

REVIEWS



The aircraft can get airborne using less than 1500ft of runway thanks to its specialist short-field performance



There is something very special about the Britten-Norman Islander that has made it one of the most successful commercial aircraft manufactured in Western Europe. What makes this aircraft stand out from the crowd can be summed up in one word - versatility.

The versatility of the small, 9-seat STOL (Short Take-off And Landing) Islander stems from the many duties it has undertaken over the years. From island-hopping to sightseeing, bush flying, air ambulance, cargo, maritime patrol, police, military and anti-terrorist surveillance duties - this aircraft does it all. Since first taking to the skies in 1963 from the Isle of Wight manufacturing plant, over 1,200



MAIN IMAGE: Great Barrier Reef X-Press operate exciting sightseeing tours of the coast of Australia and find the Islander to be the perfect aircraft for their needs

BELOW: The Islander gets airborne at only 65 mph



Nature Air operates the aircraft in the rainforest of Costa Rica. Regarded as the most environmentally friendly airline in the world, the airline runs ground equipment and generators for the aircraft using vegetable oils collected from local schools, hotels and restaurants

Tip!
This package also comes with a paint kit

The Islander has custom-gauge backlighting and a separate dome light ensuring that it is ideal for flying on instruments during the hours of darkness



BN-2 Islander

Rugged and reliable! by Jane Whittaker

aircraft have been built and more than 750 Islanders are still flying around the world.

The aim of the original concept was to create the most rugged and reliable aircraft in its class. As the manufacturer points out, this is an aircraft that is equally at home in

jungle clearings, grass strips and even on beaches requiring only around 1500ft of ground from which to take-off and land. The incredible performance is augmented by a full IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) cockpit, ensuring that the aircraft can be flown on

instruments in the poorest of weather. In short, it can be flown through heavy weather, make bumpy landings on unprepared strips and be ready to keep on flying regardless.

Built to last

You might think that the mission profile would adversely affect reliability, but Britten-Norman utilised specific design choices to ensure

put that performance to the test, albeit in the virtual world. It is apparent that Flight1 has recognised the global reach of the aircraft because 13 different liveries are included in the package, with a wide geographic spread. The liveries represent operators such as British Airways, Shetland Islands Council, Great Barrier X-Press, Nature Air

The aircraft has a range of around 800nm and can fly at an altitude of up to 13,000ft



Turning to the external model itself, the aircraft is a work-of-art. In my opinion, Flight1 made an excellent judgement call in making the Islander an FSX-only release. This has allowed the developer to utilise

The Islander is one of the few aircraft able to operate year-round in the Scottish Highlands



this aircraft would take the hard knocks. In fact, the manufacturer believes that the Islander is the most reliable STOL aircraft ever constructed.

Flight1 Software has now released its Islander for FSX, allowing flight simmers to

(Costa Rica). Milford Sound Sightseeing (New Zealand), Air Hamburg and others are also represented. If you enjoy island hopping and wilderness flying then there is sure to be a livery to suit your taste. Slightly disappointing is a lack of specialist liveries

such as military and police operators. That being said, the included paint kit has already encouraged many community repaints, which are freely available on the Flight1 forum and other websites, to address this shortcoming.

the strengths of FSX, adding extra detail and features such as bump mapping to the fuselage. Certainly, this level of detail would not be possible in FS2004. Flight1 should be applauded for not shoehorning an FS2004

There are no 2D panels, with the virtual cockpit being used for controlling the aircraft



Thirteen liveries are included in the package representing operators from all over the world

model into FSX, but making best use of available resources. The Islander is never going to be regarded as an attractive aircraft, but it does have rugged appeal. Every square inch of the aircraft is designed for reliability, eschewing complex components. An example of this is the incredibly strong, fixed undercarriage. It is deliberately non-retractable and sits on a telescopic frame for maximum strength, avoiding the need for any

The 9-seater airline version of the aircraft has been modelled and is highly detailed



of gauges and switches being operable in accordance with the real aircraft. Yet, this is only half the story with signs of wear and tear, scuff marks and dirt in the cockpit reminding us that the Islander operates in harsh environments.

An ideal step-up

One of the most appealing aspects of the Islander is that all of the gauges, with the exception of the GPS, are simple analogue gauges that are very similar to those used in default FSX aircraft such as the Cessna. It is a simple step-up from the default aircraft to the Islander, making this aircraft perfect for those looking to expand their horizons away from the default FSX fleet. This can be attributed to Britten-Norman's decision to use the most reliable and easily maintained analogue gauges in their aircraft, reminding us that this is an aircraft built to last. The only exception to this is a Bendix King GPS that may be unfamiliar to some simmers. The GPS is a relatively simple to use, and a link is provided to the Bendix King website to download the documentation for the actual unit, such is the realism. If you are not interested in learning the intricacies of the GPS, a default FSX flight planner file can be loaded into the unit for immediate use.

