



Mountain Airports

April 5th 2003. A few weeks to go for the May FOTM which I volunteered to write. I hate to break it to you guys, but I'm a little sadist when it comes to this kind of stuff. This FOTM won't be an easy ride, it will demand 110% of your piloting skills, if not more.

What could possibly be so difficult about an FS2002 flight ? For starters we're all used to nicely paved long runways, no excessive down or up slope, no trees on short final right before the threshold and much more. Throw all that away right now: you'll be facing the European Alps for a round trip. Take some extra underwear with you, just in case... Main goal of this flight is to fly some unfortunate skiers out of the Alps to an airport where they can receive thorough medical attention. And while you're at it, take some supplies with you, these "remote" airports are in dire need of a shitload of French wine to brighten up the après-ski parties. No one was found stupid enough to accept this flight, but you are not just any pilot...you're a toomuchfs.com pilot, capable of landing a 747 on a postage stamp...or close to.

Highlight will be an airport that's situated at 6580 feet MSL, rather high but that's not the difficulty. I'll let you judge for yourself:



anyone recognise this airport ? Yep, right on, it's Courchevel airport. Looks long enough doesn't it ? It's an international airport and the Dash 7 and 8 are daily visitors. Landing here requires a special authorization from the French CAA.

So what's the big deal then ? Dunno, but just have a look at this Cessna Skyhawk taking off. You'll be landing upslope, and not just any upslope: it's about 15% !

Think about it: you'll actually be climbing during the flare.



Or what do you think of this Tyrolean Dash 7 ?

This flight will be mainly a VFR flight with only the occasional use of a VOR. At the altitude you'll be flying i.e. "on the deck", you wouldn't receive them in real life anyway.

So take your book 'Mountain airports for dummies' and catch up on some desperately needed knowledge.



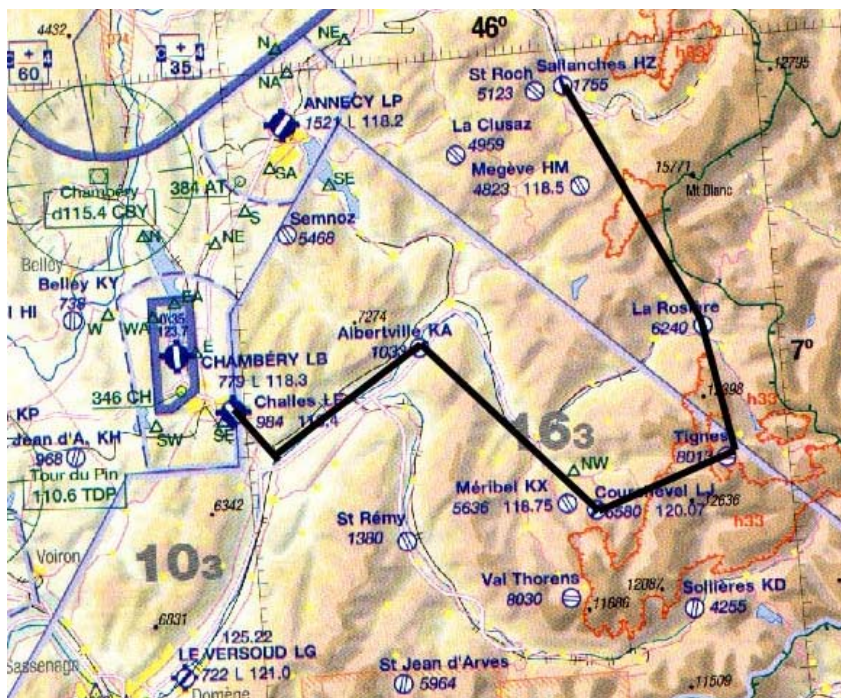
This sounds sooooo cool ! What do I need Wolfboy ?

