

## **How to enjoy air travel, the Magical Time Machine way**

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One of the amazing parts of aircraft ownership is the ability to travel on your own schedule, to the places you want to go, without the need to move from a central large airport. No other time was this more apparent than on a recent trip for business.

As many folks know, I was recently able to do the Aviation Egress Training Systems course in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The course was great, but while there, a client of ours requested that we conduct a flight test of an aircraft they were conducting a pre-purchase inspection on. They were unable to free up one of their pilots, and we offered to go down and do the test for them to complete the deal.

This necessitated a change in my itinerary. For airline travel, this would have required change fees, phone calls, rental cars and hotel re-booking. For GA, I called the Fast Air Jet Centre in Winnipeg and requested a full fuel load, instead of just the main wing tanks.

The following morning, I departed Winnipeg in the Mooney (see article in the Sept/Oct 2018 issue) and headed direct to Duluth, MN to clear customs. A hard IFR with some ice on final and we were down in Duluth. The customs guys were excellent, and I conducted some de-icing on the ramp. While waiting for the ceiling to open up, I was lucky enough to see a couple of Cirrus Vision Jets taxi to position and take off on test flights. I was also delayed by the departure of several Air National Guard F-16 Vipers, so after the impromptu airshow I was on my way.

Next stop was 4 hours away at a small airport north of Cincinnati. The Seller of the plane was there, and the Canadian mechanic was just finishing up. I taxied in and shut down. I then jumped into the light twin with the Seller, for a quick local test flight to check the aircraft systems. The FBO was good enough to fuel the Mooney while we were on the flight test.

The flight was going well and the plane was performing as we had expected. The Seller mentioned in passing that a Presidential Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) was planned for the following day, which would include the airspace over the airport. Not wanting to be grounded for a full day, I decided heading back west would be the best option later that day. Perhaps to Minnesota or maybe as far as North Dakota, but in the general direction I was headed anyway.

After landing and sending a quick note to the Purchaser confirming the plane was as expected, I checked my phone to see a note from my brother in Ontario. He noticed from FlightAware I was technically closer to Ottawa than Calgary and mentioned that I should “loop by” for a quick visit. I found out he had an ulterior motive as his aircraft had to be dropped in Brampton, ON for some service and I would be the perfect taxi from Brampton to Ottawa the next day.

As I am sucker for any opportunity to fly my plane and with no scheduled appointments the following couple days, I readily agreed and another change occurred. This one was a bit more involved as I needed to file eAPIS (via the online system) and arrange for Canadian Customs (via the old fashioned phone call). London, ON seemed like a good stop, so that became my destination for the night. File a flight plan through Foreflight, file eAPIS and call customs. Walk out, check plane, fire up, run up, depart. No security, no waiting in line, no seat selection, no stowing of baggage, no fighting for elbow room. This is why we love GA.

I departed out of Ohio and flew direct to London. ATC was good enough to put me in on final in front of a Dash 8 and we parked on the ramp for the evening. A quick UBER downtown to a hotel and a nice pint in the pub across the street finalized a long day of flying. Winnipeg, Minnesota, Ohio, Ontario. Departed 8am Winnipeg time, shut down at 6pm London time.

The next morning I grabbed a quick coffee in the FBO and departed for Brantford. 15 minutes later we were on the ground in Brantford, parked in front of Brant Aero. The ladies there were very accommodating as I waited for my brother to arrive. He landed as expected and after a quick chat with the shop foreman, we loaded the Mooney to head to Ottawa.

The weather was great, with very little cloud. The Toronto TCA was accommodating so we were able fly out over the lake just south of downtown with some incredible views. We landed in Ottawa about an hour and a half later. Two hours later, we were sitting down to a nice lunch with some extended family at my mother’s place in Ottawa.

The next day was CAVU and my uncle, brother and I loaded the Mooney for a one hour VFR flight to see his cottage renovations in Muskoka. Muskoka has a terrific airport with an amazing pilot lounge. If you get a chance to fly in there, take advantage, it is a great airport and the area offers spectacular views.

We worked the day away getting some items done for the end of the summer season and the rest of the family arrived by car later in the day. Their trip took 4 hours and included several delays for construction. Of course, we were delayed as well, since we had to finish our coffee before departure in Ottawa and put on the covers in Muskoka. Total delay, 13 minutes. A quick overnight in Muskoka and I was scheduled to depart the next day.

The next day saw the only real hiccup in the trip. Due to a bit of late day rain the previous day and the temperature dipping below freezing that night, the plane was pretty iced up where the covers did not shield it. A bit of TKS fluid and the rising of the morning sun took care of it, and with only a 30 minute delay I departed to the West. The flight over Ontario and through most of Manitoba was amazing and the plane flew along in the low teens at 170 kts. It was a long leg, almost 7 hours, but arrival in Brandon was easy, except for some minor icing on the final approach path.

Once again, a bit of de-icing with the help of the good folks at the Brandon Flying Club and a big hole developing over the airport, I departed for Calgary. I arrived about four and half hours later and tucked away the Mooney in the hanger.

All in, I travelled 3,644NM (or there about), made 10 stops at 10 different airports over the course of 6 days. It should be noted that one full day was spent in Winnipeg in training, so technically the trip was over 5 days. I visited three provinces and two US state, flying over spectacular terrain and adjusting my travel plans multiple times with very little effort. This is the freedom of GA and is the primary driver for most Owners to take the plunge and buy their very own magical time machine.