

fly

Valle

By Kay Tauscher

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Valle de Bravo is a small weekend town in mountainous terrain about 100 miles northwest of Mexico City, Mexico. Think of it as the Aspen of Mexico. Many affluent Mexico City professionals own second homes there and spend their weekends relaxing on the shores or on sailboats in the reservoir. The streets of the town are narrow and cobblestone. Most roads lead to the town square, which is of course centered with a magnificent church and gazebo, and edged by merchants selling everything from food to handmade needlework items each evening. There is a golf course and restaurants of all types with a variety of Mexican cuisine. A few miles away, you can visit the mountain where the Monarch "mariposas" (butterflies) migrate each year to "winter."

This all makes for a wonderful place to vacation, but what draws U.S. pilots to Valle is the consistent flying during winter and great potential for cross-country flight. Valle is one of those flying destinations to which every pilot eventually needs to go and fly. And like the Monarchs, once you go, you'll keep going back.

Choose Your Launch

There are two launch sites in close proximity to Valle. One is called "La Torre" and lies directly above the center of town. It is a wonderful ridge-soaring site with an outstanding view of the lake. You soar over the town and large, long-needled pine trees, then glide over the lake to practice a few maneuvers. The landing zone is a small beach area that requires confidence in landing skills. To the inland side of the beach lies a sewage canal that empties into the lake, and an overshoot landing means either flying into a chain-linked fence (for the dim-witted) or making a left-handed turn into the lake. The local pilots and veterans of Valle can tell when a pilot will overshoot and begin yelling "agua" long before the pilot even realizes his mistake. It is usually a very comical scene. A good sense of humor can help ease the pain of a bruised ego.

The launch outside of town is called El Peñon. The name is derived from a large rock structure that lies just ahead of launch. And you can't beat the view! The drive from town to

launch provides a flavor for the authentic culture of the area. The people living in the countryside are typically living in one- or two-room, open-air homes. It is common to see livestock being herded along the road and the country folk traveling by foot or horse. Livestock live just outside front doors in the yard. The locals are pleasant and friendly to visiting pilots.

Launch is located about 12 miles outside of town in a rural area at the top of a small mountain. Pine trees cover the hillsides. Depending on when you go to Valle, launch can be very busy. A nice way to start the day is to arrive early, before the crowds, and launch to get in an early morning sled ride. The idea is to then return to launch for a late morning launch, which can turn into a long cross-country flight. Midday conditions can get rockin', so the less experienced shouldn't wait too long to launch.

The rural nature of the surrounding countryside also lends itself to easy cross-country landings. The main LZ within site of launch is called "the piano," because they say you can huck a piano from launch and hit this LZ. But otherwise, almost any field is open game for landing. The local people are used to pilots and support the pilots in any way they can. It is easy to catch a ride back into town or a designated location.

(Continued on page 4)

BREAKING NEWS!

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Of course, there is always the old trusty method of just buying yourself what you really want too... Here are some ideas of items that don't cost an arm and a leg:

Stuff Sacks:

These handy items are awesome for storing your glider and harness at times when you don't wish to pack them up ~ such as, during towing, or at sites like the Point of the Mountain. After pilots buy these, they often wonder why they didn't get one sooner! I recommend the Flytrap Plus II, which has compression straps and padded shoulder straps.

2-meter Radio:

If you don't already have one, you need one. Get it while someone else might be willing to buy it for you!

Flyboots:

Hanwag boots are especially made for free-flight. They not only keep your toes-ies warm and comfy, but they also provide great support for the ankles. This is helpful when you botch a launch, step on the edge of a rock or land in a bumpy LZ. (Hey, it happens!) People who own these wear them religiously and swear by them. As always, good footwear is a key to safety and comfort.

Flightsuits:

We have some Gin and ProDesign flightsuits in stock, which are both well made and nicely designed. These keep you comfy and warm while flying high both in the winter and summer months. Remember, the higher you go, the colder it gets!

info@peaktpeakparagliding.com

Helmets:

We recommend the Charlie Insider Fullface helmet for PG-ing. It's the highest quality, gives good peripheral vision and looks damn good too! A variety of sizes and colors currently in stock.

Balaclava:

A balaclava designed specifically for free flight helmets, to keep you warm in the colder months and at high altitudes.

Variometers:

We carry a wide variety of variometers made by Flytec and Brauniger. They are all good, it just depends on what you want and how much you want to spend. Brauniger makes a small one that only makes noise that you can place on your helmet and listen to. OR you can choose one with all the bells and whistles, or one combined with a vario. They are all good.

Hook Knives:

If you don't have one, GET ONE! They should always be worn when flying and are inexpensive.

Radio Harness:

These make using your radio convenient and easy. A mike or Push to Talk (PTT) is another other item that can be purchased separately that will make using your radio easier in flight.

The Gift of Flight:

Tandem flights, basic courses, advanced clinics and workshops, and paratrips are all available through Peak to Peak Paragliding. Check out our full calendar of 2006 courses and events online at peaktpeakparagliding.com.

