

SISKIYOU'S AIRPORTS—A ROUND ROBIN

Come on, you're not doing anything that important this morning—climb in with me and we'll fly my Cessna Skyhawk to all eight public-use airports in Siskiyou county. There—you're safely strapped-in, we've done our preflight inspection, the weather is great, flight plan completed, fuel tanks are full. Here's our route: Siskiyou county airport to Butte Valley; Butte Valley to Tulelake; Tulelake to Dunsmuir-Mott; Dunsmuir-Mott to Weed; Weed to Scott Valley; Scott Valley to Happy Camp; Happy Camp to Montague-Yreka; Montague-Yreka to Siskiyou county.

Sit back, relax and enjoy the scenery...

We lift off from runway 35 at Siskiyou county airport (SIY), climbing at 70 knots (80mph). As we start a gradual right turn, Mt. McLoughlin looms up to our northeast. In a few minutes we're leveled out and flying a crescent-shaped path around the north end of Bogus mountain to keep us a safe distance above terrain. As the hills recede behind us, we look down at the gleaming water areas of Butte Valley wildlife area. A few miles to the east, we spot the runway and begin our descent toward "the sagebrush airport", close to Highway 97. We radio our position and intentions, see or hear no other airplanes. The wind is calm and we land on Butte Valley's runway 34. (During final approach we stay alert for antelope on the runway, which happens here and at SIY occasionally...)

After checking for other aircraft (there are none) we taxi back and start our takeoff roll, again on runway 34. We initiate a climbing right turn, level our wings on an easterly heading toward Tulelake. Dorris is just to our north as we continue climbing, eventually passing over Mahogany mountain; then Mt. Dome and Lower Klamath refuge come into view; soon, we can make out the town of Tulelake and see the water-shimmer reflecting off Clear Lake refuge many miles beyond our destination. It's time to begin our descent from 7500 feet down to pattern altitude at Tulelake airport, home base for Siskiyou's only ag-operator, Macy's Flying Service. Again, no other air traffic is on the radio or visible, so we fly a standard left-hand pattern and touch down just past the threshold of runway 29.

A few minutes later, we're airborne again, on the longest leg of today's trip, from Tulelake to Dunsmuir-Mott field. Easy navigation: either pass on Mt. Shasta's southeast side, or its northwest side. We opt for southeast, a track which

will take us a little north of Medicine Lake highlands and, as we approach Shasta, we'll have snow-covered Ash Creek butte passing by on our west side. Along the way we feel an occasional mild thermal, but the air is basically good today. After 30 minutes or so we come around the southeast slope of Shasta and see Mt. Eddy and Black Butte. As we reduce power, heading for Dunsmuir-Mott airport, we switch radio frequency and hear a light twin airplane which just departed and is climbing southward. Due to a hill and tall trees just off the north end, landings here are normally to the north and takeoffs to the south. No other reported or observed traffic, so we make our downwind leg just west of I-5, then left base leg and final approach to runway 32. A moment of "down air" just as we begin our landing flare results in a plunker landing. Oh well, we didn't bounce anyway...

We announce our intentions, hear no response from other aircraft, and keep rolling to the far north end of 32. After a quick 180 degree turnaround we're in takeoff position on runway 14. Check seatbelts and harnesses, fuel selector, flaps up, trim-tab set, controls free and correct—all OK. Full power, here we go. Two minutes later we're a mile west of the freeway, headed north to Weed airport. In no time at all, we're passing by the west face of Black Butte, then over the C.O.S. campus and there, a few miles ahead, Weed airport is visible. On Weed's CTAF (common traffic advisory frequency) we hear a Mooney take off and head south, so we acknowledge hearing his report and start looking for him. We each report our position and a minute or so later we have each other in sight, with plenty of separation between us.

We touch down (smoothly this time) on Weed's 5000 ft. runway 32. It's time for a "pit stop", so we taxi to the fuel pumps, answer nature's call and top-off each wing tank. Feeling refreshed, we strap-in and taxi out for takeoff. Next stop: Scott Valley airport. Airborne and westbound, we cross the ridgeline south of Duzel rock lookout, and there in all its glory lies Scott Valley, bordered on its far side by the Marble mountains. All quiet at the airport as we fly a left pattern and come in over sloughs, cattle and hayfields for a full-flap landing on runway 34.

It's lunch-time, so we park, shut-down the engine and walk over to enjoy our brown-bag lunches at a nice, shaded picnic table. What a peaceful spot! The Scott Valley Airmen take good care of this place...

In about 45 minutes we're back in the air, climbing on a northwest heading. Some serious mountains lie between Ft. Jones and Happy Camp, and we elect to follow the Scott river drainage to its confluence with the Klamath river. Once

there, we turn west, set our GPS and simply follow the course-line until Siskiyou's lowest elevation airport, Happy Camp (1209 ft.), comes into view. This is a canyon-bottom field without a lot of pattern-room. We circle overhead once to check wind and make sure the runway is unobstructed, then throttle back and descend for landing on runway 22. At minimum approach speed, full flaps, we pull power back to idle as pavement passes beneath us and with a soft "chirp" of tires on asphalt, we arrive and roll on down the runway. Again, no airplanes observed or heard on CTAF, so we keep rolling to the far end, make our turnaround, do the usual abbreviated pre-takeoff checks and begin our takeoff on runway 4--opposite our landing direction. Before heading east toward Montague, we make several climbing circles above Happy Camp. This will give us a safe altitude above the ridges en route, and while we're circling, keep us in gliding-range of the airport below "just in case".

Lined-out now with Goosenest on the far horizon. A bit of light turbulence, but nothing worrisome. This continues all the way to Shasta Valley. Eight miles out, we radio our position and landing intent. Another pilot replies that he just departed Montague north-bound to Medford. He tells us that the surface wind is calm. We thank him for the report and start letting down as the last ridge recedes behind us. On downwind leg to runway 33, we radio that we will make one touch-and-go landing followed by a right turn-out and east departure. We use partial flaps and a bit faster approach speed. Immediately after touchdown, we push carb heat OFF, re-set trim, raise flaps one notch, apply full power and are flying again.

At about 500 ft. AGL we bank right, then level our wings and switch to SIY's frequency. Still climbing eastward, south of the county airport, we see and hear a tow-plane with "glider-in-tow" rolling north on runway 35. While those aircraft head toward Black Mountain and then Paradise Craggy, we make our radio calls and come in from the east for a landing on 35. Rolling out on the longest runway in Siskiyou county (7500 ft.), we open our side windows for fresh air.

You've done it, co-pilot--the Siskiyou round robin is completed.

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