

# Flying your own aircraft to Alaska

By Vic & Carol Syracuse

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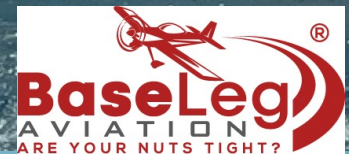
- Should be a bucket list item for every pilot
- The scenery gets better every day!
- No camera will do it justice
- You won't want to leave—but don't forget there's a winter





- We've gone 5 times in 11 years in our RV-10
- Each time we wonder how to stay longer
- When can we go back?!

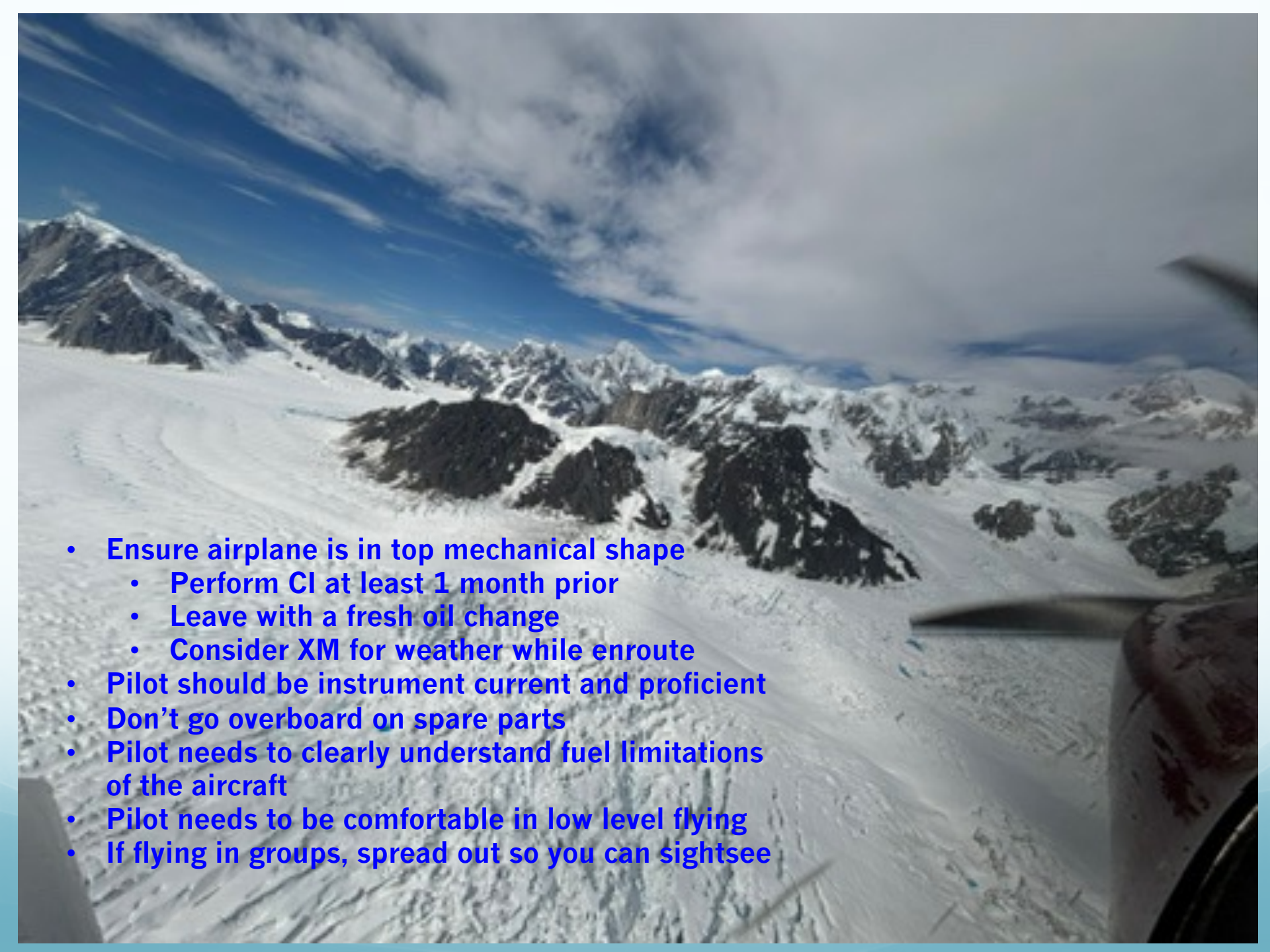
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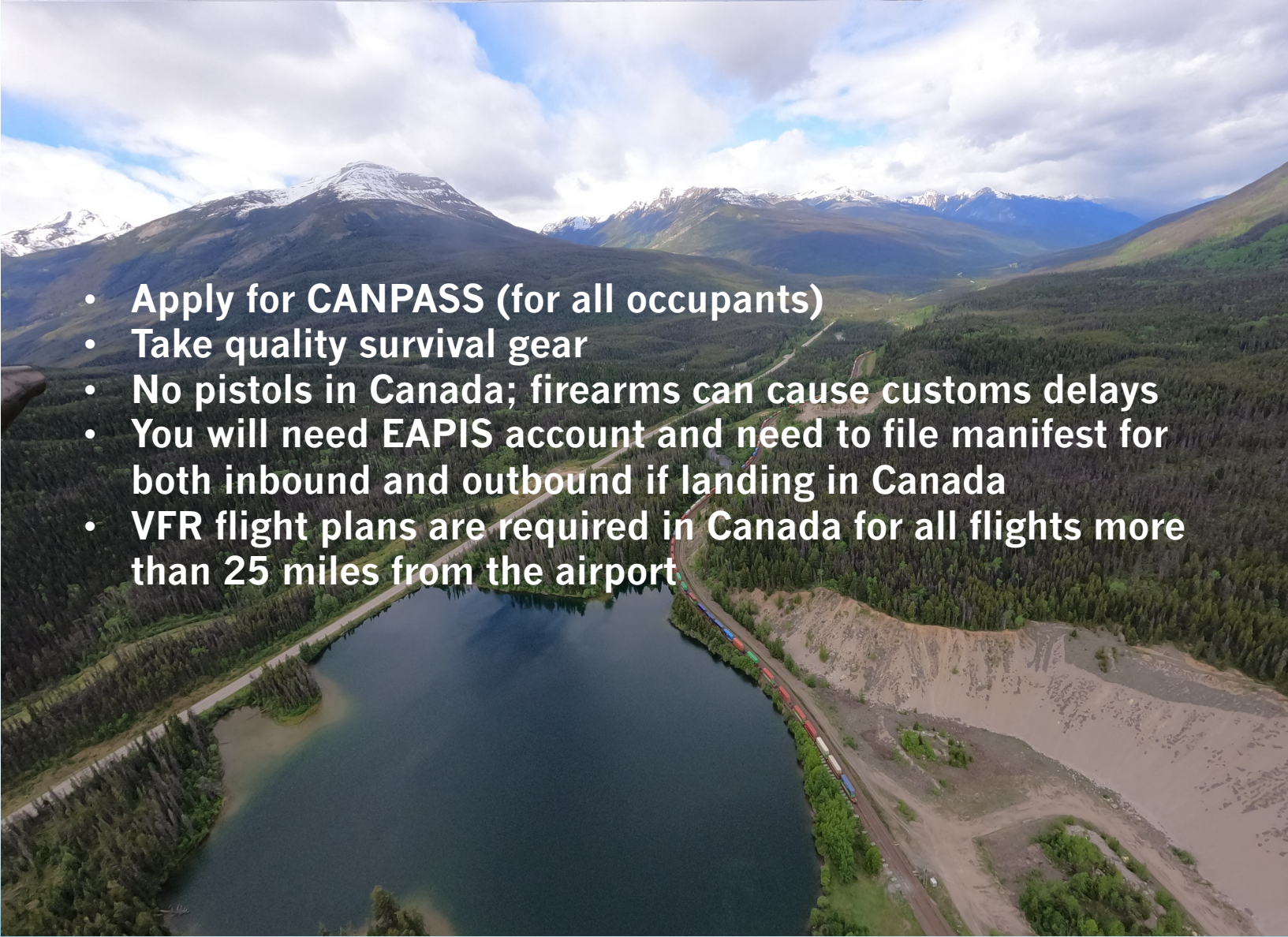


