

Mike Hayden and Nick Boland's Great Westerly Adventure

As written by Nick Boland

Wednesday, September 4, 2013

514 – KAWG – KYKN – KRAP

6.6 hours, 786 nm

It's early morning at the Sheridan Airport and the sun is coming up. Mike Hayden (right) and Nick Boland arrive for departure. Walter Ney (left) and Jeff Apple (center) have come to see the adventurer's off.



Walter brought breakfast sandwiches and Jeff makes a final inspection before departure.



The Lafayette airport is enclosed in fog as the sun comes up.



The pilots are still fresh.



But it didn't take long before the early morning departure caught up with us.



The flight was beautiful the whole way.



The landscape really starts to change as we get close to the Bad Lands.



Our final destination for the day, Rapid City, SD.

Because of a device called "SpiderTracks" loaned to us by Bill Griffith, many of our friend and family members were able to track our location to within two minutes. This gave us a great sense of security because radar and normal communication would be hard to come by in some of the areas we would be traveling. We could signal an "SOS" that would be emailed and text messaged within moments of it being sent. There was some question as to who they might call if that happened, but we never needed to find out.

At this particular stop, Walter could see that we had landed and was on top of things to have the rental car on its way. That was his task on this journey and everything worked out great!

I should also mention that we had the great fortune of staying inside all of the parks we visited because of the wonderful diligent effort of Jeanette. This greatly enhanced our experience and was a great time saver!

Crazy Horse Memorial

This was a fantastic visit. We got there by early afternoon, took the bus ride close to the monument, watch the video about it, and looked through the museum.







Custer State Park

We then drove through Custer State Park and did the wildlife loop road.







A herd of buffalo! This picture has just a small number of what passed us by on the road.

Mt. Rushmore National Memorial

By the time we got to Mt. Rushmore it was dark. The lights were out for the night ceremony.





So the first view we had was when it was lighted during the night ceremony.

They asked veterans to come to the stage and be recognized. Mike is among them in this picture.

Thursday, September 5, 2013

KRAP - KWYS

3.4 hours, 348 nm

It's early morning again but now on day two at Rapid City.



I normally have Mike carry all of the bags out to the airplane and get things ready.



This will be our first encounter with significant terrain. We used Mike's Garmin 396 with XM weather to depict a normal map. We used my Garmin 696 with XM weather to depict terrain to know we were at a safe altitude. On the glare-shield you can see the SpiderTracks unit and one of the XM antennas. The right side yoke has a push-to-talk attached and a rats nest of wires. It included a four-port 12v power socket adapter to accommodate all of these devices. Not shown are an iPhone, iPad, and Nexus with Garmin Pilot which were used as needed.

The plan for this leg was to go up and over in a (mostly) straight line if the weather permitted it. The winds were about 10 knots and the ceiling was about 15,000 MSL, so straight we went.



This is the view to the north soon after we passed Cody, WY. We are following HW 14/16/20 through a valley as it enters Yellowstone Park on the east side. Our altitude is 12,500 ft and we have been using supplemental oxygen for most of this leg trip.



This is a beautiful sight after passing through mountains and almost 3 ½ hours. Since we had to fly over the park at or above 12,000 MSL, we need to spiral down west of the airport when we got there.



This is general aviation at its best. A couple of young ladies met us on the ramp, tied the airplane down, and brought the rental car next to the airplane. Mike is still working on the luggage.



Then we go into the main terminal next door to take care of the rental car paperwork. Here the poor people are getting the 3.4 oz liquid speech while the TSA agents are lubricating their rubber gloves.

Yellowstone National Park

Then we drove into Yellowstone National Park. The sites are wonderful. These are just a few of the pictures we took.



This is the Great Prismatic Spring. You should try looking it up in Google Earth. It's very impressive.



Old Faithful which goes off every 90 minutes, except at night when they turn it off. That was a joke.



Inside the lobby of the historic Old Faithful Inn built in 1904. Thank you again, Jeanette!



We spent a couple of hours on the deck. That is Old Faithful straight ahead, but it is not erupting right now.



We enjoyed a nice meal in their dining room also.

Friday, September 6, 2013

Day three at dawn in Yellowstone. We will be moving from Old Faithful Inn to a cabin in the Mammoth hot springs area.



Nobody was out at 6:00 AM. The air was cool and fresh. It was quiet without people. Wow. This is literally only about a 100 yards from our room at the Old Faithful Inn.



Just checking the water temperature.



We found out later that if his tail is up in the air, look out, he's coming after you.



