

## AVSIM Commercial Aircraft Package Review

# Aerosoft's Beech on the Beach

(Beech 18 & Martha's Vineyard)



### Product Information

**Publisher:** [Aerosoft](#)

**Description:** Aircraft Add-on

**Download Size:**  
1301 MB

**Format:**  
Auto-Install after direct download

**Simulation Type:**  
MSFS 2004

Reviewed by: [Brian Fletcher](#) AVSIM Staff Reviewer

## Introduction

The Beech 18 is a low-wing tail dragger aircraft with available seating from six to eleven passengers, or with the cargo capacity similar to a DC3. Common as a passenger and cargo transport aircraft during and for some time after WWII, the Beech 18 found its way into service in the U.S. Army Air Corps, Navy, and Marine Corps, and later in the Air Force continuing passenger and cargo transport, but also becoming a popular V.I.P. aircraft to transport military brass and other officials.

The all-metal design was interrupted only by the fabric covered control surfaces which made it a very resilient aircraft. With a surface ceiling of 20,000 feet at speeds of up to 215 mph at a range of 850 miles, the Beech 18 found a home in 37 different countries in military, commercial, and private sectors. Designated as a C-45 and AT-11 for military use, the Beech 18 also served as a test bed for a series of Pratt & Whitney engines.

Though the exact numbers are unclear, it is estimated that there may be as many as 2,000 Beech 18 aircraft under private ownership to this day, with at least 750 that have been deemed airworthy. In fact, the U.S. Air Force still maintains four of the aircraft under the C-45 designation for use in their historical air shows accompanied by aircraft such as the P-51 Mustang and DC-3 alongside modern aircraft such as the F-15 and F-117.

Of course, an aircraft with such historical value belongs in FS9 and thanks to the team at Aerosoft a truly spectacular version is now available with the introduction of the Beech on the Beach add-on. To get a name like this it must certainly come with more than just a Beech 18, right? Absolutely. This package also contains a complete reworking of Martha's Vineyard, Mass.

What is Martha's Vineyard? Well, it is an absolutely beautiful 100 square mile island off the southern coast of Cape Cod. This island was brought into the limelight in the 19th century by its successful whaling industry, but has become more of a tourist attraction over the years. Common for attracting political figures and celebrities, the Vineyard has been considered the President's official vacation spot, most significantly over the past two decades.

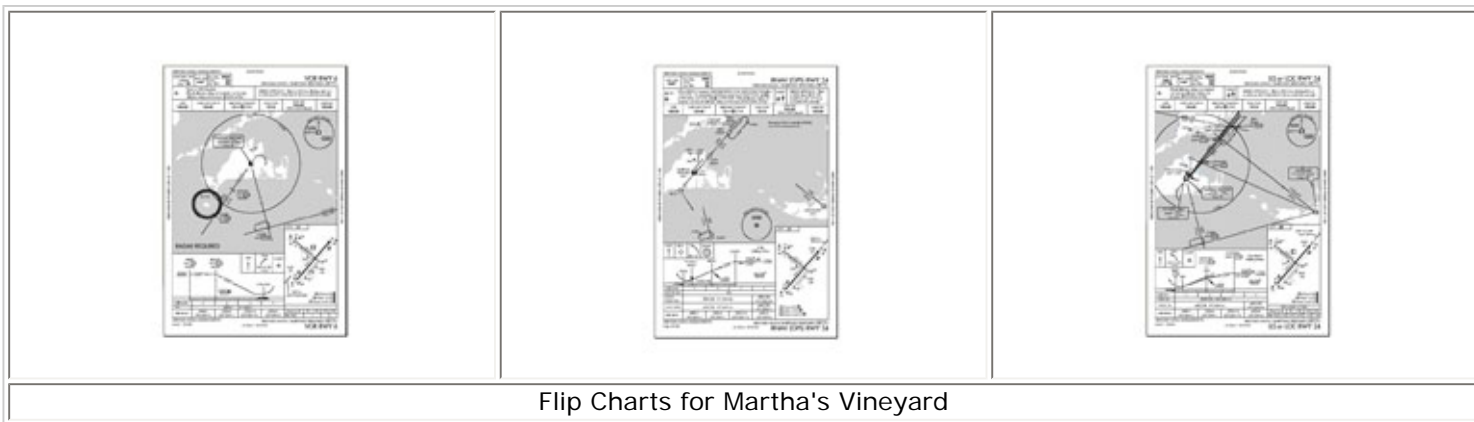
Though I am not aware of any relation to Martha's Vineyard and the Beech 18 (that's not to say it doesn't exist), it does make for a breathtaking view on approach. Aerosoft has included a revamped airport and surrounding environment that takes this area to a whole new level. I will discuss this area more in depth later, but for now we need to get this package installed. The first step is to visit the Aerosoft download shop at [www.aerosoft-shop.com](http://www.aerosoft-shop.com), or the alternate [www.aerosoft.com](http://www.aerosoft.com). \$21.50(EURO) is all it takes to get you on your way.