1. Since Microsoft forgot to include these fine airports, you'll be needing a freeware addon scenery: FRALPS2K.ZIP. It's not that easy to install, but it's certainly worth the effort. Be sure to read the readme.txt because you'll need to use the "Flatten" command in your scenery.cfg. It was made for FS2000, but also works for FS2002 (what did you expect?). Although I've noticed that running FS2000 specific sceneries within FS2002 has a bad influence on frame rates.
2. In case you're having troubles with this scenery, there is another freeware scenery of the airports available here: <http://bravomike.free.fr/altiport.htm>
3. You'll also need to have additional textures installed, but they are also freely downloadable from Flightsim.com, in their "must have files" section.
4. You definitely need to print out the VFR map that is included in FRALPS2K.ZIP, it's great if you plan to divert a little (or a lot) from the route I'll be describing.

One last word: there is a mesh scenery available for France. Since I have it installed I don't know how the flight will be without. I just hope the standard scenery is just as exciting as the mesh. I actually believe it might even be better than the mesh, since the addons are more compatible with the standard scenery.

Now strap on your virtual seatbelt, have a quick look at your flight plan, tell your wife to go make a vast quantity of coffee and advise your children that it's way past their bedtime: we're embarking on a 1 hour "mountain flying mayhem" !

I hope I've aroused your attention enough because I'll be going through the route with you now. Word of caution: take an aircraft with a VERY GOOD short field performance. Don't do what I did and fly this route with the Antonov-24. I've done some maintenance on the tree vegetation using my wings and propellers... A Dash 7 would be a nice choice but feel free to try it in the Club 767 anytime.



So here's what your flight looks like.



1. Leg 1: Challes (LFLE) – Albertville (LFKA)



Your plane is based at LFLE. A (very) small airport a little to the south of Geneva. Take your shitload of wine on board and reduce the fuel load to the bare minimum for a 1,5 hour endurance.

If the standard scenery resembles the mesh, you'll be facing a rather steep hill once you're lined up with runway 15.

Take off will be hair-raising and if all goes well you'll be clearing the mountain ahead by as much as a fuselage height. Immediately after you clear the mountain you'll need to turn left and follow the road and river to the northeast: a ground track of approximately 60° . You should see a small airport dead ahead: Albertville (LFKA), famous ski resort. Put it down here, no ILS, no VOR, nothing, just plain old stick and rudder. The runway is long enough so you won't have any problems here. But it's a prelude to your next leg.





2. Leg 2: Albertville (LFKA) – Courchevel (LFLJ)

Alright then, it seems you've covered the first leg in an acceptable fashion, the plane is still in mint condition, the Glühwein was good and everything promises a midnight run for the flight to Courchevel...or not.

Take off from Albertville (where else ?) and take her up to about 7000 feet. You can follow the valley and climb out safely or just turn right to 150° immediately after take off. That is if you're confident enough of clearing the mountains ahead. Goal is to intercept the 126° radial outbound from Chambéry (CBY) VOR (115.40).



Courchevel is 47 NM out from CBY VOR. Once you're approaching the 126°/40NM fix you'll be able to see two airports: Méribel on your right and Courchevel dead ahead. Set yourself up for a landing at Courchevel and enjoy the ride all the way down. You will decelerate quickly since the runway slopes up 15%, hell, you'll also be needing a LOT of thrust to taxi to the ramp. Do what you are supposed to do: drop off the injured skiers and take the wine on board or was it vice versa ? I seem to have had too much Glühwein in Albertville.





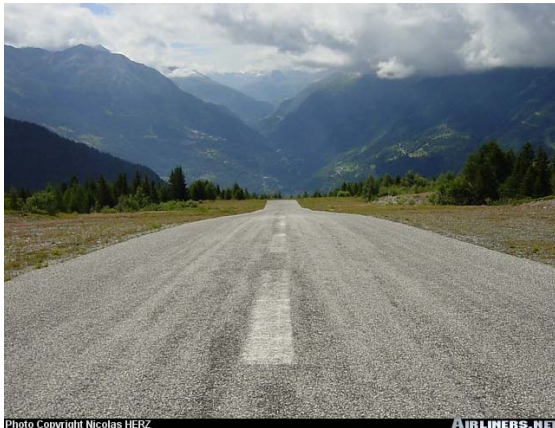
3. Leg 3: Courchevel (LFLJ) – La Rosière



Your takeoff from Courchevel should be peanuts. Maybe you'll want to try taking off with idle power ?

