Intro

My name is Raymond Andersen and some of you might know me better as Rays Aviation – I have primarily been flying Microsoft’s various Flight Simulators as well as DCS and WOP. However, I have never tried out X-Plane, so with the brand new release from Laminar Research of the X-Plane 11 featuring a full 64-bit platform, I just had to expand my view to include X-Plane.

I know that normally X-Plane vs FSX vs P3D is almost as a religion to most simmers, but for me I just want to get the very best flight simulation experience. I am certainly very excited to test this new release and do realize that comparing X-Plane 11 to FSX would probably not be fair since FSX is a rather old platform.

Testing the platform is easy and a whole lot of fun, but writing a review about it can be done in many ways as e.g. just one word “Excellent” or I could do a complete in-depth write-up that probably would drain the readers’ interest quickly when realizing the review would be more than 1,500 pages. Therefore, I have chosen to write a review covering as much as possible but without going into all specifics. I hope you will find my experience of XP11 and my discoveries to be interesting.
Download, Installation & Setup

I downloaded the X-Plane 11 directly from www.X-Plane.com and the download went quite fast for a file of more than 58Gb. The version covered in this review is the original 64-bit Home release version also known as the X-Plane 11.00.

Installing the platform is easily performed using the installation wizard – of course, the entire installation process takes quite some time due to the huge amount of data, however the process and certainly the installation wizard is very user friendly and it guided me nicely all the way through the installation process.

During the installation I had the possibility to select how much of the FS world that I wanted to install – this option is a great option if you only want to fly within certain regions of the FS world or if you don’t have too much available space on your hard drive. If you e.g. just wanted to install the US or Europe, then the rest of the FS world would show as just ocean water – this was however not an option for me and I installed the entire 58.20Gb of FS world for this review... well the 58.20 Gb of course also includes the program, the aircrafts etc.

Starting up X-Plane 11 for the first time I now saw a completely new user interface that I now needed to get familiar with. It certainly does not look anything similar to FSX and even though I did not know anything about this before, I found the user interface to be user friendly, simple and logically build.

The opening screen provides three choices about flights (Resume, New or Load) together with an entry to a Flight School and a Settings menu. The fun part would probably be to go directly to the flying, but I did enter the Settings menu instead.
The Settings menu covers a variety of specific settings that I could customize to fit my computer and my idea of how I wanted the XP11 to perform. All the features, all settings and options are very well organized and placed logically in the various pages which can be entered directly from the Settings menu.

The selectable pages are General, Sound, Graphics, Network, Data Output, Joystick, Keyboard and GPS and they all feature numerous settings and options that can be enabled, disabled or set in between using either clickable feature boxes or sliders (bars). The settings and options are logically located within each page as e.g. the page Sound features a customization of the audio both on/off but also in details with volume control of radio, aircraft exterior and interior, co-pilot, environment etc – of course also a master volume control.

The Graphics page is focused on e.g. the textures, the antialiasing, the detailing, shadows, resolution, default view, visual offsets etc. together with an option to enable Vsync, a head-tracker and the Matrox Tripple-Head2Go etc.

Settings like language, ATC guided arrows, FPS’s for the flight model, red and black-out, damage on aircrafts due to stress etc. as well as the unique X-Plane sloping runways are to be found on the page General together with additional features.

One specific page that I think is very important and which I found to be awesome and innovatively created is the Joystick page. Here you can assign functions and features to your controls which is standard, but what is new and improved is the idea that XP11 has a rather huge built-in hardware library with clickable images of the specific controls, so that when assigning functions you always have a superb overview of which buttons are available and which number etc. they have as default.

To assess the image library you need to plug in the devise and if it is in the library, the corresponding image will appear. If the hardware does not appear it means that the hardware is not listed in the library – however it will still be recognized as being programmable hardware devices, meaning you can of course still perform assignment and use the hardware. The name on the list is not necessarily a product name - it could just as well be the name of a PCB as e.g. my collective from OE-XEM that was named BU0836A or something similar. All the hardware that I tried to connect was recognized as being programmable hardware, but I can of course not guarantee that some simmers might have some hardware that could cause an issue here.

