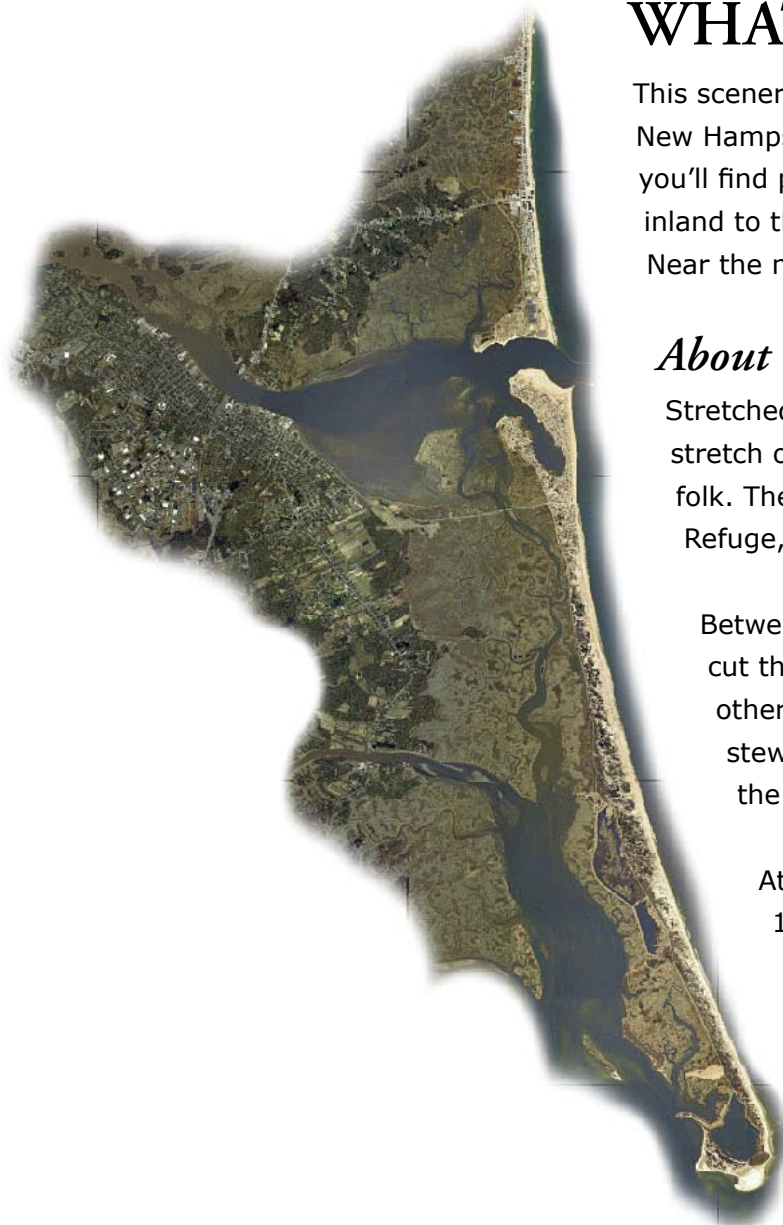




IN SEARCH OF THE HUNDRED DOLLAR BURGER

There's more to flying than screaming through the flight levels in an airborne bus. This series celebrates those intrepid fliers who put their credit cards on the line every weekend to bore holes in the sky. They're looking for a little relaxation, a spot of adventure, and a dash of sightseeing. They gather for pancake feeds in drafty hangars, tell lies to one another around the avgas pump, and spend their childrens' inheritance in search of the perfect cheeseburger at greasy spoon airport diners. That's what this series is all about: small (some might say tiny) airports that are loaded with character, as individual as the pilots who call them home.





WHAT YOU'VE JUST BOUGHT

This scenery encompasses a stretch of the Massachusetts coastline wedged just below the New Hampshire border, a bit north of Boston in the northeast United States. In this package you'll find photoscenery covering Plum Island, an 11 mile (18Km) long barrier island, and inland to the town of Newburyport, which is situated on the banks of the Merrimack river. Near the middle of the scenery area lies Plum Island Airfield (2B2), the heart of this project.

About The Area

Stretched along the far northern coast of the state of Massachusetts is Plum Island, a stretch of sand that's home to a small community of year-rounders and a few summer folk. The lower three-quarters of the island comprises the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, home to various species of birds, red foxes, skunks, raccoons, and deer.

Between the island and the town of Newburyport lies a wide stretch of salt-water marsh, cut through with a patchwork of canals and ponds. It's too briny for much vegetation other than the ubiquitous marsh grasses. The entire Great Marsh is under the stewardship of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation due to the delicate nature of its ecosystem.

At the far western end of the scenery is Newburyport, a seaport town first settled in 1635 and currently a popular tourist destination.

Wedged between Newburyport to the west and the marshes to the east is the tiny Plum Island Airfield. If you're arriving by air (what other way?), this tiny airport will be your first impression of the place. We've included a highly detailed rendition of the airport based on hundreds of real-world photos. It's an ideal home base for your GA explorations of New England.