- Start planning a year in advance
- Hotels fill up fast (get one with a laundromat and restaurant or walkable restaurant). Use EAA's Hotel Engine with flex option.
- Plan for delays
- Current Passport and CanPass are recommended



- 
- An aerial photograph of a vast, snow-covered mountain range. The terrain is rugged with numerous peaks and ridges, some of which are partially covered in dark, rocky outcrops. The sky is filled with wispy white clouds, and a clear blue sky is visible in the upper left. The overall scene is a high-altitude, alpine environment. Overlaid on the lower-left portion of the image is a list of bullet points in blue text, providing flight safety instructions for such conditions.
- Ensure airplane is in top mechanical shape
    - Perform CI at least 1 month prior
    - Leave with a fresh oil change
    - Consider XM for weather while enroute
  - Pilot should be instrument current and proficient
  - Don't go overboard on spare parts
  - Pilot needs to clearly understand fuel limitations of the aircraft
  - Pilot needs to be comfortable in low level flying
  - If flying in groups, spread out so you can sightsee



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- Apply for CANPASS (for all occupants)
  - Take quality survival gear
  - No pistols in Canada; firearms can cause customs delays
  - You will need EAPIS account and need to file manifest for both inbound and outbound if landing in Canada
  - VFR flight plans are required in Canada for all flights more than 25 miles from the airport



## Multiple routes:

- Coastal route
- “Trench”
- Alaskan Highway
- Combinations



## Coastal Route:

- Gorgeous scenery
- Rocky coastline
- Over water
- Longer legs
- With enough fuel, can overfly Canada thus avoiding customs
  - Bellingham direct to Ketchikan
- Weather can change rapidly in Ketchikan area and north
- From Ketchikan the route is to Yakutat and then Anchorage



## Coastal route

- Be prepared for fast and drastic weather changes





# Icing can occur at much lower altitudes



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Ketchikan is very scenic. Be prepared for delays. It is a coastal rain forest with 120 inches of rain per year. Hotels can sell out on the weekends.





## The salmon runs can be neat, but smelly



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# Great lunch stop in Yakutat



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## Piedmont glaciers along the coast



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Icy Bay is gorgeous!!!

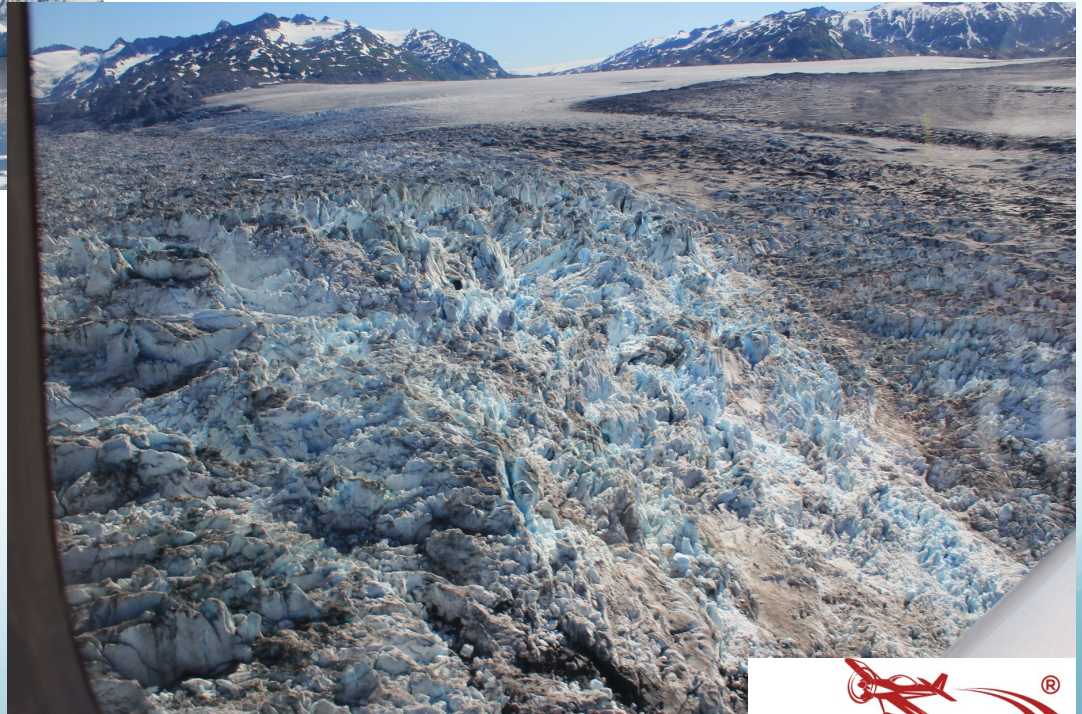


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## Blue ice!!!