## Let's Get This Thing Installed

Auto-install files have become very popular with FS9 add-ons, and Aerosoft has provided this easy installation method to get you started. By simply double-clicking on the downloaded folder (after unzipping), you will need to verify the FS9 main directory, and then choose the method of purchase. Since mine came from the Aerosoft download shop, I was required to enter my order information which included my e-mail and purchase number.

After installation you are ready to take to the skies, but it is critical that you keep all of the purchase information on file in the event that you need to re-install the aircraft for any reason. Also, the first time that you start Flight Sim there will be a brief waiting period while Martha's Vineyard is updated to the scenery files.

Now on to the documentation. Once installed there will be a new folder in your FS9 directory titled "Aerosoft". Inside of this folder will be a folder for the Beech 18 with a PDF manual and a folder for Martha's Vineyard which requires no attention. The PDF manual is 30 pages of useful information including an all-inclusive guide to flying the Beech 18 and even some charts for the airport at Martha's Vineyard.



And as you might expect, there is also plenty of information available in the kneeboard just in case you need a little help while in the sim. This info can also be read at your leisure as it is available in the Beech 18 aircraft folders that will be installed in the FS9 aircraft folder. Oh and by the way, if this is still not enough information for you, there is contact information at the Aerosoft website which will get you in touch with somebody who can answer any questions you may have.

### Let's Start On The Outside

Each of the 11 liveries on five different models of the wheeled and amphibious Beech 18 display great detail down to the weathered rivets. Starting up front, you will likely notice the presence of the pilot and co-pilot at the controls. A neat little feature that I did not pick up on right away is the fact that both of the pilots actually move their heads and arms (one of which is holding a map). If you swing your view around just right, you will notice a well detailed view of the panel and most of what I will describe in the virtual cockpit.

All of the liveries include a magnificent reflective texturing with true to life paint schemes. Naturally, the control surfaces are fully functional as are the landing gear, which recess the wheels about 2/3 vertically, and the cabin doors. The propellers have a series of animated cycles seen at startup and shutdown that add a nice touch.



The lighting is limited to a few beacons, each of which produce very little ambient lighting. This does not allow for very good screenshots in the evening, but

does reflect the real Beech 18 lighting configuration very well.

Since tail draggers can be difficult to taxi, I have found myself using the spot view to help stay on the concrete. This view will lessen the frame rates slightly, but nothing overly glaring. But since I prefer to fly from inside the aircraft, let's go see what's in there.

### What's Inside?

Just as stunning as the exterior model, is the virtual cockpit. Providing a great sense of depth, the VC contains a multitude of fully functional gauges, levers, and switches that permit you to fly the aircraft with nothing more than your mouse (though I would still recommend a yoke or joystick).

Adding to the realism of the interior model, is an excellent shadowing of the instruments which have a historically accurate and aged look. In fact, the entire model gives the appearance of being well used. Each of the gauges are very legible from the default view but will become virtually useless if you zoom out too much.

The sub-panels, which I will discuss more when we talk about the panel, can be opened in the virtual cockpit without overlapping any of the necessary instrumentation if done properly. Most of the sub-panels however are not needed, as the VC provides all of the functions you could possibly want, with the exception of the GPS.

The cockpit is set up with a series of large dial gauges and a few slightly smaller gauges below. In front of the panel is an additional panel that angles downward slightly consisting of an array of toggle switches followed to the right by the throttle controls. The co-pilot's side is fairly bare as it contains nothing more than the radio stack.



The full VC view



The Co-pilot's side



The VC up close



The lighting inside is very subtle, yet effective. A soft red glow illuminates the panel with the compliment of some backlighting. As far as I can tell, the lighting is fairly authentic, though that one was kind of hard to confirm. I can say, however, that it certainly makes you feel like your back in the dull colored 1940's.

