

BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL AIR SHOW '18

TEXT & PHOTOS - ANDY BINKS

Taking place bi-annually on this small island kingdom in the Persian Gulf is one of the region's leading commercial events, the Bahrain International Air Show. Andy Binks reports from Bahrain.



*The C-130J taxiing out for its first official RBAF flight.
Photo by Andy Binks*

The Bahrain International Air Show

Taking place bi-annually on this small island kingdom in the Persian Gulf is one of the region's leading commercial events, the Bahrain International Air Show.

The trade show is held over three days and is based along similar lines to that of Farnborough, indeed it is run by the same team of experienced people and follows a tradition of showing off the local forces as well as offering sales opportunities for the major worldwide aviation companies.

The show is held at Sakhir Air Base in the centre of the island, a fifty minute drive from the capital city Manama. From an aviation enthusiast's point of view, the background and lighting are excellent but only until midday. After that it is better to seek out suitable photographic points on the opposite side of the base to the showground, which of course leads to being much closer to the flying action.

This year the static display consisted of a number of Royal Bahraini Air Force (RBAF) aircraft including such classics as an F-5, an Avro RJ85, a Bo-105 and a pair of AH-1 Cobras as well as their more modern counterparts in the form of an F-16, a Hawk 100, Bell 212 and 214s and various UH-60s.

The latest plane in the RBAF inventory, a C-130J direct from its delivery flight from Cambridge in the UK was also shown but did not fly until departures day, this being its first official flight for the RBAF.





*The F-5 fly-past opened the show each day.
Photo by Andy Binks*



Special operations

As well as the expected large numbers of civil aircraft, also present were a contingent of USAF, USMC and US Navy aircraft consisting of an AV-8B Harrier, a pair of CV-22 Ospreys, two F-16 Fighting Falcons, two F-15E Strike Eagles and a mighty MH-53E Sea Stallion. The navy were represented by an MH-60S Seahawk.

The flight line was very ably covered by the Russian Knights and their magnificently manoeuvrable Su-30s (sadly no flares have been worked in to the routine as yet), as well as the RAF Typhoon display team, the Italian air force aerobatic display team, the Frecce Tricolori and last but by no means least, two each of the Mirage 2000-5 and F-16 from the UAE air force as well as their much-improved display team, Al Fursan.

Opening the show each day was a fly-past by three RBAF F-16s and three F-5s. After that, several of the previously mentioned aircraft took to the sky for their displays. Also participating from afar (so we were told!) were a B-1B and a VMFA-211 F-35B from the assault ship USS Essex.

The sun sets fast in this part of the world and the show was soon over but at least that afforded some opportunities to practice night photography of the static display. However, the selfie-ing crowd proved to be too over-powering for this photographer and an end was called on an excellent well-run event.

We hope to return in 2020 and possibly see the latest hardware on show yet again, maybe even in local markings if the sales teams have been proved to be successful!

