

Feb. 14-21, 2020 - Cedar Key - A Unique Florida Town

It's been quite a while since I last posted any blog article. It's not because I haven't been flying, but rather because I have not been to any new and exciting places in which to brag about.

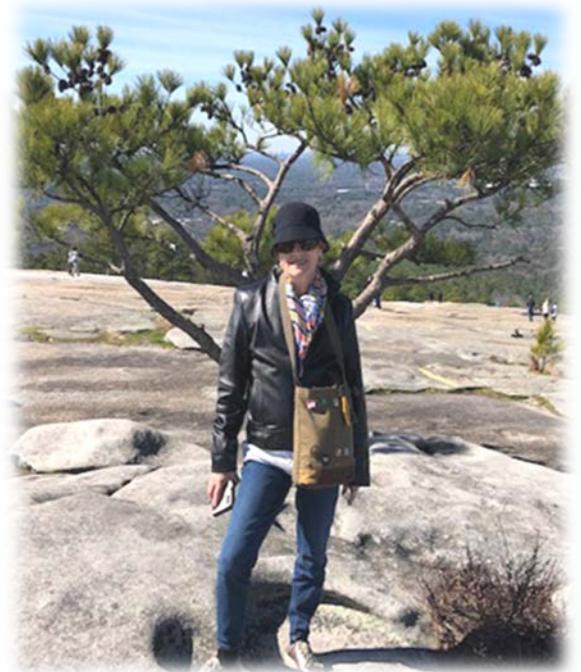
However we recently completed a two week trip in the MB motor-home which involved both aerial transportation **and** an aircraft, so it is time to tell about it with both commentary and **lots and lots** of photos. The trip was originally designed to spend time up at our property in the Tennessee Smokey Mountains, but very heavy rains accompanied by mud and rock slides predicated a change of plans. We instead went up to the Hilton Head condo for a few days and then over to Stone Mountain GA to view "The Big Rock", a spectacular 800 foot high quartz monadnock domed projection straight up through the surrounding terrain. Our campsite was right on a lake with a great view of the distant aforementioned dome. Just below is a closer view of "the mountain" which we were going to later visit.



Access to its top is accomplished either by hiking a 45 minute meandering trail (if one is in very, very good shape) or by a 3 minute, trip aboard the 50 person ski-lift gondola. We opted for the \$15 per person "sky-ride", which, I guess, made the aerial adventure technically eligible for this blog posting.



It was a perfectly beautifully clear winter day, but, after all, mid-February, and temperatures were in the chilly 40's so sweaters and jackets were in order. Just below is a picture of Miriam in front of the sparse foliage growing atop of what is otherwise barren rock. How this little tree even got started let alone managed to take root I cannot fathom, but it did add a bit of color to what was otherwise a grey backdrop.





Stone mountain is certainly a unique part of the Atlanta area landscape, being the only truly elevated piece of high ground within 100 miles. In this photo, taken from atop the mountain and viewing toward to north, you are barely able to see a lone "bump" in the horizon designated with a red arrow. This is the start of the Georgia highlands which abuts the Tennessee Smokey Mountains.

In the foreground of the picture is the same lake, visible on the previous page, and which was taken from our campground site. In fact, in this image I have placed another red arrow in the general location of my campsite.



This mountain is home to an enormous rock bas-relief carving which depicts 3 Confederate military Generals which, in today's politically correctness of re-writing history, has caused widespread controversy. Towering 400 feet above the ground, this 76 foot high by 159 foot wide carving is recessed 42 feet into the mountain and depicts the South's Jefferson Davis, and Robert E. Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson astride their horses. Originally partially carved in the early 1920's by Gutzon Borglum, this project became embroiled in project financing problems and he was summarily fired. Borglum is the same sculpturer who then went on to carve the 4 Mount Rushmore Presidents, which I outlined in 2008 & 2010 blog articles when I visited the S.D. site.



In addition to the sky-ride and carving, the Stone Mountain Park had a sight-seeing boat ride, a large amusement park which features a wintertime snow boarding attraction, golf courses and even a full sized passenger train which circumvents its entire geographic boundary. There is a Marriott hotel with an excellent restaurant at which we celebrated a Valentine Day dinner and plenty of well groomed walking trails on which to take our dogs. In this photo we are back at our camp site where Miriam is readying our two Silky Terriers for one of their daily sojourns. Becky is on the left and her daughter, Miss Dior on the right. We were at the Stone Mtn. Park for 3 nights and absolutely loved it, but it now time to move on further south.

