

„Flight Of Passage“ in MSFS

Annotations and Route Descriptions by MattW – icefireair.com

Day 1

Saturday, July 2nd, 1966: Basking Ridge (New Jersey) – Richmond (Indiana)

General Information

The small grass strip at Basking Ridge is not modeled in MSFS, so the flight begins at the nearest airport: Morristown Municipal (KMMU). Originally, the young pilots planned to cross the Appalachians slightly further north, where the mountains are lower. However, the weather forced Kern and Rink Buck to take a more westerly route. The first part of the journey, from Basking Ridge to Pottstown (northwest of Philadelphia), is navigationally challenging to follow, as the two adventurers were familiar with the area and dared to fly cross-country. The main landmarks here are three lakes and the Delaware River.

From Pottstown onward, they tracked Highway 422 to Carlisle, west of Harrisburg. After that, they relied on Interstate 76, also known as the "Pennsylvania Turnpike." Unfortunately, the route description between Bedford and Pittsburgh is somewhat vague. Interstate 76 runs further south than indicated in the book. This discrepancy leaves two possible explanations: either the pilots made an error and actually followed Highway 30 from Bedford, or the Pennsylvania Turnpike route has been altered since 1966. The flight description presented here, as in the book, follows Highway 30 via Ligonier and Latrobe.

Shortly after Latrobe, the pilots intended to turn left, reach Interstate 70, and bypass Pittsburgh to the south. However, the weather forced them to continue straight ahead until they reached the Monongahela River on Pittsburgh's eastern outskirts. There, they followed the river at very low altitude, navigating its many bends southward until they eventually crossed Interstate 70. From this point to the end of the first day, Kern and Rink followed the highway, which runs straight west, making navigation relatively simple. Potential difficulties could arise when bypassing larger cities like Columbus and Dayton, both located in Ohio.

Route Description

Historical Leg 1: KMMU – N94

At Morristown Municipal Airport the journey starts. 1.5 miles west of the airport runs US Highway 206, the first navigation point. Basking Ridge lies along the highway, 6 NM after departure, today it's just a big nice green meadow framed by roads.

The airport Somerset (KSMQ) is south of the intersection with Interstate 78. Follow this road west, crossing the middle of Round Valley Lake toward the southwest. Nearby is the grass airstrip Herr Mountain. Cross the Delaware River and fly along the northern shore of Lake Nockamixon. Quakertown (KUKT) is situated between two roads running approximately north to south. West of the lake, follow State Highway 100 to the south. Passing by Boyertown you'll soon reach the next waypoint, Pottstown Municipal (N47).

Originally, the boys did not land here, but we do to shorten the first leg.

After taking off again, Follow US Highway 422 to the west, which runs along the southern edge of the airfield. After a few miles over fields and forests, the houses of Reading come into view. The road bends right toward the city center. Fly along the Schuylkill River until you reach Berkshire Heights where the river splits up.

To the right, you will see Reading Airport (KRDG). Continue to follow the Highway 422 to the southwest. The road forms a large arc. South of it, several miles away, you will see a couple of airfields. Along the 422 you'll fly over the cities of Myerstown, Lebanon and Palmyra until the road reaches Hershey.

Shortly afterward, still following the 422, several roads form intersections. Fly southwest and keep downtown Harrisburg to the right. Straight ahead, two large airports are visible: Capital City Airport on the left and Harrisburg International Airport on the right. Between them, a bridge crosses the Susquehanna River. From here, follow Interstate 76, which runs along the southern edge of Capital City Airport.

After the intersection with a road heading south (Highway 15), Carlisle (N94) will come into view.

Historical Leg 2: N94 – KAFJ

After fuelling up and taking off, follow Interstate 76 (the Pennsylvania Turnpike), which runs along the river. The highway zigzags uphill toward the west.

A parallel road appears beside Interstate 76, which forms a small hump and skirts the airports Bedford (KHMZ). After Bedford, a small lake (Shawnee Lake) comes into view. Interstate 76 continues south of it. The road along the northern shore is US Highway 30, which leads to Indian Lake.

Shortly after the Indian Lake you'll encounter the Somerset County Airport (2G9).

Originally, the boys did not land here, but we do to shorten the leg.

Airborne again, follow the Highway 30 which crosses the Allegheny Ridge and passes by the grass strip Lohr's Landing (PN47). Near Latrobe, the airport Westmoreland County (Arnold Palmer Regional, KLBE) appears. The road continues to the outskirts of Pittsburgh and the Monongahela River.

Near Braddock, you'll reach the river Fly low along the river to the south, following its wide curves upstream to Monessen and a major road (Interstate 70). The highway runs west past several grass airstrips. The first major airport southwest of Pittsburgh is Washington County. Time for another fillup.

Historical Leg 3: KAFJ – KUYF

South of the airport, Interstate 70 runs west. A few miles later, you fly over the grass strip Uphill (PS67). Shortly after comes the state border between Pennsylvania and West Virginia. About 10 more miles south of Wheeling, you reach the Ohio River, marking the border between West Virginia and Ohio.

