

WINGS OVER AMERICA



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Continued on page 4

Flying to Key Largo—A Classic for Movie and Underwater Enthusiasts

by Charlie Spence, Aviation Writer and IFA Member

If you imagine hurricane winds lashing at the wooden structure, you can almost see Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall fighting through the hostage crisis of “Key Largo.” The building where many scenes for this 1947 classic motion picture were filmed is but one of the attractions to this gateway to the Keys.

Instead of an isolated inn, the Bogie/Bacall locale—the Caribbean Club—now fronts on a four-lane highway and is almost lost amid the low commercial buildings and neon signs hawking scuba diving, boat rentals, fast food and recreational activities. Not far away, at the Holiday Inn Marina, experience the steamship that Bogie and Katherine Hepburn struggled with in “African Queen.” Still seaworthy, the *African Queen* chugs the local waters at \$15 per person rides. Key Largo is also where “PT-109” was filmed.

Caption

This gateway to the Keys offers much more than motion picture lore, however. There is something here for every member of the family. Attractions from barefoot beach lounging to visiting art galleries or just enjoying being pampered in a full-service resort await the visitor. Key Largo is the longest island in the 125-mile long tropical chain of islands. On shore or off shore, the island offers numerous activities for the bold and the brave or the more relaxed and rested.

One of the first visits should be to John Pennekamp State Park, which lies adjacent to the National Marine Sanctuary. Pennekamp is the nation’s only undersea park. Together, these two parks cover about 103 square nautical miles where you will find 55 varieties of coral and more than 500 species of fish. Unlike gardens on the land, coral reefs are formed by animal life instead of plant vegetation. Billions of tiny organisms—called polyps—secrete a limy skeleton that is the basic structure of the reef. They form a myriad of patterns that shape into different and beautiful patterns of spires, flower-like shapes, extensions that resemble horns, branches, or shrubs. Besides marveling at the beauty of the reefs, you will see they attract a variety of marine life, such as crabs, lobsters, sea urchins, and sponges that seek the shelter of these formations.

Continued on page 3

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LASIK EYE SURGERY FOR PILOTS: GO OR NO GO?

by Paul Engstrom, Aviation Writer and IFA Member

Imagine throwing away your eyeglasses or contact lenses because now you can see air traffic and hazards aloft and on the ground, read instruments, maps and charts, and perform other important visual tasks in the cockpit perfectly well without any eye gear. Also, imagine feeling totally confident you'll ace the vision test—sans glasses—the next time your medical certificate comes up for renewal. It's all possible, thanks to an increasingly popular surgical technique called LASIK.

However, just as you carefully weigh such factors as the weather, the condition of your plane and your own physical and mental state before takeoff, you should carefully weigh "going under the knife" to improve your vision for the sake of flight unencumbered by corrective lenses. The elective procedure does entail risks, isn't exactly cheap and rarely qualifies for health insurance coverage.

LASIK, or **laser-assisted in-situ keratomileusis**, has been on the scene for about 10 years. Using a tiny scalpel, the surgeon partially cuts through the top one-third of the cornea just above the pupil, folds the corneal flap back, vaporizes tissue underneath with a programmed excimer laser, then replaces the flap, which heals without sutures. This restores proper curvature to the eyeball so images are focused squarely on the retina.

Another laser procedure—PRK, or photorefractive keratectomy, which evolved from a technique in the 1980s called radial keratotomy—removes tissue only from the surface of the cornea. But its reshaping effect is similar to that of LASIK. PRK is used primarily to correct near-sightedness, whereas LASIK can correct that condition as well as far-sightedness and astigmatism, an irregularly shaped cornea.

Typically, patients can return to work a few days after LASIK and their vision stabilizes within three months. The cost: about \$1,200 to \$2,500 per eye. Advertisements suggest that the procedure is effective, convenient, painless and quick. And, true, the vast majority of patients have a successful outcome.

But Kim Broadwell, a physician and commercial pilot who lives in Rochester, N.Y., cites "the dark side of LASIK" that could have big consequences for aviators, namely:

- The risk of infection (in one to five of 10,000 corrected eyes);
- Complications (in about one of 100 eyes) that can lead to corneal scarring, which reduces sharpness of vision;
- Dry eyes that require lots of eye drops;
- Poor vision in dim light;
- Glare and halos around lights at night;
- Unknown long-term effects, if any.

Van B. Nakagawara, an ophthalmologist, and his fellow vision researchers at the Federal Aviation Administration's Civil Aerospace Medical Institute in Oklahoma City, OK warn of other potential snags, including:

- Under- or overcorrection of the eye in surgery, which may entail second operation or corrective lenses;
- A worsening of near-sightedness;
- Less ability to detect contrasts;
- Mild eye irritation, sensitivity to bright light and teary eyes for a few days after surgery.

