



Est. 1980 



GET STARTED

TURN YOUR DREAM INTO A CAREER

www.flyhaa.com

A dark blue silhouette of a mountain peak with three distinct peaks, positioned at the bottom of the page against a light blue sky background.

TURN YOUR DREAM INTO A CAREER

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MISSION

For over 40 years, we have been training pilots to fly helicopters and airplanes in the Pacific Northwest.

Founded in 1980, our flight school has since grown into one of the largest combined helicopter-airplane school in the world.

Despite our size, we're far from being a "pilot factory". Instead, we foster a close-knit community that feels like family. New students quickly settle in, build connections, and form friendships that last a lifetime.

Our FAA training follows Part 141 certified courses, delivering efficient, high-quality instruction. Aspiring pilots receive expert, safe, and professional training, which equips them for success on their journey to becoming licensed aviators. Our comprehensive program prepares you to fly safely in challenging conditions, navigate rugged terrain with confidence, and recognize when it is time to stay on the ground—qualities that define a true aviation professional.

WELCOME ON BOARD



THE SCHOOL



INTRODUCTION



Do you dream of becoming a pilot? At Hillsboro Heli Academy, we are here to help make that dream a reality.

We don't just teach you to fly helicopters with confidence and skill—we also support you through the entire visa and admission process to get you started. Plus, with an F-1 visa, you will have the incredible opportunity to gain up to 23.5 months of hands-on flight experience through working in the U.S. after completing your initial training!

We provide you with:

- **Access to one of the most respected and largest flight schools in the U.S.**
- **Training on 21 helicopters and over 70 airplanes, guided by more than 100 experienced flight instructors**
- **Three unique locations in Oregon to suit your needs**
- **A dedicated helicopter training facility at our Troutdale campus**



Why choose Hillsboro Heli Academy?

BECAUSE WE ARE ONE OF A KIND!

Hillsboro Heli Academy is the only flight school in the U.S. that combines F-1 visa flight training with practical training (CPT & OPT) and EASA courses.

This unique setup allows you to complete your training in the U.S., build essential flight experience, and seamlessly transition to a European aviation career—without the hassle and expense of a license conversion.

THE SCHOOL

PORTLAND, OREGON, USA

“Here in Oregon, we learn to fly in all types of weather. We are not fair-weather pilots!”

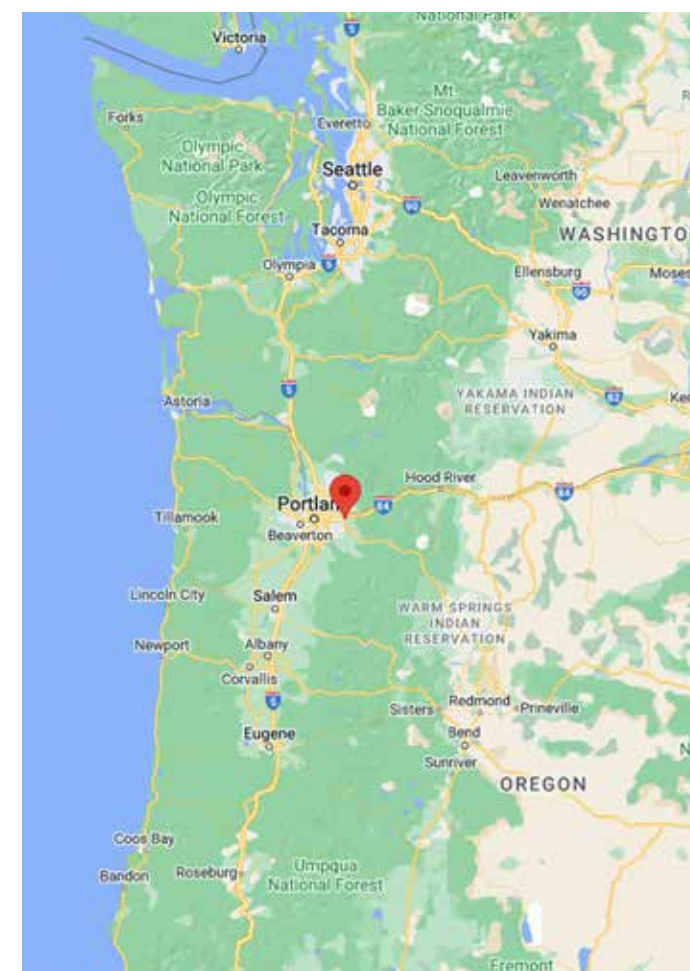
Jared Friend
VP of Helicopter Operations

THE LOCATION

Troutdale, Oregon, is home to our flight school, boasting breathtaking views and easy access to the wilderness of Oregon and Washington state. The Pacific Northwest offers ideal conditions for training pilots in a wide range of weather and environments.

Imagine being just minutes away from the breathtaking Cascade Mountain Range, where you will train amidst diverse landscapes of mountains, hills, and valleys—perfect for mastering mountain flights and off-airport landings. Head further east, and you will encounter high desert terrain with canyons and challenging off-airport sites. To the north lies Seattle, offering multiple airports and the demanding experience of navigating Class Bravo airspace. Travel west and you will find the stunning Oregon and Washington coastline, where you can enjoy incredible scenery and even practice beach landings.