Hayden Valley. We had to stop there! It was beautiful and filled with wildlife.



The Grand Canyon of Yellowstone as taken from Artist's Point.



This is called the Boiling River. A fantastic natural hot tub. The water flowing into the river from the left bank is VERY hot. When it mixes with the river it becomes just right.



Some very strange sites at Mammoth Hot Springs.



From a hill overlooking the Mammoth Hot Springs area.

Saturday, September 7, 2013

KWYS – KCNY - 40G

5.5 hours, 580 nm

We were lucky to get out of West Yellowstone early on day four. The FBO was not scheduled to open until 8:00 AM but we showed up at 7:00 AM anyway. It worked out great because the operator came in early also.



It turns out her son is also a submariner just like Mike, so lots of good conversation.



That is the Tetons on the left and Jackson, WY to the right. It is fogged in and low IFR. We were lucky not to have that in West Yellowstone when we left. The weather at the Grand Canyon is forecast to deteriorate about the time we will be arriving.



Some of the terrain into Moab, UT does not look very forgiving. We continue to follow roads and rivers through these parts.



I convinced Mike to do some canyon flying after fueling at Moab. This is the Green River southwest of the KCNY airport. There is a private gravel strip called Mineral Canyon just out of the picture to the left (it's charted if you look). I'm glad I went up with a local instructor the last time I was here and he showed this to me. We saw another pilot we had talked to at the airport who was about a mile ahead of us (not shown in this picture).



We climbed up and started to head southwest again. The Green River flows into the Colorado River near Moab. This eventually turns into the Grand Canyon. This picture is somewhere around Canyon Lands National Park.



This is just a tiny part of Lake Powell. It is formed by the Glen Canyon Dam in the Upper Basin on the Colorado River before it flows into the Grand Canyon. It is the second largest man-made reservoir in the world.



We had to dodge a couple of cells but we made it. I'm not sure why he doesn't have our luggage yet.



The Grand Canyon.

We had a room at the El Tovar right on the rim. It was fantastic.



The El Tovar had a pilot's lounge with flight planning facilities. Here we are consulting with other pilots with regard to our best options for returning home the next day. We had been advised by Mark Eberly, Jeff Apple, and Walter Ney that we should head towards Sedona (KSEZ) next. The only vision we could come up with was that of retirement communities. This was unfathomable.

So, while sipping on a refreshing cool beverage and reflecting on the suggestion, an alternative destination came to mind: LAS VEGAS! The TAF's for airports to the east and south supported this brilliant plan. It was just over an hours flight away in the airplane which we would do in the morning.

We informed our wives of the new destination and they were very pleased. Good thing we didn't tell them our consideration of the Reno Air Races.



We left the pilot's lounge and talked with some elk.



The elk were pleased as well.

Sunday, September 8, 2013

40G - KBVU

1.5 hours, 133 nm



You can tell from this picture we had perfect flying weather leaving the Grand Canyon this morning.



Here is what it looked like after we made it a little west of the Grand Canyon area. Very nice and clear.

Bill has analyzed our spider tracks for this leg and stated that it shows a “roller coaster ride”. I'm sure it was our climbing turn to gain altitude above the terrain which caused his concern.



Hoover Dam

Our first stop was Hoover Dam.



Lake Mead is behind the dam. The white area along the shore was the high water mark from the 1980's.



Looking down...



One set of generators.

Las Vegas

Lots of activity.



We left the SpiderTracks device in the airplane. Thus, our friends unable to track our movement in Vegas. What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.



But we went to see the Blue Man Group.



Which is crazy and fun!

We were in bed by 10:00 PM.

Monday, September 9, 2013

KBVU – KGUP – KTCC – KANY – KFTT - 514

11.9 hours, 1,429 nm



We filed IFR to get out of the class B airspace but departed VFR and picked up the clearance in the air. There were some cells in the area when we got back into the Grand Canyon area until almost to Gallup. The clearance was 13,000 which we made no problem. The oxygen was flowing and we did fine. There was about an hour of actual and we diverted a little bit to the north to avoid the worst. It took full utilization of the airplane and pilots to get safely out.



The last couple of hours was in the dark. We discovered on our approach into Sheridan that our landing light was out. Mike made great night landing at Sheridan, which has minimal lights, with no landing light on the airplane. Mission complete.



Walter was waiting for us and took our picture after we got the airplane back in the hanger.



Mark Eberly took a few other pictures. We certainly had an element of this feeling after we returned.

Total flight time was 28.9 hours and 3,276 nm over a six day period. We are grateful for the support and thoughts of everyone.