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Aircraft Used Aircraft Guide

## Cessna 182 RG Skylane RG

*The 182RG is an oft-overlooked high-performance choice, but watch out for maintenance bugaboos - especially the landing gear.*

By **Aviation Consumer Staff** - **Published:** March 5, 2001 **Updated:** October 29, 2019



Pilots shopping the field for a high-performance retractable sometimes have one of those forehead-slapping moments when the Cessna 182 RG is mentioned.

For reasons probably related to the Skylanes rep as a stodgy family sedan, its not often considered in league with the likes of Bonanzas, Mooneys and even Cessna 210s.

Yet there it is. The Skylane RG has good performance, hauls a load and is a reasonable buy, although in recent years, thanks to demand, its value has spiked compared to Mooneys and Bonanzas.

Mechanically, the 182RG is somewhat of a mixed bag. The landing gear has a troublesome history and although it performs we'll if maintained, its simply not the equal of systems found on Bonanzas and Mooneys. Ignore maintenance on a Skylane RG and you'll pay for it sooner or later.

### History of the Line

Cessna put folding legs on the redoubtable Skylane relatively late in the GA came. The first models arrived in 1978 and the model faded by 1986, along with the rest of Cessnas piston line.

Only 2000 RGs were built in both turbo and normally aspirated variants, which explains why you don't see many of these on the ramp. (By comparison, there are nearly four times as many J-model Mooneys and tons of Bonanzas of various models.)

While the stiff legged Skylane has Continentals rugged O-470, Cessna switched the 182RG to the Lycoming O-540-J3C5D, at 235 HP.

The Cessna TR182RG sports the same engine, turbocharged. Aside from the engine, the only other major difference between the RG and the straight Skylane is the retractable gear. This makes use of Cessnas electro-hydraulic actuating system, which is found in the entire Cessna retractable single line.

The aircraft underwent no major changes during its eight-year production run. But Cessna made lots of small functional and cosmetic changes to fix minor bugs in the design and to improve cockpit comfort. The biggest occurred in 1979 when the troublesome rubber bladder tanks were dropped in favor of integral fuel tanks of larger capacity. The bladders had problems, collecting water in wrinkles and some leaked. The integral tanks solve both problems nicely and never need resealing or repair.

In 1980, a new door latch and pin system designed to help seal the doors better against howling winter drafts was offered, although mechanics sometimes still need to do a little rubber-mallet persuasion on the doors. Further addressing the comfort issue, the airplane got wing root ventilators which are still in use in current Skylanes, albeit with Wemac eyeballs.

Owners note that the ventilators become loose with age and occasionally leak or pop open uncommanded. Field solution: Duct tape over the wing inlets. Windshields also tend to leak: Field solution: Removal and resealing. In 1981, Cessna added improved battery access along with a new muffler for better heating to address complaints from rear seat passengers. Although its not quite as slick as a Bo, the RG will still build speed in a descent so to help control that, the 1983 models had higher flap limit speeds, up to 120 knots for the 20-degree setting.

A low-vacuum warning light was offered, as was an electric six-cylinder primer system, which is found on injected Lycoming engines using the Bendix/RSA system.

The panel also got a red gear unsafe light that shows when the hydraulic pump is running, as it is during gear transit. Given the potential trouble if the system leaks

and the pump runs continuously, this is a band-aid fix with a purpose.

### **Gear Woes**

In the 210, Cessna had a rather complex main gear door arrangement, prompting some owners to just remove the things. No problems with that in the 182: It has no main gear doors. A scan of Service Difficulty Reports shows three instances where the nosegear doors interfered with operation of the gear, however. These were redesigned in 1983 so the door skins overlap the lower cowl skin, eliminating butt joints and fit/catch problems.

The Skylane RGs got new composite fuel caps in 1984 and rear-seat shoulder harnesses as standard equipment. Also, the copilot got a standard control wheel and rudder pedals, so these controls didnt have to be purchased as options. Evidently, most owners got them anyway, for all of the Skylane RGs weve seen have full dual controls.

### **Resale Value**

In the early 1980s, the resale value of Cessna 182RGs took the usual depreciation plunge then resumed its expected climb. Through the mid-1990s, used RGs were relatively cheap compared to Mooneys.

But airframe values can be fickle and the RG soon overtook the 201 in value, probably because despite its quirks, its easy to fly and carries more than the 200 HP Mooney.