Oregon is an ideal training ground, with weather conditions similar to Europe. In summer, you will learn to operate in high temperatures. Fall brings rain and reduced visibility, while winter often delivers strong winds—perfect for honing your skills in varied conditions. At the same time, you’ll develop critical decision-making abilities to assess when a flight should proceed, be postponed, or aborted, preparing you to handle real-world challenges with confidence.



THE SCHOOL

THE FLEET

For our flight training, we exclusively use Robinson, Cessna, and Piper aircraft—trusted, world-renowned brands that have been staples in flight training for decades. Their reputation for quality and safety ensures a reliable and secure experience in the cockpit.

Familiarity and proficiency with these widely used models also enhance your résumé, providing our graduates with excellent opportunities to work at many U.S. flight schools after completing their training.

We fly 70-100,000 flight hours per year, and over 10,000 in helicopters.

Helicopters

We own and operate a total of 21 Robinson helicopters.

19 Robinson R22:
2 Beta and 17 Beta 2

3 Robinson R44:
1 Raven und 1 R44 Cadet

Aircraft

Our training organization operates a total of 74 fixed-wing aircraft.

Single-engine:
43 Cessna 152 and 17 Cessna 172

Multi-engine:
1 Piper PA-34 and 13 Piper PA-44

SAFETY MATTERS! AND WE ARE LEADING THE WAY

Our flight school is proud to be the first Part 141 flight school in the world to achieve Stage 3 certification under the International Standard for Business Aircraft Operations (IS-BAO).

This prestigious recognition highlights our corporate culture, team spirit, and the unwavering dedication of our pilots, mechanics, and support staff to maintaining the highest standards of flight safety.

THE SCHOOL

COMMUNITY

At Hillsboro Heli Academy, our community is something we are incredibly proud of! Here, you are never just a number or someone only your flight instructors recognize. From your very first day, you become part of the Hillsboro family.

Every year, we host a variety of fun events like the Portland Mud Run, heli-camping trips, floating down the Sandy River, BBQs, and more.

With so few helicopter pilots worldwide, building connections and networking with other pilots is essential—and we make it easy to form those lasting bonds while enjoying the journey together.

*“I have found friends
for life here!”*

Dominik Beiwinkler,
Pilot ADAC Luftrettung

LIFESTYLE

Our flight school is located in Troutdale, Oregon, right on the Columbia River Gorge and 20 minutes from Portland. This location offers a variety of ways to spend your free time.

Portland has all the amenities of a big city: a great food truck scene, sports facilities, a wide range of cultural activities and much more. Troutdale itself has a river with a beach, a climbing wall, and a frisbee golf course.

The nearby Columbia River Gorge offers an abundance of hiking and mountain biking trails, making it a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts. In winter, you can hit the slopes for skiing or snowboarding on Mount Hood, our very own „home volcano“.

Head further south to Central Oregon, and you will find endless opportunities for adventure amidst its stunning mountains, forests, and rivers—perfect for just about any outdoor activity you can imagine.

ACCOMMODATION

To make your arrival in Oregon as smooth as possible, we offer temporary housing in several apartments where incoming students can rent rooms. These accommodations are conveniently located within walking distance of the school, saving you the hassle of finding a place to stay at the start of your training.

We will even pick you up from Portland airport and take you to your apartment or student housing.

Most of our students live in shared flats with other students or flight instructors, which is a fantastic way to immerse yourself in the aviation world. Living together fosters a supportive environment for studying, offers daily encouragement, and helps you build lifelong friendships that will accompany you throughout your career. While about half of our students own a car, it is easy to get to campus on foot or by bike.



THE SCHOOL

EVENTS

At our flight school, we host a wide range of events every year for both students and employees. In the summer, we organize regular barbecues, paired with our graduation ceremonies, creating a perfect mix of celebration and community.

For example, we celebrate the American Independence Day with a relaxing float down the river, followed by a festive barbecue.

In the photos here, you can see our team participating in the Rugged Maniac Mud Run in Portland—a fun and challenging obstacle course we tackled together.

Another highlight is our annual helicopter camping trip, where we fly our entire fleet to an airfield in Washington State and enjoy a memorable camping experience under the stars.



Follow our adventures here:





HILLSBORO AS PODCAST

In the summer of 2024, Hillsboro Heli Academy proudly launched its very own podcast! In this series, our team shares firsthand experiences about training in Oregon and offers valuable insights into our operations.

Here's the link to the school's podcast:



Here you will find Phil Haupt's episode of "The Helicopter Podcast":



HILLSBORO IN THE PRESS

PAUL SHARES HIS EXPERIENCES

Paul has chronicled his career journey in a series of five articles for ROTORS magazine. In these articles, he shares fascinating insights into his work as a flight instructor in California and as a tour pilot in Alaska.



Here you can find all five articles online:



LET YOUR DREAMS TAKE FLIGHT



HELI-CAMPING

One of the highlights of training with us is our annual heli-camping trip. Every summer, we take our entire helicopter fleet, along with a few pilot friends, and fly to Keyway—a small airport nestled in the stunning Columbia River Gorge.

There, we enjoy a barbecue, share songs around the campfire, and spend a memorable night camping together. It is the perfect way to combine flying with community and adventure!