Continue following Interstate 70. It runs between two airports: Twin Ash (OI88, grass strip) and Aldermann (OI03, asphalt). Continue along IS 70. Five miles north, a lake (Piedmont Lake) becomes visible. In Old Washington, shortly before Cambridge, you fly over a small grass strip: Brothers Aviation (9OI8).

Continue along Interstate 70, now paralleled by Highway 22/40. Along the route, you pass the airports Cambridge Municipal (KCDI), Darby Landing Strip (1OH7), and Zanesville Municipal (KZZV).

Originally, the boys did not land at KZZV, but we do to shorten the leg.

In downtown Zanesville, several roads and a small river intersect in a star shape. Two parallel roads continue west (Interstate 70 and Highway 40). About 15 NM later, you fly past Buckeye Lake.

The airport (9OA5) is located directly along Highway 40, a few NM northwest of Buckeye Lake. Continue along Interstate 70 until the intersection with the Columbus beltway.

To the north, you will see John Glenn Columbus International Airport (KCMH). Turn left and fly south of the city center. After the Scioto River, there are four airfields close to the beltway. Another 11 nm later you'll encounter Madison Co (KUYF), where you should land.

Historical Leg 4: KUYF – KRID

Continue following Interstate 70. Nine NM later, you reach Kepes Flying Field.

Here, Interstate 70 bends southwest to bypass Springfield to the south. It then continues west, skirting the large Wright-Patterson AFB (KFFO) on Dayton's northern outskirts. To the right lies Cox-Dayton International Airport.

The first airfield, McGregor, on the western outskirts of Dayton is notable for its two grass runways placed consecutively. Interstate 70 is again paralleled by Highway 40.

In Richmond, Interstate 70 and Highway 40 intersect, right at the border between Ohio and Indiana. The airport in Richmond (KRID) is south of the city, a large airfield with three runways.

End of Day 1. Well done!

Day 2

Sunday, Juli 3rd, 1966: Richmond (Indiana) – Brinkley (Arkansas)

General Information

On the early morning of the second day, the flight begins from Richmond (Indiana), at the border with Ohio. The route first heads straight west along Interstate 70 to Indianapolis - a short and easy flight. After refueling, the route continues southwest, following Highway 67 and the small White River, until reaching the Wabash River at Vincennes, on the border between Indiana and Illinois. From there, the route follows the Wabash River southward and then the Ohio River, where the Wabash merges into it.

At Paducah (Kentucky), the route leaves the Ohio River and turns south. Here begins the "Hank's Hollow" described in the book. This is a broad valley offering good visibility, while the hills on either side are often shrouded in clouds. The route runs roughly south through Fulton to Dyersburg (Tennessee). For this part of the journey, the Buck brothers followed a railroad line, which I haven't been able to find in MSFS. Instead, one can follow Highway 45 to Fulton and then Highway 51 to Dyersburg. From there, the Mississippi River becomes visible, with the airfield at Blytheville just beyond it, where refueling takes place. From Blytheville, the route heads southwest along Interstate 55. When the highway turns left towards Memphis, the flight turns right, westward, following Interstate 40 to Brinkley.

The flight is not particularly difficult in terms of navigation. However, the weather can easily disorient. From roughly Vincennes to Dyersburg, the clouds can be very low, hanging close to the ground. To avoid them, it may be necessary to fly very low, sometimes as low as 500 ft AGL. Aside from the risk of encountering tall antennas and towers suddenly in the way, such a low altitude also prevents spotting navigation points from a distance. It is also easy to lose sight of the road you had been following for a long time.

This flight requires particularly careful monitoring of fuel consumption. The distance between Indianapolis and Blytheville is nearly 320 NM. It is possible to fly this leg non-stop, but only with very economical engine settings. If you land in Blytheville with more than 2 gallons in your tanks, you've done exceptionally well.

If not, there are several refueling options along the way. Airports with fuel pumps are available near Vincennes and in Paducah. Along the large rivers, however, there are few airfields, as these are floodplain areas. Airfields are only found several miles away from the rivers.

If you run out of fuel during a non-stop attempt, you'll have to do what real bush pilots would do in such situations: land in the first available field and ask the farmer where the nearest gas station is.

Route Description

Historical Leg 5: KRID – KEYE

Immediately after takeoff, turn north to reach Interstate 70. The first waypoint is an intersection of two roads near a narrow river and some antennas. Turn west here.

Interstate 70 runs straight to Indianapolis. On the way to the next waypoint, small rivers and roads are crossed. After 30 NM you'll reach Pope airfield, a small strip adjacent to US40/I70.

Continue following Interstate 70. To the left and right, several small airfields can be seen. Shortly after crossing a river, the last airfield before Indianapolis appears on the left: Post Air.

Shortly thereafter, the city of Indianapolis begins. Interstate 70 leads directly into the city center. Fly to a heading of 295 until you can see the famous Indianapolis Speedway, it's easy to spot. Continue to fly NW until you can spot the airport of Eagly Creek (KEYE). Land and fuel up there.

