

Tecnam Eaglet available now

THE FIRST Tecnam Eaglets have arrived in New Zealand and are attracting strong interest. An evolution of the popular P92 Echo Super, the new aircraft from Tecnam offers a variety of subtle but significant design improvements. *KiwiFlyer* met with Giovanni Nustrini, Managing Director of Tecnam Australasia and spent an enjoyable morning above the Auckland and Waikato landscape.

Eaglet Pedigree

The Eaglet is the fourth evolution of the Tecnam P92 product line, following in the footsteps of the Classic, Echo S, and Echo Super models. Tecnam's design goal for the aircraft was to meet the needs of a robust trainer for all levels of flight. With the Eaglet, Tecnam have endeavoured to combine the best features of all their high wing aircraft into one platform and it is fair to say they have achieved this with some success. Our (and other) flight appraisals have struggled to find anything significant to criticise on the aircraft.

Features and Improvements

Powered by the ubiquitous Rotax 912ULS, the Eaglet will climb at 1200fpm and cruise on 75% power at 112kts. In the microlight aircraft class, it carries a MTOW of 1200lb and a useful load of 470lbs. A luggage area behind the seats will accommodate 44lbs. Flaps down, power off stall is at 37kts.

Construction is all metal and there are minor changes to the wing and tail surface areas for stability enhancement. Pre flight and fluids access to the engine bay has been much improved as has access for brake fluid level inspection. The aircraft is now fitted with toe brakes as standard. Instrumentation and cabin appointment is impressive, with the design taking a definite step in the direction of GA aircraft.

Visibility and comfort have both been improved, helped by a slight redesign of window space and particularly by new seats that sit lower in the aircraft. At 46 inches wide, the cabin offers plenty of room and even larger occupants shouldn't feel cramped or claustrophobic.

Behaviour throughout the flight envelope is stable and predictable, with controls being well balanced and light as our flight test demonstrated.



Giovanni Nustrini, Managing Director of Tecnam Australasia, formats his demonstrator Eaglet on the camera plane over the fields of Matamata. Three Eaglets are currently in stock at Tecnam's Ardmore Base.



KiwiFlyer thanks Chris Haynes for the use of his P92 Echo Super as the camera plane for these pictures.



Established Reputation and Support

As the recreational aircraft market has grown, so too has the variety of aircraft available to prospective owners. A significant point of differentiation offered by Tecnam is their scale of operation. Tecnam is the most established microlight dealer in Australasia, safely claiming the highest number of advanced microlight sales – now at 197 over little more than 10 years. The business has grown to employ seven full time staff and operates from a substantial complex at Ardmore Airfield. This combined with six separate dealerships spread around Australasia ensures customers of superb support, all backed by a factory in Italy which is currently doubling capacity to produce 700 aircraft per annum from 2009. With more new aircraft on the near horizon, most notably the twin engine Tecnam P2006T, the next 12 months promise to be very special for the company and its customers.

LSA version ready to go

The Eaglet will be available as an LSA category aircraft with 1320lb MTOW as soon as remaining legislative issues are concluded by the CAA.

Special Offer on first three sales

The launch price of the Tecnam Eaglet is \$158000 +gst (current for exchange rates at time of printing). Normally this price excludes avionics, however Tecnam New Zealand are offering a free VHF Radio and Intercom fitout for the first 3 aircraft sold.

For more information:

Call Giovanni Nustrini on (09) 298 9144 or 021 832626, email: gnustrini@tecnam.co.nz or visit www.tecnam.com



Flying the Eaglet: First Impressions

Matamata airfield is the home base of Peter Ryan, veteran of some 9000 hours of fixed wing, helicopter and parachute piloting. When KiwiFlyer dropped in with Giovanni and the Eaglet, Peter was fresh from delivering 30 hours of instruction in the Eaglet's predecessor, a P92 Echo Super. Thus he was ideally placed to compare the aircraft and offer informed comment on the Eaglet. Peter writes:



Instrument panel has plenty of space available, as well as the look, feel, and quality of GA aircraft.



Engine cowls hinge upwards, making for much easier access for coolant checks and pre-flights.



Exterior lighting includes Taxi light, Nav wing lights with strobes, Tail light and Vertical tail strobe.



Modified wingtips improve STOL performance. The basic aerofoil is a modified Gottinga 398 profile.



A brake fluid inspection window is located in clear view behind the seats which are very comfortable.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS were good indeed. A walk around reveals a variety of small improvements – the sort where the whole adds up to more than just the sum of the parts. Most notable were the improved access to the engine bay, changes to the tail fin which have aided stability, more comfortable seats with good adjustment, door seals which reduce cabin noise, toe brakes, and an instrument panel with a very solid feel to it that has good shading, circuit breakers instead of fuses and is in fact distinctly GA in nature.

Once aboard the aircraft, you immediately notice the improved visibility. The seats are lower and window placement is slightly different. That makes a huge difference and eliminates any requirement to duck ones head in order to see out the window or around the airframe. You also notice how comfortable the seats feel. Our flight wasn't a long one but all except the most awkward body shapes could spend all day in the aircraft and not feel any worse for wear afterwards. That's helped too by the spaciousness of the cabin. Once strapped in, there's no rubbing of shoulders or bumping into each other during our flight. You don't feel at all cramped into this aircraft.

Then it was time to go flying. Starting with a high performance takeoff, it took only moments before we were off the ground and settling into a comfortable 1100fpm climb. Once away from the circuit, we began an exploration of the Eaglet's flight characteristics, evaluating with both Recreational Pilots and Instructors in mind.

The immediate observation was how stable and well behaved the aircraft is. Trim it in almost any moderate flight manoeuvre, let go of the controls, and the Eaglet simply carries on doing what you just asked it to do. The controls are very balanced and have just the right amount of sensitivity.

Allowing airspeed to bleed off below 35 knots and holding the nose high, the Eaglet offered plenty of warning that it wasn't in its most comfortable state -

gently suggesting with mushy controls and mild buffeting that the pilot should do something to compensate. We didn't of course and the buffeting increased to a rocking motion, then progressed to a gentle oscillation. With more provocation the oscillation started to diverge so it was time to make the appropriate corrections. A moment later, normal flight had resumed. No dramas there at all. And neither were there any when we stalled the aircraft in a steep turn. Warning signs were again gentle but obvious and a straight forward recovery led us back to normal flight without a seconds thought.

High speed flight and low speed flight were next to try. The Eaglet will cruise very comfortably at 115kts. As you would expect stability increases with airspeed and comparisons to the feel of a Cessna 172 can be quite fairly made. At the other end of the scale, we pottered along the runway on approach for landing at a steady 40 knots. Again, there was no untoward behaviour. The aircraft felt very comfortable and was fully controllable with no tendency to break away. Thus we touched down outside the clubrooms feeling very satisfied with our time in Giovanni's new aeroplane. There are a great many things to like about it and virtually nothing to criticise, which actually makes a flight appraisal quite difficult to write about.

There is no doubt of the Eaglet's suitability to recreational pilot ownership and it also gives all the indications of being a fine club and instructing aircraft. I felt very at home in the Eaglet and would have no objections to spending all day instructing in it. A worthy successor to the P92 Echo Super, the Eaglet achieves many GA standards in feel, comfort and robustness. You simply don't get the impression that this is "just" a light sport aircraft. The Eaglet's stability will allow Cessna pilots to transition easily, there being only low inertia management to become adjusted to. Our quick evaluation failed to identify any odd behaviour at all, revealing what is in fact a very desirable aeroplane. If you're looking for an aircraft in this category, give Giovanni a call. You're very likely to be pleased you did.