I tried plugging in all my various hardware and found that some were included in the library and some were not. Surprisingly my GoFlight Pro Yoke and my Saitek Combat Rudder Pedals were not included which I do find to be a bit strange. That said, my old Logitech Extreme 3D Pro as well as my A10 Warthog FSC from ThrustMaster worked perfectly and a 3D clickable image appeared.

The entire settings menu is certainly very user friendly and for me it seems very logical the way that the menu’s etc. are built. To complete the settings process was quickly accomplished – actually I am quite sure the most time consuming part was to assign the various buttons, axis’ etc. that I have on my various controls.
Included in XP11 is a very nice flight school that can help and guide rookie pilot/simmers, so that they can learn how to fly the basics before going on with the full usage of XP11. The flight school is centered on the very basics of aviation and starts the training with how to navigate the cockpits using the XP11 commands and how to change views etc.

Hereafter the flight school offers training in how to take off and land a standard Cessna C172 together with the Stinson L-5 Sentinel, so that the simmer can experience and get used to flying both a nose wheeled aircraft as well as a taildragger. Additionally the flight school also offers training in how to fly a complete traffic pattern – Throughout the flight school the pilot will be graded to indicate how well the entire flight was performed and this is also a part of XP11 where I see pilots competing against each other for fun.

Second part of the flight school features a tutorial of VOR navigation as well as an ILS approach and landing which certainly adds to the usage of the flight school. The last part of the flight school is only focused on flying helicopters, which I did find to be rather different than what I am used to, flying FSX.

Overall the flight school is great and features a very realistic experience of being a rookie pilot starting training for the first couple of times. That said, if you are an experienced pilot or simmer, then this flight school is unfortunately too easy since it only concentrates on the very basics of aviation and only flying small GA aviation aircraft – well with the exception of the helicopter training. Unfortunately there was no training in flying twin/multi engine aircrafts, larger GA aircrafts than the Cessna C172 or even a tutorial of flying heavies like the Boeing B747 or just the Boeing B737. That I would have expected from the XP11 flight school.

One note though – included in the XP11 package is a 24 page PDF manual explaining the FMS (Flight Management System) and the functions available together with how to program the FMS etc. This manual is very user friendly and easy to read and does provide a greater understanding of flying larger aircrafts – however, this I would have loved to also be explained in a flight school tutorial.
Flight Setup & User interface

The new user interface that XP11 has got, is absolutely very user friendly and intuitive – of course there are possibilities for improvements, but the overall “how-to” select aircraft, airport, weather, season, time etc. is very easy and at the same time also very comprehensive.

When selecting a new flight, the first window to show is a combined window primarily featuring the virtual hangar, but also included are the location, weather and time as clickable entries for the specific other windows. The virtual hangar consists of all the default aircraft together with all the 3rd party add-ons that has been installed as well as the “Extra Aircrafts” which all are located in the Aircraft folder within XP11.

E.g. here below is the default aircrafts located in the Laminar Research folder, which is aircrafts like the Boeing B737, the Cessna C172, the Cirrus SF-50, the Lockheed SR-71 etc., and the Extra Aircraft folder contains aircrafts like the X15, the NASA B-52 and B747-100 as well as the space shuttle etc.

All 3rd party add-ons are also installed to this Aircraft folder. I have for this test of XP11 received the Carenado EMB500 Phenom 100 v1.1 for the purpose to try and install 3rd party add-ons and to see how the process works and how well the aircrafts are integrated.

I uninstalled the zip file containing the EMB500 and simply just copied the complete unzipped folder including all sub folders and files directly into this Aircraft folder – I didn’t have to do anything else, well except for activating the aircraft with the registration key on the first flight, which is done just after loading the aircraft for the first time. Now the 3rd party add-on is installed and was working nicely. One thing I did notice was the thumbnail image, which was using a wrong image – however this I could easily fix by applying the specific name to the correct image in the Carenado folder.

