

SIMPLY MAGNIFICENT

IT HAS BEEN TEN YEARS OF EXTREMELY HARD WORK BUT ROD LEWIS' CONSTELLATION
IS NOW THE WORLD'S FINEST EXAMPLE OF A VINTAGE AIRLINER

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INTERIOR PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRADLEY WENTZEL

It's a bit hard to believe, but the Air Legends Foundation's Lockheed C-121 Constellation *Bataan* has been on the ground for 15 months. That earth-bound time period ended on the evening of 15 July when Steve Hinton, Jim "JD" Dale, and Jeff Whitesell brought the four Vintage Radials Wright R-3350 hybrid motors to life as the aircraft sat on the Aerometal ramp in Aurora, Oregon.

The Constellation had been at Aurora so it could have its elaborate interior installed along with work on the cockpit and engines. Designing, building, and installing an interior for an aircraft the size of a Constellation is no easy task and 15 craftspeople at Aerometal had been working almost non-stop on the project under the guidance of Rod Lewis.

Greg "AceMaker" Colyer and I had flown to Aurora in Greg's Baron on Rod's invitation to see the completed

a Constellation — at least as complete as a project like this can get because, for those of you involved directly in vintage aviation, we all know that it is never-ending.

After a three-hour flight from Yolo County Airport, we touched down and taxied to the Aerometal ramp, which was dominated by the Connie. A wash crew was completing their work while Steve



Rod Lewis piloting the Constellation as it heads to AirVenture 2025.



AIR LEGENDS
FOUNDATION

Bataan climbing out from Aurora on 16 July during the Constellation's second test flight following the installation of the interior and other work. The scenic Oregon background formed a perfect setting for the classic aircraft.