The cabin is definitely not for anybody who is claustrophobic. Seven comfortable looking seats in a long thin tube pretty much describes it. The cabin continues the "worn" look from the cockpit very nicely and provides an authentic representation of the real deal.



The Cabin

Unfortunately, having such a detailed and functional VC does have one setback...the frame rates. Without a high-end system you may find yourself having to adjust the scenery settings lower in order to eliminate a "choppy" flight. On my computer I managed to run between 40 and 45 FPS, but similar tests on my laptop and two other systems failed to provide more than 20 to 25 FPS.

Despite the possibility of having to contend with low frame rates, the virtual cockpit in this Beech 18 is one of the most authentic that I have come across for any add-on aircraft. The weathered look and historically accurate configuration do wonders in representing a real Beech 18.

### Panel

Actually there is not a whole lot of difference between the panel and VC other than the fact that the panel view displays about 1/3 less of the panel than in the virtual cockpit while looking straight ahead from the default zoom. Of course, the instruments are much more legible in the panel view as compared to the VC at default zoom as well. Unfortunately, it is difficult to use the sub-panels without interfering with any of the gauges while in the panel view.

What are the sub-panels you ask? Well, the first panel contains the radio stack which is pretty much just the default stack with a slight touch of age. The second panel is full of a variety of switches that control everything from the lights to the flaps. The default Garmin GPS uses the next sub-panel followed by a fuel control panel and throttle quadrant. The final two sub-panels contain gauges on a larger scale than what is in the panel. One panel has the IAS, VS, and Altimeter, while the other has a heading indicator, compass, manifold pressure gauge, and tachometer.



The VC at dawn



The VC at dusk



The Panel at dawn



The Panel at dusk

If you are looking for some really good frame rates without having to sacrifice any scenery quality you may want to try using the shift+8 and shift+9 keys to bring up the two gauge panels, and then use the shift+1 key to remove the main panel. This will give you all of the necessary instrumentation to fly, but it does require the use of a flight yoke or joystick to remain realistic. Naturally, the panel view is considerably more frame rate friendly than the VC, but of course you are restricted to switching views as opposed to being able to pan around 360 degrees. Between the two I have chosen to sacrifice my scenery settings a little to use the virtual cockpit. I just find it to be too authentic to ignore.

## How It Sounds

This is one of my favorite parts of this aircraft. The sound set is mastered to perfection providing the most realistic replication of a Beech 18 that has ever graced Flight Simulator. There is really nothing for me to compare it to, at least nothing in my inventory, so the only thing I can do is try to put sounds into words, which isn't exactly easy.

The most impressive part of the sound set in my opinion is the way that the engines wind up. They begin with a soft, yet defined sound that almost seems like a mix of a turbo-prop and a small jet engine. Once throttled up to ½ or so, the blistering deep moan of the propellers take over with a powerful roar... powerful for a twin radial that is.

There are plenty of ambient sounds, but you will need to adjust the sound settings from default in FS9 to identify them. Though all of the sounds are impressive inside and out, the winding up of the engines as I described above is probably at its finest from the spot view. And as you can imagine, the typical sounds of the control surfaces in action, as well as the landing gears are clear and present.

All in all this sound set is spectacular from start to finish, but I should note that I have recently upgraded to a 10 speaker Bose system with a rather large amplifier that tends to make just about anything sound good. However, I did test this aircraft on my laptop as well, and it sounded great.

## But Can It Fly?

Test System
Compaq Presario SR1232
AMD Athlon 2.2 GHz
2 GB Ram
NVIDIA Ge Force FX 5500
StarLogic 21" Flat Panel
Monitor
CH USB Flight Yoke
CH USB Rudder Pedals
Saitek X52 Flight Control
System
FTP 290 Throttle Quadrant
Laptop
Toshiba Satellite 1.8 GHz
<b>Flying Time:</b>
70.5 hours

It sure can. In fact, if you have flown the default DC-3 then you will have no problem handling this little treasure as the flight dynamics are quite similar. The aircraft requires very little room for takeoff and landing, I have even managed to get it off of a couple of aircraft carriers, though I'm not ready to try landing it on one just yet.