In late 2000, an average 1980 RG sells for \$123,500, according to the Aircraft Bluebook Digest. The same year 201 retails for \$95,000. Just a few years ago, the Mooney cost several thousand dollars more on the used airplane market. Sex may sell, but utility does, too.

### **Performance**

Since the Skylane RG is most often compared with the Mooney 201 (not Bonanzas, for some reason), worth noting is that the J-model Mooney will probably outrun the 182RG in full-power run at low altitude. But barely.

Owners report true airspeeds in the 150 to 160-knot range, at mid altitudes and burning about 12 to 14 GPH at higher power settings. Some 201s actually run a little slower than that, but on less fuel. In a side-by-side flyoff by The Aviation Consumer between the two aircraft (when both had two aboard and about three-quarters fuel), the Cessna showed itself to have the better climb rate and to be more adept at getting

into and out of airports than the Mooney, especially on rough or turf fields, since the 182 sits high and has more prop clearance.

The Cessna also hauls more, both in weight and in volume. The piper is paid, of course, in higher fuel burn and marginally greater maintenance costs. The turbocharged version of the 182RG is, of course, significantly faster on the same fuel burn, since it will ascend into the low teens without breathing hard. Owners tell us it can be counted on to deliver 165 knots between 9000 and 13,000 feet, with speeds approaching 180 knots at higher altitudes.

With 235 HP, the RG also climbs well. Full power is available on the turbo all the way to 20,000 feet. One turbo pilot told us he got a 1000-FPM climb to FL 200. Said another, I have climbed through 14,000 feet with an inch of ice at 900 FPM, and I'm here to tell you this is the true value of a strong turbocharged engine.

With plenty of fuel aboard, the 182RG has respectable range, among the best in this class of aircraft and better than early Bonanzas and Mooneys. It has 88 gallons usable on 1979 and later models, which is easily enough for six hours at high cruise speeds.

At lower power settings-say 55 to 60 percent-the airplane can motor along far longer than your bladder can stand. The Connecticut state police use the 182RG for traffic, prisoner transport and admin duty and one pilot claimed that if the weather turns bad over his home state, he can fly to Chicago. That's hardly an exaggeration.

### **Handling, Cabin**

This ain't no Bonanza. Like the straight-leg model, the 182RG is heavy in pitch, so much so that pilots of small stature complain about the tug it takes to flare one for landing. (The trick is to trim correctly.) Said one owner: I lift weights for a hobby, but still had trouble holding full aft control wheel in a full stall.

A common source of damage is nose-first landings because the pilot didn't have the juice to haul the nose up. This can be avoided but is still a pitfall of the design and something Mooney and Bonanza drivers don't have to contend with.

Hard to land? No. Unforgiving? Definitely. Our review of accidents shows that many pilots lose control of the RG on the runway, land it hard or prang the nosewheel. This can't be overstated. Get lazy in the flare or leave your feet on the floor in a crosswind, and the Skylane may bite. As in other Cessna models, pitch-up moment with flap deployment must be trimmed off, especially if a go-around is

contemplated. More than one Cessna pilot has watched in horror as the nose pitches up with application of full power on a go-around. Then again, we know of several pilots who have earned private ratings in this airplane, so its hardly unmanageable.

Compared to a Mooney or even a Bonanza, the RGs cabin is commodious. There's plenty of leg and shoulder room for both front and rear seat occupants. Having two doors and a generous, low-to-the-ground baggage door also helps. And the windows on most models open, which aids in hot-weather taxi comfort.

But there's a downside to that, too. With age, Cessna doors tend to fit poorly-if they ever fit we'll at all. This occasionally creates drafts that are a nuisance in winter weather. Watch for rain ingress in baggage doors, too.

Cessna seats are hardly industry award winners. Owners complain about cheap plastic and fabric and theyre neither the most nor the least comfortable. They tend toward an upright seating position with a good view over the glareshield. Theyre adjustable in both height and seatback angle with lots of parts and pieces; watch for broken adjustors.

### **Payload**

Cessnas have and deserve a good reputation for payload. But you may have to adjust the fuel load to get the most out of it. The 182RGs gross weight is 3100 pounds, with empty weights in the 1800 to 1900 pound range, for a useful load of 1200 to 1300 pounds, tops. Fill the tanks and you can typically carry about 700 pounds, or four FAA-approved people and an overnight bag. Thats one more person than a Mooney 201 can manage on full tanks.