Historical Leg 6: KEYE – KPAH

After takeoff fly S around Indianapolis International (KIND) and follow the river which crosses the I70 until you hit the Highway 67. The route now follows the 67 and the parallel White River in wide curves. The next waypoint is the second airfield on the route.

The route bends slightly to the right and continues following Highway 67 and the White River towards WSW. After about 13 NM, Highway 67 reaches a triangle with US Highway 231, running north to south. The route makes a sharp 90° turn left. Shortly after the intersection, two airfields appear on the right. The first has a grass runway, while the second, our next waypoint, features a well-visible gravel runway.

The route turns to SSW, continuing to follow Highway 231 and the White River. The next waypoint lies close to the road, near an intersection.

Continue following the road. The White River veers left. When the road skirts a small lake, the next waypoint is almost in reach.

After the lake, the White River again comes close to Highway 231 before flowing further south. However, the road and the route bend right, leading into the city of Vincennes.

To the southwest of Vincennes we'll find the airport Mount Carmel Municipal (KAJG).

Originally, the boys did not land here, but we do to shorten the leg.

After fueling up head south and start to follow the Wabash River. You'll soon pass by the city of Mount Carmel. On either side of the river, several distant airfields can be identified. After about 23 NM, a large lake appears on the left side of the river. 7 NM after the lake, the route crosses Interstate 64, which runs east to west. Here, the Wabash becomes much wider.

At the intersection with Interstate 64, the Wabash is very wide. A small grass strip, Fifer Field, is located nearby. The route continues south along the river. The next waypoint is an island at the confluence with the Ohio River. This marks the beginning of Kentucky.

Follow the wide curves of the Ohio River (and the state borders between Kentucky and Illinois) to the southwest. Several small rivers flow into the Ohio. After a wide bend, the large lakes of the Tennessee River—Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley—become visible to the east. Shortly after this, in Paducah, the first city along the Ohio, the Tennessee River flows into the Ohio. A bridge over the Ohio splits into several roads on the southern shore. Follow the second road from the right (the first runs west along the shore). The airport of Paducah (Barkley Regional Airport) appears on the western outskirts of the city.

Historical Leg 7: KPAH – KHKA

Barkley Regional Airport has a fuel station. This marks the beginning of "Hank's Hollow," a corridor of good visibility under the clouds. There are no visual landmarks. Fly to the next waypoint, a relatively long and narrow grass strip, by compass heading 199. After about 5 NM, you reach a river and a road, Highway 45. Shortly after, another road joins Highway 45 from the right. Left of the intersection lies Terry Field.

From here, follow US Highway 45 south. After a while, a city, Fulton, appears on the horizon. When the airport lights are visible, aim towards them.

This is where you leave Kentucky and enter Tennessee. About 2 NM south of the airport, two parallel roads lead to the next city, Union City. On the other side of the city, only one road emerges—US Highway 51. In the next small town, upon crossing the narrow Obion River, the highway forms a large "S." From here, the city of Dyersburg is already visible in the distance. The airport is located on the other side of the city.

Immediately after the airport, a small river, the Forked Deer, continues southwest. Soon, the mighty sandbanks of the Mississippi come into view straight ahead.

The Mississippi is reached at the colossal loop near Blytheville. Here, the state border with Arkansas is crossed. The airport at Blytheville lies between the Mississippi and the city.

Historical Leg 8: KHKA – M36

After takeoff from Runway 18, turn slightly right to reach Interstate 55. Follow it SSW. The next waypoint, a paved runway, lies 2–3 NM left of the road.

The route continues along Interstate 55 until US Highway 63 joins it from the northwest.

A lake can be seen to the left of Interstate 55. Here, the highway turns east towards Memphis, but the flight continues straight. After a second, smaller lake, an airfield with a grass runway is reached. It is located at a bend in a narrow river.

At the southern edge of the airfield, a provincial road is crossed. Follow a small river winding south. After a few miles, a road intersects—the Interstate 40 crosses the river. Turn right and follow the road.

The flight now follows Interstate 40 westward. After a lake, about 5 NM away, the road splits. Interstate 70 runs to the north, and US Highway 40 to the south, running parallel. Between the two highways lies the small grass strip of Bruns Aerodrome, just past Forrest City.

Continue following Interstate 40 and Highway 70. The airfield Frank Federer Memorial (M36) at Brinkley is located south of the highway, for you to land.

End of Day 2. Good going!

Day 3

Monday, July 4th, 1966: Brinkley (Arkansas) – Albany (Texas)

General Information

Early in the morning on the third day, the flight departs from Brinkley, Arkansas. Initially, it heads straight west along Interstate 40 to Little Rock, the capital of Arkansas. Without stopping, the route continues southwest along Interstate 30, passing Malvern and Arkadelphia. This road would lead directly into Texas, but for some unknown reason, the Buck brothers chose a different route. At Arkadelphia, they turned right, flying westward to the Oklahoma state border. In Oklahoma, Kern and Rinker Buck flew over Idabel and Hugo, roughly parallel to the Red River, which forms the border with Texas, until they reached Durant. There, they refueled and continued their journey.

