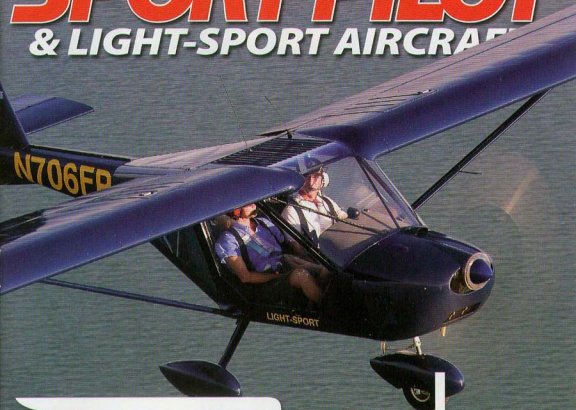


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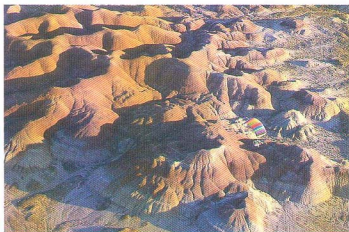
# Holbrook Municipal Airport Holbrook, Arizona

## Gateway to the Petrified Forest

Dr. Bill Vietti

**W**e thought Holbrook, Arizona, would be a one-night stopover on our trip from point A to point B, but we were pleasantly surprised.

The fixed-base operator at the airport, Alan Roes, greeted us on a hot day in June. Probably not the best time to travel to Arizona, "But it's a dry heat," as everyone out that way likes to say. Alan generously pointed to a section of the tarmac where we could park our trailers. We asked him about some interesting places to fly within 10 to 15 miles of the airport. "Oh," he said rather unenthusiastically, "there are some sand dunes



no disappointment regarding flying near Holbrook—it's on the Vietti's short list of must-fly destinations.

long as you need it." And, the flying we discovered made the extra day extra special.

Because of poor communication—well, actually because we over-

Long story short, Suzi and I flew north that morning. And for the first few miles we flew over little more than sand and sage brush, but we could see a plateau in the distance and some changing color on the ground ahead. We ventured onward over a dry wash that turned into some sand dunes, then over bumpy ground lined with red and rust and white and gray and brown layers. The Painted Desert was as advertised, and what a view from above on a cloudless day with an ancient volcano and then another. The land of the Navajo stretched out below us for miles and miles of ever-changing terrain and color. It proved to be a wonderful flight, and we couldn't wait to tell the others what we had found.

Holbrook is advertised as the "Gateway to the Petrified Forest." Only a few miles east of town lies the Petrified Forest National Monument, a great side trip during the day. Also, Holbrook itself is a page from the past. Route 66 is still alive there, and when you travel the main drag, it's

*...With the first rays of the morning illuminating the different layers of soft rock of the desert, we had one of the most spectacular flights I can recall.*

about 5 miles or so north, and some hills. That's about it." I must say, it didn't sound all that exciting. But we had to check it out.

My wife, Suzi, and I had the misfortune of having the fuel pump on our motor home fail just as we arrived at the Holbrook Municipal Airport. Scotty and Son Towing and Auto Service came to our rescue, but the repair would take more than a day. Alan saved the day when he said, "The courtesy car is yours as

slept—the rest of our group did not get the information about where to fly from the Holbrook airport. When we finally arrived at the airport the next morning and were preparing to take off, the rest of the group was just returning from their sunrise flights. We asked what they had seen, and they reported desert and a few washes and some mild hills. They had gone south, but Alan had told us to go north; oh yeah, we forgot to tell them.



Suzi Vietti logged some of her most memorable flights here.

like you have stepped back to the '60s. One of the most famous visual landmarks along the old Route 66 is in Holbrook—the Wigwam Motel. Where else can you stay overnight in a wigwam?


A little farther up the road is the Canyon de Chelly National Monument, and the ride there is through more magnificent sights of the Painted Desert. If you take the courtesy car, a retired police cruiser, be advised the air conditioner doesn't

work, and the rear window on the driver's side is stuck part way down.

If you want a good breakfast or lunch, go to Joe and Aggie's Café. They serve some good Mexican food. Check out the Route 66 map painted on the wall outside. The destinations are not all spelled correctly, but the mural is a classic. If you can't find the Route 66 souvenir you've been looking for, then look again, because the Café has just about everything, or cross the street to the sign shop.

If you want to learn more about the history of Holbrook, visit the museum that is housed in the historic courthouse. Holbrook began as a rail station and a ranching center. Both the Navajo and Hopi Indian Reservations are just to the north of the city, and the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest is south. Today tourism is a big part of the town's economy.

Our one-day stopover turned into two as the rest of the group was also anxious to fly over the area we described. At sunrise, a group of eight powered parachutes ventured low and slow north of the Holbrook airport. Starting out that early, with the first rays of the morning illuminating the different layers of soft rock of the desert, we had one of the most spectacular flights I can recall. Needless to say, no one was disappointed with the flying or with Holbrook.

Put Holbrook on your short list of must-fly destinations, but remember, the best scenery is north. 

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