



# Going the Distance in an **LSA**

A cross-country  
flight of a lifetime  
in an American  
Legend Cub proves  
to be the ultimate road-  
trip experience

**By Dan Levy**

**Photography By Mike Taylor**

**O**n an unseasonably warm spring afternoon, my friend Rod came to pick me up in his “brand-new” 1932 Ford Coupe. It was Monday, and despite the season having long ended, it was time for the weekly meeting of my Monday Night Football support group. On our way to meet Scott, Jimmy, Greg, Weed and Sid, I asked Rod about the shiny black salve he had purchased to soothe the rash of middle age. He was beaming until I brought up taking his “roadster” on an actual “road trip.”

The single expression on his face questioned my mental health and told me this car would never see the city-limit signs of Lincoln, Neb. I, no doubt, had the same look on my face when I

got a call a few weeks later. A flight of three American Legend Cubs, contenders for the light sport aircraft (LSA) category, was heading to the Sun 'n Fun Fly-In from Sulphur Springs, Texas. Did I want to ride along?

At the time of the call, my southeastern U.S. geography had escaped me, but I was certain the number of states between Texas and Florida was something like 32, or would seem like it traveling that distance in a Cub. To me, an LSA was like Rod's 1932 roadster—fun in severe-clear if you didn't stray too far from home. What sort of pilot would consider taking an LSA from point A to point B when they're more than 900 miles apart? I had to find out.





proprietors, swapped hangar stories, snacked on jerky and enjoyed a spring afternoon in southern Alabama.

The leg from Creola to Crestview began with an amazing view of the Mobile River, contrasted against an expansive steel bridge that carried Interstate 65 traffic. From there, we flew over small towns where the golden domes of town square courthouses gleamed, where late-afternoon Little League games were getting under way and where we could see people cast their eyes skyward and, no doubt, think, I bet those guys are having fun. We were.

Like any cross-country flight, aircraft performance, weather forecasts, fuel-consumption rates, wind direction and time en route were evaluated after each leg. But we also found ourselves discussing the sightings of little-known grass strips, trains that slithered along tracks and under an occasional canopy of trees and birds that spread their wings to lazily ride the afternoon thermals. Like me, I also suspect that my flying companions saw things they chose not to share, like the sight of a hawk in flight grabbing dinner from just below the surface of a pristine lake at sunset somewhere in Mississippi.

Although the words "light sport aircraft" probably never entered Orville and Wilbur Wright's minds, the idea of that type of flying had to be part of what drove them. Our imagined view, looking down from just over the rooftops, was what got most of us to the airport

## SURE, LIGHT SPORT AIRCRAFT ARE FUN. BUT IS IT ANYTHING YOU WANT TO FLY HALFWAY ACROSS THE COUNTRY?

### Low And Slow

If the qualifications for LSA don't quickly come to mind, they include a max gross takeoff weight of 1,320 pounds, max speed (in level flight with max continuous power) of 120 knots, two-place max (including the pilot), fixed landing gear and an unpressurized cabin. Toss in a few adults with overnight bags, and you're nearer max gross weight than not. Factor in winds and the inherent short range of the airplane, and it doesn't take long to figure out that LSA seems like a slightly dyslexic acronym for "Low And Slow." But as it turns out, the trip in this modern "Cub" couldn't have been more fun.

### DAY ONE: From The Plains Of Texas To The Panhandle Of Florida

The day-one flight-planning included legs from Sulphur Springs, Texas (SLR), to Ruston, La. (RSN), to Laurel, Miss. (LUL), to Crestview, Fla. (CEW); a cautious eye toward the weather; and en route adjustments made for various military operations areas (MOAs). The nature of our flying, however, lent itself to an unscheduled landing on a well-manicured grass strip outside Creola, Ala.—just because it looked like fun. After a quick flight over midfield and a few radio calls, the three Cubs touched down at the tree-lined Mark Reynolds and North Mobile County (15A) field. There, we met its



*Three pilots and three of the new Legend Cub LSAs took off from Sulphur Springs, Texas, where the Legend Cub is manufactured, and flew all the way to Lakeland, Fla.*





*Like the original Cub, the Legend is a tandem two-seater. Visibility, front and rear, is outstanding, and the big doors provide easy access.*

for that first flight lesson. But somewhere between the flight planning, pre-flight inspections, weight-and-balance calculations, winds-aloft reports, check rides and expenses, that vision got lost. I think we all found it again somewhere between Texas and Florida.

#### **DAY TWO: Florida— Right Down The Left Coast**

Day two found us departing Crestview just after sunrise. The bright yellow of the American Legend Cubs popped against the green trees and pastures of the Florida panhandle. The air was still, and from

1,400 feet AGL, we could see the panhandle hadn't quite awakened. I said to my flying partner, Tim Elliott, "If there is a better church to attend this Sunday morning, I'd be hard-pressed to find it." He agreed.

A quick stop in Quincy, Fla. (2J9), gave us not only a chance to get fuel, but also to observe the jumpers from a local "meat bomb" club in action. I learned that morning that "meat bomb" loosely translates to "parachutist" in pilot-speak at the Quincy airport.

Our route then took us south of Tallahassee and straight down Florida's west coast. Having the Legend Cub's clam-shell doors and windows open made it easy to appreciate the dark sand beaches, take in the sea air, observe large fish swimming just off the coast and wave to anglers who were trying to catch them.

Our next stop was Cedar Key, Fla. (CDK), for lunch and a chance meeting with Judy of Judy's Cedar Key Airport Taxi. The ride in her 1950s-era taxicab, which seemed held together by aviation tape and bumper stickers, along with her historical perspective of the island made the stop worth it. Judy had called ahead, snagging us the last available outside table at a local restaurant. We were treated to

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an oceanside view and a fly-by from a fleet of Yaks that was entertaining the locals on their way to Lakeland, Fla.

From Cedar Key, we followed the shoreline, then turned inland toward Crystal River, Fla. (CGC), for fuel. There, we hap-

pened upon a retired Navy captain who directed flight operations aboard an aircraft carrier and now operated the facility. His somewhat salty nature was softened when he kindly gave us a tour of his office. His walls were covered with photos of air-

craft carriers, carrier landings from all manner of aircraft, military citations and other awards, decades' worth of aviation memorabilia and several photos of him with former President George H.W. Bush. It was a trip back in time and a reminder that one can find heroes in the most unlikely of places. From there, it was straight into Lakeland Linder Regional Airport (LAL) and time for the guys from American Legend Aircraft to get back to work.

### Creature Comforts Or Cross-Country Necessities?

The sights, sounds and experiences of traveling over 900 miles, much of the time less than 2,000 feet above the ground, only tells the "low" part of the story. The "slow" part was courtesy of American Legend Aircraft Company. The trip was taken in the first two aircraft the company had produced as an homage to the Piper J-3 Cub. A Super Cub, built from a kit with a green paint scheme and military markings, made the flight of three.

Fortunately, the Legend Cubs had  
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*Back from Florida, the boys have an answer to their question: LSAs might even be the most flying fun yet.*



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