As I said, takeoffs and landings are relatively short and simple, but how does it handle at 20,000 feet? Quite well actually. Though the Beech 18 is not ready for any aerobatics, it does bank fairly swiftly with a low-angle two minute turn. Steep climbs will reduce your speed much quicker than in most similar aircraft, but a 1,500 FPM climb will seem almost effortless.

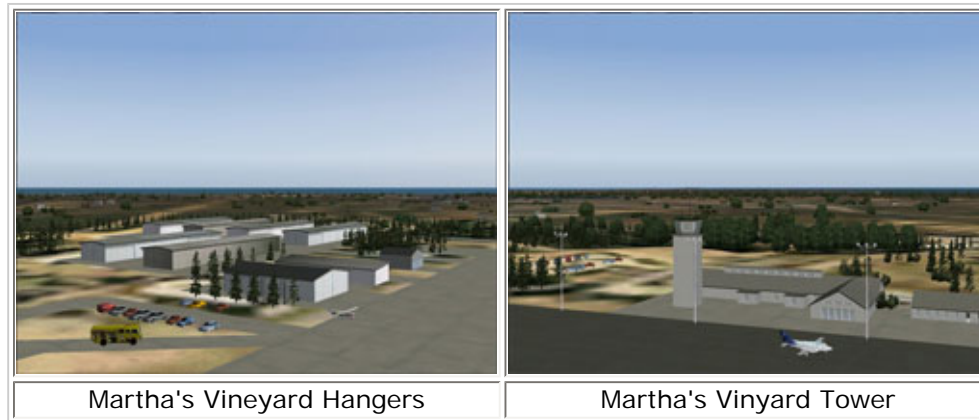
On descent I found the aircraft to be fantastic at maintaining speed with little more than a few throttle adjustments. This is especially pleasant when approaching mountainous areas that require a steep approach. Unfortunately, I am not experienced enough with tail draggers to describe a perfect landing in this bird, but I did manage to stay between 100 and 150 FPM descent on most of my landings.

Foul weather can play a big factor in how this aircraft handles, but even the highest winds I could find were unable to keep me out of the skies. For the most part, I found that while the aircraft is susceptible to heavy crosswinds, it is powerful and heavy enough to cut through the worst of the worst.

For those of you who like to deviate from the norm and try your luck landing on lesser maintained surfaces, you will be glad to know that this aircraft simply eats up the mud, dirt, and anything else that you can throw at it. I have performed numerous takeoffs and landings on uneven and un-manicured terrain with great success. And of course with the amphibian version included, there are few places around the globe that this beast can not tame.

## Martha's Vineyard

Perhaps the most notable improvement to the default Martha's Vineyard scenery is the airport; which has been upgraded to include some mini hangars, trees, vehicles, and static aircraft. With the traffic density set high Martha's Vineyard becomes an active environment with plenty of eye candy. Aside from the two runways, the bulk of the airport consists of the main ramp which contains the terminal, static aircraft, and the aircraft and vehicle parking areas.



Also included, are several groupings of more lifelike trees that not only make for nice screenshots, but also add that needed touch of realism. The rest of the island is also upgraded with a much more life-like appearance providing more undulated surfaces with a darker terrain. The trees spread throughout the island also add for a nice view on approach.



The only gripe that I have with the Vineyard add-on, is the fact that I needed the scenery settings a little higher than I normally have them in order to fully appreciate the area. Unfortunately, this can create a problem when flying the Beech 18 from the virtual cockpit as I said above. The perfect solution for me was to set the scenery to medium high, and lower the aircraft visual settings just a pinch. This allowed me to have the best of both worlds...or pretty close anyway.

### We're Cleared For Takeoff

After spending all of this time talking about this aircraft, I think that it is time to put my words into action. For today's flight I am going to follow a flight plan from the former Capn's Couriers Virtual Airlines that transports passengers from Logan Intl. to Martha's Vineyard. If I time this flight just right we might have a nice sunset landing for some good screenshots.

I begin this trip with a quick pre-flight inspection and a clearance to taxi. Thanks to a well timed departure I find the taxiways virtually empty with nothing between me and the skies except a few thousand feet of runway. During takeoff I found myself surrounded by a virtual world of authenticity as the sounds of the vintage radial engines blaze through my speakers.