In regards of compatibility with 3rd party add-ons created for the XP10, then I have talked to Carenado about this issue and they informed me that most of their XP10 aircrafts would work in XP11, however they would not be able to use the entire potential of XP11. This issue, I suppose would also be the same issue that other developers of XP aircrafts are facing since the XP10 versus the XP11 are two very differently built platforms as well as the 32-bit versus 64-bit etc.

To get back to the virtual hangar, then this new design and way to select and customize the aircrafts are certainly very user friendly. Even though I normally fly FSX, then this interface I quickly got the hang of and it seems very intuitive and logical in my opinion.

You can search the virtual hangar by various criteria as Class (airliner, glider, helicopter etc.), Engine Type, Manufacturer (real as e.g. Boeing) and Studio which is the developer as e.g. Laminar Research, Carenado etc. When filtered as desired, just click the aircraft to get into the details as selecting the livery, setup of weight and balance, setup of failures and select if you want to start the flight as cold & dark or with engines running. This is very simple and can be completed with only a very few clicks on the mouse.
Next selection is the location which is placed in the upper right corner of the window. Here you can do a search on various levels as e.g. the ICAO, the IATA, FAA, City, State and Airport ID. When you have found the departure airport you can either go with the defaults (active runway as stated below the list) or you can click the button Customize which will open up a new window featuring detailed information about the selected airport. In this new window you can still do new searches with the same levels as previously, but you can also here specifically select which runway you would like to start at, or if you would rather like to start at a gate or ramp, then this is also possible to select.

For me using this customization of the airport is absolutely a great improvement compared to what I am used to flying FSX. This specifically because in FSX I have no idea when selecting a gate or ramp, where that actually is placed in the scenery, but with the XP11 airport customization tool, I get a detailed schematic image of the entire airport with gate, ramp and runway numbers, so if I select gate 5, the gate 5 is highlighted in the image providing the simmer with a superb visualization of where the gate 5 is located.

I also found that the XP11 airport customization tool provides the simmer with a possibility to start the flight on the approach at either a 3 or 10nm approach – this is awesome! There is also a button in the lower left corner where you can select Special Starts – this is focused on carriers, oil rigs, space shuttle etc. which is a nice touch on the available selections.

The image of the schematics of the selected airport is very well detailed and you can use the mouse or the “+” and “-” to zoom and change the view etc. - very easy to use and this feature certainly adds greatly to the customization of the starting location.

In regards to flight planning, then I would have loved this to be a feature integrated in this window, however you are not able to select arrival airport etc here - this window only focuses on the departure airport. That
said, of course there is also a flight planner in the XP11 – this could be the FMS for aircrafts that supports this feature, but you can also create and file a flight plan after the flight has been loaded. This simply by clicking the **Enter** key which opens up a window during the flight and here you can file a flight plan. This is both a really nice feature, since you are now able to alter or configure your flight plan at any given moment, but also quite irritating because you do not have that possibility prior to the flight. That could maybe come as a new feature in XP11 if other simmers also make notice about that issue – I know that Laminar Research pay a lot of attention to the users of XP, and good ideas will probably be investigated and if possible included in e.g. an upgrade or service pack.

Selecting weather is also by default placed in the Flight Configuration window (the first window) where you can do a quick selection of the general type of weather you wish to use. This is selected by a bar that can be moved left/right and includes weather themes as e.g. clear weather, scattered, low visibility and up to stormy weather with lightning strikes etc.

If you wish to do a more detailed setup of the weather you can also here click the button **Customize** which opens up a new window that features a variety of specific settings for the weather. Here you can select weather mode as manually configured, match real world conditions or from custom METAR (.rwx) file.

