will enjoy answering your questions and sharing their stories with you!

Questions? Email us at mnssoaringclub@gmail.com.