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# Valdez



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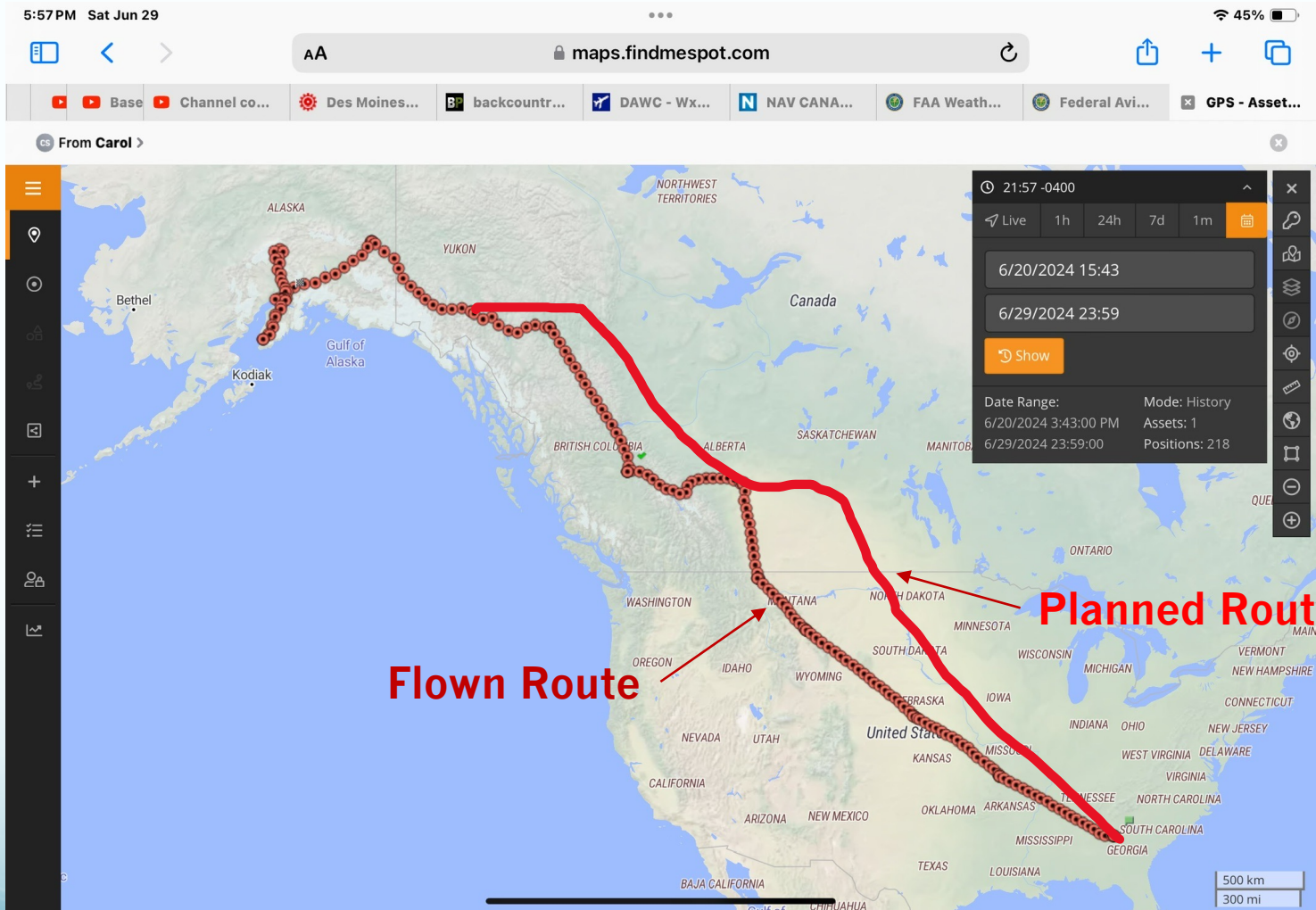


# Trans Alaska Highway





# Be Prepared for route deviations







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## "The Trench"

- Follows the Fraser River in Canada alongside the Trans Canada Highway (pick up just north of Bellingham after crossing into Canada)
- VFR route
- Keeps you over land with airport options, but will usually add an extra day with stops in Prince George and Whitehorse (headwaters of the Yukon), then into Fairbanks or Anchorage for Customs
- Smoke from fires can be a serious problem
- Familiarize yourself with Canadian flying regulations
- Mandatory Frequencies and reporting



## Flying the Trench

- Know your avionics and how to turn off terrain advisories
- Plot your route before you go; it's too easy to turn up a blind canyon
- Radio coverage is sparse, especially when low
- Weather reporting is few and far between
- Recommend a good panel mount GPS and a handheld backup
- Expect peaks to be obscured

