PILOT REPORT: PILATUS PC-12 NG

News / Manufacturer

There’s no mistaking a 2016 Pilatus PC-12 NG from earlier versions of the aircraft. The third iteration of this 22-year old model sports a five-blade Hartzell prop with scimitar shaped blades made of black carbon fiber. Because of the new prop’s computer-refined blade airfoil and thin chord section, it’s more efficient at converting torque into thrust in all phases of flight than the aluminum Hartzell four-blade prop it replaces. It’s also 7-lb. lighter, so it has less rotating inertia.

Harder to spot are the half dozen plus drag reduction improvements that, in combination with the new prop, enable the aircraft to cruise up to 5-kt. faster, take off on slightly shorter runways and climb to cruise altitude 10% quicker. The drag reduction is all about the details. Look closely on preflight inspection and you’ll notice that the oil cooler cover has been reconfigured, the cowl exhaust vent has a flush surface, all antennas are aligned with the local airflow patterns, gap seals have been fitted to the flaps, the flap track fairings are more streamlined and there’s a flush mount operating handle on the main entry door, among myriad other detail refinements.

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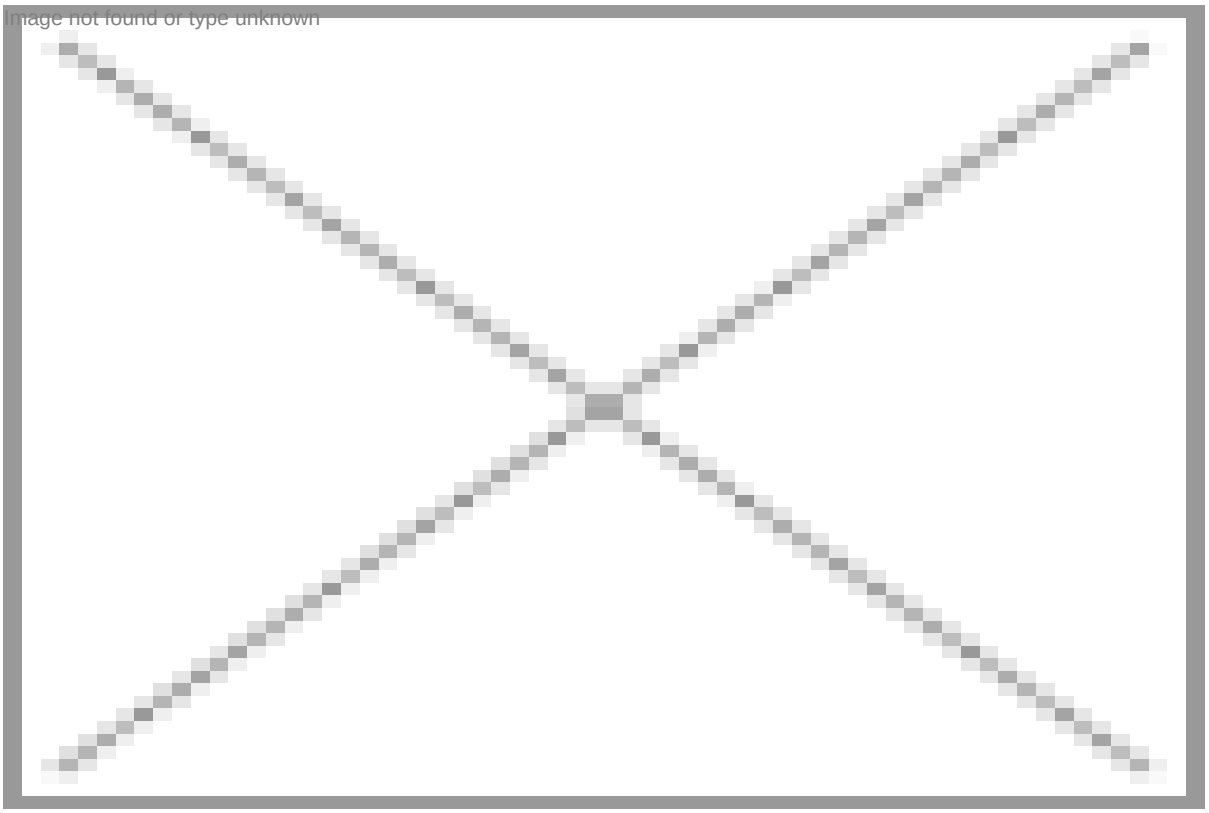

Inside the aircraft, there are several quality and comfort improvements. Starting at s.n. 1576, there’s a new air stair door with illuminated steps and a back-lit Pilatus logo. Cabin furnishings are on a par with best-in-class turboprop business aircraft costing up to twice the price.

The interior layout, created by Pilatus in partnership with BMWGroup Designworks, makes the most of the available cabin size. Large wells in the cabin side panels increased seated hip room. The side rails are positioned at the ideal height to function as outboard armrests for the chairs. The work tables fold out flush with the side rails to increase usable area. Headrests and aisle-side arm rests on the chairs retract to make it easier to move about the cabin.

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