

October 20, 2012 - Spruce Creek Aerodrome
Daytona, FL.

For the past 9 months I have been flying exclusively in Florida. I brought my plane down by trailer in February and leased a hangar at the Indiantown Airport, which is located just about 30 minutes from where I am living. I try to make a flight each and every nice day, many of which turn out to be breakfast trips. Florida is a delight to fly in and around. The terrain is completely flat and there are plenty of places to land in case of an emergency. The weather, especially in the mornings, tends to be very stable with generally light winds and good visibility.

Such was the case on Saturday Oct. 20th, when I decided to make the 150 mile trip up to the Daytona Beach area. This flight would take me along Florida's eastern coastline, and a bit to the west of the Cape Canaveral Space Center. My destination was to be the Spruce Creek Fly-in community and its 4,000 foot private runway, which is located in the center of this bustling upscale village.

I departed the 6,000 foot grass runway at my home base of Indiantown at 10 AM since this was going to be a lunch trip. Winds were very brisk out of the northeast, which produced a very disturbing 75 MPH ground speed. Since much of my flight was directly above the I-95 interstate I had to deal with many autos outrunning me on this straight away. While I would like to believe that I made up some of this speed differential by not having to follow the curves and bends of the highway, I don't think that I beat many cars that day. However, on the plus side, I don't have to worry about radar speed traps.

I arrived over the Spruce Creek airport just at noon and set up for a left hand entry to runway 23. Yes, I know that is completely contrary to what the winds were doing at my 3,000 foot flight, but often what is happening at altitude is not the same as what is going on at ground level. This was a very busy morning at Spruce Creek and I fit myself into the pattern amid the numerous take offs and landings that were happening. There was an equally slow Piper Cub in front of me, and a flight of 4 fairly fast RV aircraft calling in from 8 miles south announcing that they were going to overfly the field at 1200 feet before peeling off for their individual entries to downwind.

Once I landed and pulled onto the taxiway leading to the airport's "downtown" area I almost immediately came upon the Downwind Cafe, my destination lunch spot. Parking was directly across from the eatery and I joined the half dozen or so planes that were tied down in the area reserved for transients. Since temperatures were in the upper 70's and the skies were absolutely clear and sunny I decided to sit under the covered outside patio where there was still one table available.



Pilot in Command - Enroute to Spruce Creek



On approach to Spruce Creek Airpark



Mile final to Runway 23 at Spruce Creek



I Parked on Ramp across from restaurant

I decided on their lunch special, which was two very large pizza slices and a soft drink. During my 30 minute lunch I was able to drink in the local atmosphere with the coming and going of a dozen airplanes taxing out to the nearby runway, as well as a myriad of autos, motorcycles and golf carts traveling on either side of the taxiway. In all cases it is the airplane that always has the right of way. And what a collection of airplanes there are. I saw small single engine tail draggers such as the aforementioned Cub, along with light twins and even a Cessna Citation personal jet parked just down from the restaurant. Quite an electric collection of aircraft and their owners, many of whom are active or retired airline pilots. With the Daytona and Melbourne airports just air minutes away (and perhaps an hour or less by car) many commercial pilots choose to live in this aircraft orientated community. Even Jacksonville, Orlando and Tampa are within easy commuting distance.

Spruce Creek is a unique town. Located just south of Daytona Beach, it is adjacent to Interstate 95, giving very good highway access to those who do not own airplanes. But airplanes are the main consideration for buying into this very upscale village of some 1,000 homes, there is also a world class golf course, tennis courts, a community center complete with pool and clubhouse, and plenty of on site businesses, many of which cater to the aviation interests. In fact their main street, Cessna Blvd. has dozens of commercial buildings amongst the individual and group hangars used by their pilot residents. And, of course, many individual homes have hangars built right into their architectural motif.

After lunch I got 30 minutes of exercise by strolling along Piper Place, Beechcraft Blvd. and Piper Way taking in the sights and sounds of this very busy community. And, before you knew it, it was time to head back to my airplane and depart for my home field. As I have found is often the case, it seemed that the winds had shifted and presented an almost equally as brisk headwind component for my return trip. However when one is enjoying the flight it really does not matter how long the trip takes. I am now flying for the joy of flight, and not so much on how quickly I can get there. I returned along the same path that I had taken that morning, which took me above orange groves, cattle grazing lands, the myriad of canals and small lakes that dot Florida, as well as over small farm communities and close by the larger cities of Orlando, Vero Beach and Fort Pierce.

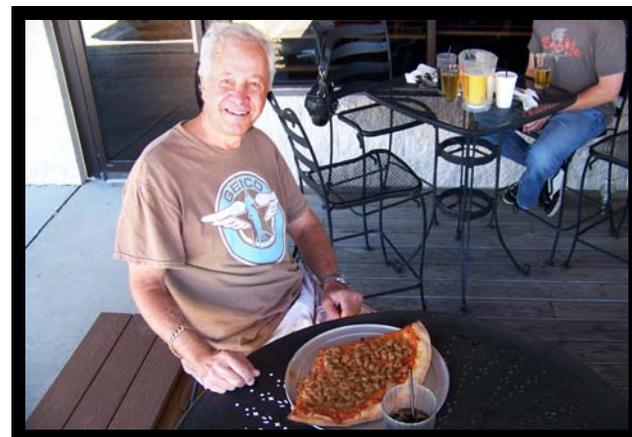
So, bottom line. Cost of lunch meal, including tip: \$10.00.
Cost of aviation fuel for the 3:45 minute flight: \$92.45.
Value of the days adventure: Priceless



Main Street is actually an active taxiway



The Downwind Cafe. where I had lunch



Pizza and a coke at the outside patio area



My restaurant view included planes, (golf carts and automobiles (a 1957 T-bird)