The good news is that the FAA doesn't require a waiver on your medical certificate if you undergo LASIK. You simply must meet the visual acuity standards for the class of certificate you want.

In addition, according to Nakagawara, "an eye specialist must verify that surgical healing is complete, visual acuity is stable and no significant glare intolerance is present."

Broadwell and other experts advise that you seriously consider the consequences if something goes wrong. In other words, does the small risk that LASIK could end your flying days really outweigh the inconvenience of wearing glasses or contact lenses?

Continued in next column

Medical Aviation Information Available

As a general rule, pilots should be more aware of their medical fitness than the average person. To help you keep up with the latest news in the medical field, visit the Aviation Medical Information section of www.iflyamerica.com. New articles are constantly being added to the library. New articles include - *Choosing the Right Sunglasses, Herbal Remedies: Solution or Problem?, Hope for Flyers Battling Disease, How to Speed Your Medical Certification, Hypoxia Isn't Just Hype, and The Upside and Downside of Caffeine.* ■

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Lasik Eye Surgery - continued from previous column

They also suggest that:

- You learn as much as you can about the procedure. Maybe you're not a good candidate for LASIK;
- Make sure your pilot-oriented expectations are in line with what the surgeon can deliver;
- Consider other options, such as implanted intracorneal rings;
- Find a surgeon who has lots of experience performing LASIK, as that will boost the likelihood of success. ■

Key Largo Details

How to get there:

Homestead General Airport (X51) is only a 25-minute ride to Key Largo. It has two paved runways and JetA and 100LL fuel. There is no landing fee. If you prefer an airport with a control tower select Tamimi, Dade-Homestead (also military operations) or Opa Locka. Both have instrument approaches (X51 does not) and full services.

A 4,000 foot paved, lighted strip is available to members and sponsored guests of the Ocean Reef Club on the eastern end of Key Largo. This is a private airport for the high-scale community. Expensive vacation rentals are available. If able to secure entrance to the club, after reservations are confirmed, pilots should call the airport, 305-367-3690, for arrival information. The airport charges fees based on the weight of the aircraft.

Where to stay:

Accommodations abound. You will find options from simple hotel rooms to seasonal rentals. Rates vary with the seasons. Villas at Amy Slate's Amoray Dive Resort, for instance, range from \$70 to \$300 a day while Ed & Ellen's Lodging provides rooms for \$49 to \$79 during the same season. Rooms at the Holiday Inn, where you will find the *African Queen*, range from \$149 to \$255. Weekly rentals can be found for as high as \$5,000. With so many choices available, it's wise to check with the Key Largo Chamber of Commerce at 800-822-1088 or www.fl-keys.com/keylargo. Then use *IEA's Travel Booking Service*, www.iflyamerica.com, that offers up to 65% off many hotel properties, plus you can book rental cars and vacation rental properties.

Where to eat:

Although you will find a wide variety of cuisines, your craving for seafood will be satisfied at any of the many fine restaurants. Here is a sampling:

- Coconuts Restaurant and Nightclub - Waterfront

Continued on page 4

ON THE HORIZON

Air Shows

Representative air shows listed below. For a full air show listing and to link to air show websites, please visit www.iflyamerica.com.

November 8 - 9

Celebrate Freedom Festival, SC

803-788-6837

Blue Angels

Homecoming, FL

850-452-3806

November 9

Gathering of

Memories, TX

830-964-2461

November 9 - 10

North Florida Air

Show, FL

904-752-1822

Stuart Air Show, FL

561-286-1844

November 22 - 24

Colorado River

Balloon Festival,

AZ

520-343-1715

December 6 - 8

Red Rock Balloon

Rally, NM

505-722-6274

December 15 - 16

Socorro Balloon

Rally, NM

505-835-0424

Flying to Key Largo *continued from page 1*

There are several ways to enjoy this undersea show. A glass-bottom boat will take you on a guided tour and you won't even get your feet wet. Price is about \$18 for adults, \$10 for children.

One of the park's more popular sites is the nine-foot bronze statue of Jesus Christ, which is a replica of a statue in the Mediterranean Sea. It rests in 20 feet of water so scuba diving is the route to it. You can be one of 16 passengers on *The Reef Adventurer* that departs twice daily for two-tank dives. Scuba trips cost about \$37 per person with tanks and weights extra. Participants must be certified divers. (Pilots and passengers in non-pressurized aircraft are reminded to wait 24 hours after diving to take to the air.)

