

Voyager Flight Planning Software

I've been using flight-planning software for just about as long as it's been around, and I've tried most of the major players on the market. The current versions are quite powerful and user-friendly, so when Seattle Avionics claimed that its Voyager Flight Planning Software, Version 2.0, was "the easiest, most technologically advanced and integrated tool available," I thought "How much better can it be?"

The Voyager is easy to use and flexible, and users can customize it in a variety of ways. Multiple pilots and multiple aircraft are no problem, and flight-planning options are almost endless. There's something for everyone, from the most hands-on pilot who wants to specify every single detail of the flight, to the pilot who knows the starting and ending points and wants the software to calculate all the details between the two points. I especially liked the auto-routing feature.

With the appropriate airplane information, the program will plan the route between the chosen departure and destination airports. It will select altitudes that avoid terrain and large bodies of water and take advantage of the most favorable winds, and go around airspace you want to stay away from, such as Class B or temporary flight restrictions (TFRs). Whether planning a VFR or IFR route based on GPS or VOR navigation on or off the airways, it checks the weather, and will even plan your fuel stops. You pick the variations that meet your needs.

The price for this flexibility and ease of use is that Voyager demands a certain level of computing horsepower. Believe it when

you read the minimum system requirements, which include a 700 MHz processor clock speed. My computer has a 450 MHz Pentium 4 processor, and while it ran the program, I could certainly tell that Voyager was working my hardware to the max. I'm sure that a faster processor would take care of the occasional pauses and hesitations I experienced, but even though it worked slower, the software always gave excellent results.

It's not listed in the minimum requirements, but I highly recommend that you have a broadband Internet connection. Voyager taps your Internet connection frequently during flight planning, so a slower connection will undoubtedly slow down the process. I have a DSL connection, so speed wasn't a

problem in that regard.

Seattle Avionics says Voyager is "so advanced, it's simple." After using Voyager, I tend to agree. The company has taken advantage of all the latest computer and Internet capabilities, and has done a good job on the user interface. Its ease of use and wide variety of options make Voyager the most flexible and user-friendly flight planning software

I've ever used. (And now I've got a good excuse to get a new computer!) The program sells for \$198, and current information, from TFRs to weather, is always immediately available through the Internet connection. To learn more, visit the Seattle Avionics website at www.seattleavionics.com.

—Joe Norris, EAA Senior Aviation Information Specialist

