

January 30, 2013 - Seminole Indian Casino @ Immokalee

While the Seminole Indian tribe operates a half dozen Casinos in the State of Florida, the one in Immokalee is the easiest to get to by airplane. A short hour and 20 minute flight brought me over to the Immokalee Regional Airport which is a 5 minute courtesy van drive from the Casino's front door. However since my recent heart surgery I have gotten back into my exercise regimen and I decided to make the mile and a half walk over since it was a beautiful sunny day with 80 degree temperatures and a pleasant wind blowing. These 30 minutes took me along 1st Street and through the main downtown area of town. Immokalee is a typical south Florida agricultural community with produce farms and packaging plants the largest employer for the working class populace. I noted that most of the signage was in Spanish with a sprinkling of Haitian Creole thrown in. Several of the old motels had been turned into living quarters for the field hands and crop pickers and quite a few people seemed to be "hanging out" even though it was the middle of the work day. Although I did not feel uncomfortable during my walk over, this is something that I would not be willing to do once it got dark. The area that I was walking through could certainly be classified as "depressed" and probably prone to drug activity "after hours".

However the most generous employer in Immokalee would have to be the Seminole Tribe. Each and every one of their members, providing that they live on the reservation, is guaranteed a free education, a job (should they want one) along with an additional stipend of \$10,000 per month, for the rest of their life, from the gambling proceeds from those half dozen casinos. However most of the tribe members do not appear to be having a better existence than those idle field hands and pickers that I passed on my way over to the Casino, due mainly to rampant alcoholism and drug dependency. But this is a another matter and a subject for psychologists and sociologists to sort out.

I have never ben one to gamble. It just does not appeal to my conservative nature and since I know that the odds are stacked way in favor of the house (how else could they support each of their tribal members to the tune of \$120,000+ per year?), I just don't imbid in this particular vice. My main purpose for today's sojourn was to get to make a flight on a gorgeous South Florida winter's day and to grab some lunch at the Casino's "1st Street Deli Cafe". While their meals are not inexpensive, they are certainly worth the \$12 - \$18 that you will spend for an entree. They serve only Boar's Head premium products, and I specifically go there for the \$16 Corned Beef and Pastrami Ruben sandwich, which comes with a side of fries or slaw. It is a thick 1/2 pound of meat layered between toasted Rye bread, and flavored with sour kraut and Russian dressing. Simply delicious and it is even served along with a dish of kosher pickles and hot peppers.

And while the Casino's courtesy car was waiting at their front door, after scoffing down this tasty meal I really needed the calorie burning walk back to the airport. After fueling up the plane (I only took 6 gallons of gas, but I always try to support the local FBO when I fly into an airport for my meal trips) I made the shorter one hour flight back to my home base, thanks to a helpful tailwind. This is a place that I try to fly into about once a month knowing that the Indians will never get rich on my dime.



The Immokalee Casino as seen from 500 feet



It's front entrance appears a bit more decorative



Me at the front entrance sign after my walk over



My lunch was at their 1st Street Deli Cafe and cameras are NOT allowed inside the Casino