

SPECIALIST REPORT ON SIMUGLIDING

Two major breakthroughs have marked the year 2001:

The first is the release of the long-awaited new version of SFS (PC), the only software dedicated to gliding, which has been released by Uwe Milde and Detlev Schwedtzter. SFS 4 is now working under Windows, uses 3D acceleration of modern graphic cards and allows a resolution up to 1024 x 780 pixels. The landscape is textured with satellite pictures but the flight area is limited for the time being to an area in Northern Germany. Several gliders (SG2-33, K8B, LS8A and ASW 27) with realistic performance and flight characteristics are available. These gliders can be launched by winch or aerotow and use both thermal and ridge soaring. The lift is well simulated; for example, the thermals have a radial distribution of vertical velocity and the clouds drift with the wind. The pilot may perform free flights, performance flights or even compete against other pilots of various strengths. Tasks can be planned on an ICAO map and GPS data can be used for navigation. The flights can be recorded and the flight logs can be analysed after the flight.

A free demo of SFS4 is available on the following web site: <http://www.sfspc.de>

Despite being limited to a short flight with the K8, it gives a good idea of the potentialities of this interesting program.

The second breakthrough is the launch by Microsoft of a new version of their popular Flight Simulator. FS 2002 is a really big step forward because it does not suffer from the display problems too frequently encountered with FS 2000 even on a very fast system. It also features more detailed landscapes, a true ATC system and stunning light effects. This has boosted 3rd party add-on developers and more and more files, with improved terrain, airfields and aircraft, can be found mostly as freeware on the web. Simugliding has also benefited from this trend and the number of available virtual gliders and thermal scenery has dramatically increased. To get a flavour of the latest developments in this field please have a look at the following web sites:

<http://www.flightsimmers.net/airfield/soar/goto.html>

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/WolfgangPiper/>

<http://www.flightsimmers.net/fszwever/index.html>

<http://www.ictnet.es/+fsim/>

<http://www.volny.cz/kochm/FS2000.htm>

<http://yokohama.cool.ne.jp/naoo/index-e.html>

<http://www.plachteni.virt.cz>

<http://www.mike-india.de.vu/>

<http://www.triskel.ch/apv/>

However, the installation of most of these add-ons requires some knowledge of the simulator and we feel that what is missing to make simugliding with FS more popular is a CD Rom allowing an automatic installation of all necessary files: gliders, thermals etc....

Interestingly, a small program called Soartrack has also been developed which allows the conversion of a flight log from a real flight into a coloured line in the 3D environment of the simulator. With the ever more realistic representation of the landscape in the FS 2002, this allows very spectacular renderings of real glider flights. Soartrack is available as freeware on the following site :

<http://www.finesse-max.com/zip/SoarTrackv1.zip>

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