VISITING PLUM ISLAND AIRFIELD

by **Bill Womack**

My wife and I could have driven right by Plum Island Airfield without knowing it. The one clue we'd arrived was the gleaming arch of the new hangar that caught the mid-morning sun. A friend told me not to miss this place if I was in the area, and he wasn't kidding. It claims to be the oldest operational field in the United States, but it's no O'Hare or JFK. Instead the visitor is greeted by a scattering of tired looking aircraft huddled around a patch of cracked hot-top that sprouts weeds like an old man grows hair—sporadically, and in unlikely places.

The airport manager spied me with my camera before I could squeeze off the first frame, and hustled over to check out what subversive activities I might be up to. Once I explained my mission, he was more than happy let me wander among the resident planes. "Stay off the runway and watch for traffic," was all he said. They're men of few words in these parts.

My wife chatted up an old-timer at the picnic table by the hangar and swatted at greenhead flies while I roamed the field. A pair of aged Ford tractors sat idle on the concrete slab remains of an old hangar, hooked up like plow horses to antique mowing gear. They must keep busy, as the longer of the two runways is close-cropped grass. Toward the ocean end of the paved runway, a wooden fence snakes across the tarmac at a diagonal, evidence of a property dispute that's left the last 400 feet of runway only usable as a parking lot for recreational vehicles and boats. From the way the manager spat out the story, I took it that this fracas had been going on for a while now, with no quick resolution in sight.

I circled the "terminal" building (more prognosis than function), a simple brown hut with a deep-set porch of bleached and pitted wood. Thirsty pilots are treated to canned soda from the machine on the porch (donation: one dollar). For transportation, they have a stable of bicycles you can rent for a quick spin into nearby Newburyport. Like New England itself, this is an unassuming airport that's a stranger to extravagance. Still, it gets the job done and the folks you meet will be glad you stopped by.



INSTALLATION AND CONFIGURATION

Installation

Installing Plum Island couldn't be simpler—all you need to do is double-click PlumIsland.exe and follow the instructions. The entire scenery except for one file is stored in your FSX FSAddon/Plum Island/ directory. The exception is the "2b2_traffic.bgl" file, which contains the AI traffic for Plum Island airport. That is put into your FSX Scenery/World/Scenery folder.

Uninstallation is done by choosing the uninstall option from your start menu under "FSAddon/Plum Island". NOTE: Our uninstaller isn't capable of removing the scenery.cfg entry for Plum Island, nor any desktop items that were created. Please remove these by hand before uninstalling.

Switching Between Summer and Winter Textures

FSX is a leap forward in many ways from previous versions. In the march of progress, a few details fell between the cracks. One of these was the loss of seasonal textures for models. As a result, if a scenery uses seasonally-specific models, such as the trees around the airport in Plum Island, they use the same textures year-round. Our workaround for this is to include a pair of batch files that let you replace your summer textures with winter versions when flying in winter, then back to non-winter after the thaw.

Activating & Deactivating Winter Textures

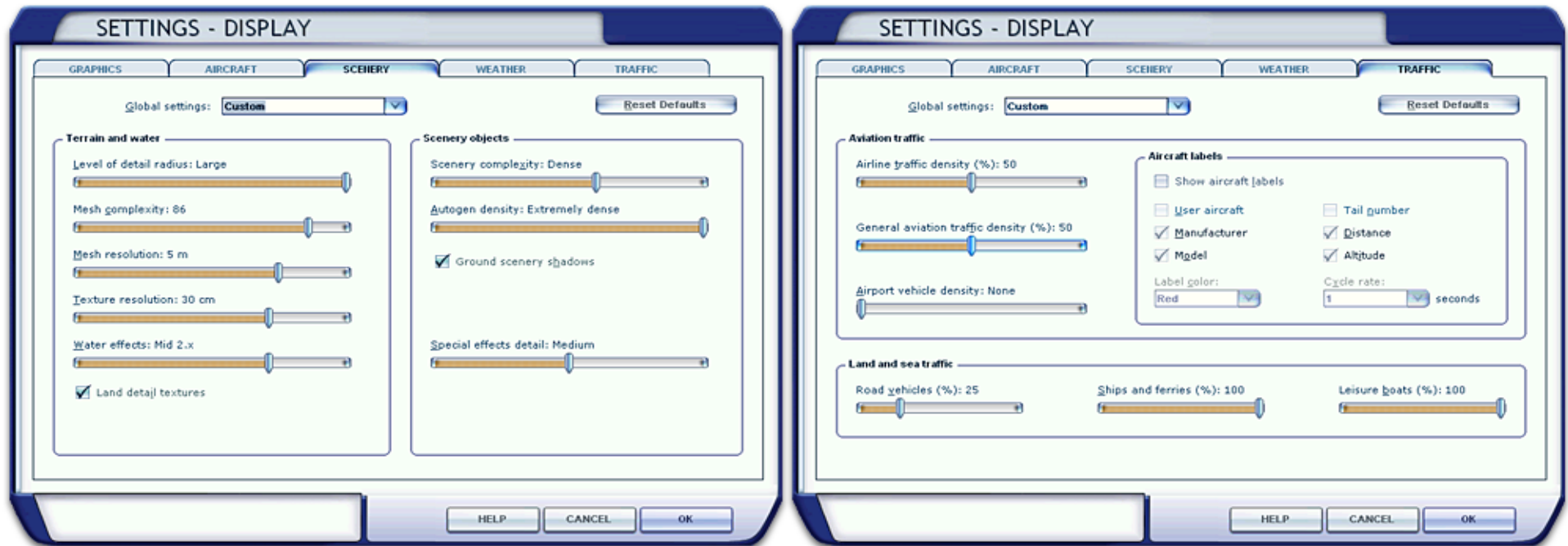
To bring on the snow, go to your root FSX folder and look in the FSAddon/Plum Island/Texture directory. Then double-click "use_winter_textures.bat". This copies the appropriate files from the "winter" subfolder to your main texture folder. When you've decided to fly in the warmer months, just click "use_non_winter_textures.bat" to copy the files from "non-winter" to your main texture directory.