The manual configured mode enables the simmer to add layers of various and specific clouds at altitudes from ground level to 50,000ft MSL. You can also do settings of the visibility, the precipitation, storminess, temperature and pressure (barometric) as well as to add thermals and actually do a minor detailing of the thermals as e.g. altitude, coverage and climb rate. You can also customize the height of the waves and the direction that the waves moves together with a setup of the runway conditions as e.g. wet or damp and uniform or patchy.
You don’t really have the weather themes that I am used to in FSX, and then again they are there but only in the Flight Configuration window and not that unique as in FSX. As an example I had issues creating a winter wonderland as in a specific FSX weather theme. I set the temperature to be below freezing point, applied precipitation and got snow which I also would have assumed. I changed the season to be winter being December month at EKBI Billund Airport, Denmark and the outcome was a nice winter wonderland runway, but the scenery just wasn’t, unfortunately – the grass areas were still green which I would have hoped and expected to be white; possible with small dunes etc. If this is due to me missing a feature or a setting I am unaware and if so, please let me know how to create a winter wonderland without having a 3rd party airport featuring a seasoning tool.

That said; this way of customizing the weather is certainly very cool and very user friendly with a lot of options to create a superb and detailed weather experience.

The final part of the Flight Configuration window is the **Time of Day** where you can quickly select a specific time on a 24-hour circle using the bar in the bottom of this sub window. Scrolling the bar will also apply changes to the time-window which is just another great visual feature of XP11 and I absolutely also like that both the real time and the UTC time is shown – just one small thing that I noticed and just have to include about this quick selection, was that I could select the time to be everything from 00:00 to 24:00 meaning that I could also both select 00:00 and 24:00 which is actually the exact same time.. I know that is a tiny detail with no relevance at all, but I just had to include it anyway. Sorry.

The selection of the time can also be customized again by clicking the **Customize** button. This opens up a new sub window where you are able to select month, day, hour and minute and apply a GMT offset as well as applying **Track real-world date & time**.
Taking a look at the XP11’s virtual hangar I quickly realized that the hangar was quite numerous just by taking a look at the default aircrafts – some are from previous XP versions and only features the 2D cockpit, but the majority is actually very good quality aircrafts that also features a usable 3D cockpit.

Default aircrafts included in the Laminar Research folder and the Extra Aircraft folder are the following:

- Schleicher ASK21
- Beech Baron B58
- Boeing B737
- Boeing B747
- Cessna C172SP
- Cirrus SF50
- Beech King Air C90B
- Lockheed SR71
- McDonnell Douglas F4
- McDonnell Douglas MD80
- Sikorsky S70
- Boeing B52G NASA
- Boeing B747-100 NASA
- Lockheed C130
- Columbia 400
- McDonnell Douglas KC-10
- Space Shuttle
- Stinson L-5
- North American X15

In the Flight Configuration window I found an entry for customizing the AI Aircrafts. When entering here a new window opens and you are now able to select which aircrafts in your virtual hangar that also should be used as AI traffic aircrafts – this is a really nice detail. Additionally you can also enable combat mode and set a skill level of the default aircraft together with marking it as either friendly or enemy – I did try this and I got an enemy F4 closing in at me after take-off, but how this specifically is supposed to work, I am not sure since I shot down the enemy F4 without firing any weapons, but simply just by placing my aircraft behind the other aircraft.

The virtual cockpits (3D cockpits) for the default aircrafts are actually of a surprisingly good quality with working systems, working avionics (both glass cockpits as well as steam gauges), animated buttons, animated pilots, toggle switches and various levers as well as nice cockpit shake effects, very realistic internal light effects and fair sound sets. The textures and the detailing are better than what I would have expected from stock aircrafts and the finish is very good quality. Of course I also did compare the stock aircrafts quality against the Carenado EMB500 Phenom100 quality and there is still quite a difference in the favor of Carenado’s aircraft.

The externals of the default aircrafts - that being the models, the textures, the detailing, the animations, the effects and the realism is also above the level which I would have expected from these stock aircrafts. I absolutely love the fact that most of the aircrafts textures are showing wear and tear and not just a perfect shiny brand new aircraft from the assembly line, but more a used a realistic look. This certainly set the level of quality higher than expected.

Taking a closer look to the aircrafts landing gears I also noticed that when taking off or landing I could see the suspension of the gears working nicely which certainly adds to the overall realism. This I would have expected from 3rd party aircrafts, but this was also included in the stock aircrafts.

