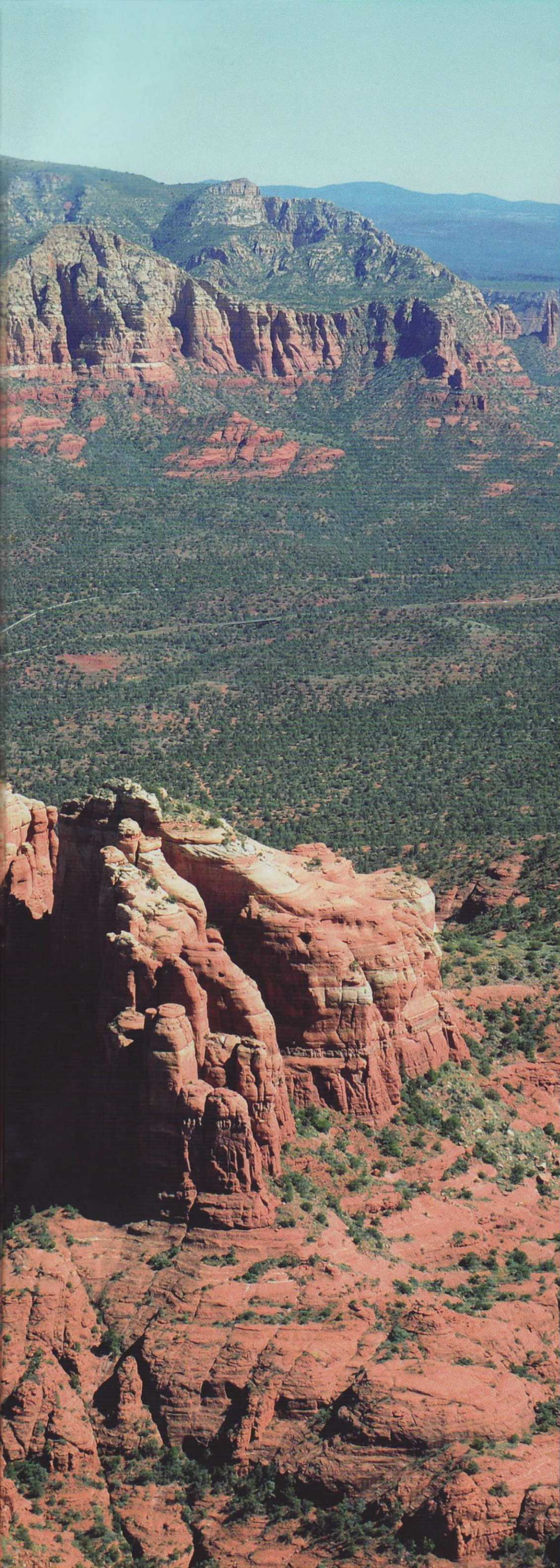


# Across America by EuroFox

A BMAA member since 1984, Bill Sherlock emigrated to California three years ago – then was asked by the owner of a new EuroFox to deliver it 2200 miles across eight states from Indiana to the West Coast. Funnily enough, he said yes.



BACK in the '90s, I developed a transatlantic friendship with Rob Rollison, the American Pegasus flexwing distributor, who later became the US distributor for the EuroFox.

I helped Rob at airshows such as Oshkosh and Sun 'n' Fun, and have flown various aircraft from his base airfield near Indianapolis, Indiana, to both shows, including Pegasus trikes, the CT, the Remos, and EuroFox nose- and tailwheel variants.

In the USA, the tailwheel EuroFox is known as the Aerotrek A220 and, given my relationship with Rob, it was a natural choice for me to buy one to replace the Jodel Ambassador I'd left behind in England when I emigrated, and fly it from Indiana to its new home in Gness Field airport, a short distance north of San Francisco.

To keep my US pilot certificate, I have to keep my UK PPL(A) and medical current, but visiting the UK annually is no hardship, since my daughter Louise and her husband Conrad run Conair Sports, the Rotax support company.

Conrad worked for me while I was MD of Pegasus Aviation. His dad Nigel and I raced hovercraft together and then together started Cyclone Airsports, trading as Pegasus Aviation, so Louise and Conrad were thrown together when Louise was three and Conrad eight.

Having said that, trying to get the timing right for my trips is difficult, so I decided it was time to get my standalone USA pilot certificate, and it was on a course for that at the local college where I met Brenda.