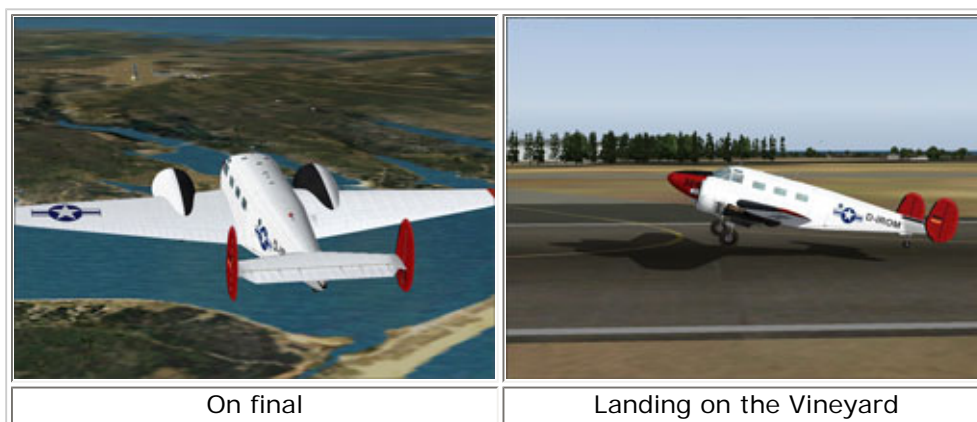
After a text book takeoff I am climbing to about 10,000 feet and get ready to head into the storm clouds south of Boston. Though I hope the weather clears before I get to Martha's Vineyard, it is a commanding feeling to pilot this bird through the worst that Mother Nature has to offer.



Now on a straight a level course I have decided to step outside for just a moment to grab a few screenshots. Unfortunately I will not have too much time to enjoy the view as I find myself back in the cockpit trimming the aircraft to fight through the increasing winds. On the bright side, I can see the clouds beginning to break as I approach the Vineyard.

Since I am not as awestruck by the scenery as I am with the Beech 18, I have chosen to forego my intended flyby of the island. But as I enter the base leg of the traffic pattern you can still get a pretty good view of most of it. Finally I turn onto final and prepare to land. As I am getting ready to touch down I get the call from ATC that I will need to perform a go-around as a Cessna 208 is preparing to takeoff.

After my frustration of having to go around, even though I was only seconds away from touchdown, subsides, I figured I would go ahead and do that flyby of the island after all. Now with a few screenshots of the setting sun glaring over the island, I am ready to try landing again. This time there is nothing keeping me from landing, which is good since I left Boston with less than a half load of fuel.



The landing was a success and now I can go find a place to park. Unfortunately the hangar doors are closed, so I guess I will leave it outside for the evening. So with this flight in the books I continue to be impressed with this classic workhorse. It is going to take a lot more than some foul weather to keep this bird from flying.

## Conclusions

If you can handle the frame rates, then this package is for you. If you can't then this package is still for you, but you will need to adjust your display settings a little. I was very impressed with the historical accuracy and authenticity of every aspect of the Beech 18, and Martha's Vineyard wasn't too bad either.

The only problem that I had while evaluating this aircraft was that I did not have any other quality Beech 18's to compare it to. The only one I have ever had in my collection did not have a virtual cockpit and aliased the DC-3 panel. But despite not having a comparison, I am confident that even if I did, this version would blow them all away. From the highly detailed interior to the stunning sound set, Aerosoft has left little room for improvement.

As for Martha's Vineyard, I found it to be an improvement over the default scenery, but since I am not big into scenery enhancements, I will have to let the screenshots speak for me. I will say, however, that the airport was a nice feature. I enjoyed the realism of having the trees alongside the outskirts, and of course the hangars and static aircraft added a nice touch.

So when I think of all of the models and variations included with this package, plus the addition of the enhanced Martha's Vineyard scenery, I feel that the \$21.50 price tag is reasonable. Those of you who are familiar with my review procedures know that I always ask myself if I would buy the program again if my original was lost. In this case I certainly would. The level of detail and authenticity places this aircraft in a league of its own.

### **What I Like About Aerosoft's Beech on the Beach Package**

- The authenticity of the Beech 18 is second to none
- The sound set raises the bar for developers of classic twin-props
- A descent selection of models and variations is included
- The PDF manual is very informative and helpful
- The airfile represents the actual flight dynamics very well

### **What I Don't Like About Aerosoft's Beech on the Beach Package**

- The frame rates in the VC range from okay to down right terrible depending on your system

### **Printing**

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[\*\*Beech 18\*\*](#)

[\(adobe acrobat required\)](#)

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