



# Flying

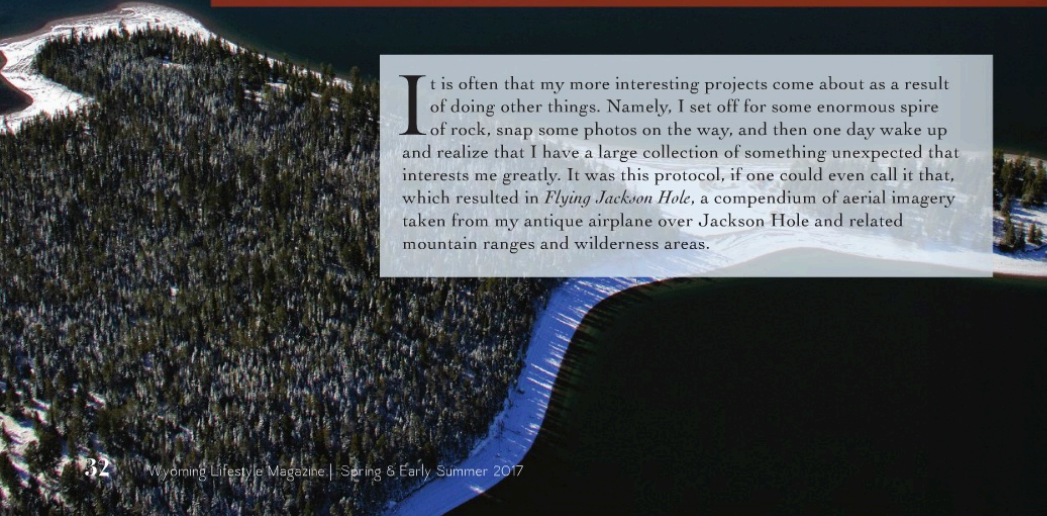
By Garrett Fisher  
Images by Garrett Fisher

# JACKSON HOLE

It is often that my more interesting projects come about as a result of doing other things. Namely, I set off for some enormous spire of rock, snap some photos on the way, and then one day wake up and realize that I have a large collection of something unexpected that interests me greatly. It was this protocol, if one could even call it that, which resulted in *Flying Jackson Hole*, a compendium of aerial imagery taken from my antique airplane over Jackson Hole and related mountain ranges and wilderness areas.

There is something to be said about the routes I choose to fly and how they relate to the original pathways that Native Americans, French fur trappers, settlers, cowboys of yore riding horses, and cowboys of today riding their BMWs use: terrain has an unsurprising way of shaping transportation and culture. The same holds true with an old airplane: it's just plain easier and safer to take the same pathways of those before me, albeit one thousand feet above the ground with an excess of wind and cold in my face. Jackson Hole was a major transit area for countless adventures through all points in and around Yellowstone, the mountains of Wyoming, and into Montana as I set off for seemingly greater adventures and destinations.

Like anywhere that I have lived or visited, it becomes surprising to uncover the magnitude of beauty and intrigue in a location, as terrestrial living has a way of dampening comprehensive access to the world around us. It is almost depressing to add up the surface of the earth that the average person has access to and traverses with any regularity, though to some extent, ignorance is bliss. When roads lead around something, few waste thought energy on what may lie in a certain area, instead focusing on the road ahead and a desired destination. An aircraft, and particularly a slow one, makes it possible to see and savor an immense amount of information about the world around us. More than just an accelerated







means from point A to B, it is a method to overfly areas without roads, private property, unforgiving terrain, and the like, and to do so with the best views the entire time. I can think of no greater freedom.

With that in mind, the idea of a book on Jackson Hole took shape over time, as I began to realize the magnitude of what I had been seeing as time passed by, and seasons changed with tremendous variety. I also became surprised at one element of the Jackson Hole that I did not expect to savor to such a degree as I did: the Tetons.

I had flown in the vicinity of Grand Teton once prior to moving to Wyoming, and the experience turned out to be the windiest and most turbulent that I ever encountered up to that point in any mountain range. Unknown to me that I had endured the worst, I had a reasonable and

anticipated fear of the Tetons, as they are the largest prominences of near vertical rock that I have found in the United States so far. It is not to say that something else more magnitudinous does not exist; it merely remains the most imposing thing I decided that I wanted to spend any time flying near.

Like a child afraid of water, I dipped my metaphorical toes into the pond, sneaking closer and closer to the Tetons, finding much to my shock and surprise, they did not seem to be engineered to guarantee my death. In fact, I found them to be bizarrely tranquil, despite all indications otherwise. With ambient upper level winds and such terrain, conventional wisdom among pilots dictates that I should encounter severe turbulence, and it simply did not happen.

As I overcame my personal terror getting closer to such large and unforgiving rock, a new chapter opened in my development as a pilot and aerial photographer: introducing weather phenomena to mountain photography. I previously conquered the fourteeners of Colorado in this airplane by waiting for the clearest and best days. Living in the Star Valley progressively allowed me to experiment with local weather phenomena, yet terrain there is nothing but a flower-filled meadow compared to the Tetons. Eventually, I started flying around Teton Range and Grand Teton when some orographic clouds were present.

The result was nothing short of aviation ecstasy, as I had the opportunity to soar below, above, and around clouds that I now have come to understand have a direct relationship with the mountains around them, forming features that appear stationary from a distance, yet are in reality a dynamic flow of air and moisture around an



unmoving and stationary monument to geologic supremacy. There I was, in a nearly 70 year old airplane with no heat, wandering through this complex atmospheric science experience in a way I could never have imagined.

Grand Teton National Park was such an experience that I have chosen to dedicate an entire future book to the subject. However, it gets fair representation in this project, and created an immense draw to fly in and around the entirety of the Teton Range, showing the mountains and the inhabited valley below from a wealth of unexpected angles.

There is a matter of complexity to deciding how to portray the entirety of an area from an airplane. I often ask myself what I would wish to see from the ground if I were visiting the area without an aircraft, and the answer for me is consistently the same: I don't mind a few images of popular areas, though I would like to see the things that I don't have time, stamina, or willingness to exert effort to see. With that in mind, I spend much of my perspectives in the book from on high, looking back upon Jackson Hole from many peaks and mountain ridges encircling the long valley, things that a person could spend a lifetime exploring and getting to understand.

Flying Jackson Hole is available at Jackson Hole Book Trader, Valley Book Store in Jackson, the author's website, and Amazon.com. [WLM](#)



Garrett Fisher is the author of ten books, seven of which relate to aerial photography. He is in the process of publishing a long list of aerial photography books focused on the Rockies as seen from his antique airplane. Garrett blogs regularly about his aviation adventures at [www.garrettfisher.me](http://www.garrettfisher.me).



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