Brenda has a friend who owns an airstrip north of San Francisco, and had decided that she wanted to learn to fly, that she would buy an aircraft, and that she would base it there. Since I'd flown more than 150 small aircraft, she asked me for advice. After flying her into the strip, a dirt runway in the Sonoma Valley (famous for its wines), I realized that there would be few more suitable aircraft than the EuroFox A220, with its rugged composite undercarriage, good brakes and, for a taildragger, excellent forward visibility.

Shortly after takeoff on the return flight, Brenda turned to me and said "I want one of these. Who do I make the deposit cheque out to?"

Due to increasing demand, it was nine months before her A220 was ready to be collected from Shawnee Field, Indiana. She ▷

**Main photo** Sedona Valley, Arizona

**Inset** Somewhere over New Mexico: The author, left and Brenda, proud owner of a brand-new EuroFox



▷ spent the time learning to fly, and when her new aircraft arrived, she asked me to fly it home with her.

Rob collected us from Indianapolis Airport and put us up at his home for two nights while we prepared for the trip. Due to the need to fly over the Rocky Mountains and the Sierras, I fitted Skydrive's mixture-control kit, and after a check of the pristine factory-built aircraft and a short test flight, the first leg was a 45min hop to Henderson Airport, Kentucky to get the transponder checked and signed off.

I've used Garmin GPSs since they became available in the very early '90s. I currently use a 10-year-old 296, and added Wing X Pro on my iPad as an alternative to carrying the 13 FAA charts needed for the route from Indiana to California. Brenda liked the iPad so much that she opted to mount an iPad Mini on her panel.

We made it the 275 miles to Lebanon, Missouri, in just over 2h, and after tying the aircraft down looked for transport to a hotel.

The American airport system is fabulous, with most operating under state subsidies. Landing fees are non-existent and overnight tie-down charges are very reasonable, usually around \$6, rarely more than \$10 and sometimes free. Most small town airports have a couple of courtesy cars, and sure enough there was a free car available at Lebanon. Most are old, beat-up ex-police cars, and this was no exception, with its Certified Calibration placard on the speedo.

The next day, with a frontal system heading our way and stretching completely north to south across the country, we took off at 7:45am and managed 115 miles in a 25mph headwind before putting down at Pittsburg, Kansas.

With fog down to the ground the next morning, we busied ourselves lowering the engine idle speed back to 1400rpm. As is normal with a new engine, the idle speed creeps up as the engine wears in and internal friction reduces.

With the fog lifted, it was off the vast, flat prairies of Oklahoma for a fuel stop in lonely Guyman, where Brenda made a very nice landing in gusts of over 20mph.

On towards Farmington, New Mexico, some 370 miles west, and after 1h in the air, we started to climb to clear the 13,000ft peaks we could see ahead. Below us, the landscape was changing dramatically, from flat plains to vast forests to jagged ravines and canyons like the surface of the moon.

At 13,000ft we hit headwinds, and our groundspeed dropped to about 80mph. With 130 miles to go to Farmington, we would have no reserves.