If you have any trouble with the bat files working, you can also simply copy from the winter and on-winter subfolders and paste the entire contents into the main texture folder, allowing the files to overwrite.

NEVER paste anything into the non-winter and winter subfolders, or you risk accidentally overwriting critical files.



Recommended Settings



Scenery

- **Mesh Resolution: 10m or lower** – this assures that the terrain will conform properly to the photoscenery
- **Texture resolution: 60cm or lower** – the patch of ground around the airport is sampled at 60cm/pixel, so setting the resolution to at least 60cm will let you see the most detail possible.
- **Autogen density: Dense to Extremely Dense** – if you have the computing horsepower to enable this, please do. Nearly every building in the photoscenery area was added by hand, and using high autogen settings will show them off nicely.

Traffic

- **General aviation traffic density: almost any setting above 0%** -- the AI traffic at 2B2 is set to activate at 1% density, so even if you normally run with no AI, you might consider it for this airport.
- **Road vehicles: 25%** -- many of the major roads in the area have vehicle traffic, but setting the density higher than 25% makes the area appear too congested. It's not Manhattan, after all!

COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER ADD-ONS

This scenery should fit in well with the default Massachusetts coastline, however it blends even better with Flight 1 Software's Ultimate Terrain X: USA. If you already had UTX installed before installing Plum Island, you should encounter no compatibility problems. If you install Ultimate Terrain X after Plum Island, you'll need to manually adjust the layer order of the sceneries in your FSX scenery library screen so that Plum Island is above UT in priority.

The photoscenery was hand-colored to match the default ground tiles, but has been tested with Ground Environment Pro as well, to good effect.

Plum Island was tested with both the default FSX terrain mesh, and FSGenesis' USA 10m Terrain v.2.0. Both work well.

No other addons were tested in conjunction with this scenery, and so compatibility cannot be guaranteed. However, we'll be happy to assist you with any problems you might encounter. For support, **visit the FSAddon forums.**



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CREDITS

Every project of this scope is a collaboration. The key players who made this one possible are:

Scenery Concept and Design

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Francois Dumas

Additional Site Photography and Local Flavor

Robert "Helldiver" Folsom

Virtual Photographer Extraordinaire

Nick Churchill

Intrepid Beta Testers

Chris Brisland

Michael Carr

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Nick Churchill

Jim Dhaenens

Robert Folsom

Ted Freeman

Lars Peter Hammer

Jun Kazama

Ian Pearson

Rick Piper

Christian Stock

Joe Watson

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL AERODROME

Small airports like Plum Island are a vanishing breed. If you enjoy flying in and around this one virtually, why not make plans to visit it in “real life” as well? If you’re in the Boston area, it’s well worth the short hop to check it out. Plum Island is entirely privately supported, with no help from the government. In order to keep the door open and the lights on, they depend on visitors like you to pay them a visit, make a donation, and live a bit of aviation history.

To find out what’s happening at the real 2B2, visit Alex Hasapis’s “**2B2 Flyby**” blog. He keeps the world updated with what’s happening both on-field and off.

Special Thanks

This scenery wouldn’t have been possible without a slew of real-world photographs of the airport, taken with the kind permission of Steve Noyes, the airport manager. He got very excited when I explained my plans for a virtual version of his field. I hope he’s happy with the result!

I never would have known that 2B2 existed without advice from Robert Folsom, “Helldiver” to those of you who frequent FS forums. He’s lived in the area his whole life, and was a fount of information on the airport and its environs. If you visit the real thing and discover similarities between it and this virtual version, thank Robert for standing on my neck and making me get it right. Any details that are less than accurate are because I was ignoring him and exercising my artistic license.

Bill Womack, August 2008