Peak Gift Certificates:

Available in any denomination, gifts certificates can be used to buy gear, courses, tandem flights or trips.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Jan 7-15 | Valle de Bravo, Mexico
March | Ridge Soaring Clinic
April-May | Over the Water Courses
May-June | XC Clinics

Check our online calendar for full schedule and/or changes. peaktpeakparagliding.com



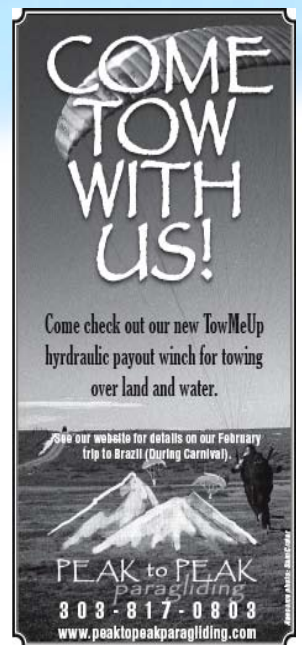
CROSS COUNTRY *Safety*

by Kay Tauscher

It's always a good time to review some basics regarding safety and preparation for XC flying. Below are some things to consider before you take off for Mexico or warmer parts for winter XC flying.

- ⊙ Know your controlled airspace regulations and have an airspace map handy as needed.
- ⊙ Keep a landing zone in site at all times. Be aware as you fly to change this mental LZ as needed.
- ⊙ Be aware of areas subject to Venturi winds, such as canyons or narrow valleys. (If you don't know what these are, then you need more education prior to XC flying.)
- ⊙ Always look for signs of wind direction and strength, such as smoke from chimneys or stacks, laundry hanging on a line, tall grasses, trees, and other such clues.
- ⊙ Remember that strong thermals are often associated with areas of strong sink.
- ⊙ Stay well hydrated before and during your flight. This is key for clear thinking and good decision-making. Likewise, stay fueled with power bars, GU or food that you can easily eat before and during flight, if necessary.
- ⊙ Remember that flight above 12,000 feet msl for extended lengths of time will require oxygen to ensure your mental faculties stay strong and you remain safe. (This is especially important to remember in locations such as Aspen or Telluride where you are launching at or above 11,000 feet msl.)
- ⊙ If flying through a canyon or narrow valley, remember to avoid areas of possible rotor (which can be the middle of the canyon/valley depending on wind conditions and direction) and fly in areas of lift.
- ⊙ Never fly on the lee side of a mountain unless you have a minimum of 1000 feet of clearance.
- ⊙ Be sure to check the weather and winds aloft thoroughly before flying. Know if and where to expect a possible wind shear. Watch conditions and clouds when flying to anticipate shear layers, which can cause your wing to react violently. (Spoken from experience...)
- ⊙ Know what is happening at the top of a mountain if your launch is midway down the mountainside.
- ⊙ Always watch for hazards such as power lines (look for the poles), fast-moving water (drownings have occurred), trees or houses near your intended LZ (potential sources of rotor). It's good idea to scope out terrain and territory by car before venturing into unknown areas by air.

- ⊙ Avoid landing in roads if possible. It's some times difficult to anticipate oncoming traffic, or may take you longer than anticipated to move yourself and your gear from the road.
- ⊙ Carry some minimal first aid and a survival kit with the bare essentials.
- ⊙ Consider carrying a tree rescue kit and a whistle.
- ⊙ Carry a cell phone if you own one.
- ⊙ Make sure some one knows your intention to fly cross country and which way you're headed.
- ⊙ Give location by radio (GPS coordinates, if you have them, or visible description of area if not) while high in the area occasionally so you can be easily located by driver (if you have one). Remember that your radio may not reach them once you've landed.
- ⊙ After picking a final LZ, approach it high so you have time to do some 360s and a standard aircraft approach, which will help you assess wind conditions and your target landing spot. Take power lines, trees, etc. into consideration as you lay out your final approach.
- ⊙ Always carry money and/or a credit card with you so you can get food, drink or a ride (if needed).



Fly safely. Check out our weather links on www.peaktopeakparagliding.com before unfolding those wings!

INDUSTRY NEWS:

Nevil Hullett flew 304km on Oct. 23 to break the South Africa national cross country record. On the same day, William Wertheim Aymes flew 258km to break the New Zealand national cross country record.

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Nov. 05: Frank Brown broke the South American record flying 380km at Quixada, Brazil.



Fly Valle, cont.

Chillin' in Valle

Many pilots fly all the way from the Peñon launch and into town each day and land on the beach LZ. One of the best aspects about Valle is the camaraderie between the pilots. Whether hang glider or paraglider pilot, European, Mexican, or American, there is a sense of brotherhood that you feel when flying here. Each day at the glassoff flight, everyone hangs patiently in the Piano or at the beach LZ, awaiting the landings of the last pilots, while playing soccer with the local children, and drinking a cervesa or two. Some days there are impromptu spot landing contests, or acrobatic shows by the more advanced pilots. Once, we all watched as a group of instructors gave the local kids free tandems and even hucked a 14 year old local boy off for his first time. (These kids have old gliders they kite all the time. They watch pilots constantly, and know how to fly, whether they have yet or not.) Excitement filled the LZ as he spot landed his glider perfectly and turned to choose two young boys (to his delight) to fold his glider.



The atmosphere in Valle is supportive and positive. This is truly a place for pilots of all skill levels to enjoy and advance. If you are a beginner to intermediate pilot, I recommend going with a guide the first few times, and encourage anyone who has not yet been, to visit. You may find yourself a "regular" before you know it.



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January 7-15, 2006

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