

Friday, February 12, 2010

304th Cobra flight, 315th PIC, 4 landings

Pools, Caldron, Rio San Jose, PPC, Puerco Volcanoes, Cabezón,, Double Eagle, Mid-Valley

Jacques and Sylvie Jallet, two trike pilots from Montreal, Canada contacted me a few months back, saying they wanted to come to New Mexico and fly. They arrived last Wednesday, and I helped them set up their DTA Voyager trike at Mid-Valley. Mike let them store it in his hangar.

We agreed to meet on Friday at Belen for the grand tour to Cabezón and back. They were waiting with their trike outside my hangar when I drove up to Belen. I set up quickly (including testing out my new homemade PPT switch) and we were on our way. We headed out past the pools and towards the Valley of the Horses.

Belen takeoff: 9:30 am PPC landing: 10:56 am
PPC takeoff: 12:02 pm DE landing: 1:46 pm
DE takeoff: 3:03 pm Belen landing: 3:56 pm
Today's Airtime 4.4hrs
Total PIC Time : 800.1 Total Logged Time 821.3



The wind was NW, blowing over the Sierra Lucero, causing some rough air. Just past the pools, we flew past a herd of about 10 horses. All motivation to enter the Valley evaporated, so I suggested we retreat to the east into smoother air.

Sylvie had no problem piloting her trike in the bumpy air over the over to the Caldron of Hell and Jaws of Death.





From the Red Spot, we followed the Rio San Jose, past this old abandoned ranch house.

After crossing I-40, I headed west to the PPC landing field. We were about 30 minutes ahead of our planned meeting with Frank at the PPC field. We landed ate an early lunch at the shack there. By the time Frank arrived on time around 11:30am we were packed and ready to go. As I expected, Frank had already eaten lunch so we took off and headed east towards Mt Taylor.

As we approached the Mt Taylor Plateau, Jacques radioed to me, "Jeff, are you sure you want to head to that mountain?" I nodded to myself in agreement, the view was a little intimidating from here. I said, "We won't go all the way to the mountain, we'll turn outside the outer row of volcanoes. They are really cool, you will like them."

A few minutes later, I did a 360 to look for them and Jacques and Sylvie were gone. So was Frank.





I radioed Frank, and he said they were flying together a few miles out from the volcanoes. I turned north about a mile from the first volcano, Cerro Vacio.

Later when I saw Jacques pictures back at my house I could tell that he came back and flew almost the same route that I did. I just didn't see him.

I cruised north outside the Valley of Volcanoes and regrouped with Jacques and Sylvie and Frank near Nuestra Senora Volcano (lower right)



We flew north up the Rio Puerco Valley towards Cabezon. The wind became stronger, slowing my ground speed at one point to 30mph. With all that wind came a few bumps. We flew over the ruins at Guadalupe, and out to Cabezon. The DTA and Frank's Apollo fly faster than me and pulled ahead of me. I cut a corner by climbing up and crossed over the top of Cabezon, which had a lot of snow on the summit.

Jacques was a little concerned about his fuel burn rate, so after circling around Cabezon, we headed straight in to Double Eagle Airport.

I was about 5 miles behind Frank and, Jacques and Sylvie. I watched them land ahead of me. I was approaching Runway 22 when I heard the tower clear a plane to land on the opposite end, Runway 4. I verified my landing on 22 with the tower, and they said they were aware of the situation and the other plane would be well clear of the runway before I landed. The tower cleared me to land and I about 20 seconds touchdown when tower radioed, "17JX, your are not clear to land on 22, can you divert to 35?" The plane on runway 4 had botched its landing and gone into the dirt on the side and was blocking the runway. "What are the winds, do the favor 17 or 35?" I asked. The tower said they were about 8 knots, and slightly favored 35, the direction was almost 90 deg cross. I said that would be ok, and landed on 35. That was a first for me, diverting at the last second like that.



I met everyone at the gas pump and tied down my trike. We took short warm up break inside, then headed back outside. Jacques got a couple gallons of 100LL. The winds had shifted, favoring runway 17 on takeoff now. At the departure end of 17, I could barely hear the tower on the radio. I asked for the light gun, and looked over. I saw a solid green light, "Clear to Takeoff". I radioed, "I see solid green, clear to takeoff", and took off. I was making the radio calls for Jacques, and he followed me out and on to Mid-Valley. I watched him land, did a touch and go, then headed to Belen. That was a fun flight. We'll fly again later.

