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# Speedi

Wings & Wheels

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February / March 2026

Issue No: 84



**NEW FORMAT  
VIDEO LINKS**

**THIS ISSUE: NHRA Gatornationals 2026 and Much More**

# SPEEDI'S BLOG

## WELCOME TO SPEEDI'S Blog.

Welcome to the second issue of 2026 of the Speedi Wings & Wheels Magazine.

In the first couple of months of 2026 I have been back and forth to the island of Menorca, which is the second-largest island in the Balearic Islands archipelago, located in the western Mediterranean Sea. It covers an area of approximately 702 square kilometers (271 square miles), making it significantly smaller than Mallorca but larger than Ibiza and Formentera.

My reason for doing so was, initially, to see how it had changed in the 58 years since I last visited the island.

Clearly it has changed, but not in any way like its fellow islands of Mallorca and Ibiza.

Going back in time the island made such a vivid impression on me back in 1968 that I needed to see if it would be on my short list for relocation.

The answer was a resounding YES, and so much so that the second and third visits were made to conclude a purchase deal for my future home.

But what's so special about Menorca?

**1. Unspoiled Beaches & Nature:** With over 365 beaches (some say one for every day of the year), Menorca offers a mix of dramatic rocky coves in the north and fine white sand beaches in the south. Nearly half the island is protected, preventing high-rise development, earning it a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve designation.

**2. Prehistoric History:** The island is practically an open-air museum with 1,586 Talayotic sites, dating back over 3,000 years. These

include mysterious stone tombs and megaliths known as 'Taulas', earning the island UNESCO World Heritage status.

**3. Unique Cultural & Culinary Experience:** It is the birthplace of mayonnaise (linked to the port of Mahón). The island was named the European Region of Gastronomy 2022 and is famous for its local gin, gin-flavored pomada, and Mahón cheese.

Talking of Mahón, its port is the largest in the Mediterranean and the second deepest in the world. It has served as a naval base for different powers throughout history.



The British Royal Navy used the port extensively during the

18th century, which is perhaps why I felt so 'at home' there?

The Port of Mahon is situated on the eastern side of Menorca and is a deep, narrow inlet with a huge natural harbor.



**4. Historical Significance:** The port has a rich history, with evidence of human settlements dating back to prehistoric times. Over the centuries, it has been a key maritime hub and has witnessed various civilizations,

**5. Starlight Reserve:** As a designated Starlight Reserve, Menorca has minimal light pollution, making it an ideal destination for stargazing.

**6. Charming Towns:** Ciutadella, the former capital, is known for its narrow, medieval streets, while Mahón, the current capital,

features one of the largest natural deep-water harbors in the world.

**7. Slow Travel:** Unlike its party-focused neighbors, Menorca is focused on "slow travel," with activities like hiking the 185km Camí de Cavalls coastal path, horseback riding, visiting farmsteads and, of course, sailing.



Below is a photo of a lovely beach bar - deserted in winter - but no doubt idyllic in the summer right next to a superb natural beach.



But a significant advantage for me, personally, is that, unlike the USA where I have to rely on my Amex card for health insurance and which I will lose due to my age in a couple of years time, Spain allows me to take my UK health benefits with me if I relocate there.

So eventually I will be moving to a property on Cala Llonga - or Long Bay - which is considered the most sought after urbanisation on the island. It's just 7 minutes away from Mahon, about 15 minutes from the international airport, and a similar distance away from Menorca's flying club which is based at the 'old' international airport, almost alongside the new airport.

So, I will still be able to go flying, but not in Goofy as it's just too complicated to relocate my airplane to Spain. But I can sail instead . . .

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### Spring Equinox at Teide Observatory

Image Credit & Copyright: Juan Carlos Casado  
(Starry Earth, TWAN)

**Explanation:** The defining astronomical moment of the equinox today is at 14:46 UTC (March 20). That's when the Sun crosses the celestial equator moving north in its yearly journey through planet Earth's sky, marking the beginning of spring for our fair planet in the northern hemisphere and fall in the southern hemisphere. Then, day and night are nearly equal around the globe. In fact, both day and nighttime exposures from a spring equinox at the Observatorio del Teide in Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain, are used in this composited skyscape. Over 1,000 images were taken with a fisheye lens and merged in the ambitious equinox project. The apparent motion of the Sun setting along the celestial equator on the equinox date follows the bright linear, diagonal track from the sequence of daytime exposures taken over 6 hours. After sunset, nighttime exposures recorded startrails, with the celestial equator as a linear track and concentric arcs circling the north celestial pole near Polaris at upper right and the south celestial pole beyond the lower left edge (and below the Teide horizon). The foreground includes the distant Teide volcano peak and the observatory's pyramid-shaped solar laboratory building.