Flying e.g. the heavies like the Boeing B737 and B747 I found that the wings had a very nice and realistic wing-flex effect which I was very happy to see. However looking at the Sikorsky S76 I did miss a rotor
effect where the rotor blades would bend a bit upwards when flying compared to when being at idle prior to take-off.

The default aircraft lights are fair quality with a soft and warm shine. The landing lights are fair and realistic but could perhaps be a bit brighter, but still very okay quality.

The various sound sets are fair quality for the props and the turboprops however, I was a bit disappointed when hearing the sound set for the jets and even worse, then sound set for the Sikorsky S76 which in my opinion is quite far from reality.

The flight models for the stock aircrafts are good and realistic. I of course tested the stalls / spins that XP has become famous for when comparing XP to FSX. I agree that the stalls and spins are more realistic using XP11 than using FSX but only when focusing on the stock aircrafts.

I was very pleased and very glad to see that XP11 featured the Schleicher ASK-21 glider, because I have actually flown this glider for many hours in real life when completing my gliders license. Therefore I also used this glider for multiple tests of the flight dynamics and the result was very realistic.

Generally handling of the ailerons, the rudder and the elevator as well as the airbrakes are very well in accordance with real life. The glide ratio I would assume is close to real life but I did not do a specific test on that. The ASK21 glider can do a lot of aerobatics but is actually very pilot-friendly and very difficult to get into a spin. This was very much the experience I got flying this bird and what I also tried out in both the ASK21 and the C172 was performing a wing glide. This is a procedure used to drop a lot of altitude quickly if needed as e.g. on a final coming in very high. My experience here was also okay realistic and I was able to perform a nice controlled wing glide in both aircrafts – only one thing was missing which was the cockpit panel shakes that I remember to have experienced in real life when performing this procedure.

XP11 also features a customizable aerotow where you can select any aircraft from the virtual hangar to be the tow aircraft. Also during the aerotow you can change the route from a straight line to turning left or right etc. which is a superb addition for glider pilots. Also thermals are a feature which the simmer is able to customize, however the quality of the thermals in XP11 are not great – mostly just a static thermal with the climb rate that was set during the customization. Here I would have expected a more dynamic thermal experience.

Applying realism settings I found that overstressing the aircrafts would result in a damage of the aircraft followed by a crash – there is a setting for this feature on the General page where you can apply a setting that removes flying surfaces of the aircraft if over speeded or if the G-limits are exceeded. The animation and experience this gave me was quite fun, but it did look more like an arcade version of a combat simulator than what I would have expected from a serious flight simulation platform. Well that is just my opinion.

One specific feature that I discovered was during taxi of a C172. When performing a taxi in FSX I am able to control the nose wheel with the ailerons (the yoke) which is actually far from being realistic. However when performing the taxi in XP11 in the C172, I had to use my rudder or wheel brakes and the nose wheel was not in any way impacted by using the yoke – that is a superb improvement because I have often been very irritated of this specific issue in FSX. Awesome!

The aircrafts are very affected by the weather, mostly the cross wind which certainly is a great feature and this also applies when the aircraft is parked which certainly is excellent. Also during a thunderstorm the effects, the sound of raindrops hitting the fuselage, wings and cockpit as well as the visuals are really good,
however with one small minus though. When it rains I didn’t see any raindrop on the windshields – the sound was there but no visuals unfortunately.

I did notice another unique feature of the XP11 which I had not seen before, and that was the heat-exhaustion effect from e.g. the jet aircrafts. I certainly like that there is an effect included which does add to the realism but unfortunately I find the effect to be of a not that superb quality. The heat waves are not placed accurately enough in my opinion, but the positive side is that it is included and the heat waves do provide the exhaust with a blurry look as per real life.

Another feature that I had not seen before was the selection of Sunglasses, Night Vision Gauges and the Cinéma Vérité which all can be selected in the drop-down menu View after the flight has been loaded and you are ready. Switching on the sunglasses changes the lights setting so that the visuals are almost like if the simmer had just put on sunglasses. The same idea is working for the night vision gauges where the visuals now changes into NVG mode with green visuals – very cool!