Our next stop was another Georgia State Park, in Cordele, which is very near the Jimmy Carter Plains home. I have enjoyed staying at the Georgia Veterans Park a number of times and it even wrote of its military aircraft and tank display in an Aug. 2009 blog article. However this was just an overnight stop with no photos or commentary. A day later we arrived at Cedar Key, located on the western Gulf side of Florida. We decided to stay at the nice and upscale Cedar Key RV resort, just a few miles out of town. With well over a hundred campsites this place was packed with snowbirds from the north, many of whom will spend the entire winter enjoying the warmer temperatures and nicer weather. We stayed for another 3 nights and I discovered that there was a local pilot who would make his Cessna tail-dragger available for an aerial tour of the town. On the following pages I have included a number of photos taken during that flight.



Just below is a picture of me in front of this beautifully cared for 1948 Cessna model 170 at the Cedar Key airport.





Pictures description:

top left: Ready for take-off

top right: Airport on left, Town out in front

Center: Downtown Cedar Key aerial view

Lower: Typical Cedar Key city street

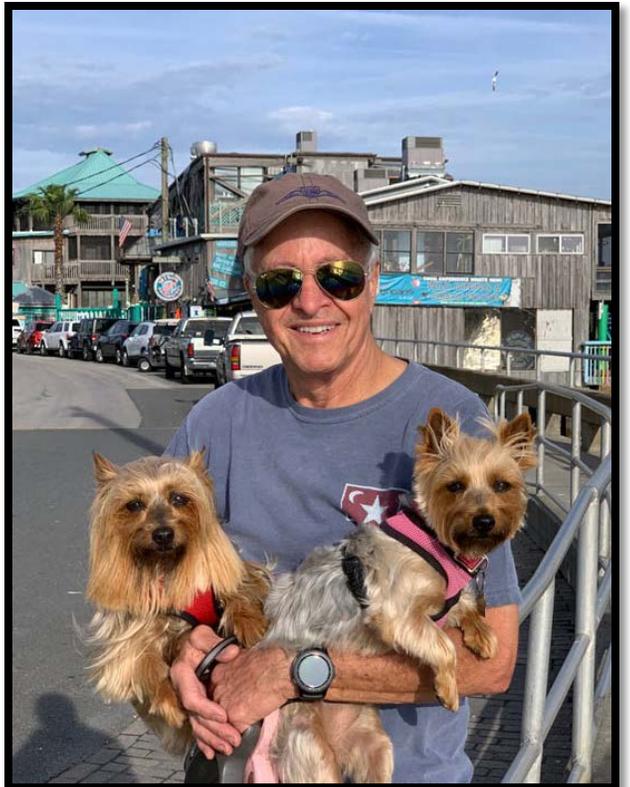


Pictures Description:

Upper: Me, enjoying the scenery and the plane ride

Lower right: Me and my dogs in downtown Cedar Key

Lower left: View of our Mercedes Sprinter motorhome from aloft (red arrow) at the campground.



Pictures Discription:

Upper: View of a nearby Key with its lighthouse & beach, now a U. of FL environmental/ecological studies center. Access to the island is only available by boat.

Center: Pilot eye view of the landing approach as the Cessna crosses the runway threshold.

Lower: Miriam captured a photo just as the airplane began its flare to touchdown & the sunset.



After the flight we went back into the downtown area to explore the city and learn more about its history. Like its cousin Key West at the far southern part of the Florida peninsula, Cedar Key is quaint, eclectic, historic and well off of the beaten path. Located 50 miles due west of Gainesville, the roads leading to it are rambling and generally 2 lanes for most of the way. It is Florida's second oldest town but today has less than 1,000 full time residents. However in the 1850's and '60's it was linked to Florida's east coast by a railroad line. At that time there were several smaller island (keys) that made up a fairly vibrant industrial base with the Farber and Eagle wooden pencil companies that utilized the plentiful Cyprus trees to make their products as well as a business that manufactured brooms & brushes from fibers taken off of the leaves of palm trees. And, of course, there were the shrimp, fish and oyster men who plied their trade just offshore the shallow marshland waters. Life was good until a hurricane hit the keys in 1896, killing more than 100 and pretty well decimating their economy. Today tourism has revitalized the town and during the summer there is not a room to be had unless booked months in advance. However over the winter the pace is much slower but the sunsets are still just as spectacular. The one just below, with its flying pelican, was captured by Miriam.