Scan the QR code to see more of our heli-camping:





TRAINING

ALL THE FACTS AT A GLANCE

- Research
- Decision
- Medical
- Application
- Financing
- Visa
- Training
- Duration
- Licenses
- Career prospects
- Worldwide network

LET’S GO

Starting a career in aviation is a big decision, and we want to support you every step of the way!

RESEARCH

Here is a brief guide to help you understand what to expect:

Before you enroll in a flight school, you should do a lot of research. This first decision often affects your entire pilot career. Of course, you should check out the schools’ websites and social media channels, but it may be even more useful to talk to former or current students.

This way, you can get a better and more personal impression.

Some of the things to consider when choosing a flight school:

- School reputation:**
Does the flight school have a good reputation with its current and former students?
- Maintenance:**
Does the flight school have its own mechanics who are familiar with the helicopters?
- Fleet:**
How many and which helicopters are flown by a flight school is an important point of reference. In the US, for example, the FAA requires that you fly at least 200 flight hours, of which 50 hours must be in a Robinson R22, before you can work as a flight instructor in the R22 yourself. Since the R22 is used by most flight schools in the US, you have the best job perspective if you have trained in the R22 yourself. At the same time, it is advantageous to have at least 25 hours of flying experience in R44 as this will open up more job opportunities.
- Which licenses are obtained:**
Does the flight school offer all the licenses you could want to obtain, or do you have to then go elsewhere to get additional and expensive recertification?
- What happens after training for graduates:**
Are graduates hired by the flight school? And if so, how much do they fly there?
- For international schools, what visas are offered:**
In the U.S., you should look for the F-1 visa, as this visa allows pilots to work in the U.S. after their training.
- Prices and cost structure:**
A key consideration when choosing a flight school is, of course, the cost of training. All expenses should be clearly communicated, transparent, and easy to understand. For example, if taxes apply to your training costs, they should be explicitly stated upfront. Additionally, a reputable flight school will only charge you for the training you actually complete—nothing more, nothing hidden.
- Location:**
An important aspect when choosing a school far from home is its location profile: Does the training location offer you the right terrain training to be able to operate fully and safely in your home country? Can your skills be developed in training to meet the requirements of your professional field?



FASTEN YOUR SEATBELT...



“Hi, I’m Phil, the European Representative at HAA. Here are my personal tips to help you get ready for the English language!”

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Your entire training will be in English, which forms the basis of your future career in the cockpit. That is why strong language skills are essential—it is the foundation of your success in aviation. Even if your English is already quite good, there is always room for improvement.

1. Duo Lingo

This free app makes learning English fun and manageable with just 5–10 minutes of practice per day.

2. Movies in English

This is how I personally improved my English. Watch movies or TV series in English with English subtitles. Keep a vocabulary notebook handy to jot down unfamiliar words and their meanings.

3. Podcasts

A great one to start with is The Helicopter Podcast by entrepreneur and former student Halsey Schider, where industry pros share insights, experiences, and career advice for future rotor pilots. Listen here: open.spotify.com/show/2MQNirwFhaiE5uVwKaBGiz?si=20d53c5a4a5b4952

4. Aviation English

Aviation terminology can be challenging but is incredibly valuable for your preparation. You can download, print, or purchase the Helicopter Flying Handbook from the FAA for free. Learning these technical terms ahead of time will save you both money and time in theory lessons.

Download it here: www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/handbooks_manuals/aviation/helicopter_flying_handbook

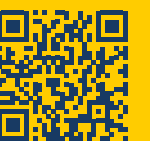
5. Theory Course

We can give you free access to our Learning Management System (LMS), which includes an online theory course. This course works best on a tablet but is accessible on any device with an internet browser. Since this course is mandatory during your training, getting a head start will give you a significant advantage. Additionally, we hold free weekly theory review sessions, which I highly recommend joining!

6. Plane English

This app is designed to help aspiring pilots improve their English radio communication skills. Together with our flight instructors, Plane English has created helicopter scenarios that simulate our radio calls at Troutdale Airport. Practicing with this app will prepare you well for cockpit communication. Explore the app: planeenglishsim.com

By working on your English before training begins, you will set yourself up for success and make your aviation journey even smoother. Let me know if you would like more tips or help getting started!



The costs for the following training and licenses are included:

FAA:

- Private Pilot License
- Instrument Rating
- Commercial Pilot License
- Certified Flight Instructor
- Certified Flight Instructor – Instrument

EASA:

- Commercial Pilot License
- Frozen ATHP(IFR) Theory

We can send you our current price list for the combined FAA/EASA program by email:

phaupt@flyhaa.com

TRAINING

MEDICAL

Before you sign up for flight training, you should make sure that you meet the physical requirements.

To do this, the respective authorities require a medical. For the US, you need the FAA Class 2 Medical. You can get this worldwide from an FAA-certified Aero Medical Examiner. The FAA website includes a search function:

Here you can find their website:



For the EASA license, you need an EASA Class 1 Medical. The initial examination and issuance can only be done at an aeromedical center and the medical has to be issued by the Austrian aviation safety agency Austro Control and in order to train with us, the medical has to be issued by the Austrian aviation safety agency Austro Contro.

The examination can also be done in any other EASA member state, but your doctor must send your examination results to Austria (which you need to tell him to do).

The EASA Medical is only valid for 12 months and must be valid at the end of the training. This means that you have to renew the medical at least once during your training.