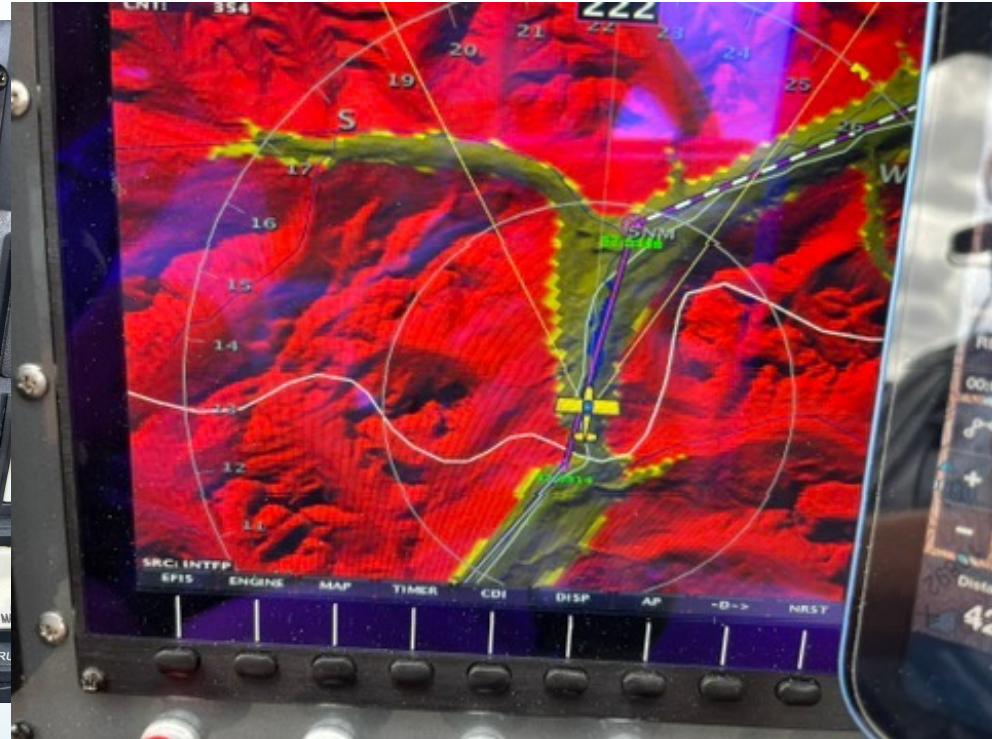
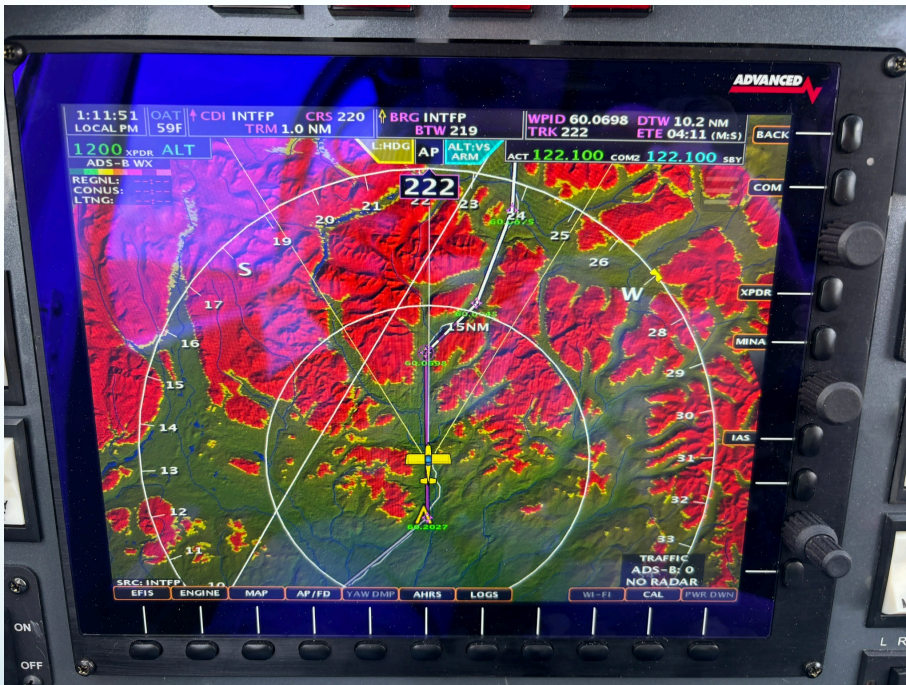


# Turn OFF the forward-looking terrain advisory (non-pilots will thank you!)





**Pay Attention in the valleys. Yes, it can get bumpy!  
Density altitudes will be higher.**





# View out the canopy



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# Trench Scenes



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- In the Trench expect peaks to be obscured
- Special requirements for VFR OT in Canada