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Editorial Team: North America Editor – Steve Wood   West Coast Contributors - Jim (Flybum) Pratt, Tim Sowell   Canada - Jim Swan   Cruisin' & Hot Rod's - Gary Rosier   UK Team - The Gremlins at Kew

## Editorial



Welcome to the February / March 2026 issue of *Speedi Wings & Wheels*.

Take a look at our 'Content's page to find out more about what's in this issue. The magazine is published bi-monthly during the last week of February, April, June, August, October and December.



In this issue we are featuring a look a visit to the NHRA Gatornationals from Gainesville, Florida - Plus much more . . .

Take a look at the next page - the magazine index - for more details

Blue Sky's and Safe Flying.

*The Speedi Team*  
*Speedi Wings & Wheels is a wide screen format magazine*  
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# 7 NHRA Gatornationals 2026

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**7 NHRA Gatornationals 2026:** This issue features a visit to the 2026 NHRA Gatornationals from Gainesville in Florida. Gary Rosier was there for the high octane action . . .

### Regular Features:

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## Airbus is working at full throttle to offer the German Air Force an operational Uncrewed Collaborative Combat Aircraft (UCCA) system by 2029.

Brussels, Belgium, 13 March 2026

– Airbus is working at full throttle to offer the German Air Force an operational Uncrewed Collaborative Combat Aircraft (UCCA) system by 2029. In Manching, near Munich, the company is currently preparing the first two Valkyries it acquired from its US partner Kratos Defense & Security Solutions, Inc. (NASDAQ: KTOS) for their maiden flight with a sovereign European mission system. They are scheduled to fly later this year. The two companies are bringing their respective industry-leading capabilities to integrate, missionise, and ultimately produce and deliver the Airbus UCCA system.



Airbus is currently equipping the UCCAs with its sovereign European mission system, the Multiplatform Autonomous Reconfigurable and Secure (MARS) system. MARS also contains an AI-supported software brain called MindShare which not only replaces the missing pilot, but is also capable of coordinating entire mission groups by being distributed across many manned and uncrewed platforms.

“By combining the Kratos Valkyrie with our MARS mission system, we are offering the German customer exactly what Germany and Europe urgently need in the current geopolitical situation: a proven flying uncrewed combat aircraft with a sovereign European mission system that does not have to be developed from scratch in a time-consuming and costly manner,” said Marco Gumbrecht, Head of Key Account Germany at Airbus Defence and Space. “Our objective is to deliver credible combat capability in time of relevance,

while assuring key sovereign aspects. And we are confident that we can do this at a very affordable price - which is a key driver for UCCAs.”

Steve Fendley, President of Kratos Unmanned Systems Division, said, “We couldn’t be more excited about the opportunity, the capability we’re providing, and the teaming relationship with Airbus. By taking the flight-proven and in-production Valkyrie and integrating the Airbus MARS mission system, the Airbus-

missionised Valkyrie UCCA is a multi-mission, affordable system that can operate independently, in teams of UAS, or in Manned-Unmanned-Teaming operations. Along with the technical and production backing Airbus and Kratos bring, we are realising an optimal capability system that can be bought and deployed as ‘affordable mass’; the consistent discriminator identified in today’s peer to peer wargames.”

To enable the Eurofighter to act as a “command aircraft” with cross-platform connectivity performance, Airbus and Rafael are enhancing the Litening 5 Advanced Targeting Pod, already contracted for the Eurofighter fleet, with a connectivity capability. Along with minor updates to the Eurofighter’s avionics, these enhancements will significantly increase the aircraft’s lethality in combat.

Key technical data and areas of operation

The Kratos Valkyrie has a length of 9.1 m, a wingspan of 8.2 m, and a range of over 5,000 kilometres. The maximum take-off weight (MTOW) is around three tons. It can fly at an altitude of up to 45,000 feet. The maiden flight of the Valkyrie already took place in the USA in 2019; and additional aircraft have been flying regularly since that time. The maiden flight of the Airbus variant is scheduled for 2026.



## Boeing Flight Deck Modernization Keeps C-17A Mission Ready

LONG BEACH, Calif. — February 9, 2026 —

The Boeing Company today announced a contract award from the U.S. Air Force that will keep the C-17A Globemaster III flying and mission-ready for decades to come.

The contract provides for the design, manufacture, integration, qualification and military certification of a modernized flight deck for the C-17A. The program replaces critical avionics and mission essential equipment with modern, modular open systems

architecture (MOSA) that enables plug-and-play enhancements and ensures the fleet can adopt new capabilities rapidly and affordably.