The Cinéma Vérité applies a non fixed non steady view, meaning a dynamic view where it seems that the view out of the simmer/pilots eyes are moving slightly up/down and left/right randomly like if it was a real view from your own eyes when sitting in the seat breathing. That is absolutely an awesome idea and I apply that for each and every flight.

There are a lot of possibilities and features when the flight has been loaded; just move the mouse to the upper left corner and all the drop-downs will appear – there are features like e.g. your logbook, various flight menu’s and configurations, ground services for e.g. push back control and video recorder etc. - very much like FSX.

I was very positively surprised about the sun glare effect but even more of the shadow effect visualized in the virtual cockpits – the shadows are superbly created and absolutely bring the experience to a higher level. I did however sometimes experience the quality of the shadows changed to be a lower quality which I do not really understand. Especially the shadows I found in the S-76 were terrible and low quality – it seems that the resolution for the shadows is not a fixed high quality resolution, but changes from time to time. This also during flights in the C172 going from awesome resolution when viewing the cockpit panel, but changing the view to the wing instead, also changed the resolution of the shadow on the bar connecting the wing to the fuselage, to a poor low quality experience – why I encountered this issue I am not sure, but rather irritating.

I have a Tracker IR5 (head tracker unit) which I of course has also tested. To integrate this unit in the simulator I simply just had to enable the head tracker in the Settings/Graphics menu and that was it. The calibration of the IR5 was done in the IR5 program and not in XP11. Using the head tracker was the same experience as when using it in FSX. Of course using a head tracker will disable some of the other visual features as the Cinéma Vérité, but instead I gained a full and realistic pilots eye-view.
Scenery & Environment (clouds, contrails etc)

Taking a look at the default scenery that covers the entire XP11 world, I have to say that the scenery and textures is very good quality when talking about a default scenery. Of course there are possibilities for improvements here also but the very basics are better than what I had expected.

The scenery library containing 3D objects is huge with an enormous number of 3D buildings, animated vehicles, landmarks, trees, grass, roads, bridges etc. Especially the buildings really surprised me greatly since the quality, the textures and the detailing, the shadows on the ground and the wear and tear here is just so much better than FSX’s default buildings.

The AI road traffic is working nicely with region/country specified right versus left lane traffic, however I did get a bit confused touring London because here I found several places where the traffic was in the right lane instead of the left lane as per standard England traffic rules. The traffic in Denmark, Germany and the US was in the right lane as it should be but Australia was mostly right lane traffic in the cities that I checked, which is not as per real life. The outskirts of London and the rest of England was left lane traffic with a few exceptions.

The quality of the roads does vary quite a lot – I found the roads in general to be fair quality especially the freeways/motorways etc. but in some regions with e.g. a variable terrain, the roads did not always curve or follow the terrain that well. I did a flight from Esbjerg Airport, Denmark (EKEB) and took a look at the freeway passing by the airport and that was created very beautifully with light-poles, road guards and signs etc. However this experience was not perfect because I saw several places where the trees were disturbing the traffic and in the picture here below you can also see two lanes that are cut with a road guard = that would in real life result in car crashes. Also the signs were not written in Danish even though Esbjerg Airport is located in Denmark. I do know that it would be close to impossible to include signs for all regions written in the correct language, so of course I do understand why and reading the information supplied from Laminar Research about the EU versus the US, then I can confirm that the signs in Denmark and Germany are actually in German whereas the signs flying in e.g. Los Angeles was written in English. The smaller roads or general roads are not that good quality – they are created, integrated into the terrain and okay quality, but not more than that.
Here below are two pictures where the left picture if taken at the NZMF Milford Sound, New Zealand on the helipad No.7 looking at the nearby roads that totally does not resemble real life at all. The road just beside the airport has a quite unrealistic climb as well as the road near the trees has about a 50° angle. This was probably one of the worst areas that I found according to roads versus terrain and realism.

The right picture is from the final approach at PAGY Skagway, Alaska where you clearly can see the sea level does not match properly – errors like these are quite common in the XP world, but that said I still do find the general default scenery quality to be better than I had expected.