APPLICATION

To register at our flight school, you simply need to go to www.flyhaa.com/apply and fill out the application form, upload your school or university graduation certificate, and proof of financial means. This is to certify that you have the financial means to pay for your training and living expenses.

If you do not have an equivalent to a U.S. high school diploma, you need to take the so called Ability to Benefit test. This online test consists of a math and an English section, each of which takes 20 minutes to complete. We can provide you with additional resources for your preparations.

Once all documents have been submitted and your application fee has been paid, you will receive the I-20 document from us. This proof of enrollment is required to apply for your visa at the embassy. Of course, we will help you every step of the way!

TRAVEL TO THE U.S.

You can enter the US up to 30 days before the start of the training program. We recommend booking a direct flight to the U.S., as passport controls can take a long time and connecting flights have been known to be missed as a result. KLM, and Iceland Air offer flights to Portland with layovers in Amsterdam or Iceland.

FREE WEBINARS

Register here for our next webinar:



TRAINING

EASA TRAINING

EASA TRAINING Advantages of EASA training in the US

The biggest hurdle for aspiring helicopter pilots in Europe is the fact that most helicopter companies require their pilots to have 800 -1000 flight hours of experience. Achieving this number of hours in Europe is not easy since there are only very few jobs for low-hour pilots available.

In the U.S., on the other hand, it is comparatively easy to find a job. With the F-1visa, our graduates can legally work in the U.S. as a pilot or flight instructor for up to 23.5 months after their training.

This means that you can return to Europe with up to 1500 hours of flying experience and, thanks to the EASA license you can acquired with us, work in Europe without any or expensive license conversions.

Another advantage is that training in the U.S. is considerably cheaper.

- **With the F-1 visa, you can work in the U.S. for almost 23.5 months**
- **Great job opportunities for pilots in the U.S.**
- **Up to 1,200 - 1,500 hours flight hours experience possible**
- **Combined European and U.S. licenses**
- **Training in the U.S is considerably less expensive than in Europe**



TRAINING PROCESS

Students begin their training with the FAA Private Pilot License. After this is completed, we start with the EASA theory, which takes about 9 months and consists of 60 hours of instruction and 590 hours of structured self-study.

Parallel to this, you complete the FAA IFR and CPL training. Every two months, students can take their EASA exams at our in-house Austro Control Testing Center.



TRAINING

FAA TRAINING

In general, the training takes place in four phases:

Private

Here you will learn the theory and flying skills needed to fly the helicopter safely and independently. During the first 20–30 hours, you will practice maneuvers and emergency procedures before your “Stage Check,” where an experienced flight instructor evaluates your knowledge and skills.

Afterwards, you will fly solo for the first time and then complete several navigation flights—first with your CFI and later on your own. Once this is done, you will return to practicing flight maneuvers and then take your final stage check, after which you will be a certified private helicopter pilot.

IFR

During your instrument training, you will learn to fly by sole reference to instruments. To train this skill, we are using a “view limiting device”. These special glasses prevent you from looking outside the cockpit.

This phase of your training consists of 35 flight hours along with theoretical instruction.

Commercial

The FAA commercial training consists of 60 flight hours along with theoretical instruction, during which you expand your knowledge and experience. This advanced training focuses on key skills such as off-airport landings, day and night cross-country flying (both with and without an instructor), and the option to incorporate R44 external load training during the course.

CFI/CFII

After completing the commercial training, you will proceed to the flight instructor and instrument flight instructor training. This phase challenges you to become an effective teacher, combining didactic methods with hands-on practice. You will work with fellow students in group sessions where you will teach one another and provide constructive feedback. This approach not only helps you refine your teaching skills but also trains you to give effective critiques, enabling you to guide future students towards improvement. In the helicopter, you will train to fly from the left seat while simultaneously instructing—a skill that many pilots find challenging at first.

To teach in the Robinson R22, you must log at least 200 helicopter flight hours, including 50 hours in the R22.

HOW TO BECOME A PILOT:



TRAINING

VISA REQUIREMENT

In order to train as a pilot in the U.S., a foreigner must first apply for a visa.

Depending on the purpose of your training, you will need to apply for either an M-1 visa or an F-1 visa. Both visas are available at Hillsboro.

The M-1 visa is suitable for those who do not plan to work in the United States. It is a purely student-based visa. If you plan to work as a pilot after completing your training, you must apply for the F-1 visa. Below, we will explain the differences to help you determine the right option for your goals.



F-1 VISA

The F-1 visa is designed for full-time students who wish to complete the full pro-pilot training program, including flight instructor training.

This visa allows you to work as a pilot in the U.S. after your training, enabling you to gain valuable flight experience.

The F-1 visa is only offered by a limited number of flight schools, meaning only a few institutions can provide the opportunity to work in the U.S. for up to 23.5 months through CPT (Curricular Practical Training) and OPT (Optional Practical Training).

If your goal is to work as a commercial pilot, gaining flight experience is crucial. For this, the F-1 visa in combination with our CPT and OPT is the ideal path.

M-1 VISA

The M-1 visa is perfect for anyone planning to take a specialized course in the U.S. but does not take the full program with us.

I-20 AND THE F-1 VISA

To apply for an F-1 visa, the flight school must issue you an I-20 document.

