

Friday, September 10, 2004
4th Cobra flight, 14th solo
Down to Socorro and back

Launched 6:50am, Landing 9:20am
Flight time: 2:20 hour Total time: 28:10
Launch: Light winds on 21 Landing: 10-12 cross
2 landings

Launch Code Double Eagle predicted calm the night before. At 4:30AM it was predicting 2-3mph. Winds aloft called for 10-12 out of the south. Met Frank at Dion's at 5:30am. Got to Belen 6:10am. Taxied out 6:45 am with light winds (5mph) down the runway 21. Fixed the SmartSingle FF1 so it would integrate the fuel consumption - I just had to set the fuel tank capacity in the calibration menu.



Took off before just before dawn. Frank launched first, I was right behind him. Trike took off smartly, RPM up to 6840 again, 500fpm climbout. We went out over the Rio Puerco which was in shadows.

Rio Puerco Valley at dawn, Ladron Peak in Distance

Following Frank



The air was very smooth, but there was a 20mph headwind. We had to fight it all the way down south. We had originally intended to fly to Magdalena, and then down the canyon from Magdalena to the Socorro Airport. But the winds were a little too strong and the Magdalena airport is nestled in a valley behind some good sized rotor generating mountains. So we flew down the Rio Grande Valley instead.

It was a little disconcerting to watch the ground creep by at 25 mph at my altitude (500-1000 ft AGL). I took it easy in the throttle and babied the engine. My RPMs at cruise were around 5800, I need to repitch the prop again.

Going South (just past Bernardo)



We flew past the rest stop, then down by San Acacia, a gap between two mountains that the Rio Grande goes between.

We flew past the town of Socorro and landed at the Socorro airport. It was blowing 15-20, but it was right down runway 15. After landing, I replaced the batteries on the GPS which had died on the way down. Then we took off and headed home, this time with a 25 mph tail wind.

My trike at the Socorro Airport



USAPhotomaps view of Socorro Airport



On the return trip, we climbed up to 7300 MSL so we could fly over the wildlife refuge on the east side of the Rio Grande. It was the highest I had gone up in a long time, back to my hang gliding days 12 years ago. What a view.



Flew by San Acacia again, except on the east side of the Rio Grande. While we were flying along at 7500 ft, we saw a twin engine plane zoom by, 1000-1500 ft below, and half mile to the west. I saw him in plenty of time, but I think I would like to stay low now (500ft AGL) away from the big planes.



Rough terrain east to San Acacia, Black Butte in the distance

Near Bernardo, I crossed back to the west side of the Rio Grande and followed the Rio Puerco north. (Looked at the big rings) and entered the pattern from the west.

The landing was a little trickier than usual. My most challenging landing to date. The wind was blowing hard, 10-12 cross according to DigiWX logs. There was a lot of mechanical turbulence blowing off the hangers. Frank landed first and radioed a warning to be careful. I kept the speed up, eased her down, got centered, but a little on the north side of the runway so I could angle her a little closer into the wind. Touched down a little past mid-field for a nice easy landing.



Heading North along Rio Puerco



Nice long flight.