Leave an hour of fuel with the FBO and you can carry generous baggage and still have more than five hours of fuel for a still-air range of 900 miles to dry tanks. Not bad.

Clearly then, the Cessna 182 RG fits in a tiny niche between the load champion 210s and Saratogas and the stingier Mooneys and Bonanzas. Unlike the Bo, the Cessna is not cranky about CG. You have to work to load it outside the envelope.

### **Maintenance History**

If the 182RG has an Achilles heel, this is it. The Skylane RGs are plagued with a number of problems that merit buyer attention. Heres a list gathered from owner reports and FAA Service Difficulty Reports:

Landing gear malfunctions. Despite claims by Cessna and owners groups that the landing gear isn't that bad, problems with the folding legs lead the list of maintenance woes. However, recent reports from owners contain few complaints about the gear, leading us to conclude that its shortcomings can be managed.

Most SDR problems on various airplane models can be tallied in singles or perhaps tens of occurrences. Gear SDRs on the 182RG run into the dozens. And remember that only a fraction of problems find their way in the SDR database.

Examples: Main landing gear actuator bolts loose, broken or sheared; chafed hydraulic line failed, pilot unable to lower gear and lock; rudder cable rubbed hole through emergency hand pump gear down line; control cable to carb heat rubbed through hydraulic line to power pack; nose landing gear actuator hose ruptured in flight; downlock actuator leaking, found piston rod assy. scored; relay became intermittent, causing landing gear to fail to operate either up or down; landing gear failed to extend due to screw missing from gear motor circuit breaker...and on and on.

Shimmy dampers: Problems were legion, involving broken clamp pins, broken attach bolts, worn bellcrank bolts, cracked barrels, etc. At least one Cessna Service Bulletin (80-67) was aimed at correcting the problem with a modification kit. Two pilots, however, said they found a cure to nosewheel vibration by increasing tire inflation to 55 PSI.

Balky throttles: At least five different service bulletins and mod kits were put out to cure the problem. Any used RG should have them installed.

Instrument panel eyebrow lights that flicker out. Multiple replacements seem to be the rule. Said one owner, I buy them by the dozen. If anyone can figure out a fix, Ill happily buy the STC. Cabin air and water leaks: Service bulletins address the chronic Cessna problem of leaks around the windshield and wing roots.

Other problems noted included turbos leaking oil, vacuum pump drive shafts shearing, aileron hinge cotter key holes badly aligned, Bendix starters failing, exhaust stacks cracked and alternator mounting bolts worn.

In short, the 182RG has a greater list of maintenance bugaboos than average. Any owner should know that going in, especially during pre-buy inspections.

## **ADs of Note**

Despite the SDR list as long as the proverbial arm, the Cessna 182RG has managed to escape the AD list from hell.

Most of those that have been issued are of the shotgun variety that affect a wide variety of airplanes due to common components.

Much-publicized ADs called for inspection of fuel tank caps for leakage, and for inspection of bladder fuel tanks on 1978 RGs for wrinkles and installation of quick drains-the famous rock & roll AD.

Fortunately, it only affects 1978 models, which account for about a quarter of all 182RGs built. Others required inspection of aileron hinges for the correct location of cotter pins.

AD 87-10-6 requires inspection of the rocker arm assemblies and 82-27-2, inspection of the prop shanks.

## **Mods, Club**

Given the large number of both straight-leg and retract 182s, the model has spawned a number of aftermarket modifications and improvements. Some mods apply only to the straight-leg versions, some apply to both RGs and fixed gear models.

Bush Aircraft Conversions makes a STOL kit and flap gap seals, contact them at P.O. Box 431, Udall, KS 67146, phone 800-752-0748. Horton has been in the STOL and speed mod business for many years. Reach them at 421 NW Road, Wellington Airport, Wellington, KS 67152, phone 800-835-2051.

Monarch Air and Development, Inc. also offers a range of Cessna mods (not just 182s), contact them at P.O. Box 419, Oakland, OR 97462, phone 541-459-2056.

For ongoing support of any Cessna-singles and twins-we recommend the Cessna Pilots Association as an unparalleled source of competent technical advice and help. Contact [www.cessna.org](http://www.cessna.org) or 805- 922-2580.

## **Owner comments**

Six months ago I purchased my first aircraft, a 1979 TR182. I wanted rock-solid safe airplane able to carry two to four adults and pretty much full fuel and go to the mountains with a little power reserve. I also wanted it to be relatively inexpensive to maintain and operate.

