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Surefire A2 Aviator

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- Gear reviews and tests - Lamps and Lanterns -



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Description :

Digitally regulated hybrid aviation light from Surefire

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Surefire A2 Aviator

While standard Surefire lights are some of the finest lights made, they, like any other high-output light of their size, suffer from short battery life and excessive brightness for close-up work. The Aviator solves both these problems handily.



The light is 5.6 inches, and, as you may expect from Surefire, has a hard-anodized class III finish (HA-III). This means that if there is any change left in your pocket after buying it, at least it won't scratch up your light. The lens is tempered Pyrex. A long pocket clip of black oxide-coated stainless steel is included. This light was designed for the aviation industry, so it has an incandescent main lamp for pre-flight inspection and a trio of 5mm LED's for low-level light inside the cockpit. The LED's are available in white, red, blue, green and yellow-green, but I chose white for proper color rendition.



The main lamp puts out 50 lumens, but has greater throw than the 60-lumen E2e, due to its larger reflector. This light has a regulatory circuit for its incandescent. There is only one incandescent light other than the A2 that I am aware of that utilizes such a regulatory circuit. This circuitry keeps the light within a lumen or two of maximum output for a full 50 minutes, per Surefire's website (This figure seems to be a bit generous, as many users have reported runtime of about an hour) after which the LEDs will continue to run for a few hours. It also provides a "soft start" for the lamp, protecting it from the initial current spike of lithium batteries and therefore lengthening lamp life.



Beamshot with Aviator's incandescent on right and 3C Mag on left.



Beamshot with Aviator's LED's on right and Photon Freedom on left. The LEDs provide a nice flood, and their runtime is advertised as 20 hours. It is bright enough for many tasks, from reading to walking a path, thus lengthening the

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amount of actual use you will get out of a set of batteries to a lot more than an hour.



The above picture shows "witness marks" which are intended to indicate when the tailcap is in the proper position for use. While the tailcap looks similar to other Surefire lights, it functions in a somewhat different way. Depressing it halfway or tightening it halfway will turn on the LED's. Going the rest of the way will activate the incandescent. Unscrewing the tailcap one and a half turns locks out the light so it cannot be turned on with the button. The light comes with a removable lanyard made of 550 Para-cord. Interestingly enough, the LED's do not turn off when the incandescent goes on. This will seem like a waste, until you drop the light one night while the incandescent is on, causing it to burn out!

Due to the long-running LED's, I prefer the Aviator to the E2e in all but pocketability - it's a little longer and the diameter is a little larger - so it will, unless something better comes along (I don't think that will happen soon!), be my jacket light in the winter, my BOB light in the summer, and even my camping light. I feel that the Aviator is one of the most well-designed and versatile lights on the market.