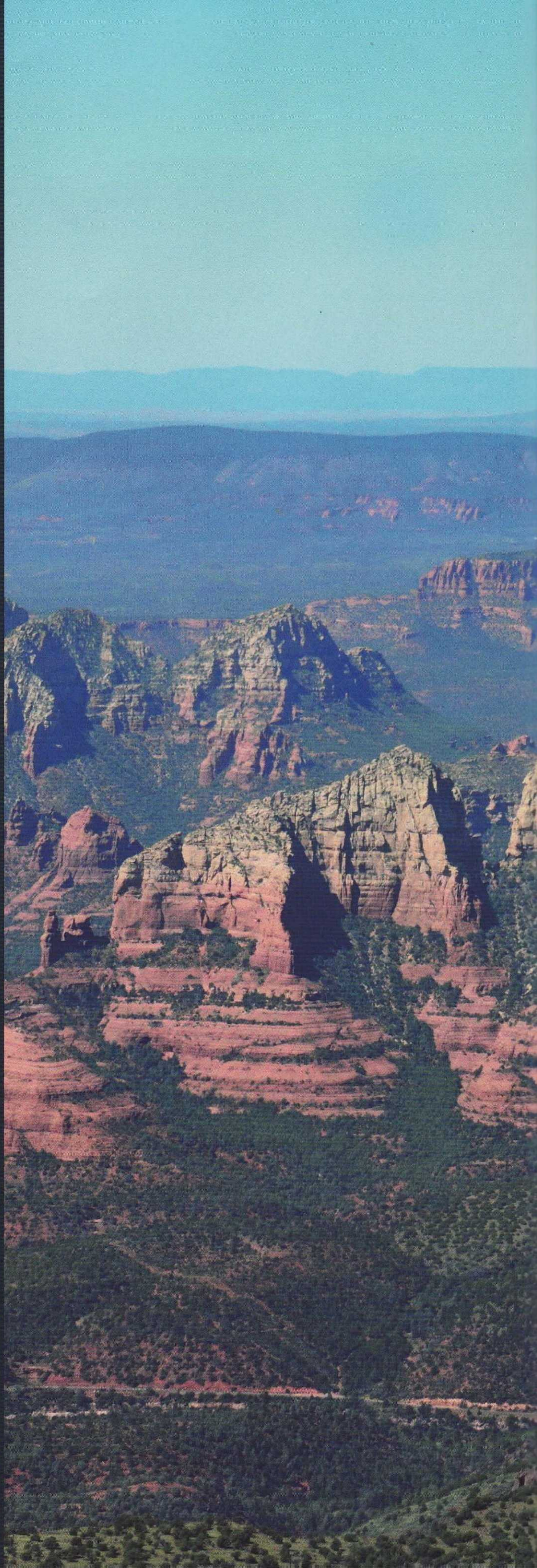
Over much of America it is possible to safely keep going until you run nearly dry of fuel (although I'm not advocating this practice), because there are friendly airfields with 24-hour fuel services just about everywhere, but to stay safe, I decided not to carry on to Farmington, but to overnight instead in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Brenda readily agreed because she had stayed there before and said it had a great downtown restaurant area.

She was right, except that the restaurant the hotel recommended was closed on a Sunday. Brenda accosted a couple in the street and asked for advice on an alternative, so we ended up eating with them in a sushi restaurant. The food was excellent, as was the single-malt Scotch back at their hotel afterwards! ▷

**Main photo** Approaching Sedona, Arizona

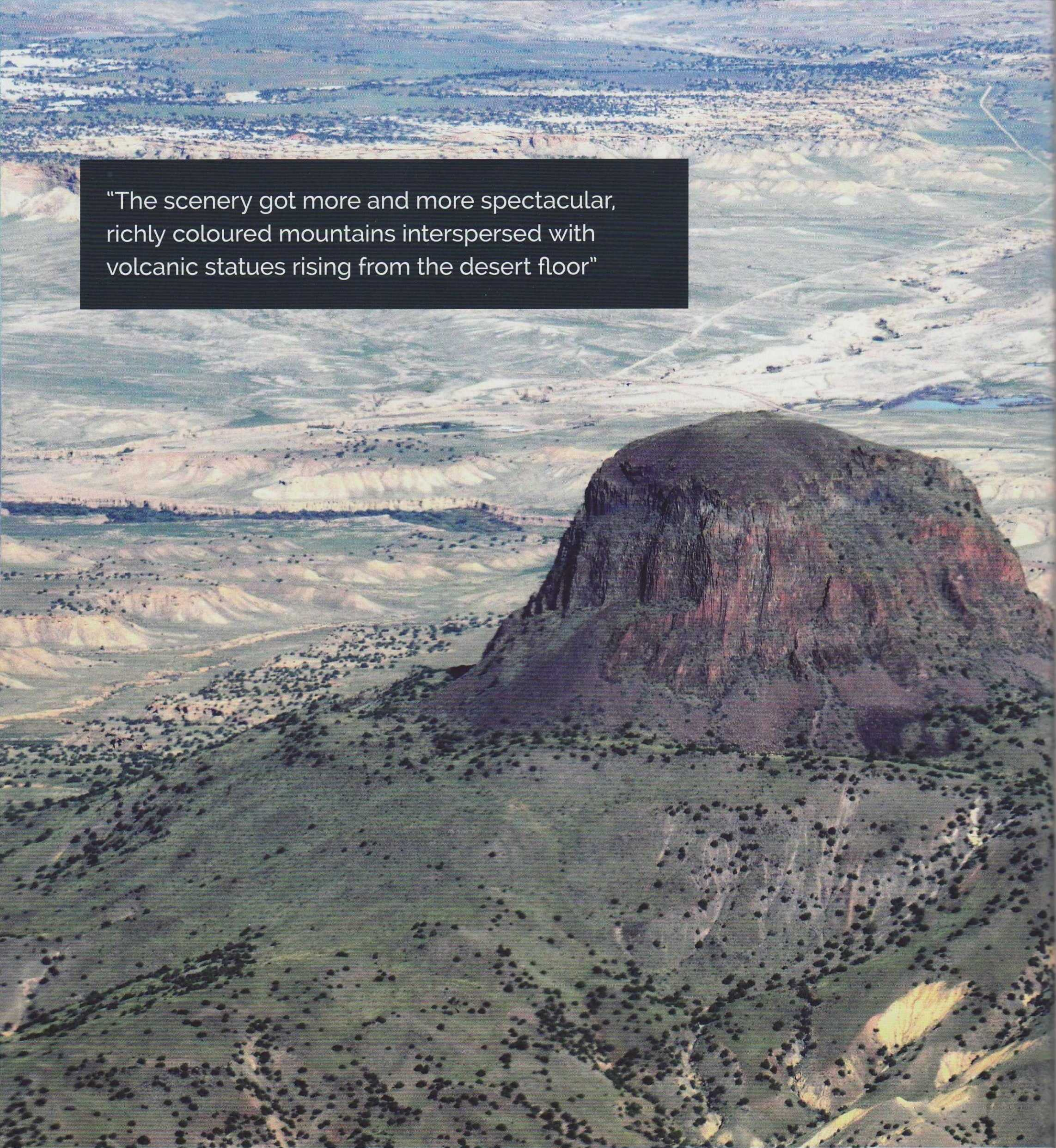
**Inset** Santa Fe airport, New Mexico (left); and approaching the top of the climb to 13,000ft (right)