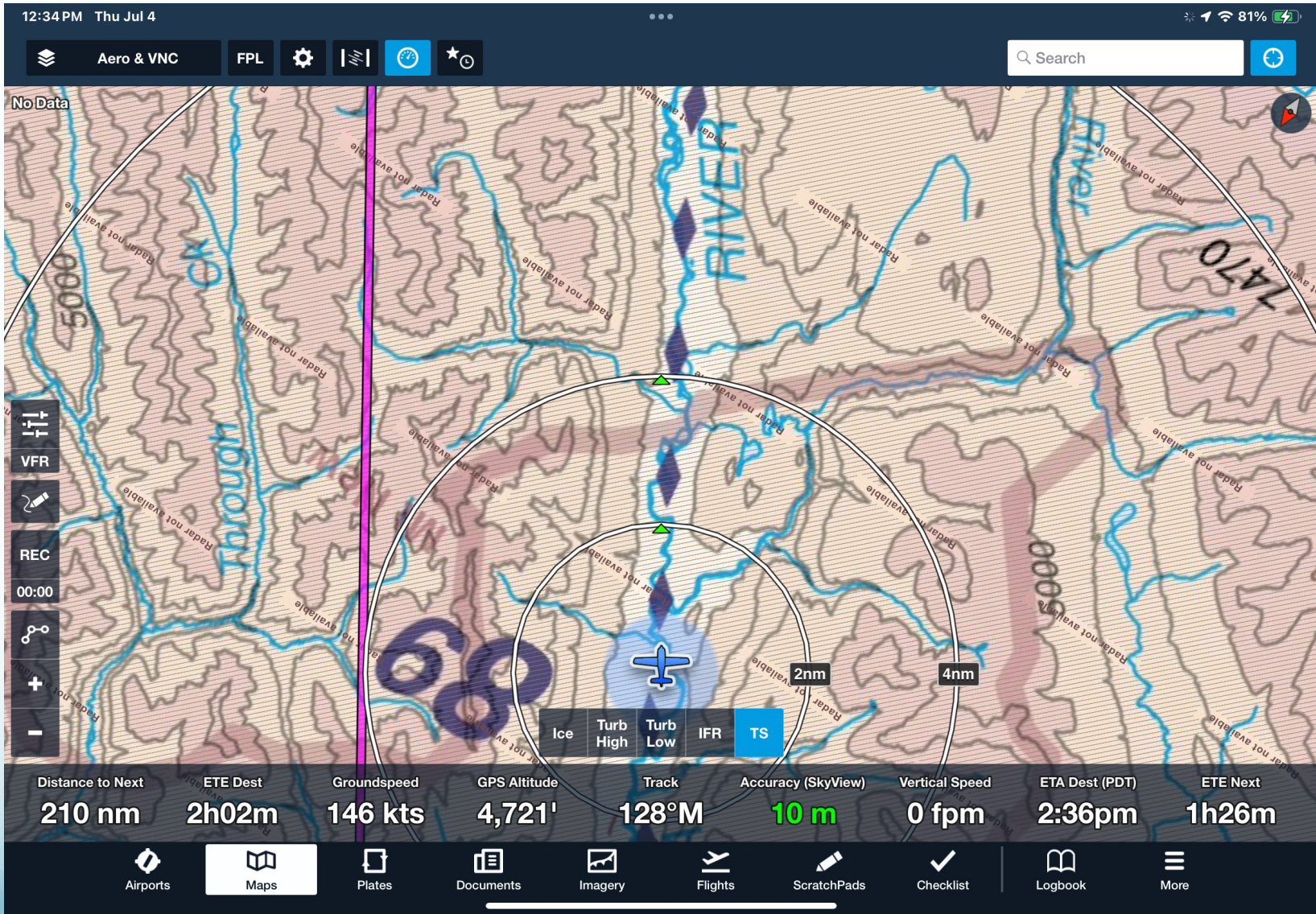


- Trench flying is mostly over flat terrain
- Beautiful lakes!
- Plan ahead for fuel stops and food. Watson Lake has no food or water.





# Follow the Diamond for VFR routes on Canadian Sectionals





# Scattered “bug washes” in the valleys



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**You will want air conditioning at your hotel in Whitehorse!**

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# Whitehorse can be beautiful one day.....



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**And on others you can expect delays.  
DON'T PUSH THE WEATHER!!!**

**The Alaskan Highway is a useable runway**



- **Expect to turn around**
- **Fuel is your friend!**
- **Pay attention to winds and have a turnaround point**



**Fire on the mountain is not just a song  
Always get a route briefing in Canada and Alaska**

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- Landings are permitted on the Alaskan Highway
- Cars have right-of-way



Call ahead for customs at Northway. Expect to get a bypass  
To Fairbanks or Anchorage. Fuel stop allowed at Tok Junction



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## Flying the Cook Inlet from Whittier to Anchorage

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- The airspace around Anchorage is busy and complicated
- Controllers are super friendly, but you are expected to know the procedures (Hint: VFR procedures are in ForeFlight)





