Zakynthos Airport LGZA

Aerobask Diamond DA62

Cockpit Hardware

Aviation Gallery

Welcome once again.

Flight Sim Show 2019 in Cosford, UK will be a two day event for the first time, which should increase attendance. This year it is dedicated to the late Bob Sidwick, who will be sadly missed. I will be there as a visitor on the Saturday only and I'm looking forward to taking my time to wander around and enjoy the exhibitors and presentations.

Microsoft recently hosted a 'Microsoft Flight Simulator Global Preview Event' on FS2020. You can watch two reports on YouTube at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkMoZkGhIog
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-ppN8HjZGk
You can also read a report, which includes 4K screenshots at:
https://flyawaysimulation.com/news/4953/#heading01

In this issue we have two reviews; the A220 Series Pack (FSX) and LEAL Alicante Airport (P3D). John McNeely looks forward to the coming dark season with 'Winter is Coming'. If you would like to try something novel aviation related in the real world, have look page 47.

The next issue is due December 2019.
Terry McGee

The perfect weekend break...

FLIGHT SIM 2019
5th-6th October
RAF Museum Cosford

www.flightsimshow.com

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Contents:

LEAL - Alicante Airport

Developed by PILOT's FSG of FS Global Mesh fame (and more), LEAL Alicante Airport for P3D4 represents a very welcome addition to commercially available add-ons for that platform. The most recent preceding version of this airport produced was that very worthy rendition for FSX/FS2004 by Eiresim, as far back as 2010. Although there is a great choice of commercial airports available for flying in Spain on the P3D4 platform, produced by a number of different developers, the wait for LEAL has been a long one, and this despite the importance of the airport as the fifth busiest in Spain.

LEAL is in the region of Murcia in Southeast Spain on the Costa Blanca, and is closer to the North African coast at Algeria (150 miles) than Madrid (220 miles). Additionally, it is 100 miles west of Ibiza, 100 miles South of Valencia, 240 miles from Malaga, just over 300 miles from Gibraltar, and just over 1000 miles from Dublin, useful perhaps to know when planning your virtual flights. Locally, it is located 5.5 miles southwest of the city of Alicante (modelled in the scenery) and just over 6 miles east of the city of Elche (also modelled), from which the current airport gets its name.

Released earlier this year, this is only the second airport to be modelled by this developer, after a highly rated rendition of Almeria (further along the coast towards the Southwest) was released in

2018. The real-world airport is based on quite a straightforward plan, but what it lacks in complexity of layout, it makes up for in sophisticated and attractive terminal design, and PILOT's have gone all the way in replicating this to an extreme and painstaking degree in the quality and detail of scenery package, as we shall see. LEAL currently handles around 14 million, mostly international passengers, annually. From Ireland, it is served by both Ryanair and Aer Lingus, but most passengers originate in the UK, Germany, The Netherlands and Scandinavia. The airport is a hub for Norwegian, Ryanair, Vueling, Air Nostrum and Evelop Airlines (which has been running charters for Norwegian from Dublin to North America this year due to the 737max problem), and many other airlines fly here also from many European and some more distant points in Russia and Ukraine. The original airport was known as El

Atet, and dated back to 1947. Currently there is a single large "New Terminal" of over 3.6 million square feet in size, which replaces its older terminal 1 and 2 predecessors. I remember from my last time passing through, that the modern terminal is very spacious, bright, clean and pleasant. The fact that everything is under one roof for the passenger, and not least being that the 40 gates (16 with jetways – SODE operated in the scenery) are easily reached without extended walks, makes for a pleasant and comfortable travelling experience.

The airfield, at 141 ft. elevation, has a single 9842ft. east-west runway 10/28 (ILS 110.30), with the westerly approach coming in over the Mediterranean, whilst the easterly approach (low altitude Alicante ATE VOR DME 114.65 just west of the 3D approach lights) passes over the industrial areas of Elche,

with higher ground and eventually mountains further out towards the west. A second (high altitude) VOR ALTET ALT 113.80 is located just south of the field. The general airfield layout consists of the runway along the southern half of the complex, and the extensive apron (with its many remote stands), terminal, and associated landside infrastructure along the northern half of the complex; all-in-all a compact footprint.

Installation of the scenery package is reasonably straightforward. The download zip file is just under 3.5Gb and following unpacking, activation of the Pilots.Setup executable is followed by the usual prompt for serial number input and placement of the scenery files onto my hard drive.