From Durant, the route turns south, and after a few miles, the young pilots reach Texas skies. Navigation in Texas becomes more challenging at times because parts of the flight cross over remote prairie far from roads and rivers, leaving few identifiable landmarks. Dead reckoning navigation is further complicated by rapidly shifting winds from various directions. Between Sherman and Denton, there is a large reservoir in the modern day, Lake Ray Roberts, which was created in 1987.

Kern and Rinker avoided the large cities of Dallas and Fort Worth with a wide detour. They flew over Denton, Decatur, and Bridgeport, mostly following smaller roads and aiming for Abilene. However, near Breckenridge, they realized they didn't have enough fuel to make it, so they decided to refuel in Albany, just short of Abilene. The two adventurers liked the town so much that they decided to stay there overnight.

This leg of the journey doesn't require as precise fuel management as the previous one. In his book, Rinker Buck mentions that after the marathon flights of the first two days, they decided to take the journey a bit more leisurely from then on and to rest more frequently. However, the book explicitly mentions only one fuel stop: Durant, Oklahoma. With very efficient settings, it would be possible to fly nonstop from Brinkley to Durant (279 NM). However, such a long stretch would contradict their decision to take things slower. It's likely that the Piper Cub N71H landed somewhere in western Arkansas for refueling. Arkadelphia would have been a very suitable choice for this.

Route Description

Historical Leg 9: M36 – KADF

Right after takeoff, turn to the west. The route runs exactly parallel to Interstate 40 (on the right) and US Highway 70 (on the left). After about 14 NM, you pass a crescent-shaped dry lake. On the left, south of Highway 70, you can see an airfield with a single runway. Shortly after, straight ahead, another airfield with two runways comes into view: Carlisle Municipal.

Continue along Interstate 40. North of the highway, there's a lake with a small grass runway on its western shore. A few miles further, you'll spot another small lake. Approximately in the middle, also north of the interstate, lies a grass airfield: Sendero Airpark.

Continue following Interstate 40 toward Little Rock. On the left, the crescent-shaped Faulkner Lake appears, a dead arm of the Arkansas River, which lies just behind it. On the opposite shore, you'll see the lights of a large airport: Adams Field.

Fly over this airport (the Piper Cub N71H has no radio, so you won't hear the air traffic controllers cursing). South of it, several roads branch off heading south and southwest. The last one is Interstate

30. Follow this interstate. In a wooded area (Interstate Park), there's a lake. Shortly afterward, a settlement (Little Rock Southwest) appears. At its southwestern edge, there's an airfield: Saline.

This airfield has a distinctive feature: a small lake directly on its grounds. Continue following Interstate 30 through another wooded area. The next waypoint is the road intersections in the next town: Malvern.

The route continues along Interstate 30, which is flanked by the narrow, winding Ouachita River. After about 18 NM, you pass a large lake on the right, DeGray Lake. On the left is a smaller lake. Right after this, the next waypoint appears: the town of Arkadelphia and its airfield (KADF). Land here.

Historical Leg 10: KADF – KDUA

Interstate 30 continues south, but the flight turns west. A road branches off in the same direction, Provincial Highway 26. This road continues winding westward. Simply follow it to Howard County. After about 20 NM, State Highway 27 joins from the north. To the north, about 5 NM away, you'll see a large lake: Lake Greeson.

South of Howard County, the road, State Highway 27, turns to the right. After crossing the Saline River, you'll come to an intersection with a road running north-south, US Highway 59/71. This intersection marks the next waypoint: Lockesburg.

Continue following Highway 27. Soon, fields replace the forests. A winding river, the Little River, runs alongside the road. At two points, the river seems to touch the highway from the right. Between these two curves of the river, the state border with Oklahoma runs north to south. This line is visible on GPS.

Following the road further, you'll reach the town of Idabel. In the middle of the settlement, directly along the road, there's an airport with a large gas tank on its grounds: Idabel.

The road near the airfield leads in the wrong direction. Highway 70 bypasses the town to the north, so you'll need to turn slightly north to continue westward. From Idabel, you can already see the wide blue ribbon of the Red River to the south. Highway 70 and the river run parallel at a distance. The road is flanked by three lakes on either side. The third and largest is Hugo Lake. A few miles later, Stamper Municipal Airport (KHHW) appears.

Originally, the boys did not land here, but we do to shorten the leg.

This airport also features a small lake on its grounds. Back in the air, follow Highway 70 which continues through the uninhabited forests of southern Oklahoma. The only reference point here is the intersection with a road running north-south. On the left, you can still see the Red River.

Following the road further, the first town along the route is Durant. In the southern part of the city lies the airfield Eaker (KDUA), your next stop.

Historical Leg 11: KDUA – T23

Continue south. A road leads out of the city past the airfield. This is US Highway 75, which also passes a small, inconspicuous grass runway. On the right is a very large lake, Lake Texoma. Across the Red River, you'll see a city: Denison. Crossing the river brings you into Texas. The next city is Sherman. On the right and before the city, you'll see a large airport. Sherman Municipal is located south of the city.

