

Saturday, June 5, 2010
315th Cobra flight, 325th PIC, 3 landings
Train Man, Abo Canyon, Manzano Mtn Ridge Run

Sam, a train fanatic, contacted me last year after watching some of my YouTube trike videos that featured trains. Sam wanted to photograph the trains and bridges from a trike, so I sent him to Frank, who is an instructor. Bad weather and scheduling problems have forced many postponements of his trip. Finally everything has come together and weather looks great for Saturday.

Belen Takeoff: 6:35am Belen Landing 7:23am
Belen Takeoff: 7:41am Belen Landing: 9:44am
Today's Airtime 2.9hrs
Total PIC Time: 836.4 Total Logged Time: 857.6



Frank said he would land at Belen around 7am to let Sam take a break before continuing on to Abo Canyon at the southern end of the Manzanos. Paul, John S, Chuck and Mitch would be there as well, making for a 6 trike rendezvous in Belen.

Paul and I were ready to go around 6:30, so we headed north following the train tracks, expecting to intercept them flying south from Double Eagle. Near the Rio Puerco crossing I picked up Frank on the radio.

We had some fun flying next to this train.



We landed at Belen to group up with the other trikers. Paul, John and I crossed the Rio Grande and headed towards Abo while Frank flew over the train switch yard south of Belen. Frank caught up with us just as we arrived at Abo.



They were doing some construction, adding a second set of tracks through canyon. I have never flown through Abo canyon at low altitude because there was no place to land except for the railroad tracks. That would not be fun.

Today, the prepared route for the second set of tracks created a perfect landing strip, clear of obstacles and smooth. We flew up the canyon, and returned to the west side of the mountain.



Mission accomplished, Frank headed back to Belen. He was an hour and a half of away from Double Eagle and he didn't want to wear Sam out in the late morning thermals. It's been 100 degree weather this week.

I looked north along the Manzano Mountain ridgeline, and suggested a flight along the mountains. Paul immediately agreed. As we climbed we picked up a 20 mph wind out of the NW, crossing the mountain at 45 degree angle. We stayed to the windward side where the air would be smooth and worked our way up the ridge.

Right: Following Paul's trike for the first half of the trip.





Left: Following Paul near the center of the mountain.

Lower Left: I was getting great air-to-air pictures of Paul. As we approached the flat topped mesa at the north end, I asked Paul to switch positions so he could get some good pictures of me.



Right: Shortly after Paul took the picture on the right, I got an over the shoulder picture of him. It's one of my best, and its on the next page.





We continued to the far north end of the Manzanos and looped around Guadalupe and Mosca Peaks and retraced our path to the flat topped mesa near the center. I got another over the shoulder picture of Paul (above).



When we left the mountain, I flew over Paul and shadow bombed him. We spiraled down to stay clear of any jet traffic heading south, then crossed the plains to Belen.

The next day, Sam drove over to Abo Canyon to take some pictures from the ground. He ran into some other train enthusiasts there. They said, "You should have been here yesterday. There were some trikes following a train near the canyon!! It was so cool!"

Sam replied, "That was me, I was in the red trike." That made the trip for Sam. Here is my GPS tracklog.