If you think water is just for drinking, stay on the land and trek the trails of Pennekamp where you will see an ecological smorgasbord of gumbo limbo, strangler fig, tamarind, wild coffee and mahogany trees. Or, go to the Hammocks State Botanical Site to view rare tree snails, Schaus swallowtail butterflies, white crowned pigeons, or mangrove cuckoos.

Okay. So you are not a nature lover. You just want to relax and maybe brighten up an evening. Loll on a sandy beach or sit under an umbrella at one of the many hotel pools. Average daytime temperature is in the low 80s.

After a trip here, you might paraphrase Bogart from another picture, "Casablanca" - "We'll always have Key Largo."

For additional information, visit www.fl-keys.com/keylargo. ■

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PILOT'S QUIZ

You probably have taken I-Q tests. Now, just for fun take this I Fly America FLY-Q test.

- Eric Weiss was the first American to fly a plane in Australia. Weiss was better known as:
 - Elmer Gantry
 - Harry Houdini
 - Al Jolson
- How many planes did women pilots in the Air Transport Auxiliary during WWII deliver from factories to line squadrons?
 - 2,486
 - 96,806
 - 308,567
- The first mid-air collision occurred when?
 - France, 1922
 - Grand Canyon, 1956
 - Germany, 1931
- In 1915, Alan Loughead began an air service across San Francisco Bay. His company became known as:
 - Air West
 - American Airlines
 - Lockheed
- When did the first U.S. Navy flying school open?
 - 1910
 - 1915
 - 1922
- One of the requirements to obtain a student pilot's license in the U.S. is that a person be able to read/speak/write/understand English.
 - Yes, all four.
 - No, only speak English.
 - No, speak and understand only.
- Is there any special identification for aircraft carrying members of the President's family?
 - No
 - Yes—Air Force One-F
 - Only if pilot notifies ATC
- Who was the first person in the U.S. to hold a pilot's license?
 - Orville Wright
 - Glenn Curtiss
 - Gen. Billy Mitchell
- In what airplane did British pilot Sheila Scott fly solo around the world?
 - Piper Comanche
 - British Auster
 - Hawker-Siddeley HS-125
- At 15,000 ft., how long before abilities are impaired?
 - 1 hour
 - 45 minutes
 - 15 minutes

1b; 2c; 3a; 4c; 5b; 6a; 7b; 8b; 9a; 10c
Key to Answers

Accident Report

Safe flying is the aim of all pilots and comes from training and experience. This accident report, provided by the National Transportation Safety Board, is presented in the interest of safety by helping pilots learn from the experience of others.

Aircraft: Mooney M20S

Where: Port Huron, MI

Injuries: None

Phase of flight: Landing

A Mooney M20S, operated by a private pilot, collided with a snow bank while landing on runway 04 (5,103 feet by 100 feet.) The pilot was not injured and the airplane was substantially damaged. The 14 CFR Part 91 flight was operating in visual meteorological conditions without a flight plan.

The pilot reported he flew a practice ILS approach to runway 04. The approach was terminated in a go-around followed by VFR traffic pattern and full stop landing on runway 04. He reported the winds were out of the northwest at 10 knots. He then departed on runway 04 and made a left hand traffic pattern for another landing. The pilot reported, "Final approach required minimal crab to correct for crosswind and then mild slip to maintain the centerline." He reported that just prior to touchdown while 2 feet above the runway "... a significant gust ballooned the aircraft 5-6 ft. above the runway where the aircraft stalled and began to settle abruptly with a nose high attitude." He reported he applied power to recover, but could not gain enough airspeed. The airplane veered to the right and the right main landing gear contacted the snow on the side of the runway. According to the pilot, the airplane spun around clockwise into the snow where it came to rest.

The local weather observation, taken 5 minutes prior to the accident, reported winds from 270 degrees at 11 knots, gusting to 18 knots.

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident/incident as follows: The pilot failed to maintain directional control of the airplane and the runway selected resulted in a tailwind condition. Factors associated with the accident were the gusty crosswind and the snow bank. ■

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Key Largo Details continued from page 3

location with extensive menus. Nightly entertainment.

- Frank Keys Café. - Named among the top 200 restaurants in Florida for the past eight years. Small and intimate.
- The Fish House - Specializing in seafood in "conch-style" cooking in a fun and casual atmosphere.
- Snooks Bayside - Dine under palms at the water's edge. Plan dinner at a time to enjoy what the owners say are "spectacular sunsets." If you tire of fine eating, there are many fast food locations. ■