“As we climbed to clear the 13,000ft peaks, the landscape changed dramatically, from flat plains to vast forests to jagged ravines and canyons like the surface of the moon”



“The scenery got more and more spectacular, richly coloured mountains interspersed with volcanic statues rising from the desert floor”





▷ I don't normally choose airports with control towers because it inevitably takes longer to get into the air, and next morning was no exception. By the time we had paid the \$6.50 overnight fee, taken the bus to our aircraft, fuelled and taxied what seemed like 2 miles to the hold for runway 33, it was 9am.

We were headed for Sedona, Arizona, and as we climbed towards the 10,000ft mountains ahead, the scenery got more spectacular as each new ridge was crossed, with ravines, fault lines, skeleton-like structures and richly coloured eroded mountains interspersed with volcanic statues rising from the desert floor.

As we flew over Winslow, we could see the edge of the crater billed as "the world's best preserved meteorite impact site".

The breathtaking result of a collision between a piece of asteroid travelling at 26,000mph and the Earth over 50,000 years ago, the crater is nearly one mile across, 2.4 miles in circumference and 550ft deep. An awesome spectacle.

As we approached Sedona, a magnificent site unfolded before us. A forested clifftop gave way to a sculpted valley, with red, craggy stone-statue like mountains, hillocks and ridges. Some of the smaller pyramid-shaped hills had red stone pillars protruding upwards hundreds of feet against a backdrop of green formed by the trees on the valley floor and lower slopes.

Sedona Airport, on a small plateau high above the valley floor, is well known for its aircraft-carrier appearance, and the view of the runway on long final reminded me of Darley Moor in the Peak District where I'd landed a few times 15 years ago, although Sedona had a much longer runway, which at nearly 6000ft altitude, was no bad thing.

Refuelled and heading west towards the high desert of southern California, we came across the largest quarry I have ever seen; at least a mile across and with its own lake.

At Victorville, the follow-me vehicle led us to the GA terminal past several Boeing 747s, including a couple of BA aircraft. We were handed keys to a courtesy car, in this case a Mercedes crew bus with about 15 seats and a registration saying Million Air, to drive to the nearest hotel 15 miles away. Impressive!

Next morning, we passed south of Edwards Air Force Base in the Mohave Desert. Even from 10,000ft, the runway looked absurdly long.

We climbed to 12,000ft to cross the mountains into the Central Valley, and to our right we could see the hundreds of windmills from the lower foothills leading to the Tehachapi pass.

The Central Valley is broken up into large square crop fields as far as the eye can see, occasionally interspersed with small cattle ranches, and from the mountains south of Tehachapi, with only 300 miles to go, I was on home ground.

Unknown to Brenda, I had texted her husband, mum, dad and close friends to arrange a reception party for her arrival, so there was a gathering awaiting us as we taxied up to the hangar she had rented at Petaluma airfield.

