

August 23-24th Cody, WY & Yellowstone Park (sort of)

Cody, WY was, of course, named for its most famous citizen, William F. (Buffalo Bill) Cody, Scout for the US Army cavalry, hero of dime novels, Wild West showman, and stage actor. I was surprised to find very limited visibility due to heavy smoke when I arrived on Saturday evening. I learned that a large forest fire had been burning since mid-July and was expected to continue until the winter snows. The National Park service had hundreds of firefighters on the mountain to the west of Cody, and were deploying aerial bucket brigades to keep the fire from spreading to buildings. Otherwise the plan was just to let it burn itself out, since over the past few years the pine beetle had pretty much decimated much of the woods. In addition to the limited visibilities, I found out that the valley that I had planned to fly through, onto Yellowstone Park had been closed to air traffic starting about 20 miles from town with a TFR (Temporary Flight Restriction) due to the fire fighting efforts. This was certainly going to limit the amount of the park that I would be able to see.

On Sunday I took the Vespa into town to scout out the sights. The [Buffalo Bill Historical Center](#) is a museum...actually 5 museums in one. There is a section on Buffalo Bill, the Plains Indians, a Gallery of Western Art, as well as a Firearms and a Natural History museum. Two hours were certainly not enough time for this very interesting attraction, and I will try to return while I am here.



This is Buffalo Bills Historical Center museum



And this is the US Army Cavalry Scout himself, as depicted in this 25 foot high bronze sculpture



Heavy smoke rises from the mountain forest fire



Fire fighting helicopter lifting its water bucket while the King Air scout plane (left) taxis out



Cody's historic main street with hotel & shops



Buffalo Bill Cody's original Irma Hotel on Main St

On Sunday the wind shifted enough that I could get into the air for some flying around the local area. I flew down the valley that would have taken me to the East gate of Yellowstone National Park until I reached the restricted flight area. I was able to take a few photos of the mountains that extend onto the park, some of which reach 13,000 feet. While I could have proceeded on to Yellowstone Lake by flying over those mountains, thus avoiding the TFR, I knew that there would not be the opportunity for an emergency landing zone that I would have along the North Fork river which went through a pass. Remembering what happened to Steve Fossett in these same mountains, I decided not to be that adventurous and turned back when my 8,500 feet flight altitude began to approximate the terrain off my left wing.

Monday, 8/25 was spent doing some sightseeing both by air and ground. I made a 50 mile flight over to Greybull airport to look over some WWII era aircraft that had been turned into aerial fire fighting equipment. (See next article entitled "Boneyard"). And, speaking of "fighting", when I returned I went into town to attend the afternoon "gunfight" ([click here for movie](#)) at the [Irma Hotel](#), which was originally owned and operated by Buffalo Bill himself. It still retains its "wild west" atmosphere, and this weekend was host to about 100 "bikers" who attended a motorcycle rally. They seemed to tolerate my little red Vespa among their Harley Hogs and assorted Honda's, BMW's, Indians and other "real" motorcycles.



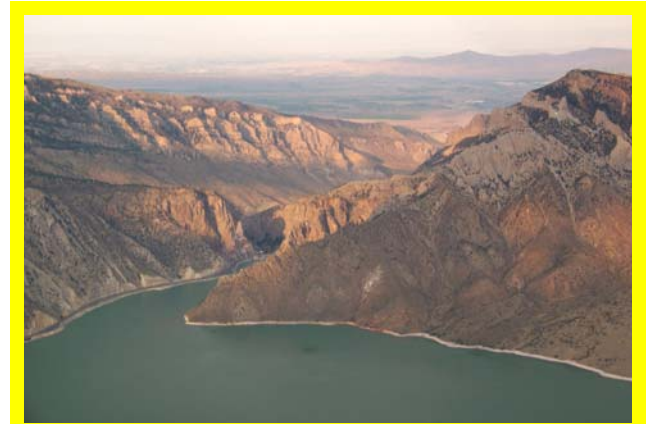
The North Fork of the Shoshone River takes a valley route thru the mountains to Yellowstone



The mountains here reach to 13,000 feet



Each evening at 6 pm there is a one hour Wild West gunfight skit performed at the Irma Hotel



This lake was the boundary of the restricted area



This is the cast of the nightly gunfight



When the mountains got close, I turned back