## It's easy to confuse Merrill Field with Elmendorf AFB



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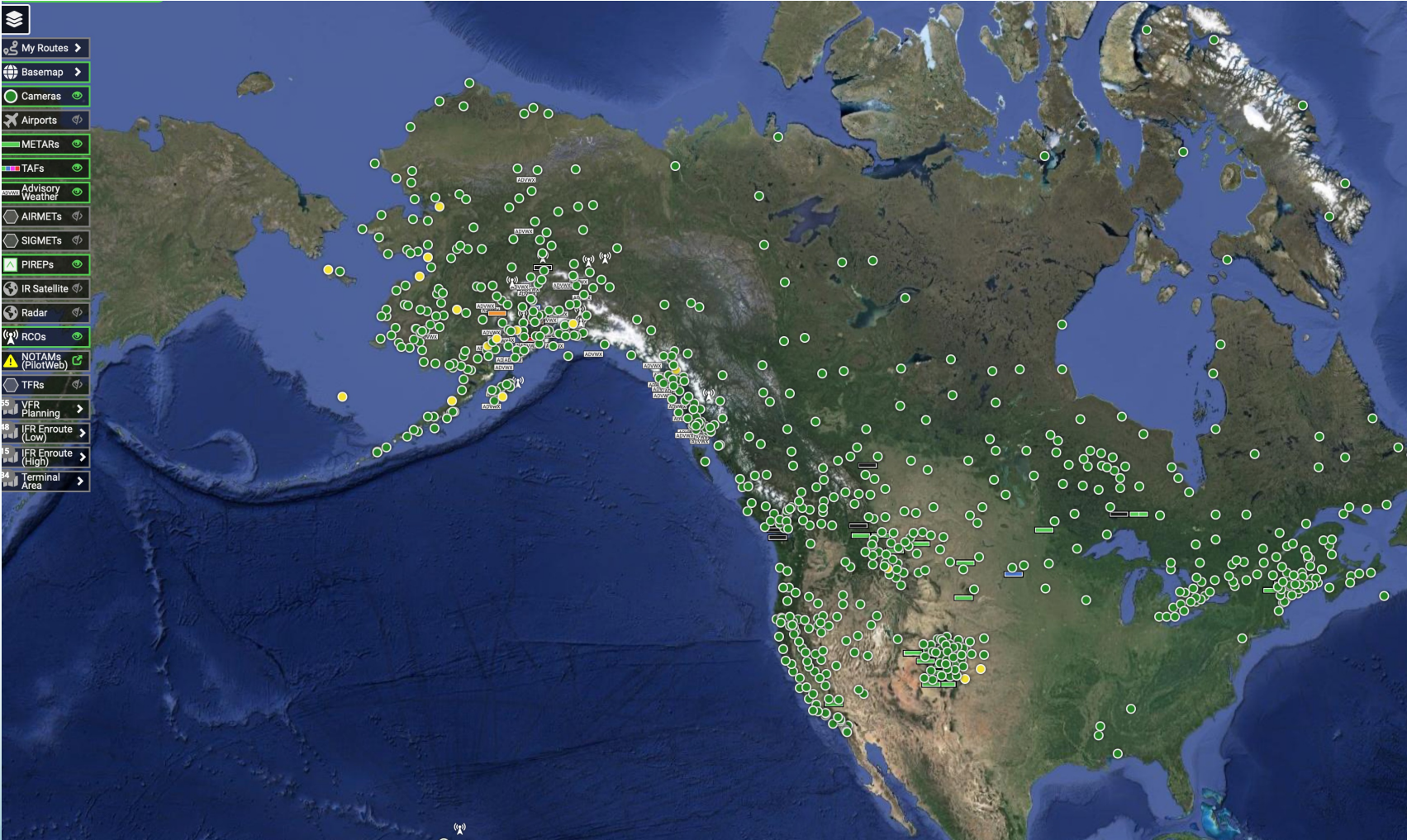




- **Glacier flying is fantastic**
- **FAA publishes reporting points and frequencies**
- **Keep your eyes and ears open!!!**
- **Lots of traffic during tourist season**
- **Use the FAA webcams!**



