

CASINO CHARTERS

Flights 729-01-01 through 729-01-06

Captains Notes

HISTORY

The use of the airplane to transport customer to the casinos of Nevada has a long and varied history. It appears to have started in 1943, When the Hotel Last Frontier shifted from bus to airplanes because road travel was too slow. The Hotel Last Frontier contracted with several air charter services in Los Angeles. This allowed the hotel's General Manager to offer his guests deals "at a very reduced rate" that included room a number of meals, and transportation to/from the airport.

One of the fleets contracted with was the Los Angeles Air Service, which had a DC-3, a twin Cessna, and a single engine Beech. He upgraded later to a fully refurbished C-54. From the success of the early flights, the Hacienda Casino decided to get into the act in 1959 with the Hacienda Airlines, which as the business matured left Long Beach for Las Vegas via Burbank 70 times a week. There was talk of extending the flights to other Nevada cities and casinos, but this never came to fruition. The CAB closed down the casino charters and airlines, claiming they needed a certificate to operate as a carrier then refusing to issue them one because of "unfair competition".

However, in recent years, small charter airlines have returned to the business of transporting customers to rural Nevada casinos. Several of these seemed to have been successful at times, including the "Casino Express" into Elko.

These flights include those that happened and those that might have been.

(Information above mostly derived from Hacienda Airlines, Daniel Bubb, Nevada Historical Society Quarterly, Volume 44, Number 3, Fall 2001)

FLIGHT DESCRIPTIONS

In general, I have tried to include Instrument Approaches to all airports so these flights could be flown IFR or VFR. The exception is the flight to KLAS. These Yaps are derived from the actual procedures, modified slightly for flight simulator usage. They are **NOT** intended for any other use than flight simulation.

729-01-01: KLGB to KBUR

The feeder from the southern LA basin to the northern basin. Most of the charters that went to Las Vegas started here. This is a short flight of 33 minutes, give or take with an enroute altitude of 4,000 feet. Scenically, once established on the second leg of the route you will see the Queen Mary and the Spruce Geese former hangar in Long Beach harbor, and in front of you Catalina Island. The only high point on the 3rd leg is the over flight of KLAX.

The approach into KBUR is on the ILS, but has an interesting twist. Because of the sharp angle to turn to the ILS our Head Charter Captain felt we needed to ease it a bit. I modified his suggestion slightly, and you have the result. Those of you with a few more hours will note that this is a standard parallel entry for a holding pattern. At stated altitudes and speeds, you should have no serious problems capturing the Localizer and Glide Slope

729-01-02: KBUR to 1L3

This is a possible charter flight that was listed in the above article. Searchlight was originally a mining town, and when the ore ran out so did a majority of the town. However, Laughlin is only about 20 miles away, so the old timers didn't miss the true gold of the region by much.

PMD is on the AAF factory, which was principally Lockheed. P-38's were built here. We are flying on the north side of the San Gabriel Mountains, and just south of Edwards Air Force

Base on the PMD to HEC leg. Goffs (GFS) has a strange name, but was originally a siding on the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad, later to become a part of the AT&SF.

This is a purely visual approach; I would not want to attempt it without a 4,000 AGL ceiling and 3 miles visibility. Stay at or above 6,400 feet at SRCH as if you turn late there is a small hill you could accidentally bump into. The runway will become visible in the left portion of the forward windshield, and at a descent rate of 500 FPM you can make the end of the runway if you turn to the right and line up a straight in approach. You could also enter the pattern (standard left hand) but watch out for the rising terrain in the north and west sectors.

729-01-03 KBUR to KLAS

Las Vegas... the name brings back fond memories of my childhood in Henderson, south of Las Vegas. I can remember the Strip when they were building Caesar's Palace and it was so far out there was desert between the end of the Strip and it. Look where it is now.

This approach was designed to give your passengers a good view from both sides of the aircraft on landing, roll out, and taxi; and you a good view on the approach. Visual only approach, ceiling 8,000 MSL and visibility at least 3 miles. Under worse conditions use the ILS approaches to 25L and 25R. This approach is much more direct than the ILS approaches, but it brings you close to terrain so you need to be able to see to avoid if you should get off track. This approach is also good practice for speed and descent rates, and the relationship between them and altitude lost in a given distance. From RDSP to OASYS you should maintain speed 130-135 knots, from OASYS on to final 120 knots. Descent rate 500 FPM. If you get too slow then you will be short of the runway and have to flatten your descent, if you go too fast you'll either have to increase your descent rate (not good for the passengers) or fly the pattern (right handed for 1L, wouldn't want you to scare anybody on the Strip) to lose altitude.