- The I-20 is required to apply for the F-1 visa and allows you to legally reside in the U.S. during your training.
- Initially, the I-20 is issued for 18 months but can be easily extended.

The F-1 visa in your passport is only necessary for entering the U.S.

- Typically, the U.S. Embassy issues F-1 visas for three to five years.
- If you need to stay in the U.S. longer, you can apply for a new visa. To do so, you will need to leave the country briefly, either returning to Europe or traveling to Canada. In most cases, obtaining a new visa takes about a week.

F-1 VISA, CPT, AND OPT

To work in the U.S. as a pilot or flight instructor, an F-1 visa is required.

Hillsboro Heli Academy has been training pilots in the Pacific Northwest since 1980. We provide flight training under U.S. SEVIS regulations and the FAA's Part 61 and Part 141 standards, allowing our students to qualify for the F-1 visa.

The F-1 visa requires students to enroll in a structured training program to earn their licenses and maintain full-time student status for at least one academic year (6,5 months). This visa also enables you to work in the U.S. for 23.5 months after completing your flight training. The combination of high-quality flight training and a work permit makes our academy the ideal choice for aspiring commercial pilots.

Once our graduates successfully complete their training and secure employment, they can begin their Curricular Practical Training (CPT). This program allows them to legally work in the U.S. as a pilot and/or flight instructor. Whether working at Hillsboro Heli Academy, other flight schools, or aviation companies, we are here to support our graduates at every step of the way. The CPT is renewed every three months and can be extended for a total of up to 11,5 months.

After completing CPT, the work permit can be extended for another year through Optional Practical Training (OPT). To avoid delays, it is important to apply for OPT with the U.S. authorities in a timely manner. Once approved, the OPT allows you to work in the U.S. for an additional 12 months, after which you have 30 days to leave the country.

F-1 REQUIREMENTS

Language skills

While you don't need perfect English, strong communication skills are essential. The entire training program, including flight and ground instruction and exams, is conducted in English. If you aim to become a flight instructor in the U.S., your English must be proficient enough to explain and teach complex technical concepts clearly.

Most students make rapid progress in improving their language skills once they arrive, but we are happy to share tips on how to improve your English before training begins.

Financial proof

You must demonstrate your ability to cover both training costs and living expenses to qualify for the F-1 visa. Acceptable proof includes a bank loan a recent bank statement, or supporting documentation from relatives.

The required financial amount varies depending on the course you select.

Health insurance

Although insurance is not mandatory, we highly recommend it.

Tip: Foreign student insurance policies are often significantly cheaper than standard insurance options.

High school diploma

As the F-1 visa is a student visa, you must provide proof of high school completion or its equivalent.

If you do not have this qualification, you can take an online placement test in English and math to fulfill this requirement.



WISH DO

CROSS COUNTRY FLIGHT

OREGON

FROM ABOVE

A report by Mirko



Oregon from above - a round trip of almost 12 hours with many highlights from the air

Intro

For over 10 years, I have known and loved Oregon with its variety of landscapes.

From the desert in the east, across the Cascade Mountain Range near Troutdale, to the coast with its sand dunes—and in between, always volcanoes and rainforests. Until now, I had experienced Oregon mainly through hiking the Pacific Crest Trail and taking various road trips. But now, during my pilot training, as I regularly fly over Oregon, I had an idea: I wanted to see Oregon’s highlights from above. So, I spoke with my flight instructor and began planning.

Planning

Oregon is about three times the size of Austria, with many sparsely populated or completely unpopulated areas.

This meant detailed flight planning was necessary. I created a 12-page PowerPoint presentation for our Chief Instructor, Eric, outlining our route to ensure we would always have enough fuel with our range of approximately 2 hours and 40 minutes.

I also analyzed the various weather conditions along the route to ensure we could complete the flight safely. For this, I conducted detailed wind evaluations and used several weather tools to find the best time window for the trip. Using Google Earth, I identified interesting off-airports along the route. Eric was very pleased with my preparation and planning, and we got the green light for the flight.

The Flight

Finally, the day had come. My flight instructor Sandro and I were ready. After the usual extensive pre-flight checks, performance calculations, and a final weather review, we headed to the ramp, and our adventure began.

From Troutdale, we first flew south, passing our local volcano, Mt. Hood, and continuing toward Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Washington, and the Three Sisters near Bend. At Sunriver, an airport located in a luxury golf resort, we stopped for our first refuel before heading to one of Oregon’s absolute highlights: Crater Lake, a deep blue lake nestled in an extinct volcano.

After this breathtaking sight, we flew west to Medford and then toward the coast. Seeing the impressive redwoods, towering cliffs, lush rainforests, and the iconic Cannon Beach from above was an unforgettable experience!

After all these highlights, we returned to Troutdale, completing our Oregon loop after a total of 11.9 hours of flying.

Lessons Learned

In addition to the incredible landscapes, I gained valuable experience practicing off-airport landings in the mountains and learning about the power limits of the R44.

