

Web Links for the Grounded

By Richard Bertoli, CSIP

Fly fishermen spend long winter nights over the vise, attaching fur and feather to tiny hooks, day dreaming about the trophies to be caught in spring. Restocking the fly box is just one of a few activities that an angler might accept as a suitable substitute for actually wading the river. When unflyable weather keeps pilots grounded, there are ways to pass the time aside from staring at the FBO television. To state the obvious, the world-wide web is a well-spring of aviation related information. It's astounding; I received 179,000 links when I Googled "stall speed" – 139,000 for "localizer approach" – 2,340,000 for "aviation weather!" If you can't slip the surly bounds, might as well try restocking the fly box of your mind. Below are a handful of websites, in no particular order, that you will hopefully find valuable, or at least a worthwhile excuse to avoid washing the dishes.

Cirrus Design's "Pilot's World" (<http://www.cirrusdesign.com/pilotsworld/>)

This section of the Cirrus Design website contains a fantastic monthly proficiency program. Each month, this program provides a Ground Segment and a Flight Segment that address important topics of concern for all Cirrus pilots.

NASA In-flight Icing Course (<http://aircrafticing.grc.nasa.gov/courses.html>)

A Pilot's Guide to In-Flight Icing is a free, online course primarily intended for the general aviation pilot who flies aircraft certified for flight in icing, although much of the information is applicable to all pilots. With an operational focus, this course provides tools pilots can use to deal with in-flight icing. Emphasis is on avoidance, detection and exit, as well as the effects of ice accretion on performance and handling and the particular hazard of Supercooled Large Droplet (SLD) icing.

This self-guided training aid contains imagery captured on NASA Icing Research flights, animation, pilot testimonials, case studies, and interactive demonstrators. In addition, interactive exercises allow the user to assess his or her operational understanding of the key points presented.

An All-in-One Weather Graphics Page (<http://www.valleau.com/toppage1.htm>)

This is a great home-grown site that assembles weather graphics from all over the internet onto one fast-loading page; a great place to get the "big picture."

AOPA Air Safety Foundation (<http://www.aopa.org/asf/>)

If you're not familiar with the Air Safety Foundation, you should be. The AOPA Air Safety Foundation, founded in 1950, is dedicated to just one goal—making flying easier and safer for general aviation pilots. The free on-line courses are fun, educational and available to the public.

FAA Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) Listing (<http://tfr.faa.gov/tfr/list.jsp>)

Look here for a quick and easy display of TFRs sorted by ARTCC (Center), State, or Type. The hard-to-read all-capital-letter presentation is still displayed, but at least the text is accompanied by a sectional chart graphic when you click on a listing.

Cirrus Owners and Pilots Association (<http://www.cirruspilots.org/>)

The member forum here is extremely active, with literally thousands of posts on anything and everything Cirrus. Membership is highly recommended, as is attendance at the regularly held Cirrus Pilot Proficiency Program (CPPP).

Digital Terminal Procedures – Free FAA Approach Charts (http://www.naco.faa.gov/index.asp?xml=naco/online/d_tpp)

Get your free, downloadable IAP charts, DPs, and STARs here from a fast server with an easy user-interface.

AVweb Articles:

<http://www.avweb.com/system/> - Informative articles on IFR flying from a range of publishers.

<http://www.avweb.com/news/columns/182651-1.html> - Atlanta Center controller and COPA member, Don Brown, writes enlightening articles regarding pilot / controller communication, IFR ops, etc.

<http://www.avweb.com/news/columns/182146-1.html> - “The Pelican’s Perch” is John Deakin’s column, author of the famous “Where Should I Run My Engine” series, “Mixture Magic”, and more.

Whitt’s Flying Page (<http://www.whittsflying.com/>)

I stumbled upon this site a few years ago while conducting research. I can’t imagine where else one can find this much information under one URL. It’s not pretty, and the organization takes some getting used to, but this old-timer’s site is loaded. Great reference.

Track your flight – LIVE!

(<http://www.fbweb.com/cob/google.asp?airline=N&flightnum=305AP>)

Give spouses or loved ones this web address so they can get real time information on your flight status, but only if you’re flying IFR or using Flight Following. Just plug the tail number, without the N, into the end of the URL (where you see “305AP”) and *voila!* It’s free.

Aviation Safety Magazine (<http://www.aviationsafetymagazine.com/>)

Subscribers have access to the entire archive of this excellent publication. I regained a significant chunk of bookshelf space when they went on-line.

Google Earth (<http://earth.google.com/>)

Did you ever wish that you could get an idea of what an unfamiliar airport might look like before you takeoff? With access to millions of bytes of high-resolution satellite imagery, you simply point and zoom to anyplace on the planet that you want to explore. Requires a high-speed internet connection, free software installation, and works best with a 3D graphics card.

METARs Java Tool – ADDS (<http://adds.aviationweather.noaa.gov/metars/java/>)

This is only one of several useful tools on the Aviation Digital Data Service site. Click and drag open a “zoom” box on the US map and get surface observations from any equipped airport without having to look up a single ICAO identifier. Includes a handy TAF overlay feature, as well.

I’m sure everyone has their own list of personal favorites, but this collection ought to have enough fresh stuff to keep you busy until spring. Enjoy!

More Links!

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I received many suggestions to include in this follow up to last winter's "Web Links for the Grounded" article. Most of the links below are tools for flight planning and training, which is what the internet has proven to be a tremendous resource for. Thanks to all of the contributors.

