

## August 13 & 14, 2008 Taos, NM

Taos is an artsie-craftsie community located in New Mexico's high desert country. In fact its elevation at 7,000 feet means that it is the highest airport runway that I have used so far. I got lucky when I arrived at their [Regional Airport](#) in that my campground was less than a 2 mile drive away. I was given permission to leave my trailer at an unused tie down area on the east side of the field, and upon my arrival at about 11 AM, I removed the plane and got it ready for a 45 minute orientation flight over the area. I was curious as to how my plane was going to react at this altitude. Because of the ambient temperature, which was nearing 80 degrees, the "density altitude" was well over 10,000 feet. This means that the plane would perform as if it were taking off from a field at this altitude. My engine has a "pressure compensating" carburetor, which has no manual leaning capability. The carb is supposed to "sense" the altitude and compensate by adjusting its jet position to "lean" out the fuel. This is my first experience with this type of fuel metering system, and it seemed to work well. My take off used a bit more runway than usual and both acceleration and climb rate was less than stellar, but I did get up to 8,500 indicated (almost 12,000 density altitude) for my tour around the area. The mountains, which exceeded 13,000, seemed so close that you could reach out and touch them. However, they were about 10 miles to my east. In another day, I will make a drive through those same mountains, on my way to Eagle Nest, Angle Fire and the Blue Lake. The pass that I will have to travel through is over 9,000 feet. I will be interested in seeing how my motor home will perform at that altitude.

I am always perplexed when I view these little cities from the air. They appear so small, yet take so long to drive through. Taos is located about 8 miles south of their airport, so it took a while to make the drive

over to their welcome center to pick up some literature. I decided that my best bet would be to take the sightseeing trolley which would take me to the highlights of this very interesting city.



This is a view of downtown Taos, and its mountain range. This is a big ski area during New Mexico's winters.

On Thursday, 8/14, I made an early morning visit to the airport for a 7:30 lift off in cool (50 degree), calm, clear air. For the next hour I flew around the general area, taking photos for this article. I really didn't want to return to the ground, but I had a reservation for the 11 o'clock trolley tour. I arrived at the town plaza an hour early, to have a cup of coffee and scones at the Hotel La Fonda. While walking around the square, I came across 4 "hippies" sitting on one of the benches. Now these were "real hippies", not just millennial wannabes. During the



My campground was very close to the airport



After unloading the plane, it was time for fuel

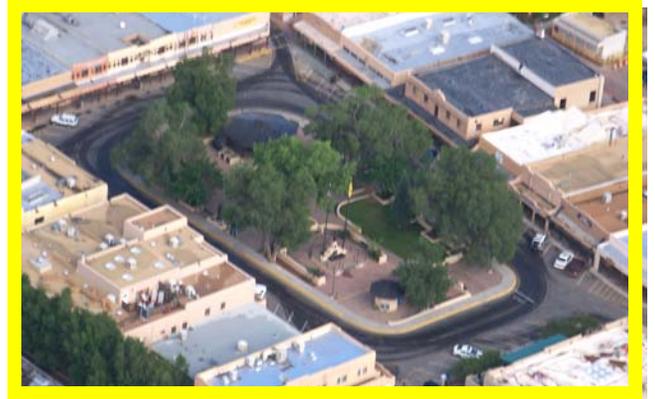


Taos airport, w/ 13,000 foot mountains beyond



At the bottom of this 600 ft. deep "trench" is the Rio Grande River, which runs down to Texas. Note the gorge auto bridge crossing mid photo.

'60's Taos had a large hippie enclave, and, no doubt, these were 3rd generation followers of the cult, with original clothing from their grandparents, replete with peace symbols, beads, braids and flower power markings. During that evening, I went back to the same plaza for some music on the pavillion. The 2 piece combo with a guitarist and base violinist were great, and they jammed for 2 hours straight. Music was mainly "folk" and "protest songs". The 60's are alive and well in Taos. While waiting for my trolley to arrive, I noticed a lot of police activity. There were 3 patrol cars, one unmarked SUV, and 1 motorcycle vehicle, and a total of 6 patrolmen and 1 plainclothes detective viewing up toward the 2nd story of the old county courthouse (now plaza shops and boutiques). When I asked the motorcycle cop what all the activity was about, he responded, with a twinkle in his eye, "We heard a rumor that there were going to be hot, fresh donuts here this morning". I found out later that some kids had climbed up to that second floor and graffiti marked the walls with their "tags". So, I guess that even Taos has big city "crime".



Downtown Taos Plaza as viewed from above

Our visit to the [Taos Pueblo](#) village was one of the more interesting trolley stops. Here we were able to view and walk among adobe buildings that go back over a thousand years. The village is still occupied by approximately 150 families of the original Indian tribes that occupied this community well before Columbus came to America. It is said to be the oldest continuously inhabited communities in the USA, and is a United Nations World Heritage Site. These indigitis people still live like they did centuries ago...well, sort of. They have no electricity, running water or plumbing. There are common "outhouses" (but most use camping type portable toilets), and propane is used for limited cooking and heating. Automobiles are allowed within their walled community. The sect is rather secretive in a lot of their social, ceremonial and cultural dealings, but their sacred village is open for visitation and limited photography. While they will not divulge the details of their religious rites, most inhabitants (90%) practice a variation of the Catholic faith (originally forced on them by their Spanish conquerors), but with a "back to nature and mother earth" overtone. They still cook outside in adobe "horno" ovens that make delicious bread and pies. I tried one of these fresh made fried blue corn flat breads with organic honey and cinnamon sugar. It was delicious.



My sightseeing trolley, at the Plaza pick-up point

While this hour spent at Taos Pueblo was the highlight of my trolley tour, other places visited were the [Kit Carson home and museum](#), St. Francis of Assi Church, and the Hacienda of Los Martinez family.



Some of the 2 story homes at Taos Pueblo

Photo of me in front of the San Francisco de Asis church which is billed as the oldest Catholic Church in the US



Taos Pueblo homes and outside "horno" ovens