Shake rattle and roll

Aside from noise, the Islander is also renowned for its vibration. This has been modelled in the simulation with a very convincing shaking of the panel when full power is applied for take-off. It may seem so far that I have painted the Islander as not particularly good-looking, extremely noisy and vibrating so hard that your fillings will fall out. While this may be part of the reputation of the real aircraft, it is much loved by its pilots for its handling. This is an aircraft that is very easy to fly and wants to stay in the air. It stalls at 40 mph, which is much slower than other aircraft in its class. Flight1's Islander mirrors these characteristics, with convincing flight dynamics and excellent handling in all weathers and flight regimes. It flies with real ease,

nose design between each variant. What you will not see with this aircraft are some of the more complex visual gimmicks such as chocks and opening inspection covers. It appears that the developer has been mindful of performance in FSX, making the aircraft accessible to all, regardless of your computer specification. The trade-off has worked with frame rates being only slightly lower than that of default aircraft.

Satisfying sound

Perhaps, the most impressive external aspect of the aircraft is the opportunity to listen to the twin propeller engines in action. The Islander is a noisy aircraft and it has been joked that achieving lift is proportional to noise rather than speed! The included sounds are truly excellent and have obviously been recorded from the real aircraft, as anyone who has been around the Islander will recognise the distinctive noise immediately. However, some of the interior cockpit sounds appear to be generic clicks rather than recorded from the actual aircraft, but that is a minor niggle.

The cockpit, as is becoming increasingly common with FSX-only releases, has no 2D panels. Instead, the centre-piece is a highly detailed virtual cockpit and cabin. The developers state that they have employed custom technology to create very smooth 3D gauges and the results are certainly impressive, with custom gauges recessed into the fascia of the panel. The gauges can be backlit independently of the dome light, which illuminates the entire cockpit. The level of functionality is very high with almost the entire suite

The fixed landing gear has been specifically designed for reliability and use over rough terrain. It does not retract specifically to avoid a requirement for moving parts and hydraulics that may otherwise be damaged



making it much easier to nail those difficult approaches to the tiny airfields that are visited daily by this aircraft. It came as no surprise to find that the flight model was rigorously tested by current Islander pilots, because within the confines of the desktop it feels absolutely perfect at the controls, making it a real pleasure to fly.



If the weather takes a turn for the worse, the aircraft is a fully capable instrument flyer

The package, as mentioned previously, is rounded off with a paint kit, plus a 52-page PDF manual that includes excerpts from the actual pilot's manual. What is missing is performance data, which I hope will be addressed in future updates.



ABOVE: The aircraft has been designed to be as simple to maintain as possible; a very important feature when operating away from the facilities available at major airports



BELOW: British Airways affiliate Loganair regularly operates the aircraft from grass strips in the Scottish Highlands and islands, including landing on a beach at Barra

Conclusion

The Flight1 BN-2 Islander is simply superb for visiting all the nooks and crannies of the FSX world. It can island hop, land in the African Bush, visit the jungles of South America or almost anywhere else that fires your imagination. As such it opens up the FSX world for exploration, bringing a whole new



The aircraft is a common sight in the Caribbean and even serves the notoriously difficult approach into the 2,000ft runway at St Barts

dimension to simulated flying. Add to this the benign flying characteristics and familiar gauges, and it ensures that whatever your gaming experience, the Islander can be enjoyed to the full.

The distinctive high mounted engines are designed to limit the ingestion of foreign objects when the aircraft is used on poor quality runways

Tip!
A detailed virtual cockpit is included, but no 2D panels

The level of detail on the external model is astonishing, with every panel and rivet being depicted in high detail



hydraulics in the design. It was a risk that hydraulic systems could break under the stresses of landing on unprepared airstrips, so Britten-Norman chose the fixed tricycle arrangement, which is modelled beautifully in the simulation. In fact, if the nosewheel tyre were to burst on the ground, it can be replaced by the pilot with the minimum of fuss by borrowing one of the tyres from the rear wheel assembly.

This approach of strength and simplicity is a hallmark of the aircraft and is clearly visible in the Flight1 model, with every rivet and panel being recreated in full detail. The package includes the BN-2A and BN-2B, reflecting a change in the



With a climb rate of only 950ft per minute, the Islander is not going to win any climb performance prizes, but more than makes up for this in short-field performance

REVIEW SCORE

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Publisher: Flight1
Developer: Virtavia
Website: www.flight1.com
Price: USD \$39.95 (£26 approx.)
At a glance: An excellent rendition of one of the most versatile aircraft ever to take to the air. The BN-2 Islander is the ideal aircraft for bush pilots and island hoppers.
System Requirements: FSX (SP2 and/or Acceleration pack optional); PC 2.8GHz or higher; 2Gb RAM; 512Mb graphics card; 650Mb Hard Disk Space; Windows 7, XP or Vista
Recommended: FSX (SP2 and/or Acceleration pack optional); PC quad core; 2Gb RAM; 512Mb graphics card; 650Mb Hard Disk Space; Windows 7, XP or Vista