

Columbia River Gorge Tour (Updated) with original credit to Sherman Kaplan

You are about to undertake an adventure tour for a group of wealthy tourists. They are enchanted by the idea of flying our airline as well as the opportunity to see the Columbia River Gorge, and more from above. As pilot and tour guide you will fly VFR under ideal weather conditions. Thus, your flight plans for the three legs of this trip are conditional on the weather.

To give your passengers the very best possible views, you will be flying the first two legs of your flight at 2,500 feet, climbing only when necessary to avoid terrain or low cloud formations. Remember that when flying this route as a VFR pilot, you will have wide discretion. Also remember that even though you are seeing the River and other scenery head on, your passengers can only look out their side windows. Therefore, for them to get the best out of this flight, you should alternate between the left and right banks of the river, and even circle particularly interesting points.

Leg 1 will take you through the gorge East of KPDX and the many scenic wonders there. The first leg lands at Richland, which can also serve as an emergency destination in the event foul weather should develop during the flight. If prevailing winds and the control tower allow, your best approach would be on the RIBCO NDB for an ILS landing on Rwy 19. The ILS frequency is 110.50.

| DCA Flight No | Departure | Arrival | NM | Description | Altitude |
|----------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------|--|-----------------|
| 622-01-01 | KPDX | KRLD | 210 | Dep KPDX using Rwy 28R at Hdg 280 deg. Fly over the airport ahead in Vancouver WA Turn to 100 deg. Climb to 2500 ft Then follow the Columbia River. Mt Hood is straight ahead Pass Crown Point on the right bank Beacon Rock on the left bank, Then Multnomah Falls, Follow the river over Bonneville Dam with Mt Hood to the south , Dalles Dam is just ahead. After Dalles Dam just follow the river heading ENE Tune NAV to 108.4 for VOR/DME PSC Past Pasco Airport. You will see KRLD at you 10 o'clock. Follow the river north and turn around for your southern ILS approach. You may see the Hanford Nuclear Reservation at the turn on the west side of the Columbia River. Land Rwy 19 Altitude 390 feet 187 deg | 2500 |

Your second leg, 662-01-02 will take you from Richland to a tour of the Grand Coulee Dam. The dam is one of the marvels of construction and by some accounts an even greater achievement than the Hoover Dam. Remember to circle the dam both clockwise and counter clockwise to give your passengers the views for which they are paying top dollar.

As you leave the dam, you could fly direct to Chelan, which is where you will end your second leg. But, the more scenic way is to follow the Columbia River, which wraps around this way and that, but ultimately leads you to Chelan

Chelan is only about 1300 feet and requires an approach to RWY 20 from a slightly offset point. You can only land here under VFR because it is an uncontrolled airport. On my test flights, I had to do several go-arounds to land successfully.

| DCA Flight No | Departure | Arrival | NM | Description | Altitude |
|---------------|-----------|---------|-----|--|----------|
| 622-01-02 | KRLD | S10 | 167 | Dep KRLD Rwy 19 Heading 187 deg climb to 2500 ft Turn right and track 343 degrees to MWH VOR/DME 115.0 After crossing the VOR at Grant Co. Intl airport, continue north to 3W7, Coulee airport at Grand Coulee Dam then Climb to 4000 ft Follow river to Chelan Municipal Airport S10 After crossing S97, Anderson Field, and drop to 2500 feet Follow the river slowly descending to line up for 200 deg approach to Chelan airport and land Rwy 20 elev 1263 ft | 4000 |

Your last leg, 662-01-03 will be your longest, and includes up close and personal views of Mt. Rainer and Mt. St. Helen. Again, you will be flying VFR if weather allows. If weather is inclement, there is no point in making the flight.

While the flight plan will get you to a good perspective of Mt. Rainer, it is up to you to navigate so your passengers see this natural wonder. As you did at Coulee Dam, it would be a good idea to circle the mountain both clockwise and counter clockwise. I found that an altitude of 11, 500 is a good view, but if you can climb up to 13,500 or higher, it can be even more striking.

As you leave Mt. Rainer and begin heading South for Mt. St. Helens. You will want at least 10,500 feet of altitude so that you can circle the crater (again, in both directions) and look for the puffs of smoke that reminds everyone that this is very much a live volcano. You will see remnants of the destruction left in the wake of the May 18, 1980 eruption. For more information about the volcano, here's a link from the National Park Service: at <http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/mshnvm/>

After leaving the volcano would be a good time to create an IFR version of your flight plan and file it with control. As you may have done earlier, pick up the plan where you are currently flying, not from your take off airport.

| DCA Flight No | Departure | Arrival | NM | Description | Altitude |
|------------------|-----------|---------|-----|--|----------|
| 622-01-03 | S10 | KPDX | 247 | Dep S10 using Rwy 2 After take off, climb and turn right to heading of 182 degrees Tune 111.0 for EAT VOR/DME Continue past EAT heading 213 degrees to circle Mt Rainer Tune 328 for LAC NDB. Pick up a heading of 245 degrees from Mt Rainer to LAC Tune 113.4 for OLM VOR/DME Pass OLM head to Mt St Helens on a heading of 134 degrees Tune 256 for LSO NDB Pass LSO and turn to 213 degrees. Descend to 3000 ft At 29 nm from LSO and turn 154 degrees as you approach Portland Tune 110.5 for ILS landing at KPDX on Rwy 10R heading 100 degrees elevation 29 feet | 11,500 |