# FAA Web Cams



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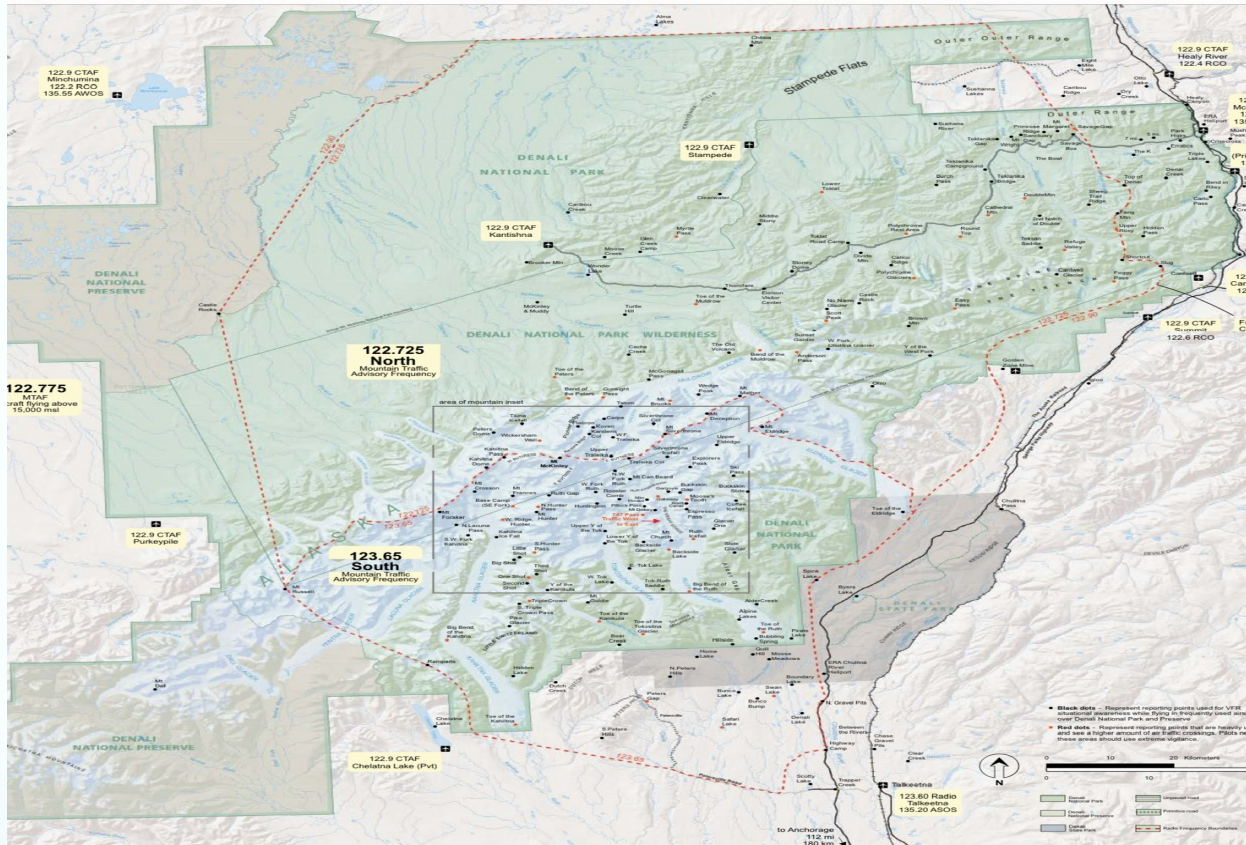


# Frequencies and reporting points on FAA.gov

7:33 AM Sat Jun 29

nps.gov

88%



## DENALI NATIONAL PARK - ALASKA RANGE COMMONLY USED REPORTING POINTS

**For Advisory Purposes Only**  
Pilots are responsible to See and Avoid other aircraft.  
This is a collection of the most commonly used reporting points used by Part 135 Operators based in the Talkeetna and Windy Pass areas.

**Caution:** Study the reporting point locations. Maintain VFR separation at all times. Please report discrepancies to Denali National Park & Preserve for updates to the Alaska Supplement under "Denali Advisory" for the most current. For Google Earth overlays, GPS downloads, current revisions and updates visit [www.nps.gov/denali/management/aviation/guidelines.htm](http://www.nps.gov/denali/management/aviation/guidelines.htm)

ALASKAN REGIONAL AVIATION SAFETY

Sponsored by: National Park Service



M2- 42.253
M190- 55.300
M191- 0.231
M192- 32.958
M193- 14.909
M194- 11.366
M195- 40.340
M196- 17.445
M197- 27.727
M198- 11.153
M199- 11.789
M200- 11.253
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M249- 11.253
M250- 11.253









- Always stay to the right side and give yourself room to turn around
- Slow down---turning radius will be smaller
- Pay attention to altitude and climb performance





# Same position...different trip



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Blue Sky days are the best for photography

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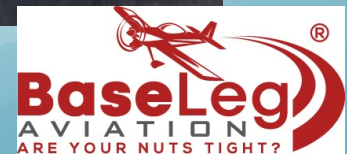




Coming down the glacier from Mt. Denali into Talkeetna



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## On top of the Harding Ice Field south of Anchorage



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Every once in a while Mt. Denali shows itself!



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If you think you will only go once, consider taking one route there and another route home. It will be 2 weeks of non-stop gorgeous scenery!



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Relaxing at the Lakefront Millenium Hotel Fancy Moose Restaurant, watching the busiest seaplane base in the world at Lake Hood is just fantastic!!



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# Some thoughts on group trips



- Can be lots of fun; can also be frustrating if not prepared
- Pilots should practice flying together before leaving—it's harder than you think to keep track of other aircraft in "loose" formation and ground clutter
- Compare airspeed readings at various power settings
- Recommend the leader fly at a given groundspeed, and everyone else match that, as airspeed indicators will vary
- Everyone should have a good mechanical inspection prior to leaving—no shortcuts
- Make sure everyone can accept weather delays (or mechanical delays). Pushing the weather can be fatal!
- Share the "spares"



# QUESTIONS?



9:30 PM in Anchorage on left; Sunset was at 11:40 PM; 1:54 AM on right.

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