

SoCal Pilots Vice President's Message

BACK IN THE U.S.A. – Gary Schank

As many of you may know, I went to New Zealand to take a position as a Chief Pilot and Flight Manager of a small airline. New Zealand is a wonderful country. It is relatively modern and clean, with charming cafés and spectacular scenery. However, I discovered that if I remained in New Zealand for more than half of the year, or if I obtained a permanent place to live, New Zealand would tax my worldwide income. Consequently, we are back from New Zealand to stay.

Flying in New Zealand is different. Most airports are relatively small, with few airports having more than one runway, or even a control tower. Even at “larger” tower airports, some taxiways and runways are grass. The grass taxiways are difficult to recognize, as the grass is no different than the grass areas that are not taxiways. The grass taxiways are marked by taxi signs, and it is quite common for a GA airplane to receive a clearance to taxi onto the grass. If an airport has both, a paved and grass runway, you may be cleared to land on either one. If you are cleared to land on the paved runway, the clearance may be to land on “Runway 24 Seal”. The word “seal” meaning paved. If you back-taxi on the runway, you will report that you are “back-tracking”, and the airport pattern is called the “circuit”. There are very specific rules for entering that circuit as well.

VFR flying is also quite different. There is no radio navigation while flying VFR. Navigation is solely based upon geographic landmarks. There are large areas that require monitoring and reporting positions on a common frequency. A position report may be, for instance, "ZK-ZOG, Adele Island, two-thousand five-hundred, heading south to Nelson". If you are flying VFR and the weather deteriorates, forget the idea of getting a pop-up IFR clearance. IFR flying requires a filing at least 30 minutes before departure, and the control zone requires a 10-minute heads up before you enter the zone... not to mention that you must pay for ATC services if you file IFR.

I have now lived in two other countries, and I have visited 40 countries throughout the world. Every one of those countries was great to visit. People are generally friendly, and it is always great to experience different cultures, see the new sights, and eat the great food. Flying in New Zealand and obtaining a NZ-CPL (Commercial Pilot License), has been an interesting experience. But, IF you want to appreciate our great country, go *anywhere else*. Our freedoms are second to none, and that certainly applies to flying.