Jeppesen Chart Training :

[http://www.jeppesen.com/wlcs/application/commercewf?origin=category.jsp&event=link\(browse\)&wlcs_catalog_sourceKey=wlcs_categories&wlcs_catalog_destinationKey=wlcs_siblings&wlcs_catalog_category_id=AT3B1](http://www.jeppesen.com/wlcs/application/commercewf?origin=category.jsp&event=link(browse)&wlcs_catalog_sourceKey=wlcs_categories&wlcs_catalog_destinationKey=wlcs_siblings&wlcs_catalog_category_id=AT3B1)

Jeppesen's online chart training courses help you understand how to read and interpret Jeppesen charts. The courses utilize state-of-the-art Internet technology to make your learning experience dynamic and interactive. JeppChart Training includes instructional lessons, activities, and a final test so you can check your understanding. When you complete the online training courses, you will know how to use Jeppesen charts efficiently and effectively. Recommended for pilots transitioning to CMax equipped aircraft.

ADDS Flight Path Tool: http://adds.aviationweather.gov/fpt_application/

The FPT allows a user to view data along a specified route of flight. The user can view important weather information on a map. Points can be entered along a route, so that the data can be viewed in a vertical cross section. Weather information that can be displayed on the FPT horizontal and vertical cross section views includes, but is not limited to: • Wind • Temperature • Relative humidity • Icing potential • Turbulence potential • AIRMETs and SIGMETs • PIREPs • TAFs • METARs

Digital NACO Charts: <http://naco.faa.gov/ecom/Catalog.aspx?a=AERO+NOS+DIGITAL>

Download terminal area charts, sectionals, and instrument approach charts; cheap!

Advanced Pilot Seminars On-line Course: http://www.advancedpilot.com/online_overview.html

"Engine Management Made Easy" presents a very thorough description of the modern engine monitor (EMax) and how to interpret it. You will become comfortable using the engine monitor to diagnose a wide variety of engine problems, including clogged injectors, fouled plugs, impending valve failure, detonation, and pre-ignition. It is designed for all levels of pilot experience, from the private pilot to the ATP and covers basic piston engine theory from the basics through advanced concepts.

Voyager FreeFlight Flight Planning Software: <http://www.seattleavionics.com/Products.shtml>

All-new Voyager FreeFlight is the quick, easy and 100% free way to plan your flights. It's very easy to use yet much more sophisticated than other free flight planners. Plus, while it gets real-time data from the Internet, Voyager FreeFlight doesn't require access to the Internet so you can use it on your laptop or Tablet PC in flight.

FAA Free On-line Course Catalog: http://www.faasafety.gov/ALC/course_catalog.aspx?categoryId=15

The FAA has been busy expanding their list of these brief, but informative on-line courses. Current courses available include "Navigating the DC ADIZ, TFRs, and Special Use Airspace," "Flight Review Prep Guide,"

I have no financial stake in any of the above mentioned resources and they are presented in no particular order.

“The Art of Aeronautical Decision-Making,” and “Multi-Engine Safety Review.” There is a possibility that legislation may be written requiring all pilots operating in or around the Washington DC ADIZ (within 100 nautical miles of the Washington DC VOR) to take the course mentioned here. The FAA will accept the public's comments on this Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) through September 5, 2006.

XM Weather Satellite Datalink Refresh: <http://www.xmradio.com/refresh/>

Use your internet enabled handheld device to refresh the XM Weather Satellite Datalink right from the cockpit. Note that you must power up the avionics within 15 minutes of processing the refresh. This beats calling the 800 number and sitting on hold forever.

Free Flight Tracking: <http://flightaware.com/live/>

Here's another great site for tracking flights and checking out your own previous IFR adventures.

Cirrus Aircraft Training Software (CATS): <http://www.undaerospace.com/cats/>

CATS puts you in the cockpit! Explore and learn your Cirrus SR20 or SR22 aircraft like never before. Practice checklist procedures, calculate performance, and explore aircraft systems all at the click of a mouse. You can demo and purchase the software here. This is an outstanding tool for transition and recurrent training.

FAA Satellite Navigation Site: <http://gps.faa.gov/index.htm>

All you could ever want to know about GPS and new developments, such as WAAS and LAAS, can be found here.

Preferred IFR Routes Searchable Database:

[http://www.fly.faa.gov/Products/Coded_Departure_Routes/NFDC Preferred Routes Database/nfdc_preferred_routes_database.html](http://www.fly.faa.gov/Products/Coded_Departure_Routes/NFDC_PREFERRED_Routes_Database/nfdc_preferred_routes_database.html)

Check here when flight planning and you might just hear the words, “Cleared As Filed,” next time you contact clearance delivery.

Runway Finder: <http://www.runwayfinder.com/>

Take a look at what your destination really looks like as part of your preflight. The satellite view allows a pilot to see the layout of the runways, taxiways, and buildings (depending on the quality of the satellite images) before arriving at the airport. The age of the satellite images varies quite a bit, but they seem to be at least a few years old. Don't be surprised if some things have changed. A chart data view has been added to Google Map's default views to show aeronautical chart information such as obstructions and special use airspace.

Bahamas Flying: <http://www.bahamas.com/bahamas/experience/experience.aspx?experience=flyi>

Go here for information on a very popular destination with AirShares owners. Turn up the volume and be lulled by the sound of gentle surf.

Canadian Flying: <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel/canpass/privateair-e.html>

The CANPASS - Private Aircraft program makes clearing customs easier for private aircraft owners and their passengers travelling to Canada from the United States.

Find Low Fuel Prices: <http://www.100ll.com/>

100LL.com is a pilot's information service with a continuously updated nationwide airport directory with aviation fuel prices including 100 Low Lead and Jet-A, hotels, ground transportation, airport services and more. Use 100LL.com on the ground during flight planning or in your aircraft when deciding where to land or when changing your flying plans.