She was happily surprised, and the aircraft was admired by all. Now I need another EuroFox to be sold to an inexperienced owner so I can make my fourth Indiana to California trip. I'll never get tired of it. □

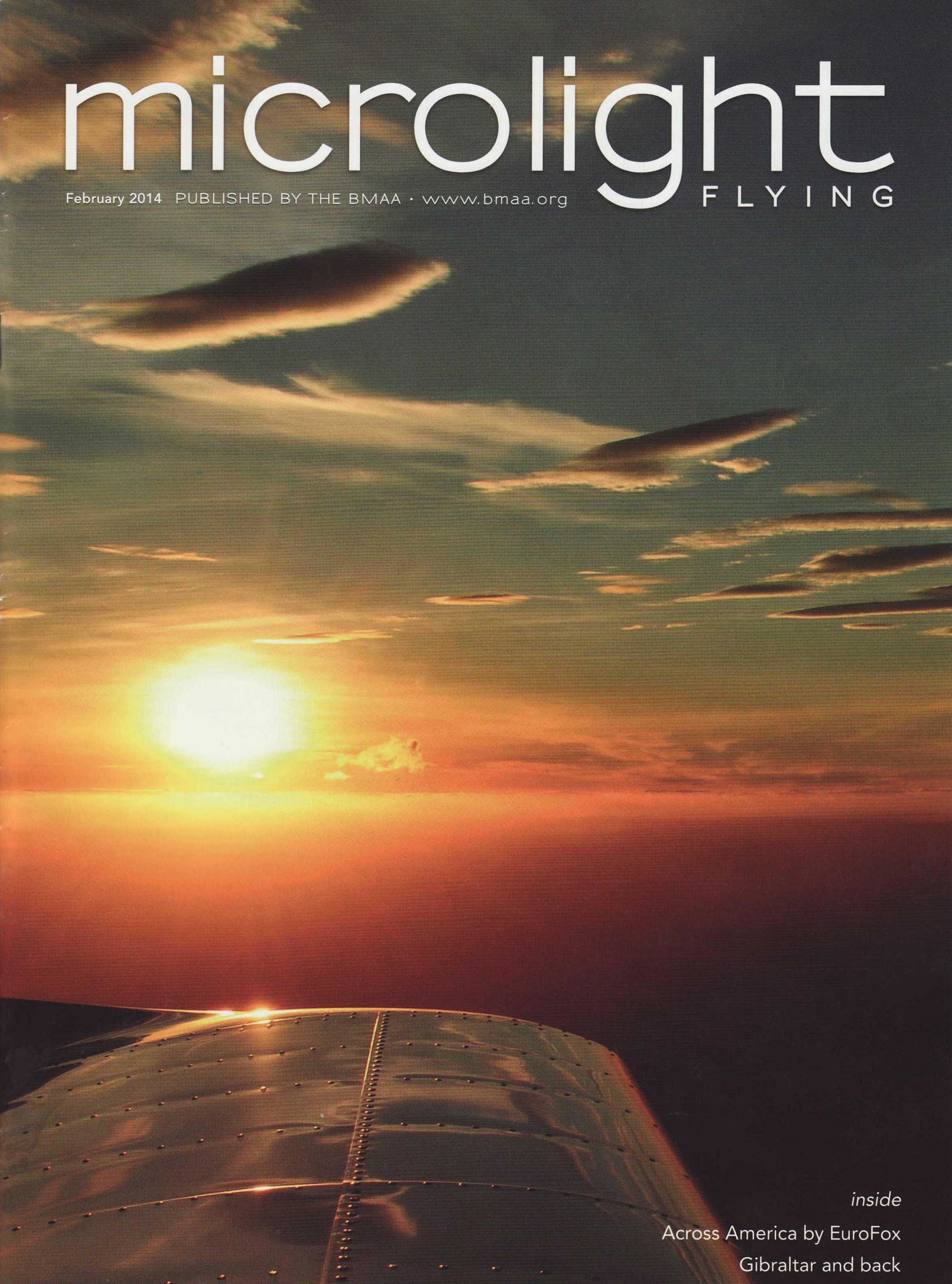
**Main photo** Eroded volcano, only the core remaining, New Mexico

**Insets, left to right** Meteor crater, Arizona; giant's handprint, New Mexico; and mission accomplished, Petaluma airfield, California

# microlight

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FLYING



*inside*

Across America by EuroFox

Gibraltar and back