

## **Monterey Peninsula**

By Bill Barnett

Every July my wife Susan and I go to Carmel on the Monterey Peninsula in California for two weeks to let the heat and stress drain out of our systems. The highs in Carmel rarely pass the mid 70's, so it is the ideal time to be away from the Texas heat and humidity. We hike, Susan paints, I photograph, and then we eat. In the past I have focused on non-flying activities, but this time I wanted to see the area from the air. As I found out, flying in this area is a completely different experience – different terrain and weather patterns from Texas.

I began by studying the local airports and their FBO's through the AOPA database. I settled on Monterey Peninsula Airport as it was close to our rental house and had an FBO (Del Monte Aviation) with new 172's. I set up two familiarization flights to work on the local departure and arrival procedures and navigation, since the 172's had new GPS's, one with an HSI. A checkout for solo rental is a one hour ground school, filling out the multi-page questionnaire, and a one hour checkride. If you do not rent within a ninety day period, then you take a short checkride in the pattern with multiple landings to be re-certified for solo.

Monterey Airport can be a busy airport, particularly during the Pebble Beach Pro-Am in January or the annual August car show, The Concours d'Elegance. Jets are lined up wingtip to wingtip on both sides of the 7600 feet long runway. The airport weather is influenced by the Pacific air. On one morning of my trip there was fog at the west (seaward) end of the airport. The fog was covering the 10 end of 10R-28L. VFR traffic was taking off downwind, since the wind was in the 3-4kt range from the west, into perfectly clear weather. Another afternoon, there was a horseshoe of fog around the airport with the runways completely clear. These strange patterns are caused by the cool moist air from the Pacific and the very hot dry air from the desert. The coast stays cool (about 70 degrees on average) and it may be 94 degrees at 2500 feet immediately east of the airport.

The first flight was a triangle from Monterey to Watsonville (Watchout – ville) to Salinas to Monterey. We overflowed Watsonville, as the locals are a wild and undisciplined bunch, so the pattern gets a little lively. Salinas has a tower and an onsite VOR, and it is a good airport for pattern work. Interior from the coast it is a little warm, a lot like Texas summer warm. We returned to Monterey and landed on 28L, which has a displaced threshold. The end of the runway has a 200 foot drop down to Tarpey's Roadhouse, a well-regarded restaurant in Monterey. On a nice day with a west wind you can sit outside at Tarpey's and watch aircraft do their last minute landing dance 200 ft up.

The next flight was to Hollister in a 2002 172 with an HSI. An HSI improves situational awareness considerably and is very easy to use. Set the bug on the required course; keep the yellow line touching the white line and you are on course or at the proper intercept angle. There was a forest fire southwest of the

Hollister airport, so we had to gain altitude to 5500 ft before flying over the activity. There were three water bombers working and three news copters watching. Landing at Monterey was uneventful, but I missed the first exit.

I had hoped to land at Carmel Valley Airport (see [www.vintageairfield.com](http://www.vintageairfield.com)), which was one of the first airparks, opened on December 7, 1941. A big yellow X is now on both ends of the runway, but there is some hope it may open again. Read the commentary on their website for the maneuvering by the various parties involved.

Back in Carmel there was a lot going on: Annabelle the cow was re-united with her owner after a two week wander through the hills. The location of the SprintPCS cell tower was decided. It will be hidden in the fire station flagpole. Another option was to hide it in a false chimney, but the local politicians felt the fire station had too many chimneys. (Carmel practices Radical Environmentalism.) Property values continue to soar -- topping the For Sale listings is a \$9 million dollar home. A seaside home has 2800 square feet on two lots at \$6 million. There is still no mail delivery or home addresses. Clint Eastwood was the mayor but has moved on to California politics. From an aviation perspective, Wings over America has a terrific inventory and the store is worth a visit. The Stokes Collection closed their gallery; the post cards I bought last year were not enough to keep them open.

Flying GA aircraft was part of my vacation, even if I used big iron to get there. It required some research and planning, but it added another dimension to my vacation. Next summer I will be prepared for solo cross countries; I will have a list of potential destinations from my "Pilot Getaways" magazines.