CAREER

LAUNCHING CAREERS, ONE GRADUATE AT A TIME

Our graduates and training programs are highly respected and globally recognized by pilots and helicopter companies alike. Our graduates moved on to work for many world renown companies:

- **ADAC Luftrettung**
- **DRF Luftrettung**
- **ÖAMTC**
- **REGA**
- **Air Zermatt**
- **Bristow Helicopters**
- **CHC**
- **Rotak**
- **Helicopter Transport Services**
- **Columbia Helicopters**
- **Maverick**
- **Papillon**
- **US Police**
- **NASA**
- **Avincis**
- **OMNI Helicopters**
- **The Helicopter Company (THC)**
- **and many more**

CAREER PLANNING

For many, becoming a helicopter pilot and turning that passion into a career is a lifelong dream.

Breaking into the exciting world of helicopter aviation requires a strong network, a good reputation, the right certifications, and, of course, flight experience. That is where training in the U.S. makes all the difference.

After completing your training, you will have the opportunity to work as a pilot in the U.S. for 23.5 months. During this time, you can easily log 1,200 to 1,500 flight hours, setting you up for a successful career in aviation.

Many of our graduates from Europe have gone on to work as rescue helicopter or offshore pilots. Others have chosen to stay in the U.S., moved to Canada or other exciting places around the world.



WORLDWIDE NETWORK

Over the past 40+ years, thousands of pilots have successfully completed their training at our flight school.

Many of them have stayed connected with us and are eager to support the next generation as they embark on their journey into the world of helicopter flying.

MY CAREER AT ADAC AIR RESCUE

FROM FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR TO RESCUE PILOT

My name is Dominik Beiwinkler, I'm 29 years old, and I completed my pilot training at HHA in Oregon, U.S. After completing my training, I worked as a flight instructor.

After returning to Europe with 1,200 hours of flight experience, I completed my EASA conversion and have been flying H145 and EC135 helicopters on primary and secondary rescue missions for ADAC air rescue since February 2022 to

Working for ADAC Air Rescue has always been my ultimate goal.

That is why I sent my first application to ADAC while converting my license in Germany. Through the cooperation program between HHA and ADAC, I was able to establish valuable contacts and gain further insights into the field.

My EASA conversion, however, was not without its challenges. A less-than-ideal learning program, delays due to the coronavirus, and complications with the application process made it a longer and more expensive endeavor than I had anticipated. Fortunately, HHA now offers a combined EASA program in the U.S., which significantly reduces the time, cost, and effort involved in obtaining the license.

After earning my EASA frozen ATPL(H) license, I applied to numerous companies, including ADAC Luftrettung. The support from my friends and former colleagues was incredible—they shared tips for applying and information about vacancies.

Finally, ADAC invited me to take the DLR test. Thanks to thorough preparation, I passed and was accepted into the ADAC pilot pool.

Initially, I joined as a PICUS (Pilot in Command Under Supervision) to familiarize myself with HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Services) operations. During this phase, I learned about ADAC's structures and processes and completed type rating training on the H145, as well as HHO (Helicopter Hoist Operator) training.

In the first few weeks, I met many colleagues from different departments at the ADAC Air Rescue headquarters. Following this, I attended six weeks of intensive training at the ADAC HEMS Academy in Hangelar for my H145 type rating.

Before becoming fully operational in the rescue service, I underwent HHO training, which was essential for mastering hoist operations.

From my perspective as a former flight instructor, this hands-on training—absorbing knowledge from experienced pilots during active operations—is the most effective way to learn and grow in this demanding field.



“Working as a pilot for ADAC Air Rescue has been a major goal for me from the very beginning.”

Dominik Beiwinkler

My First Shift in Air Rescue Service

My first day in the air rescue service began promptly at 6:30 a.m. on June 1, 2022.

For my very first mission, we were tasked with transferring a patient from an island to a hospital on the mainland. Adrenaline pumping, I followed the pilot to the helicopter while the rest of the crew climbed in calmly and routinely. Once the helicopter started, I settled into the rhythm of the operation.

On the return flight, I was given the controls for a while, but halfway home, we were redirected to a traffic accident. This provided me with invaluable insights into the communication and cooperation required at an accident scene.

Our doctor gave me the opportunity to follow the entire process—from receiving the patient, to transporting them in the helicopter, to handing them off at the emergency room. This firsthand experience helped me better understand the work of the medical crew.

First Experiences and Milestones

In my first two months with Christoph 26, I flew 100 missions, logging almost 85 flight hours, including a thrilling hoist operation where we rescued three people stranded in the mudflats as water levels rose.

I am proud to serve as a mentor in the HHA-ADAC cooperative program, supporting former colleagues and new students. Through meetings, seminars, and trade fairs, I've shared valuable insights drawn from my own experiences in air rescue.

Reflections on 23.5 Months as PICUS

After 23.5 months as PICUS in Sande, I can now reflect on this transformative period. Coming to ADAC without prior rescue service experience, I used this time to immerse myself in all aspects of HEMS operations and to learn as much as possible from my colleagues.

During this time, I participated in over 500 primary rescues, around 150 secondary transfers, and several hoist operations. The variety of missions and challenges in Sande allowed me to experience and master numerous situations under the guidance of experienced colleagues.

Working with different crews, each with their own approaches, was particularly rewarding. This diversity helped me develop my own „toolbox“ of strategies, tailored to what works best for me.

Key Skills and Development

Among the most important skills I have learned are flying in ways adapted to the needs of both crew and patients, as well as making constant ad hoc decisions regarding weather, landing sites, and range.