Within the P3D4 directory, a 16Mb PILOTS Software folder is created wherein are located 21 high-quality PDF charts in colour, the scenery manual, an uninstall executable, and links to the Pilots website and further LEAL Charts. The brief 8-page manual covers system requirements, installation, and recommended settings. There are some nuanced aspects of the installation process that need to be read carefully as they relate to how to adapt your installed LEAL to the particular setup of your P3D4 platform such as whether Orbx Global Vector is installed or not. Moreover, if you prefer to manually make a static Boeing 757 and ATR72 disappear from the scenery (both in-

stalled by default, together with air stairs, attendant ground services, and embarking passengers), manually activate parking gates for AI airliners if you use them in your scenery (by placing the right AFCAD file in the correct folder location), or manually remove virtual people in the scenery that are also placed by default both inside and outside the terminal, careful study of the instructions in the manual is needed. It would have been nice to have had a scenery configurator tool that would automate these slightly tedious tweaks, but that being said, the steps are clearly described in the manual and not complicated to follow. The manual also assures us that the scenery is fully compatible with FSGlobal mesh and with Orbx FS Global, which I can confirm as I have both installed and there were no conflicts in evidence. Demanding-looking configuration settings are also recommended, some of which looked set to provoke a commensurate decrease in performance e.g. ground mesh resolution set to 2M, Texture resolution to Ultra, scenery complexity and autogen very dense etc. With my default F22 Raptor aligned for take-off on runway 28 at these recommended settings (plus Rex Environment Force, ActiveSky, and AI traffic 100%), I was relieved to see that I had a good frame rate from the cockpit of 26, but with my PMDG 777 loaded this fell somewhat to around 18, though still quite acceptable.

Going back again to installed files, the bulk of these (6.88Gb-worth) are located in the P3D4 "Ecosystem" folder, within a Pilots sub-folder containing separate airport and city scenery and texture files. It is to the airport scenery folder here that you need to go to move and/or activate/deactivate the necessary files in order to make the installed LEAL compatible with Orbx Global Vector or not, depending on whether it is on your system or not, and to activate or deactivate the necessary AFCAD file for AI aircraft using the airport. Beginning our assessment of the installed LEAL, my immediate first impression was how convincingly realistic the photoreal ground textures of the greater and local scenery area look. They have a very "south of Spain" appearance, what with various hues of yellow and green in the parched-looking landscape both within the airport boundary and in the 750 square kilometres of surrounding fields, hills and countryside. Indeed, a downside for me was that they make the Orbx landclass Europe beyond the LEAL scenery boundary now look noticeably less realistic! Another slight downside, is that there are no seasonal textures included, so that parched-scenery look is equally in evidence in the winter. That being said, the photo-scenery scenery and the hand-placed 3D scenery layered above is simply beautiful – including extensive variety which is enhanced further by inclusion of highways and roads, custom autogen trees and

buildings, detailed hand-made mesh, and good detail of the city of Alicante and its port (e.g. elevated castles, train station, sports stadium, and port infrastructure with docked ferries and reefer vessels). An extensive section of the Costa Blanca coast adjacent to Alicante is also represented in the scenery.

Focussing in on the airport and airfield proper, the use of high definition 4K resolution textures is in evidence throughout the scenery. Runways, roadways, taxiways, grass and earth surfaces, roofs, building facades etc. look highly realistic. Tire skid marks abound on the runway touchdown zones and centreline, at taxiway turning points, and in the lead-up to parking stands, but are not overdone. The airside ground surfaces include asphalt and concrete and these look convincingly weathered, worn, stained, and in places cracked, as you would see in real life. Airside ground markings are both accurate and crisp, and are complimented by 3D direction signs. There is also very good rendition of the extensive 3D approach lighting at both ends of the runway.

Landside, the ground infrastructure of the airport is placed upon a photoscenery layer but this has been beautifully enhanced by the placement over this of a complex of textured and marked approach and access roads both to the terminal building, between the service infrastructure beyond, and on the open-

air car parks in the immediate vicinity of the airport (the car parks further out do not get the same treatment). Any aerial view downwards towards the various building infrastructure roofs reveals abundant and varied gross and subtle detail including e.g. ventilation and air conditioning units and solar panels, as well as weathered and shaded concrete surfaces on the older infrastructure and the curved reflective shapes atop the modern terminal building.

The rise and dip of the terminal approach roads are particularly well and accurately done, which I think is difficult to achieve given the poorer results we see in some other commercial add-ons. Even more impressive is the 3D multistorey car park immediately behind the main terminal; this is one of the best such representations I have seen with superb modelling and texturing, including the capture of depth for example with the access ramps disappearing downwards to the lower floors from the roof. The airport ground-level parking includes a multitude of marked parking spaces which have sun shades overhead to protect the static cars parked here from the strong rays of the Costa Blanca. There are lots and lots of road direction signs and advertising placards, lighting pylons and vegetation, and at the highly detailed terminal passenger drop-off points the details include road markings with wheelchair spaces and taxi-points

as well as a variety of dynamic people and static (only) cars and buses. Look even closer and you will see that the bus stop shelters even have very legible bus timetables!

One part of the ground car park in the vicinity of the airport tower includes a nicely detailed yellow Chipmunk aeroplane and tractor on public display, and this brings us to another superb feature of the scenery. The control tower sits atop a support infrastructure at 270ft and alongside a twin tower which is very obviously an additional access stairwell as the internal staircases are well-detailed and visible. Between the two there are also two connecting covered metal gangways, and on the topmost, again also two animated controllers engaged in conversation. The control room has transparent windows and is decked out with all the required air traffic control hardware as well as a number of vigilant animated controllers. Above the office at the very top of the structure are various communication aerials. This is one of the most detailed control towers you will witness in any add-on scenery and is another major plus.