I searched various locations around the XP world where I was looking for scenic locations to see if they were fairly in accordance with reality – for the most parts it was a good experience but I got very surprised when touring the New York area and couldn’t find the Statue of Liberty…. Just to make everything even more unrealistic I also found what I believe to be the twin towers - the World Trade Center perfectly located in the New York skyline which was quite a confusing experience. Very nice to see the towers included in the scenery but at the same time also very unrealistic.

I also discovered that KCGX Meigs Field, Chicago was an active and operating airfield even though it was closed several years ago. This is probably the very most known airfield in the flight simulation community and I know that many simmers have a certain connection to that airfield (myself included) so of course I was very happy to see Meigs Field once again, but also here with mixed feelings since this was completely unrealistic.

Setting the focus on the default airports then also here I found several levels of quality however, the overall quality is certainly much improved compared to FSX. Larger airports or international airports are actually very good dynamic sceneries with also a payware quality which I certainly had not expected to be of this level of complexity. I was very overwhelmed with the detailing and complexity that was put into so many airports around the world – I checked out several international airports covering almost all continents except for Antarctica and the level of detailing, 3D buildings, scenery complexity, good quality textures and dynamic airport environment just kept on showing. Awesome!
Ground services in all the airports marked with 3D objects in the Flight Configuration window are awesome, and features high quality dynamic vehicles that are very realistic. Also the pushback is created with a very realistic pushback tug as well as dynamic fuel trucks etc. Pushback can be selected from the dropdown menu’s at the top left corner or by pressing the SHIFT+G and features 3 options as pushback left, right or straight backward. Remember that this feature will only work if the aircraft is parked at a gate.

The water textures are fair and the quality of the waves and the water in general is good. Especially flying low level is a very realistic experience due to the dynamic waves and even more to the superb reflections the water and also the nearby cliff have. However climbing to higher altitudes I unfortunately find the quality to decrease. In the weather configuration window you can change the high of the waves (water bodies) which actually is a quite fun feature – normally this is not something I would use that often but still quite a nice idea to include when creating a great thunderstorm or similar.

Viewing the ground from high altitudes however, is a completely different and awesome experience that absolutely looks very realistic. That combined with the superb haze-effect creates a very realistic flight experience when cruising at e.g. 35,000’. That is certainly a great advantage of XP11 versus other flight simulators that I have tried out.

Before testing the XP11 I had read and heard a lot of comments about the clouds in the XP series and how terrible and unrealistic they were. What I found in XP11 was nothing like what I had read or heard – actually I was very amazed by the quality of the clouds that in a lot of ways seemed very close to the clouds I get in FSX when using REX Overdrive and comparing the XP11 default clouds to FSX default, then the quality of XP11 is certainly better.

I found that if I selected the menu Developer in the top left corner when the flight was loaded, I could select Show Sky Colors which brings out a window providing the simmer the possibility to change and customize the clouds color in various conditions – this is amazing and a feature that I have never seen before as default. Contrails however, disappointed me quite a lot – they are very dark and not that realistic and the simmer have unfortunately no possibilities to customize them (as far as I could find) which could have been a superb additional feature.

Now going to something that I find to be one of the best upgrades to my flight simulation experience is the superb sloping runways that XP11 features – the runways follows the terrain instead of just a level runway and this absolutely adds to a greater experience of blasting down the runway during takeoff or flaring the aircraft when landing. This add more realism and also require more control from the pilot planning ahead if e.g. trying to land on a runway sloping upwards. Absolutely awesome!

I also noticed that when selecting the map during flight, the map will open in a smaller window allowing the simmer to continue flight with a dynamic moving map at the same time. This is really great and I also love the details which the map features as customizing the map with the Compass Rose, the selection of VFR, IFR low and IFR high enroute as well as doing quick customization with the clouds and winds as well as to select a desired approach from the drop down etc.