Despite the added effort for the station, I received training in Sande to become both a TC-HHO and an NVIS pilot. This unique combination brought additional challenges and variety to my duties.

In addition to flying, I was thoroughly trained in station and office responsibilities, which gave me a new appreciation for the importance of maintaining a clear overview in all areas of the operation.

From PICUS to Commander

Towards the end of my time as PICUS, I flew several missions as commander without a second pilot, which greatly boosted my confidence in my abilities and decision-making. Sitting in the front seat alone, while the medical crew worked with a patient in the back, was something I never would have imagined myself doing during my first weeks as PICUS.

Having completed the entire PICUS program and logged around 600 flight hours on the H145, I have now transitioned into the slightly smaller EC135. I now fly as commander of Christoph 28 in Fulda, where I will continue to grow and serve in this incredible profession.



FLYING THE MIGHTY CH-54 SKYCRANE ON THE FRONTLINES: FIGHTING FIRES FROM THE SKY

A report by Phil Haupt



In the United States, helicopters have been a key tool for fighting forest fires for many years. They are categorized into light, medium, and heavy classes.

During the 2022 fire season, nearly 200 helicopters were deployed, and I had the incredible opportunity to fly as a co-pilot on one of the biggest of them. The helicopter in question was the CH-54 Skycrane, a heavy-category helicopter. Originally built by Sikorsky in the 1960s for military use, the Skycrane is now operated by just a few civilian companies for heavy-lift operations and firefighting.

Our helicopter, N722HT, was a CH-54B model from 1969 with almost 11,000 flight hours. Powered by two Pratt & Whitney turbines delivering 9,600 horsepower, the helicopter can handle a total weight of 21,000 kg. Its tank holds over 9,000 liters of water, which can be refilled in just 90 seconds and discharged in under 10 seconds.

Firefighting missions

Our assignments varied between serving as an initial attack crew, fighting small remote fires and being dispatched to join a large force of firefighting aircraft to combat major fires.

During my first missions in eastern Oregon and Idaho, we tackled numerous small fires, which we were able to contain quickly and efficiently. After several weeks operating in Oregon's high desert, we were dispatched to the Cedar Creek fire. There, we joined a fire camp in Oakridge, Oregon, alongside seven other helicopters.

Our mission was to halt the fire's advance along one flank. Over the course of this deployment, we dropped more than 400,000 liters of water along a one-mile stretch. On Google Maps, you can see the area between Charlton Lake and Waldo Lake, where our efforts successfully stopped the fire.

„As a co-pilot on the CH-54 Skycrane, I experienced the incredible power and precision of aerial firefighting. With 9,600 horsepower and the capacity to carry 9,000 liters of water, we fought fires with remarkable effectiveness—a challenging yet deeply rewarding experience.“

Phil Haupt



9,000 LITERS OF WATER IN 10 SECONDS

We received our mission orders from our Forest Service manager, typically in the form of a digital document with coordinates and radio frequencies.

Once we put on our protective gear and completed our extensive pre-takeoff checklist, we were usually airborne within 5–10 minutes. Next we were heading toward the fire at near maximum speed—105 knots (194 km/h)—and often flying at an altitude of less than 500 feet above the ground. During the flight, we programmed our electronic flight bag, digital radios and contacted our airborne or ground contact to receive additional instructions. To ensure safety, the FAA established Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs) to keep other aircraft and drones out of the area. To enter these restricted airspaces, even we had to request permission.



Arriving at the fire

Upon reaching the fire, our first task was to locate a suitable water source. In the high desert, this was particularly challenging with a 25-meter-long helicopter. We often had to seek out small rivers or remote lakes barely larger than the rotor diameter. Once we located a water source, we performed a water pickup, referred to as a “dip”.

Following the dip, we received instructions for the water drop zones (known as a “drop”) via radio from ground contacts or made independent decisions on where to release the water.

Dip-drop cycles

During these cycles, the co-pilot typically handles the enroute flying while the captain manages the more complex aspects, such as dips and drops. I was fortunate to fly with one of the training captains, who guided me through performing dips and eventually even some of the drops. Both maneuvers demand careful planning, a precise understanding of the helicopter’s performance, and perfect timing to ensure effective water release.

A special opportunity

After my regular tour ended and our Skycrane returned to its home base in Aurora, Oregon, I was given a unique opportunity. A forest fire broke out near Camas, Washington—just minutes from our Troutdale campus. I had the honor of flying the Skycrane to Troutdale and spending a day fighting the fire in our training area. It was an incredible experience to put my skills to the test so close to where my aviation journey began.

*“To fly with purpose
and make a positive impact
using a helicopter
is a dream for many pilots –
one I can wholeheartedly
recommend!”*

Phil Haupt,
European Representative at HHA



Scan the QR code to watch
the video on Instagram:



THOMAS SKOV'S LIFE AS A BUSH PILOT IN CANADA

“NO DAY IS LIKE THE OTHER!”

My name is Thomas, and I have been passionate about flying for as long as I can remember.

I started flying gliders in Denmark at the age of 14 and later served in the Danish Air Force for 2 Years. After completing my service, I moved to the United States to pursue my dream of becoming a helicopter pilot.

I graduated from Hillsboro Heli Academy in 2017 and immediately began working as a flight instructor. After 23.5 months in that role, I moved to Canada, where I began working as a bush pilot in northern British Columbia and Alberta.