For that matter I wanted to have an out in weather and thought the turbo, although more expensive, was a safety option. I trained in Cessnas and Cherokees.

Reading your publications, I felt the 182 was the way to go. I wanted a turbo 182 straight leg, but there are so few of them and everyone talked me out of the conflicting turbo and straight legs.

Despite my low time (250 hours) and no IFR rating, my advisors felt that a transition to the TR182 would be no problem. And as a side benefit, it came with the better Lycoming O-540 de-rated to 235HP vs the Continental in other 182s.

Most influential was speaking to Field Morey of Middleton Wisconsin ([www.ifrwest.com](http://www.ifrwest.com)) who has owned many of them and uses them for around-the-country 10-day IFR training courses.

This was much the kind of flying that I wanted to do. I bought the airplane, took his course, got the IFR rating and am very happy with my decision to buy the TR182 over a normally aspirated Skylane.

Total time was 1400 hours and I purchased it for \$129,000. No corrosion, amazing panel, all Bendix/King radios, HSI, S-TEC 55 autopilot, Precise Flite Standby Vacuum, Argus moving map, Stormscope, Magellan VFR GPS, Clark intercom. It had had a gear-up landing with good repair. Engine, turbo and prop in great shape. I have flown it about 80 hours, all in training so far, and use about 15 GPH at the various training power settings. It seems to burn about a quart of oil every time I go up no matter how long or short the ride.

Asking around, I found out that these Lycomings, although calling for eight quarts, may be happier at six. Add any more than that and you probably just blow it overboard. I am cautiously still trying using less than 8 quarts to test that theory.

I find that doing run-ups at 1700 RPM as called for in the POH leads to very rough mag checks, despite timing and plugs being okay. I learned that doing the run-up and mag check at 1200 RPM is better.

Also, the lower six plugs tend to foul. On expert advice, I replaced the lower six with iridium fine wire plugs which tend not to foul. I have as yet not found the annoying water leak from the front windshield wing root area. At 6000 to 10,000 feet, I'm getting IAS 150 to 155 knots with two to three people aboard. The airplane is fairly

easy to fly, like a 172, but so much more nose heavy. I am still working on getting the flare just right.

Joseph Koveleskie  
New Orleans, La.

We have owned a 1979 182 RG since 1993. It has been a great airplane. We have flown approximately 160 hours per year, much of it IFR. It is a solid and stable IFR platform.

In 1998, we did a complete makeover and put in a new leather interior, paint, windshield, replaced the old plastic and so on. In 1999, we replaced the plastic on the panel with aluminum and recessed lighting eliminated the post lights that were a continuing source of frustration.

Annuals on the airplane have run about \$2500 for the routine things. The maintenance issues that seem to recur with some frequency include the shimmy damper on the nosewheel and the brake seals on the mains.

At cruise, we consistently see TAS of 151 to 153 knots at the 6000 to 10,000 feet. Fuel burn is typically about 14 GPH, block to block. We had a problem with fresh oil on the belly of the airplane from the breather tube.

The mechanics convinced us we needed a top overhaul since they determined that valve issues were pressurizing the crankcase and forcing oil out the breather. After topping all six cylinders by Lycoming, the oil problem continued. We then went directly to Lycoming. They showed us a mod done for the 50 or so 182RGs that the FBI was flying and had the same oil problem.

The fix was to cut off the crankcase breather tube about 1/2 inch inside the cowling. This immediately solved the problem and we have had no oil issue since. We probably did not need the top overhaul at all.

The other thing Lycoming recommended was to run the engine 50 to 75 degrees rich of peak, versus POH recommended 25 degrees lean. We do this consistently now. While it costs a few cents in fuel, the jugs are all turning out compressions in the mid 70s after 300-plus hours.

Anyone looking for an airplane of this type should also look closely at the windshield and the condition of vent tubes inside the wings. The windshields leak water along the lower front edge in rain.

The insulation around the wing root (or lack thereof) will also allow a lot of cold air in. The air vent tubes to the rear seats rot and leak air even with the vents closed. We replaced all of them at the time of the paint work.

We love the airplane and feel we now have one of the best ones out there. I would compare our airplane to any new one coming off of Cessnas line. I have attached a few pictures. Hope you might use one.

Ted and Mike Ehrlich  
Pittsburgh, Pa.

