



Q. I am currently a student pilot and will get my license about 30 days from now. I will also be training for my instrument rating, complex, and high performance endorsements. I would like to buy a plane but I am not sure on the one to get. I am thinking about a Piper Comanche 250 or Mooney M20F. The price range is about \$50,000 to \$85,000. The things that are important to me are useful load, fuel economy, cruise speed and the overall cost to own.

A. Both the Comanche and the Mooney are good aircraft. However, from an insurance standpoint, you will be better off buying the Mooney or an Arrow as a first high performance complex aircraft. The Comanche does not usually get as good of rates as the other two for low time, transition pilots. In this case, low time is anyone with less than 500 total time and 250 of retractable gear time.

Your rates will be high the first year anyway, because of your low time. I would get the instrument and about 25 hours of complex time before you buy anything. You do not have to do this, but it will make the insurance search easier. I would also fly the Mooney and see if you like the size. It is not a big aircraft and even though it is very fast, efficient for the engine, and cost, it is uncomfortable for many people.

*Send your questions to:
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Personally, I think the Mooney offers more “bang for the buck” than many other aircraft, as long as you can put up with the cramped cabin size.

If there is any doubt about the cockpit room in the Mooney, check out a Piper Arrow. The Arrow offers a reasonable cabin space and decent performance. If you want a little better speed, you might even look at a turbo Arrow. I never liked the T-tailed Arrow as well as the other models, but they can often be purchased a little cheaper.



Another alternatives would be the Beech Sierra, which is an interesting plane. It is not exceptionally fast, but it has a large cabin, is very comfortable and reasonable to operate.

If you want to spend more money, a Cessna R182 is a very nice aircraft. The \$182 is the retractable gear 182. It is not as economical as the Mooney, but very good at load and comfort. It makes a very stable instrument platform.

Finally, if you don't really need to have the retracts, look at the American (Grumman) Tiger. The tiger offers almost retract performance from a fixed gear aircraft.

*Send your questions or comments to
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**Hangar Talk Q & A
continued**

Q. I am a current owner of a Belanca Super Viking and want to get a Twin. I have 5000+ total time and 4000+ multi-engine. I have been looking at 1968 to 1971 Piper Navajos (PA31-310). They seem to be priced reasonably and insurance for me affordable. I am avoiding Cessna 400 models due to the pending AD, (which I think will increase the value of the Navajo). My criteria (as silly as it may seem) are; can I carry four people, golf bags and fly for 3 hours in cabin class comfort?

A. The Cessna 400 spar problem could be a major factor in a purchase. As you have mentioned, it could be a reason to stay away from the Cessna aircraft. I also agree that the Cessna prices will probably drop and other brands and models could increase in value.

Of course, you could take the other view, which is to watch the prices of the Cessna 400 models and see if they drop significantly. After the prices have went down, they could actually become a good buy. You could have the AD on the spar done (even if it cost \$75,000) and have a cheap 400 series aircraft. Of course, there are potential financial risks to that plan.

I suppose there are risks that the Piper line of aircraft will go through the same type of testing and potential AD's as the Cessna lines, but that does

not appear to be on the horizon. The Piper Navajo aircraft can be a good investment. They offer a nice roomy cabin and good useful load. Navajo's should stay in demand and increase in value, especially with the Cessna spar AD since the Navajo and the Cessna 400 lines compete for the same type of use.



As far as the load, carrying four people and golf clubs should not be a problem. The average gross weight is between 6,500 and 7,000 pounds. The empty weights run from 3,600 to 4,000 pounds. Range...the average range is around the 900-mile mark for standard fuel. The Mojave had a standard fuel of 238 gallons. The book range was about 1190 miles. The optional fuel for the other models (up to 238 gallons) would be a better choice to get the maximum range and reserves. Since your plan is to carry only four people and baggage, that should still give you enough useful load for the maximum fuel and range.

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