

July 20, 2013 - Chalet Suzanne, Lake Wales

One of the more interesting fly-in restaurants located in South Florida has to be the Chalet Suzanne resort, located on its own private airport just to the east of the city of Lake Wales. I have flown into its 2300 foot grass strip a half dozen times and have always marveled that such a place like this can still exist in today's world of high rise modern chain hotels. Going back to the early 1930's, it is a family owned and run resort which has gained recognition as destination venue with its collection of two dozen individual and highly unusual private cottages and extremely distinct room accommodations for overnight guests. Prices range from \$130-\$170 per night (for two people) and will also include a country style dining room breakfast each morning. Every bedroom has its very own distinct atmosphere with furnishings that can only be described as eclectic. But more than a Bed and Breakfast, it has one of Florida's truly 5 star gourmet restaurants with fare that you will not find anywhere else. The baked grapefruit appetizer is truly "to die for". While not inexpensive, the dining experience will last for at least an hour and each course is presented with a flourish fit for royalty. It's no wonder that this restaurant has won the Florida Golden Spoon Award and is prominently listed in the Duncan Hines directory of places to see and eat while in Florida. It's own soup factory and cannery produces a very tasty variety of soups that can be purchased at their gift store and its distinctive Romaine "Moon Soup" was selected by NASA and the crew of Apollo 15, thanks to friend and Astronaut James B. Irwin, to be aboard their trip to the moon in 1973. The soups also went into space on Apollo 16 and even the Russians chose these fine soups for their joint dinner meeting in space on Apollo-Soyuz journey.

However, today's trip was not just to enjoy the "soup of the day", but to also visit with an old friend who was down from Illinois to attend a prestigious awards ceremony for her daughter, a journalist for the Tampa Times newspaper. Barbara Bohlen is also a part time neighbor of mine when I am back in Hilton Head. Since her time in Florida was limited to just 3 days, and as she was staying up in Orlando, I thought that the Chalet Suzanne would be an ideal close by meeting place for a quick lunch along with visiting and catching up. Barbara is a retired professor from the University of Illinois, and a archeologist specializing in early Greek civilization. Right now, in the middle of publishing her 4th book on her speciality, she took time away from her research and editing duties to attend her daughter's honorarium presentation and to meet with me for a tour of the Chalet's grounds.

The trip from my Indiantown Airport base is just a little over an hour's flight. Prior to landing I made a fly-over of the resort complex for an aerial photo of the interesting grounds before setting up for an approach to runway 18. Although the grass was rather high, my Highlander does not require much distance for either landing or take off. Not so with my prior airplanes and it was a relief not having to worry about the possibility of insufficient runway in order to get back airborne. All in all, it was a very nice visit and an enjoyable lunch. I will not see Barbara again until next winter when she leaves behind the chill and bleakness of central Illinois for the sun and fun of Hilton Head Island. But I will probably be making other visits to the Chalet Suzanne, if for nothing else but another bowl of its famous "Moon Soup".



1,000' view of complex, including pool & runway



Lower 500' view of the cottages, pool & restaurant



Me, in front of the main entrance to the Chalet.



Barbara and me at the Cottages courtyard area