

Sept. 14, 2013 - Palm Coast & Highjackers Restaurant

Sometimes things are just unplanned. Such was the case on my Saturday morning flight from my home base in south Florida to my beach side condo on Hilton Head Island, SC. This is usually a 4 to a 4 1/2 hour airplane trip for me, depending on the winds aloft. While I have the range to make it non-stop (but just barely) the difference between \$5 per gallon gas in Florida and \$7 per gallon gas at Hilton Head makes it desirable to go for an en route fuel stop. I had never before flown into the Flagler County Airport, in Palm Coast, which is located midway between Daytona Beach and Saint Augustine Beach. My flight over Daytona's Class "C" airspace needed to be conducted above 4,000 feet or I would have had to beg them for a clearance into their control area. Since Flagler Co. airport is 8 miles from Daytona airport's outermost ring, I still had plenty of time to begin my decent to their pattern altitude, and I decided not to even bother with Approach Control, and reported 5 miles out. Upon landing, the Flagler County tower cleared me off of active runway 29 and to the parking ramp with a cheerful "Enjoy your lunch". Interesting... I didn't even know that there was a restaurant on the field. A quick stop at the FBO office confirmed that Highjackers' Restaurant was not only located on the grounds, but I had parked directly in front, only a 200 foot walk to its outside patio seating.

Since they had just opened for lunch, I was one of the 3 outside booths so occupied. The menu was large and varied and their special of the day was a chicken cheese steak sandwich with crisp fries that was not only delicious, but filling. It was still early, with mild temperatures, and with the thatched tiki roof covering each table, the sun was not at all unpleasant. Lunch was quickly served with mine being the only airplane parked on the ramp, right in front of the restaurant. Immediately after eating I taxied over to the self serve fuel dock and filled up both tanks for the remaining two and a quarter hour trip onto Hilton Head. By the time that I reached St. Augustine I was back up to my 5,500 foot cruising altitude. Once reaching Jacksonville I would leave the safety of the coastal beaches, with their emergency landing provision, for the somewhat hostile swamp lands of southeast Georgia, so I wanted as much altitude as I could muster. On previous flights, along this route, I would often opt for 8 to 9 thousand feet, if the winds were at all favorable. However on this trip a stationary front was ensconced over Brunswick, Georgia making a lower altitude necessary. At one point during the remainder of my flight I was down to 1,500 and skirting around low clouds and rain showers. However that little 120 HP engine continued to run smoothly and plug me along at about 95 MPH. I arrived at Hilton Head just a little before 2:30, and their control tower cleared me for a straight in to Runway 3 before I even reached the south tip of the Island. After taxiing over to my preferred tie down spot at Signature Aviation, I commented to the ramp attendant that it must have been a slow day since I was the only one in the pattern. He said that it had been busy, pretty much all morning, and I had, in fact missed actress Meg Ryan and her main squeeze, musician John Mellencamp, who had just left in their private jet. Apparently the couple has a place on nearby Daufuskie Island and they visit often. I'm sorry that I arrived too late. I would have loved to have seen the jet that they flew out on. The couple... well, maybe not so much.



Over Daytona Beach Intl. Airport & Raceway



St. Augustine, its marina, beach & Fort



Parked in front of Highjackers Restaurant



Lunch w/ my plane on ramp just beyond