No roads and much dried prairie: this section has no landmarks for terrestrial navigation. Continue the flight with dead reckoning. Maintain precise course and account for crosswinds. From here begins the "Texas Sky," with many scattered cumulus clouds. After about 25 NM, you'll fly over a small airfield, Bridges Field (53TS). If you see a road running north-south, fly toward it and follow it south. It curves twice and passes two small grass airfields. When the illuminated lights of Denton Municipal Airport appear straight ahead, steer toward it.

Just before Denton, a road runs westward, US Highway 380. On the left, you'll see some buildings. Follow the highway. The next airfield is Decatur.

The Decatur airfield (KLUD) lies on the right near the road.

Originally, the boys did not land here, but we do to shorten the leg.

Continue following Highway 380. North of the road is another inconspicuous grass runway, Red Ace Field. Straight ahead, you'll soon see a lake, Bridgeport Lake. The airfield of the same name is south of the lake.

A tributary of the lake forms the next landmark, leading south-southwest. At the source of this tributary, you'll find the tiny grass runway of Rock Creek Ranch. It's difficult to spot, especially if a cloud obscures it.

Fly westward and follow a winding road. To the left, in the distance, you'll see Mineral Wells Lake. After crossing a dried-up river, you'll see Possum Kingdom Lake and its airfield straight ahead. This airfield is very close to the lake's shore.

Possum Kingdom Lake has two inflows in the south. The first is at the southeastern corner, and the second is at the southwestern corner and is actually a dry river. Follow this dry river to the intersection with a road running east-west: Highway 180.

Now follow US Highway 180. On the left, a few miles south of the road, you'll see Breckenridge Airport: Stephens County.

Highway 180 crosses a large lake, Hubbard Creek Lake, and continues westward. Shortly before one of the many dry riverbeds that cross the road, you'll see an airfield on the left: Albany (T23).

Be cautious when landing. While the asphalt runway is long enough, it is rather narrow. The wind was blowing crosswise at the time.

End of Day 3. Superb performance!

Day 4

Tuesday, July 5th, 1966: Albany (Texas) – El Paso (Texas)

General Information

Early on the fourth day, the flight departs from Albany, Texas. The journey initially heads southwest to Abilene and then continues along Interstate 20 to Sweetwater, the first refueling stop of the day. In the book, Rinker Buck mentions that he and his brother intended to follow the old airmail route, which passed through Snyder, Lamesa, Seminole, and Hobbs to Carlsbad, New Mexico. To do this, the pilots would have simply followed US Highway 180, which runs from Dallas directly to El Paso. However, it's clear that Kern and Rinker got off course. Their travelogue describes a different, slightly more southern route that follows Interstate 20. Originally, they planned to follow the interstate to Pecos before turning north toward Carlsbad. However, shortly after Odessa, they cut across toward Wink.

After Carlsbad, Kern and Rinker tackled Guadalupe Peak. The book recounts a long, grueling climb through heat and thin air to reach an indicated altitude of 11,600 feet. In reality, Guadalupe Peak—the highest point in Texas—is nearly 9,000 feet high. Considering the inexperienced pilots may not have adjusted their altimeter for the current barometric pressure, it might indeed have been necessary to climb above an indicated 10,000 feet to clear this section of the Rockies. However, the gateway to the west, Guadalupe Pass, is much lower at around 6,000 feet. Highway 62/180, the only road from Carlsbad to El Paso, runs through this pass. Kern and Rinker mention in the book that they followed this road for a while. Whether they truly flew dangerously high through the narrow V of Guadalupe Peak or followed the safer pass is left ambiguous. Pilots retracing this route today have the choice: follow the road comfortably or challenge themselves with a high-altitude flight over the peak.

The remainder of the journey is straightforward: fly west until reaching El Paso. El Paso International Airport is unsuitable for the Cub due to its lack of a radio. The day's leg ends at the nearby Dona Ana County (KDNA).

Route Description

Historical Leg 12: T23 – KSWW

Right after takeoff from Runway 17, turn northwest. The road directly behind is US Highway 180, which leads west. Turn left at a junction nearby. State Highway 351, marked by numerous radio masts, leads to Abilene. Just before the city outskirts, a narrow, sparse grass strip appears: Portlock Airfield.

Highway 351 enters the city. On the other side of Abilene, the lights of the military airbase Dyess AFB are visible. A highway ring bypasses the city center and continues westward. Near the city limits, the Flying B Ranch appears.

The road now becomes Interstate 20, winding through prairie-like steppe to the next city, Sweetwater. Avenger Field, located on the western side of Sweetwater, is relatively large and features a prominent gas tank. During landing, one of the Cub's elevator springs breaks.

Historical Leg 13: KSWW – KINK

The journey continues southwest, still along Interstate 20. When antenna masts and a lake come into view, the next waypoint is near. Trulock Ranch Field, a small grass runway, lies slightly north of the road.

Interstate 20 crosses the northern tip of the lake and continues westward. The next city is Big Spring, with the airport Big Spring McMahon (KBPG) located at its western edge.