729-01-04 KBUR to KTPH

Tonopah. The name reminds one of fortunes made on silver at the turn of the century, the names of Mizpah and Desert Queen. However, we are more interested in the old AAF training base (WW II Bomber) and the local casinos (one which was named Mizpah).

Of interest on the way up, on the DAG to BTY leg DME 55.5 on the left of the airplane is Furnace Creek, one of the few oases in Death Valley. Yes you are flying alongside one of the deepest valleys on the face of the earth, and you are at this point crossing the Funeral Range... just thought you'd like to know. Beatty (BTY) is not so well known, although the mining town of Rhyolite (just to the north of the VOR) is. By the way, on the BTY to TPH leg we are actually crossing over the restricted airspace of the Nevada Test Range, but we have special dispensation. About 15 miles out of KTPH, look to the left, and you might be lucky enough to see the runways where the F-117's were initially flight tested.

This is a simple approach, either visual or IAP on pilots discretion. The IAP is a circle to land, in other words it does not set you up for a straight in landing. Depending on when you spot it you may be able to put her down first pass or you may have to fly the pattern. By the way, time to Map is 1 Minute 16 Seconds at 100 knots.

729-01-05 KBUR to KRNO

Reno, the biggest little city. Sorry about the high altitude at Mina (MVA), but since the put the VOR on the top of a mountain the 10,500 feet its necessary. High enroute altitudes are quite common in the west, which can make flight planning interesting if you are altitude limited by an unpressurized cabin. Some sights along the way are Walker Lake to the left just after passing MVA, at the south end of which is Hawthorne and the Naval Ammo Depot there. When closer to Reno, to the left is the Sierra Nevada mountains, and when you are just short of Mustang (FMG) you are passing over one of Nevada's more infamous "Ranches".

This is a standard instrument approach. Due to the steepness of the intersecting angle, we are going to fly a 45/180 procedure turn to line up on the localizer. We have spelled out the procedure for a procedure turn in the instructions for the flight, so don't worry. Just follow them and you'll see just how easy they are. There is one gotcha here. When you fly the wrong way on

the localizer (outbound instead of inbound) its called backcourse. The gotcha is that the needle movement is reversed. Remember on an normal, inbound, approach the needle shows which way to turn, if its off to the left you turn left to return it to center. Going outbound, however, the needle goes opposite, if it's off to the left you need to turn right to center the needle. Takes some getting used to.

729-01-06 KBUR to KWMC

Winnemucca is named for an important Northern Nevada Indian Chief, and was initially a siding on the Central Pacific Railroad. Nowadays, it is a population center for the local gold mining areas, such as Getchell, Pinson, etc. I can remember my first flight into Pinson back in 1980-ish. Landed on the paved road that ran to the mine, that was the airstrip.

On the way up, once past Mina (DME 40 or thereabouts) keep an eye out to the left. Out there is Fallon, home of the Navy's Topgun and Strike U. In fact, you are flying through one of the MOA's that supports this.

This is a standard NDB approach, although you can land visually if you spot the airport soon enough. Note, however, that on the final northbound leg that you are below the mountains flying up a valley, so be careful about turning left or right until you get to Winnemucca. There is another of those pesky 45/180 procedure turns on this approach, but once again spelled out for you. This is another circle to land approach, with time to MAP at 2 minutes 27 seconds at 100 knots.

GENERAL NOTES

You will note that I give directions at VOR's both as course and tracking a specific radial. This is intentional to get you thinking in terms of radials so if/when a controller tells you to intercept a radial is isn't a new idea to you. The easiest way of thinking about radials is that the radiate (radial, get it) out from the center of the VOR. If you can imagine them as arrows, one every one degree, with their bases at the center of the VOR and their points out, then you get the general idea. Now, as far as courses (or curses, depending on your point of view).... If you remember the arrow sticking out, then you can see that an outbound course from the VOR is the same as the radial you want to track, thus, if you want to leave the VOR due east, your course is 090 and you can use the 090 radial to do so. Inbound, if you want to go east your course is 090 but your radial you need to track is 270. Make sense?