Shown above, C-17As line up on the flight-line. (Boeing photo)

“The C-17A has been the backbone of global air mobility for over three decades,” said Travis Williams, Vice President of United States Air Force Mobility & Training Services, Boeing. “With the U.S. Air Force requirement to keep the C-17A viable through 2075, we already have a clear and achievable roadmap to support their needs, and the needs of our international partners around the globe. By resolving avionics obsolescence and

introducing MOSA, we’re preserving a proven, highly dependable, heavy airlifter and keeping it at the forefront of performance and efficiency for decades to come.”

Boeing delivered 275 C-17A aircraft between 1993 and 2015. The Air Force received 222 and our international partners received 53, forming what is now a well-established fully integrated virtual fleet support system across nine partner nations.

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All photos for this feature by Gary Rosier





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**N**EW FROM THE Barn is a regular feature about the happenings at the largest (and greatest) fly-in community in the world - Spruce Creek Fly-in. Situated on the Space Coast of Florida, just 7 miles south of the famous Speed City of Daytona Beach, Spruce Creek is a very special place. Our North America editor, Steve Wood, has lived there for since 2001, so he should know. We hope you enjoy this regular feature about a very special aviation community.

Spruce Creek Airport Information - Courtesy of the Spruce Creek POA Website - [www.scpoa.com](http://www.scpoa.com)

The Spruce Creek Airport is the heart of the Spruce Creek Fly-In Community. The Airport is a private airport owned and operated by the Spruce Creek Property Owners Association (SCPOA). The Spruce Creek Airport Authority Committee through the SCPOA Board of Directors has the authority and the responsibility to oversee the operation of the Spruce Creek Airport. The SCPOA employs a full time, 24-7 security staff. The Airport runways, taxiways and aircraft parking areas are regularly patrolled and are under continuous video surveillance by the Security staff 24 hour a day.

All flying activities at the Spruce Creek Airport are regulated by the FAA and by the recommended procedures published in the Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM). In addition, a limited number of local rules and procedures have been established to promote a safe and enjoyable airport. All resident, tenants and invitees are encouraged to cooperate and abide by these procedures.

**SPRUCE CREEK AIRCRAFT ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE PACKAGE** - The airport management provides information to assist all pilots operating in and out of the Spruce Creek Air, viewed or printed with Adobe Reader. [Download PDF](#)

Here's a link to Spruce Creek Airport (7FL6) web page - click [here](#)

**AIRPORT SAFETY VIDEO** - The airport management recommends that all Spruce Creek Fly-In residents and airport users view this very good airport safety video. Click [here](#)

TEL ..... 386/760-5884 or Airport Manager cell see below.

FAX ..... 386/761-7808 AFTER 1700 ..... 386/756-6125 (Security)

VORTAC OMN .....112.6 MHz 165°R/13.9 DME

VORTAC ORL ..... 112.2 MHz 020°R/35.6 DME

FSS St. Petersburg ..... 122.2 MHz

APCH CNTRL Daytona Beach ...125.35 MHz (South) 125.8 MHz (North)

INSTR APCH (Rwy 06) ..... GPS (Private, Residents Only)

Runways: ..... 06 / 24 - 4000 ft x 150 ft

CTAF..... 122.725 MHz (pilot actuated lights 3-5-7 clicks)

AWOS..... 121.725 MHz

FUEL ..... 100LL & JET A (self serve and truck delivery)

FUEL ..... 386 257-7791 (on field) or 129.925 MHz (forward request to Spruce Creek)

Airport Manager - Jim Stone ... 386 275-1894







## America's Quickest Production Car: Corvette ZR1X Does 8.675-Second ¼-Mile, Sub 2 Second 0-60

2026-01-13

The Chevrolet Corvette ZR1X, the most advanced Corvette ever, is the quickest American production car available – and the fastest way to get down a quarter-mile drag strip for under a million dollars.



Testing on the ZR1X culminated in October 2025 with validation at US 131 Motorsports Park – reflective of the real-world environments where Corvette customers exercise their vehicles. On a prepped surface, the ZR1X completed the quarter mile in 8.675 seconds at 159 mph<sup>1</sup>, on pump gas, using standard-equipment tires and production 50-state street-legal engine calibration, and achieving a 0-60 mph time of 1.68 seconds<sup>1</sup> on the same run. The ZR1X blasted to 60 mph in less than 100 feet, generating a peak of 1.75G of acceleration force.

“When we made the revolutionary shift to a mid-engine platform, this is the type of performance we knew was possible,” said General Motors President Mark Reuss.

The car was equipped with ZR1X’s standard aero configuration, standard Michelin PS4S tires, and available carbon fiber wheels. This acceleration was not a one-off, either – the vehicle used for testing completed multiple back-to-back quarter-mile runs all under 8.8 seconds. The 2026 Corvette ZR1X uses its twin-turbo LT7 V8 engine and front-axle electric motor to

generate a total of 1,250 horsepower<sup>2</sup>, sending it to the ground via electrified all-wheel drive.