I discovered that in the Custom Scenery Folder there were placed a lot of scenery folders named Aerosoft together with a corresponding ICAO code and airport name. I don’t know for sure if this means that these specific airports that are included as default airports, are actually airport sceneries developed by Aerosoft for XP11 as extra cream/eye candy – I would assume so.
**Additional Programs**

Additionally the XP11 simulator also features a couple of programs within the flight simulator – these are the Airfoil Maker program and the Plane Maker program and both programs are located within the root of the XP11 main folder.

In short they are both bundled programs with XP11 used for designing and creating your own aircrafts and physical specifications, which hereafter can be installed in XP11 that now can predict and simulate how the aircraft would fly in real life.

I will not go into details of how these programs work but simply add to the review that XP11 includes these extra features.
Conclusion

To wrap-up my experience of XP11 during my +100 test flights, then this new XP11 flight simulator gave me a truly and absolutely amazing new experience of flight simulation. The level of quality is just so much higher than what I had expected and even though I am an experience MS-flight simulator guy, then XP11 has certainly made its icon on my desktop to stay there permanently.

There are always possibilities for improvements and especially if there is still being developed on the specific program/platform as the XP11, but I find this new user interface and the overall experience I got using XP11 to be very intuitive and very innovative, which I believe could set a new standard for flight simulation.

The design, the user interface, the aircrafts, the sceneries, the textures, the realism, the flight dynamics and all of the other details are of a very high standard. I certainly do recommend XP11 for my fellow flight simmers and even though you might be an MS-guy like me, then my experience tells me that I will of course still use FSX, but also include XP11 because both flight simulators provide me with a wider and greater flight simulation experience.

Since I had never previously tested or used any of the XP-platforms, I did not own any 3rd party add-ons that could help completing the test. Therefore I would like to give a special thanks to Carenado for donating the beautiful EMB500 Phenom100 for this test and review – Thank you Carenado!

I also would like to thank the team at Laminar Research for creating this new and greatly improved flight simulator, which certainly gave me an exceptional new flight experience. You have done a truly amazing job creating this new interface and lifting the flight simulation experience up to the 64-bit version – Thank you for this experience and keep up the excellent work!

Ray Aviation
My Test Specs vs Minimum and Recommended Specs

Technical Requirements

- Minimum Hardware Requirements
  - CPU: Intel Core i3, i5 or i7 CPU with 2 or more cores, or AMD equivalent
  - RAM: 8Gb
  - Video Card: DirectX 11-capable from NVIDIA, AMD or Intel with at least 1 Gb VRAM

- Recommended Hardware Requirements
  - CPU: Intel Core i5 6600K at 3.5 GHz or faster
  - RAM: 16-24Gb or more
  - Video Card: DirectX 12-capable from NVIDIA, AMD or Intel with at least 4 Gb VRAM

- Supported Video Cards
  - NVIDIA, AMD, Intel

- Supported Operating Systems
  - OS X: OS X 10.10 or newer (e.g. Yosemite, El Capitan or Sierra)
  - Windows: Windows 7, 8 or 10, 64-bit
  - Linux: Will run but no support and will require proprietary driver from AMD or NVIDIA

Review Computer Specifications

- Windows 10 (64-bit)
- X-Plane 11 Home 64-bit Edition (XP11.00) installed
- Intel Core™ i7-4790K 4x4.00GHz (Turbo 4x4.40GHz)
- Asus Maximus VII Ranger (ROG-series)
- Antec Kuhler H20 650 Water Cooler
- Kingston HyperX Beast-series 32Gb DDR3-2133 RAM
- 500Gb Samsung 850 EVO SSD
- 3Tb Seagate Barracura (7200rpm, 6Gb/s)
- Asus GeForce GTX 980 Strix OC 4Gb
- 150/150Mbit Fiber Internet Connection

3rd Party Software Add-ons

- Carenado’s Embraer EMB500 Phenom 100 v1.1

Flightsim Hardware

- GoFlight PRO YOKE
- Thrust Master Warthog A10 Flight Control System
- OE-XAM Bell B206 Collective
- Saitek Combat Rudder Pedals
- Saitek 3-lever Throttle Quadrant
- Rays Aviation Command & Lights Panel
- Logitech Extreme 3D PRO