

Sunday, December 26, 2004
25th Cobra flight, 35th solo
Rio Salado, Alamo Band Reservation,
Tres Hermanos, Caldron
4 landings

Launched 9:20am, Landing 12:20 pm
Flight time: 3:00 Total logged time: 77:05
Launch: calm on runway 21
Landing: calm on runway 21 small thermals

The day after Christmas was a nice no wind day, but a little cold. Took my time, even walked the dogs before leaving home, and got to the hanger around 8:30am, launched at 9:20. I did one touch and go to check out the Aeros wingtips I had borrowed from Frank for my Stream wing. The wing handled the same, but I did notice a more extended glide on landing.

My plans are to follow the Rio Salado to the Alamo Band Indian Reservation, then head north backtracking my route last week. Winds aloft at 9000ft were west at 15 so I flew to the west of Ladron Peak. We had some snow earlier in the week and it wasn't melting. Down in the Rio Puerco valley it was a cold 25F. But as I climbed to cross the Ladron spine, it began to warm up.



Snowy Ladron Peak



As I climbed to 7000 ft to cross the Ladrón spine (left), it was a much warmer 40 degrees.



I headed on south to the Rio Salado, then followed the river bed west (right).

An interesting volcanic pinnacle was ahead so I circled in for a closer look. Down below I could see the ruins of an ancient indian city on a plateau at the base of the pinnacle.

Machu Picchu on the Rio Salado.





The Rio Salado widened and far ahead I could see three bumps in a row, the "Tres Hermanos."

Note: Nearly every instance of 3 hills in a row is invariably named "Three Sisters" throughout the southwest.

Below the three sisters is the Alamo Band Indian Reservation. I could see an nice athletic field and track, but where was the landing strip?

One of our local trike pilots claimed to have landed a Cessna 150 on the strip a few years back. I continued to look around, and eventually used my GPS to fly directly over the airstrip . . .





Airstrip??

Cessna 150 landed here??

This picture does not do justice to how bad this strip appeared from the air. The west end (upper left) was a bulldozed gouge between two hills.

I continued up the Rio Salado, flew over the Three Sisters climbing to 8000 ft to cruise north over Tres Hermanos Mesa.

Over the mesa I picked up a 25 mph tail wind.



Crossed over to Arroyo Colorado, near Petaca Pinta Mesa.

Snow capped Mt Taylor with Petocho Butte in foreground.

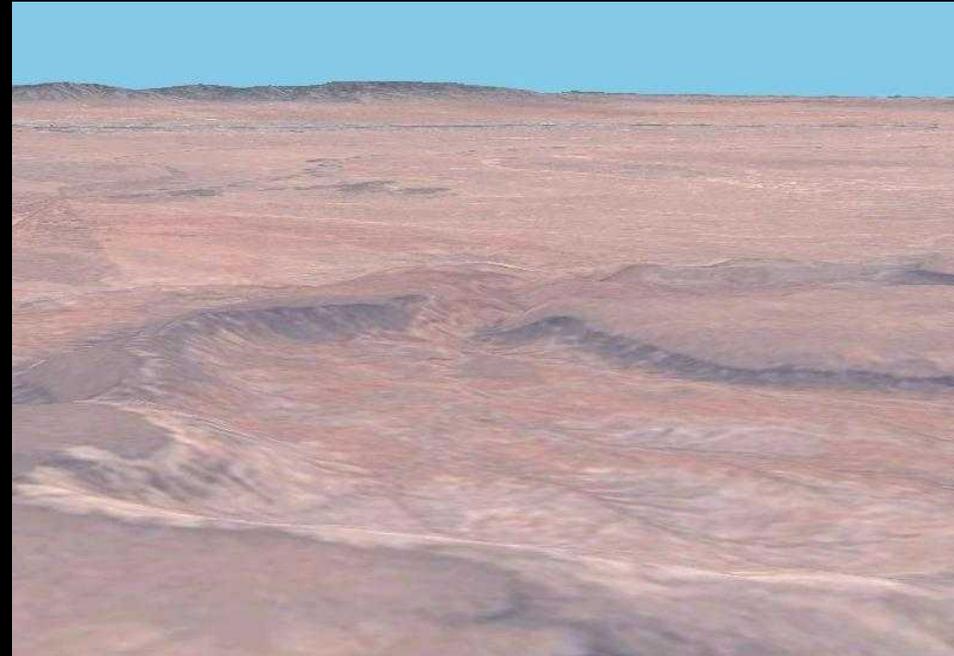
It was nice warm 50 F as I crossed over the Caldron, heading back to Belen. As I descended, the temps dropped down to 25 degrees in the pattern over Belen airport.