Corvette development engineer and test driver Stefan Frick earned this record-breaking quarter-mile performance using Corvette’s standard Custom Launch Control feature, found throughout the lineup from Stingray to ZR1X. Custom Launch Control manages tire spin, transmission clutch application rate, and numerous other parameters, allowing the driver to optimize acceleration runs by adjusting launch RPM and wheel slip targets from the auxiliary driver display.

“There are many different parts and subsystems on this car, with teams across the company responsible for them,” said Frick. “We were all motivated by the mission to break into the eights – this is a powerful example of the in-house skill at GM, and the level of performance we developed into this car.”

On an unprepped surface, the Corvette ZR1X equipped with

available ZTK Performance Package can complete the quarter mile in 8.99 seconds<sup>4</sup> and accelerate 0-60 mph in 1.89 seconds<sup>4</sup>.

Eighth-generation Corvette 0 to 60 mph stats:

Stingray with available Z51 Performance Package: 2.9 seconds<sup>1</sup>

Z06 with available Z07 Performance Package: 2.6 seconds<sup>1</sup>

E-Ray with available ZER Performance Package: 2.5 seconds<sup>1</sup>

ZR1 with available ZTK Performance Package: 2.3 seconds<sup>1</sup>

ZR1X with available ZTK Performance Package: 1.89 seconds<sup>1</sup>

The 2026 Corvette ZR1X began production in December 2025, and is proudly built in America at General Motors’ Bowling Green Assembly Plant in Kentucky from U.S. and globally sourced parts.

## MINI CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF THE MODERN MINI BRAND, WITH 24 YEARS IN AMERICA, SURPASSING 1 MILLION U.S. SALES

Woodcliff Lake, NJ – March 19, 2026

The modern MINI brand marks its 25th anniversary worldwide, celebrating a quarter century of distinctive design, driving excitement, and passionate community around models that now include the MINI Cooper, MINI Cooper S, MINI Countryman, and the MINI Convertible.

The milestone year also marks 24 years of MINI in the United States since the brand’s official relaunch in the market. As of March 2026, MINI USA has surpassed 1 million vehicles sold in the United States since the brand went on sale here on March 22, 2002, underscoring the enduring appeal of MINI’s “go-kart feeling” and unmistakable personality.\*

“The United States has played a vital role in the success story of MINI over the past quarter century,” said Kate Alini, Head of Marketing, Product, and Strategy for MINI USA. “From our first public debut to passionate owners and enthusiast communities across the country, the U.S. has been central to some of the brand’s most memorable moments, and we look forward to growing the MINI spirit for generations to come.”

A Strong U.S. Connection from the Beginning



The modern MINI brand first captured American attention with its U.S. debut at the North American International Auto Show on January 8, 2001, where the reborn icon introduced a new generation of drivers to the brand’s blend of heritage and innovation.

Even before that debut, the United States helped create one of MINI’s most memorable publicity moments. On August 25, 1999, MINI enthusiasts in New York City packed 25 people into a classic Mini, breaking the previous Guinness World Records mark and demonstrating the playful spirit that has long defined the brand and its fans.

Momentum continued into 2002 when the high-performance MINI Cooper S made its U.S. debut at the Los Angeles Auto Show in January 2002, further cementing MINI’s reputation for delivering engaging performance in a compact package.

A Dramatic Convertible Debut in New York

The MINI Convertible made its U.S. debut on April 7, 2004, at the New York International Auto Show.

In true MINI fashion, the reveal featured two MINI Convertibles performing high-speed parking brake stops before sliding into position in front of the venue, creating one of the most memorable and unconventional vehicle debuts in auto show history.

The First MINI Sold in the U.S.

When sales officially began on March 22, 2002, the first retail MINI sold in the United States was a MINI Cooper delivered by MINI of Peabody to a car collector in the Boston area.

The buyer had been captivated by the car since seeing it during its Detroit auto show debut and placed an early order. His MINI was finished in the brand’s classic red body with a white roof, a tribute to the legendary victory of the classic MINI in the 1964 Monte Carlo Rally.

# GONE CRUISIN'

Gary's Hot Rods & Cruisers



Welcome to Gone Cruisin', our regular feature on the cruisin' scene brought to you by Gary Rosier. Primarily from in and around Central Florida, but we'll be including interesting events around the USA.



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# Old NASCAR Racers



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THE NEXT ISSUE OF SPEEDI WINGS & WHEELS FEATURES A VIVIT TO SUN 'NFUN IN LAKE LAND, FLA AS WELL AS MUCH MORE AVIATION AND MOTORSPORT ACTION

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