

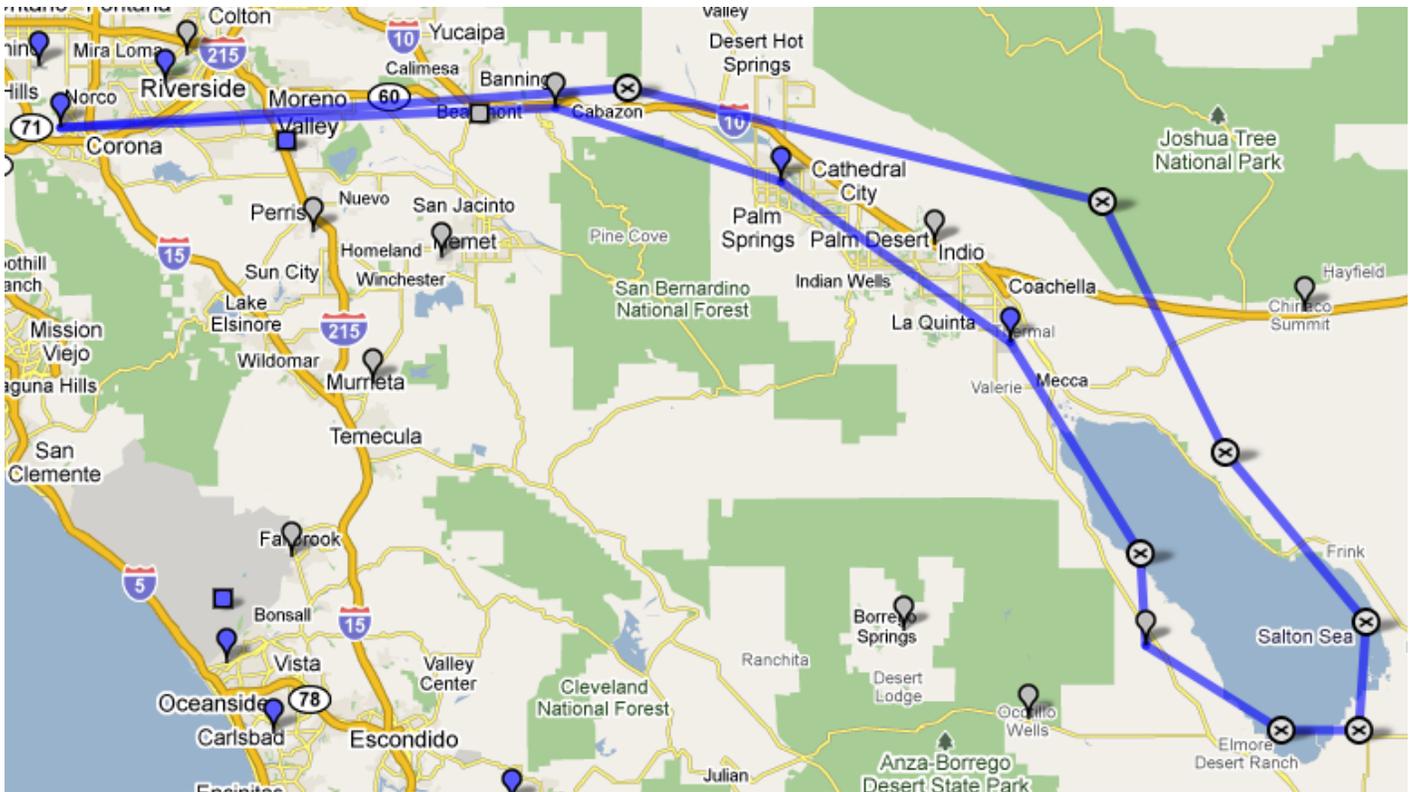
The Salton Sea Loop

Brandy Johns in Phoenix wrote on my Facebook page - "My dad was on a flight-going to a Super bowl awhile back - and the flight was classified as a hijacking, even though it never took off. Some drunk said once this plane is in the air, it's mine. Well that's all they needed to hear." 4 hours ago

I posted back to her - "I Went flying today with Charles, a friend of mine. I am sure he was thinking (not drinking) 'once this plane is in the air, it's mine'. In our case he was correct. He flew it for the next hour and a half. I feel a short story coming. Can I use your words and your name above in it?"

Brandy graciously granted permission, and so here is my story about today's Salton Sea Loop.

As I mentioned recently, the Salton Sea is always 'way over there' as I fly to or from Phoenix, so I decided to check it out for a change. Also I am still breaking in my rings, so I need to fly low to develop high horsepower. That usually means warm air and more bumps.



And so I planned out a flight that looked something like this as depicted on runwayfinder.com thanks to the great efforts of Dave Parsons. I could stay low, around 3500' MSL, and we could make left turns as we flew a counter-clockwise route near the shoreline. This calculated out to just under 300 miles round trip, (pun intended, AI).

We launched into hazy but fairly cool air and I pointed us eastward. At our lower than usual altitude, I figured that some good pictures might be possible. We circumvented March's Class C airspace due to an overworked Air Traffic Controller and due to our low altitude. We were 'under the radar' and he had trouble finding us on his screen. Not too long had passed when we zipped by this Indian casino on the north side of I-10. I think it is called the Morongo Indian Casino, although I have never made a deposit there. It was around 11:30.



As we flew by Palm Springs' airport, I got to fly for 20 seconds while Charles snapped a shot for you.

Then the bouncing began, but it was for only 10 minutes. We were slowed to 165 MPH here due to unusual headwinds in this area. As we headed southeast over Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert, Indian Wells, LA Quinta, Thermal, and Mecca, I thought about how it all looks the same from up here. I was happy though and just looked outside.



Soon we were to the north shore and the salt deposits on the land were evident.

Every time I go flying, I see something that makes me wonder... what is that? Why is it here? What does it do? To always wonder is to continually be a child. I'm loving that concept also.



Just to wonder...



We went by some pretty desolate terrain sculpted by winds, water, and time



Unusual landscapes and unusual shorelines for sure. No camping was observed. No boats at all were on the water. No populated beaches. Except for the major highways, no vehicle traffic was observed. No ghosts were sighted either.



I took these two pictures just for the interesting colors that showed up outside my window



Flying north now up the eastern shore, we saw the community of Desert Beach. Who LIVES there?



My trusty GPS was leaving 'bread crumbs' (a trail of light blue dots) behind us



Here we saw the unusual practice of nearly every field having a pond in the corner



When we again approached the Palm Springs area it was evident that these people are golf nuts, as every neighborhood for miles is a golf course.

It seemed to warm up as we got back to this area but it was only 84 out, so not too bad. We were coming up on the wind farm area again. The plane started bouncing. Charles was still hand flying and I knew he was working as opposed to just gently holding on. He and I are used to it, but I briefly thought about Kim, Bethany, and Sima. My other fly-buddies don't mind the bumps.

I have noticed the wind farms west of Palm Springs for years, but I have never noticed their layout in comparison with the lay of the land? Maybe it was the sun angle. Nice angled pattern.



Out my left window, me going bounce, bump - bump westbound past Palm Springs towards Banning



Good - the casino was still there and the Banning airport was still there, some things are constant

We jiggled and giggled our way for 10 minutes as Mother Nature noticed that I was again flying my Mooney. Charles had given control back to me over Riverside. Nothing much left to say here - except it was a great day with a great friend.

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