Towards the western landside end, further high-level details abound including a fuel farm, various warehouses, and a compact cargo and ground support infrastructure (DHL, Swissport, Groundforce). The cargo terminals landside have de-

tailed flat and ramped cargo bays complete with stained surfaces, detailed static trucks, and you'll also see painstaking further details such as coloured wheelie bins, damage to loading bays, and worn logos and signage. Airside, this infrastructure is even more detailed and includes cargo hold pallets, stacked wooden pallets, and in one location there are even tall cardboard boxes bearing the very clear and legible name of a well-known real-world producer of electronic equipment! Lots of static ground vehicles and equipment are in evidence, and at the very western end of this segment of the airport, the scenery developer has placed his discrete signature in the form of a sign at an elevated point bearing the "Pilots" logo and a number of large boxes bearing the legend "Pilots Alicante" – I wonder what they contain!

Nearby and adjacent to taxiway Alpha1 is the fire station, and yes, yet again, the attention to detail is painstaking. It includes the 3D fire-tender garage with several of the vehicles parked partially within, further fire vehicles outside, and a tiny hard-surface fenced-in football field (5-a-side?) to alleviate the boredom of the crews (long may they continue to be bored). Behind the fire station building is a small enclosed wash bay with a sinuous hose left sitting on the ground. In the other direction, a group of Jet2.com airside buses sit parked and just beyond them a yellow 4 x4 security vehicle is on vigil at a

gate in the security fence. The closer you look the more you see (a theme throughout this scenery).

As we move back along the south apron towards the Alicante main terminal scenery centre point, we pass small Ryanair and Jet2.com warehouses, what looks like the VIP reception area next to the tower, and then the five-bay western extension of the main terminal. The first of these has a static Jet2 757 in place together with ground equipment, and static and animated personnel and passengers about – you can manually remove all this as mentioned above, if you prefer to have your animated airliners parking here. None of these five gates have full jetways, which I hope reflects the fact that they are still under construction and not that there is something amiss with my SODE jetways. Moreover, when I first installed LEAL I overlooked ensuring that SODE was installed in

the first instance as well, leading to me not having any jetways at the remaining gates of the terminal building (I am in the process of a full reinstall of P3D4 but that is an entirely different and ongoing story). As is the consistent theme of this scenery, the entire apron and all the airliner gates and infrastructure are hugely enhanced with additional scenery elements including multitudes of extremely well-detailed static ground vehicles and equipment of every type, lighting pylons, bollards and cones (some fallen over), wheel chocks awaiting use, the odd tuft of grass peeking through pavement cracks, and warning and direction signs of various types. There are also many animated passengers and ground staff, and the outer apron areas also include some animated ground traffic. The Lat-Long of each terminal parking bay is individually represented on an elevated screen facing parking airliner cockpits.

Finally, the main terminal itself is a major success as a work of scenery add-on excellence. Architecturally, this has very extensive glass facades rendering the interior very bright and cheerful. In the scenery, this glass is both reflective and transparent, and thoroughly convincing. Its interior detail is already apparent from outside, and once inside the extent of this detail becomes very impressive; animated passengers walking along wide and bright floors, seating next to marked boarding gates (with static passengers seated), shops, bars and eateries of various and well-known brands, airline desks, escalators, and direction signs of all sorts. Adding to the atmosphere are the effects of the environmental sound package which include interior ambient terminal sounds. I'm not qualified to describe the unique-looking architectural design of the huge terminal roof, suffice to say its complex, multi-domed, and flamboyant both inside and outside, and with a gathering of solar panels at the centre point of each dome on the Sunny side.

It's perhaps a worn cliché, and not very descriptive of me to say that night lighting is superb. Except to say that the transparent terminal (especially), apron, and landside approach roads and infrastructure really do impress well beyond the ordinary. I can give no better compliment to this aspect of the scenery than to say that if you want to see what is meant by (and as advertised by the vendor), "Special night light shadows textures" and "Dynamic lights" in P3D4, this scenery shows you how good it really can be.

In summing up my impression of Pilot's rendition of Alicante, one of the biggest difficulties I had with my review was putting an upper limit on the number of screenshots I took; in the end I failed miserably and submitted an unreasonably large number of these to Terry (!). This is simply because there are so many visual treats in this incredibly highly-detailed airport and environs that it's very hard to stop the shutter. Performance might be a little challenged but only if flying here in a resource-demanding airliner and if you have for example (as I had during the review) a high density of AI traffic active and a weather generation package activated, together with all the display sliders set to the recommended settings, or higher; even under those demanding settings I found performance more than satisfying. One other observation I would make would be to re-state the suggestion for a scenery configuration tool to ease the work of making scenery tweaks and maybe adding/removing elements corresponding to your hardware configuration and capabilities. Notwithstanding these points, this is a scenery that sits very comfortably and indisputably in the premier league of the best scenery developers. I hope Pilots continue in their scenery development work and produce even more airports and regions of this superb level of quality.

John Melville ■

Platform: P3Dv4
Cost: €29.95 approx.
Developer: PILOT'S
Publisher: PILOT'S
Available:
www.pilots.shop
www.simmarket.com