Originally, the boys did not land here, but we do to shorten the leg.

After take off, head over to the road on the north side of the airport, the Interstate 20, which continues west. It passes a lake, the Natural Dam Salt Lake, and winds further through the prairie. The next city is Midland, where Interstate 20 runs directly into the city center, dotted with buildings. The large airport with two runways is on the right-hand side.

From the city center, two roads extend further. Interstate 20 continues southwest, skirting the large Midland International Airport, which must be avoided. The route follows the road west, Provincial Highway 158. Visibility deteriorates. The highway intersects another road at a right angle. South of the intersection, about 5 NM away, you can see the northern edge of Odessa and the airport lights.

After the intersection, the road is now County Highway 866 and heads west. The prairie transitions into drier, desert-like terrain. When the highway reaches a series of intersections, the Winkler airfield (KINK) can be spotted at approximately 10 o'clock.

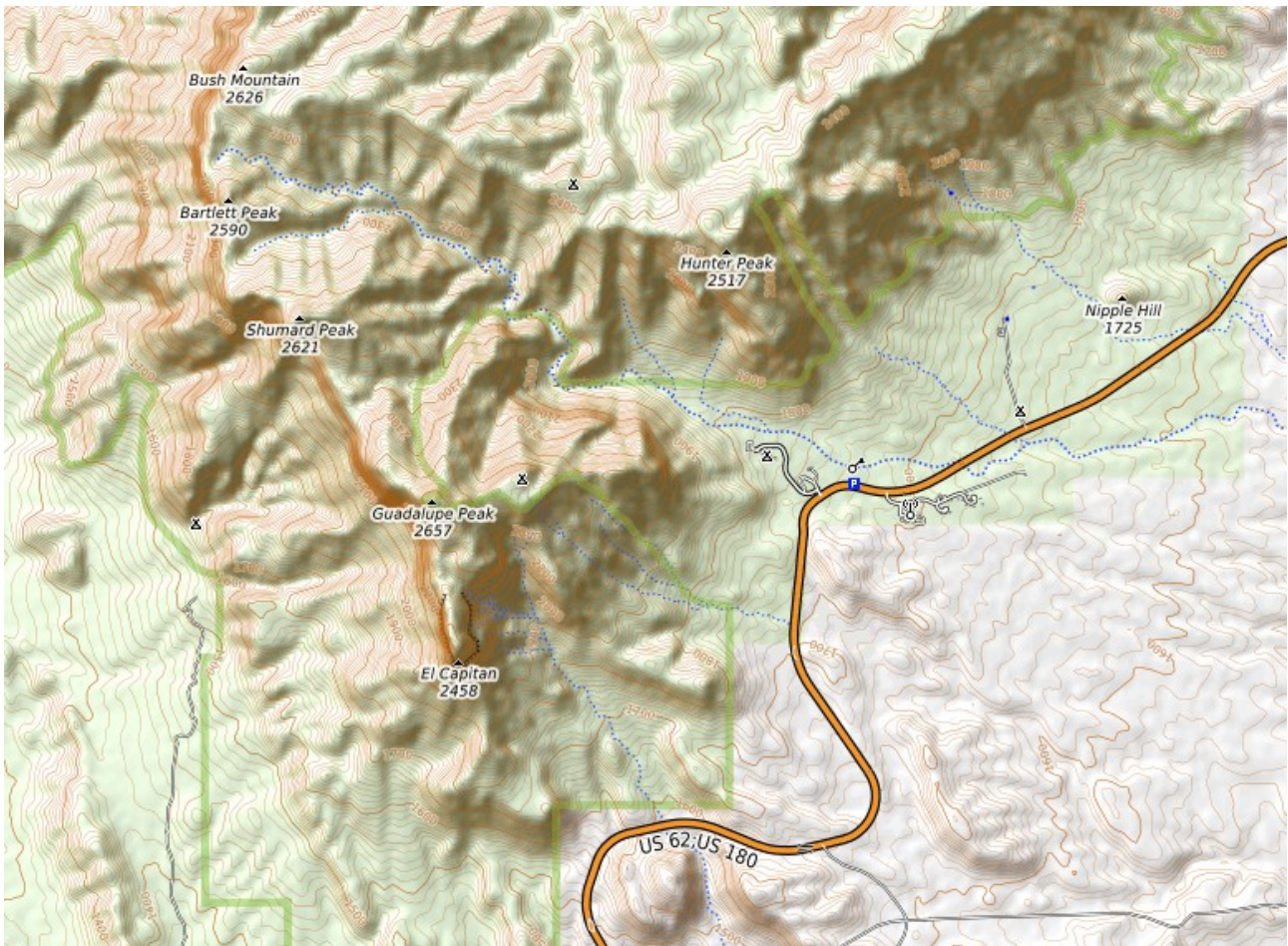
Historical Leg 14: KINK – KCNM

Just beyond Wink, the desert begins. The flight follows a compass heading, compensating for westerly winds. Midway through the stretch, the Cub experiences engine trouble, necessitating an emergency landing: At some point, a river, the Pecos, becomes visible straight ahead. If visibility allows, you can also see Red Bluff Lake at 9 o'clock and a salt lake at 2 o'clock. Beyond the Pecos, Highway 285 appears. The river and the road both lead to Carlsbad, where the large airport lies southwest of the city. Land at Cavern (KCNM), where the B-Boys had to make repairs.