Caldron



NASA World Wind view of Caldron

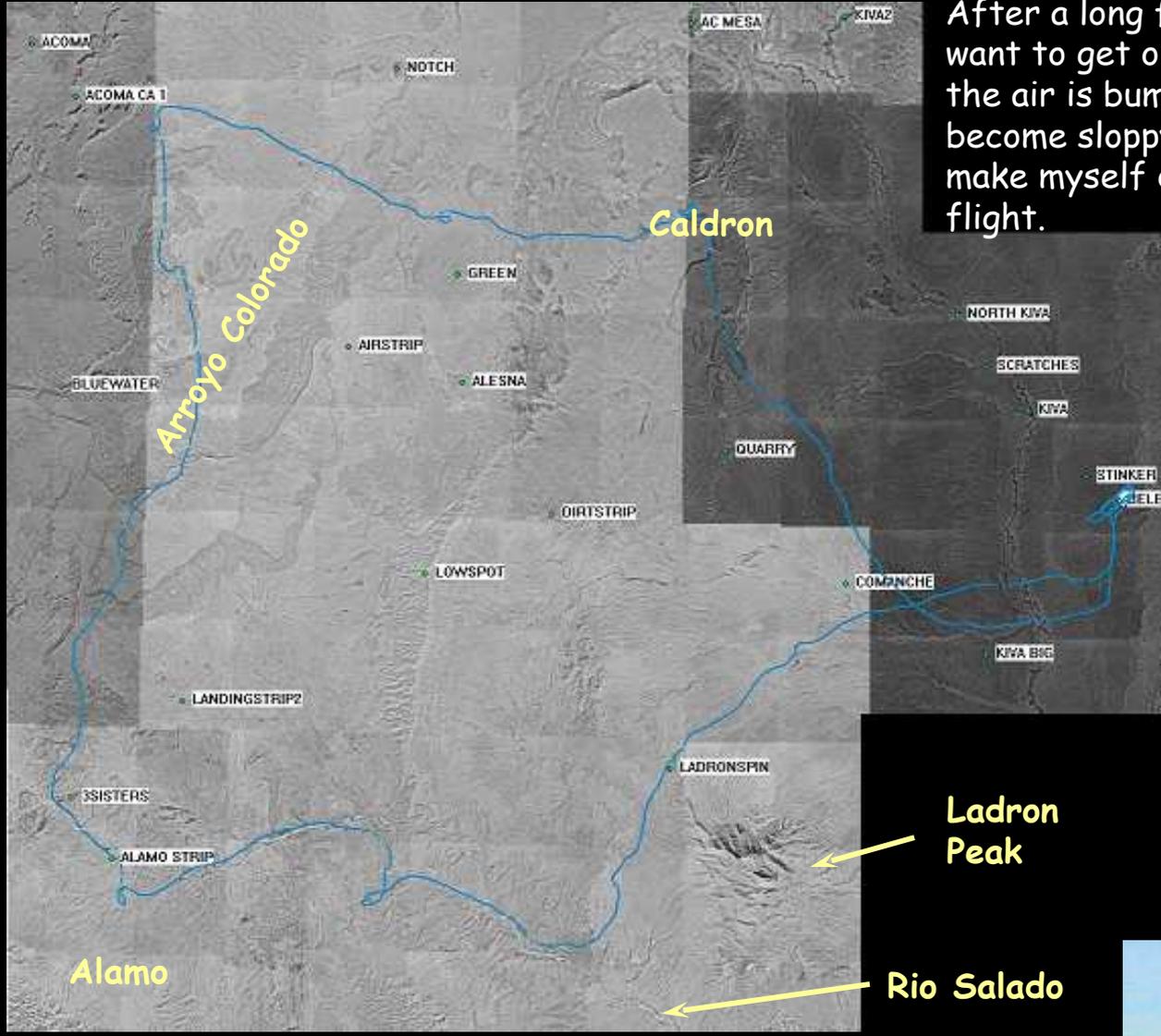


After a long flight, there is a tendency to just want to get on the ground. Your bladder is full, the air is bumpy, you are tired and landings become sloppy. To counteract this in myself, I make myself do two landings at the end of the flight.

The second landing is almost always smoother than the first one. I must be picking up some cues during the first landing.

.....

There were some weak thermals down low and I got bumped around. I used some power to get exactly centered up before touching down. The wingtips stretched out the bleed off phase a bit longer than I was used to so I pulled in to set the trike down. Second landing was nice and smooth.



Just as I was hangering my trike, Frank pulled up to work on his new Aeros Velocity. I worked on my trike some, then flew with him later for an afternoon / sunset flight.