Since you've obviously mastered the Courchevel run on the first try it seems that things are just too easy for you guys. So let's shift to a higher gear.

Actually we're not even allowed to fly to La Rosière: it's only 300 meters long, has a rather excessive slope and in the even of a go around you'll be lucky to get out alive.



Yep, this is it. Again, it doesn't look too difficult: just fly straight in and hit the brakes. You'll see where the difficulty lies when you're established on final: you'll find that deciding to go around won't be an option any more.

How do we get there ? Easy: take off from Courchevel runway 5. Try to fly a ground track of 80° which will take you over Tignes (another famous ski resort) shortly after take off. Turn left to the north once you're over Tignes and follow the valley ahead. You'll see La Rosière coming up in the distance (I told you this was easy) and you'll also be flying almost straight in, which makes it even easier.



Never mind the screenshot on the left here, I decided that it was too easy to fly straight in and set myself up for a Kai Tak like approach. How stupid...almost made it to the 'blunder section' again.



You've certainly noticed what the 'big deal' is in this shot: how the hell is one supposed to go around here ?



4. Leg 4 : La Rosière – Sallanches (LFHZ)

Anyone want to take off in northerly direction ? Guess not. Ok, we'll be departing to the south then. Right after take off you'll have fly to the Geneva (GVA) VOR (114.60) and flirt a little with the Italian border. On the way you'll also be passing the biggest mountain in Europe: Mont Blanc with a whopping 4807 meters above sea level. Since you've proven yourself a true mountain flyer, I guess it's about time to relax with the challenges, I can pull another one out of my sleeve, but you'll have to set course to Bhutan to fly it.

Your disabled passengers won't like that idea either so let's just cut it short here and land at Sallanches, which is located halfway in between La Rosière and Geneva.



Taking off from La Rosière should be easy, only the trees in the departure end of the runway could make life a little difficult. My Antonov proved to be an excellent "tree mower" as you can see from the screenshot on the left here. I had to seriously trim the plane nose up and took off with full flaps. You should make a right immediately after take off and establish yourself inbound to the Geneva VOR (114.60).

On your right you'll see the Mont Blanc, or as the French like to call it: 'La Dame Blanche' (The White Lady). When you're abeam it might be a good thing to start preparing for your last landing of the day. Due to the rather low altitude above sea level of Sallanches and the fact that you're almost flying at the same altitude as the Mont Blanc implies that you'll have to descent with a steep angle. The terrain doesn't offer any opportunities for an early descent either, so it's up to you to maximize your drag on the approach to steepen your descent into Sallanches.



You'll see Sallanches dead ahead in the valley. There is a small city to the left of the airport that can help identifying it. Another nice help is the VFR chart that is supplied with this flight.

Be careful because the runway is pretty short. Of course the others were short too, but there is no upslope to save your pitiful excuse for a landing. Get that speed down to the minimum possible safe speed and try to put your main gear on the treshold.



Right...you've done it. You've earned yourself a place in the hall of fame of virtual mountain flying. It's something to brag about really, not many people know these airports, and the next time you hear someone brag about putting his chunk of metal down at Valdez, Kai Tak, Funchal, ask him if he has tried proving his manhood at Courchevel already. He'll probably don't even know what you're rambling about.

I hope you had as much fun flying this FOTM as I had creating it. It took some time to investigate the possible options for a FOTM but as a result of my quest I've managed to come up with some other exciting possible FOTM's. Although the other challenges are too far away from the French Alps to be doing them in this FOTM, I'm convinced you'll run over them a few months from now.