Historical Leg 15: KCNM – KDNA

Having fixed the plane and after taking off, the road near the airport is US Highway 62/180, leading to Guadalupe Pass. **IMPORTANT!** Don't fly GPS here or you'll miss the fun: When the road begins to twist and descend, you have reached the Guadalupe Pass.

Portions of the road are flanked by (sometimes dry) tributaries of the Pecos River.



Here, two options are available:

- Follow Highway 62/180 westward.
- Turn right and fly into a valley that quickly ascends toward Guadalupe Peak.

After the pass, the road splits. One branch heads south, but the route continues along Highway 62/180 westward, passing several large salt lakes.

We will make a quick stop at Dell City Municipal (2ES) to the northwest.

Originally, the boys did not land here, but we do to shorten the leg.

Continue south west and catch up with the 62/180. This is a long, monotonous stretch through the desert of the Texas high plains. The only city on the route is El Paso. Shortly before the city, the road splits again. The highway continues straight into the city.

We can't land in El Paso Intl. (no radios!), and the airfield the Bucks landed on (West Texas) doesn't exist anymore, so we head over to KDNA, Dona Ana County, which is located at the northwest of the city center.

End of Day 4. Did it, Champ – you passed The Pass!

Day 5 and 6

Wednesday, July 6th and Thursday, July 7th, 1966: El Paso (Texas) – Yuma (Arizona)

General Information

After the exertions of the previous legs, Kernahan and Rinker Buck took a rest day in El Paso. However, the day didn't turn out to be as relaxed as planned. They intended to make a short hop from the smaller West Texas airfield, where they had landed the day before, to El Paso International Airport. They had arranged to meet a TV crew there. But because the Piper Cub didn't have a radio on board, special precautions were necessary to enter El Paso's controlled airspace. Naturally, things went wrong. Kern and Rink almost caused an accident when they forced a passenger plane into a go-around.

The following day, they departed from El Paso International. In the book, the description of this leg is very sparse, not even mentioning refueling stops. In this account, those stops have been chosen at my discretion.

The route initially follows Interstate 10 and the Rio Grande northward toward Las Cruces (New Mexico). From there, Interstate 10 turns westward, winding for 200 miles through barren terrain to Tucson. It is doubtful the two pilots actually flew close to Tucson. Had they done so, they would have likely seen the massive and famous aircraft boneyard at Davis-Monthan AFB. Two aviation enthusiasts like Kern and Buck would certainly have mentioned this in their story. They probably made a wide detour around Tucson, as the interstate runs directly between the large airbase and the equally large international airport. After their experiences the previous day, it is unlikely they ventured through such controlled zones.

Interstate 10 continues northwest to Phoenix, but the route turns westward 30 miles before reaching Phoenix, at Casa Grande. From there, Kern and Rink followed Interstate 8 for 150 miles. This is a very long and monotonous stretch. It is recommended to stay on the northern side of the highway, as a massive USAF testing range begins south of it. Jets fire live ammunition in this area. The day ends in Yuma, on the border to California.

Upon landing, the Bucks were approached by U.S. Border Patrol agents who, noting their youthful appearance and the out-of-state registration of their Piper, suspected potential smuggling activities. The agents conducted a thorough inspection of the aircraft and questioned the brothers about their flight plans and purpose. After verifying their identities and understanding the nature of their cross-country adventure, the agents allowed them to proceed.

Route Description

Historical Leg 16: KDNA – KLSB

We take off and fly to the north. Just beyond El Paso, the Rio Grande flows. Here, set a course of 330–340 and follow the river and its valley. Soon, a city will appear straight ahead, staying to the right of the Rio Grande: Las Cruces. To the left of the river, a few miles away, is the Las Cruces airport.

The road connecting the city of Las Cruces to the airport is Interstate 10. It continues westward and serves as a reference point for a long stretch until just before Phoenix. At Solo Ranch (NM08), the second small airfield on the route, the road splits. Interstate 10 is the northern route. The next town is Deming, whose airport Deming Municipal (KDMN) lies east of the town and is skirted by Interstate 10.

Originally, the boys did not land here, but we do to shorten the leg.

Interstate 10 continues westward in a wide arc. Other than the road, there's almost nothing to see. When two small salt lakes appear right next to the road, the next waypoint to land at and fuel up is near: Lordsburg (KLSB).

Historical Leg 17: KLSB – E60

I10 bends south-southwest past two large salt lakes before resuming a westerly direction. Ten miles farther, on a green patch in the middle of nowhere, lies the small Bowie airfield.

Continue following Interstate 10. Ten nautical miles ahead, a road branches off—Highway 191 to the north. Interstate 10 veers slightly left. When it splits into several parallel roads, the Cochise County airport is nearby. A very large salt lake lies to the left of the road.