What makes this job so exciting is the incredible variety of operations I get to perform with different types of helicopters, including:

- Medevac (medical assistance)
- Aerial firefighting
- External load operations
- Infrared surveys and much more

A typical week might involve taking aerial photographs in a Bell 206 one day, delivering drill heads to remote locations with an AStar the next, and fighting forest fires in a Huey by the end of the week.

No two days are ever the same, and that is what makes this career so rewarding!



Scan the QR code to see more on Instagram:



Here is an interview with Thomas on YouTube:



WORLDWIDE CAREERS FOR OUR GRADUATES

FROM HILLSBORO OUT INTO THE WORLD:



Timm

- Pfaffenhofen, Germany
- Training at Hillsboro 2021-2022
- Flight Instructor at Hillsboro 2022-2023
- Tour Pilot at FlyNyon 2024



Alexandra

- Munich, Germany
- Training at Hillsboro 2021-2022
- Flight instructor at Hillsboro until 2024
- Tour Pilot at TEMSCO in Alaska 2024
- Instagram: ale_4_ela



Nico

- St. Wendel, Germany
- Training at Hillsboro: 2021-2022
- Flight Instructor at Ascent Aero Academy 2022-2023
- Tour Pilot at Coastal Helicopters 2023
- Instagram: n1co_888

WORLDWIDE CAREERS FOR OUR GRADUATES

After completing their training, our graduates have many exciting opportunities for their professional careers. The CVs and careers are as individual as the individuals themselves:



Cordell

- Maupin, Oregon, USA
- Training at Hillsboro 2007-2009
- Flight instructor at Hillsboro 2009-2014
- Tour pilot at Caribbean Helicopters Ltd 2014-2016
- Pilot at Helicopters Inc 2016-Present
- EMS Pilot at GMR (Air Evac/Med Trans/REACH) since 2019



Manuel

- Graz, Austria
- Training at Hillsboro 2021-2022
- Flight instruction, tour and charter pilot at Maxflight Helicopter Services 2022-2023
- Air rescue pilot at ADAC Luftrettung since 2023
- Instagram: manu_hz__



Sam

- Wynigen, Switzerland
- Pilot in the Rega junior program
- Training at Hillsboro 2019-2020
- Flight instructor at Hillsboro 2020-2021
- Tour pilot at Helicopter Adventures in Orlando, Florida
- Since 2023 MercyAir, Africa
- mercyair.ch



Oliver

- Starnberg, Germany
- Training at Hillsboro 2020-2021
- Flight instructor at Quantum Helicopters 2021-2022
- Tour Pilot at Rainbow Helicopters 2022-2023
- Pilot at Air Dynasty in Nepal 2024

Andi

- Munich, Germany
- Training at Hillsboro 2020-2022
- Flight Instructor at Hillsboro 2022-2024
- Tour Pilot at Sunshine Helicopters



Peik

- Wiesbaden, Germany
- Training at Hillsboro 2020-2021
- Flight instructor at Hillsboro 2021-2022
- Firefighting in CH54 and S61 at HTS 2022
- Tour pilot at Temsco 2023
- News pilot and senior base manager at ATN, Melbourne, Australia
- Instagram: peik_b

Markus

- Dachau, Germany
- Training at Hillsboro 2021-2023
- Flight instructor at Hillsboro 2023-2024
- Tour pilot at FlyNyon 2024



CHECKLIST

OUR PRE-FLIGHT CHECKLIST FOR YOUR TRAINING

Prior to beginning your pilot training, there are a few things to consider and take care of.

Of course, we are here to support you every step of the way.

BEFORE REGISTRATION

- **Passport** – valid for at least 4 years
- **Medical** – FAA class 2 and Austro Control EASA Class 1
- **Health insurance** – providers such as Hanse Merkur or ADAC
- **English training** – you can find tips on page 19
- **Financing** – training and living expenses

REGISTRATION

You will need the following documents to register:

- **Passport**
- **Financial verification**
- **A-levels/Matura or online math and English test**

AFTER REGISTRATION

- **TSA background check** – online questionnaire and fingerprinting after arrival in the U.S.
- **I-20** – certificate of enrollment with us
- **Visa registration** – online registration
- **Visa interview** – at the US Embassy or US Consulate
- **Travel to the U.S.** – up to 30 days before the start of the training



CONTACT

Phil Haupt is the European representative for Hillsboro Aero/Heli Academy and your primary contact for any questions about training at our flight school or pursuing a career as a pilot.

Since joining our flight school in 2015, Phil has held several key roles, including flight instructor, assistant chief instructor, head of theory training, and EASA program manager. Beyond his work at the academy, Phil has also flown as a co-pilot on a CH-54 Skycrane during firefighting missions. He holds both FAA and EASA certifications as a helicopter flight instructor and is also a licensed airplane pilot.

Phil regularly hosts webinars and information events to share insights about our flight school and connect with future students. Feel free to reach out to him via email or through our contact form at www.en.flyhaa.de, and he will get back to you promptly!

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OR 97124 U.S.**





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Responsible in the sense of the LPrG-MV:

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READY FOR TAKE OFF?





Est. 1980 

**NOT ALL
CLASSROOMS
HAVE 4
WALLS**

Flyhaa.de

phaupt@flyhaa.com