My wife and I purchased a spanking new 1978 RG from the factory when we were each 52 years old. We flew home to San Luis Obispo sans radio but with Cessnas 300A Nav-o-Matic autopilot and electric trim. We installed a Bendix/King RNAV, transponder, ADF and KX-170-B navcomm as Cessna electronics were poorly rated then, as you no doubt know.

We now have over 4000 hours on the airframe, are on the second paint job after the original and preparing for a third. There is a story here: The single-engine models in 1978 and 1979 had received faulty primer so within two years, filiform corrosion began showing on the exterior surfaces, whether hangared or parked outside. Some eight owners of these affected airplanes at SBP were forced to sue Cessna for new paint jobs.

We won and that was paint job number 1. Eleven years later, we had it painted again and now, eleven more years, its due once more. This eleven-year cycle is less expensive than hangaring in the least expensive hangars at SBP-\$350 to \$400 per month.

The first engine went to 2500 hours Hobbs time and was overhauled by Medallion engines of Camarillo, California, now of Las Vegas. We used exchange cylinders and it ran fine for 1500 hours, when it was fed bad fuel at Oakland, which resulted in a rebuilt as new engine by Lycoming courtesy of Chevron.

Both Chevron and Lycoming did an exemplary job of coordinating and getting us into the air again in just seven weeks.

We cruise at 7500 feet, 65 percent power on 11.5 to 12.5 GPH, leaned 50 degrees rich of peak at 155 knots true, very slightly slower at peak lean. Landing gear problems have been nil. Once only have the gear not thunked down, requiring hand pumping to green.

It was a broken electric connection to the nosegear. Once a burning smell sent me back to land about 10 minutes after takeoff, that turned out to be an overheating gear pump; got a green light after two tries and landed without incident. Insurance is for \$1 million one-incident liability and \$95,000 hull and costs \$1325 through Falcon, the CPA recommended broker. For cost, we figure at \$95 per hour all-inclusive, figuring older fuel prices of under \$2, \$42 per month tiedown, 2000-hour TBO and 200 hours a year of use. We have talked about other sleeker, faster aircraft but always decide that our 182RG is best for us.

If anything stands out for us, its ease of flying and load hauling capability. We load it with two normal 10-speed bikes, baggage and such to overflowing or two other adults and baggage, full fuel and still stay within the envelope.

Thats unmatched with any other airplane with the possible exception of the 210.

James H. Maul  
San Luis Obispo, Calif.

I bought my 1979 Cessna 182RG in 1990 and have flown it 1200 hours since. It has 3200 hours total time, oxygen, STOL, aftermarket interior insulation, a repositioned horizontal stabilizer, new paint in 1088 and a top overhaul with new ECI cylinders at 300 hours.

I paid \$72,000 for it and its easily worth \$120,000 today, with lots of bells and whistles installed by the previous owner, including a Stormscope and other items.

Its the perfect airplane for me and my kind of flying: Lots of long, high-altitude flights to northern California, south Texas, the San Juan Island, with heavy takeoff loads from high-altitude fields. My home field is 6875 feet, with high density altitude during the summer.

I get 155 knots at 10,000 feet at 75 to 80 percent power and half payloads. Its a little bit faster when lighter. Its easy to fly, fast or slow, costs much less to maintain than my previous Beechcraft retract due to the hideous prices I paid for Beech parts.

Its also lovely to look at and seems timeless in its lines and curves. Im 58 years old and will probably fly this airplane until Im 65 and then give it up. Id buy something else new or used if it better fit my needs and my body; Im 6-foot-2 1/2 and 240 pounds.

Mooneys are great airplanes and I have to fly em but the difficulty of egress/entry is too great for me. And I like the idea of those two big doors, just in case.

The most important element of the cost of this airplane is that thus far, all the money Ive spent flying it has been equaled by the appreciation in value. Through the three airplanes in my life, my wet cost of flying for 3300 hours is zero, because of the increase in price between purchase and sale for each my airplanes equals the cost of ownership.

I pay \$1400 a year for insurance with high limits and low deductibles. I burn fuel at about 13 to 14 GPH, buy thorough and expensive annuals and keep the airplane hangared and waxed regularly.

If I think hard about the negatives of 182RG ownership, I come up with the usual Cessna criticisms: Cheap and shoddy original equipment interiors, poor fabrics and doors that did not fit-mine do now-and the typical short-sighted poor quality assurance.

All of those are past memories for now and I think of this airplane as a perfect, mature bottle of old Cabernet Sauvignon that I can keep on drinking endlessly.

John Loehr  
Montezuma, N.M.

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