The road winds through the dry valley between the Dragoon Mountains to the south and the Galiuro Mountains to the north. When the landscape becomes slightly greener, you've reached Benson, with the airport Benson Municipal (E95) a couple of miles west of the city.

Originally, the boys did not land here, but we do to shorten the leg.

After Benson, continue roughly westward. When the desert resumes, Interstate 10 bends to the right. The brown-gray area ahead is Tucson. The airport to the right of the road is Davis-Monthan AFB. To the left lies Tucson International Airport.

Fly straight across downtown Tucson. On the far side of the city, two roads continue; between them flows a dry riverbed, the Santa Cruz River. Interstate 10 is the road to the right of the river. The route follows Interstate 10 and the green valley of the Santa Cruz River. The first small town is Eloy. The airport Eloy Municipal (E60) is two miles beyond the town, to the right of the road. Fuel up.

Historical Leg 18: E60 – 54AZ

The city visible past Eloy is Casa Grande. Near the city's edge, to the left of Interstate 10, where the now more water-rich Santa Cruz River flows, a parallel road branches sharply left. This is Interstate 8. While Interstate 10 continues north to Phoenix, the route follows Interstate 8, turning left.

Interstate 8 runs straight west through the Sonoran Desert. Aside from the road and dry riverbeds, there's nothing to see. A few green patches ahead mark the location of Gila Bend. Here, three roads intersect. Two airfields lie near Interstate 8: south of the road is a USAF auxiliary airfield; north of the road is Gila Bend Municipal (E63).

Originally, the boys did not land here, but we do to shorten the leg.

At Gila Bend, both the interstate and the flight path turn slightly left. For this long stretch, the road is the only reference point. There are no more airfields until Yuma. South of the road lies a restricted area—an extensive USAF testing range. It is advisable to stay north of the road. The green strip running parallel to Interstate 8, a few miles to the right, marks the Gila River.

Midway along this stretch, the road splits. Interstate 8 and a small country road run parallel westward. Shortly afterward, the Gila River approaches the road. By now, the river is more water-rich and distinctly blue.

The long ridge directly ahead is the Gila Mountains. Beyond them lies the city of Yuma: a large gray patch in the middle of a narrow green strip.

Yuma is not only an international airport but also a Marine Corps airbase. It's too large for Kern and Rink's small Cub. The route takes a sharp left immediately after the airport.

Just four miles away, almost directly aligned with KYUM's Runways 21R and 21L, lies a small airfield with two intersecting runways, close to the river south of Yuma: Somerton (54AZ), waiting for you to land.

End of Day 6. You've come far!

Day 7

Friday, July 8th, 1966: Yuma (Arizona) – San Juan Capistrano (California)

General Information

The last day of their journey went from Yuma, AZ to Brown Field in San Diego, CA, the longest and easiest they made. They refueled in San Diego among a throng of reporters, then departed for their final destination at San Juan Capistrano Airport, California. Nowadays there is no airfield for us to land anymore in Capistrano, so our final destination will be Bob Maxwell Memorial (KOKB) which isn't too far away.

Having already flown across the country from New Jersey, this final leg marked the culmination of their ambitious journey. There was a mix of excitement and a tinge of melancholy as they realized the end of their adventure was near.

The flight itself involved crossing the arid expanse of the California desert, a stark and awe-inspiring landscape that presented unique challenges: The intense heat and turbulence over the desert terrain tested their flying skills and the endurance of their little Piper Cub.

The desert scenery also gave them time for introspection, as they considered how far they had come and what the trip had meant to them.

The brothers were greeted warmly by family and friends, including their father, whose approval they had sought in undertaking the journey. The completion of the flight symbolized a moment of connection and pride for their family.

Route Description

Historical Leg 19: 54AZ – KSDM

After takeoff make sure you don't cross the border to Mexico, and fly north for a bit, to then follow the Interstate 8 for a long time.

North of the town of El Centro there is an airfield Imperial County (KIPL).

Originally, the boys did not land here, but we do to shorten the leg.

Continue to follow the I8 until it starts to turn northwest. You'll see the airfield Cereso Del Hongo on the right side of the I8. Keep going west, on a course of about 250 degrees, passing by Reider Ranch (CA75) until you end up north of Tijuana. You'll be able to spot two large airports – on the left there is MMTJ beyond the Mexican border – don't cross it! – and on the right lies Brown Field (KSDM), where we'll land to fuel up one last time.

Historical Leg 20: KSDM – KOKB

For the last leg of the journey the descriptions of the route had again become rather vague in the book, because the story was concentrating more on the emotional side and on the experiences in the rather crowded airspace in Southern California. The easiest way to reach the final destination is to just fly along the coastal hills to the north, trying to avoid the big airports and military fields until you reach Oceanside. Back in the day the Bucks were annoyed by media helicopters who flew in their way at Oceanside.

Land at Bob Maxwell (KOKB) and be proud of your achievements as a cross country bush pilot!