

AVSIM Commercial Scenery Review

Hervey Bay (YHBA)



Product Information		
Publishers: OrbX FTX		
Description: Australian airport and environment scenery.		
Download Size: 477.9 MB	Format: Download	Simulation Type: FSX
Reviewed by: Tim Capps AVSIM Staff Reviewer - November 15, 2009		

Introduction

If you want to fly "as real as it gets" you might want to consider the land down under. The FTX (Full Terrain Experience) scenery geniuses at OrbX have woven a magic carpet of regional scenery in their color series for Australia, and decorated it with a fine collection of detailed airports.

This makes Australia arguably the best place to fly the virtual skies, and Hervey Bay (YHBA) may be the best place to start. Not only do you get nothing less than a digital reproduction of the airport itself, but 100 square kilometers of the surrounding world, including the seafront community of Hervey Bay City. Orbx once again proves that no one is doing scenery better.

The Fraser Coast adorns the eastern seaboard of Australia, and is home to ecological marvels like Fraser Island and The Great Barrier Reef. Hervey Bay is located 300 kilometers north of Brisbane. The seafront community of Hervey Bay City is set in the middle of 40 miles of beaches and has one of the fastest-growing populations in Australia. It is a holiday magnet, not least for being "The Whale Spotting Capital of the World."

Hervey Bay Airport is the main airport the city and the Fraser Coast region. In addition to active general aviation operations, the airport hosts scheduled commercial flights by Jetstar and Virgin Blue jets.

Installation and Documentation

Hervey Bay is available through The FlightSim Store for download. Orbx provides a lot of extras, enough to be occasionally bewildering, especially to new users.

Managing various options for your Orbx scenery products is made easier by FTX Central, which serves as a one-stop control panel for scenery. There are no less than 19 options for Hervey Bay, including 13 ambient sound sets that are tied to various locations both at the airport and in the surrounding area. Other options include static vehicles, animated people and other filler objects, 3D grass and a fictional helicopter pontoon at the marina for rotary wing fans.

A 24-page manual is available through FTX Central, as well. It is very detailed and includes information on optimum settings, tips, and scheduled flights (which you will see if you have the freeware Orbx FTX AU Traffic add-on installed), plus all the necessary charts.

But wait, there's more! You also get FTX Aero. This is a utility that allows you to select from different asphalt bump maps for greater visual detail. It also lets you choose a high definition globally surface for any Runway 18 (common in Australia), and different taxiway markings. These will work for any airport globally.

The scenery is not difficult to use, but the options and optimal FSX settings make study of the manual essential. Fortunately, it is well-illustrated and clearly written.

A Sunny, Busy, Dusty Place

At least that is my recollection from my virtual flying vacation to Hervey Bay. Think opposite of generic – that would be particular – and you have the essence of Hervey Bay. If you usually teleport to the end of the active to start your flights, you might want to reconsider.

The airport is recreated in loving detail from the baggage flats to the rusty roofs of the hangars, and you don't want to miss any of it. Beyond the aprons and runway is a dry, dusty, weedy, rutted patch of land that makes you thirsty just looking at it. You can almost hear the buzz of flies. Airport fixtures from radio equipment and lights all the way down to tall grass and concrete cones are modeled. I'm sure there are one or two things the real airport has that didn't find their

Test System
Dell XPS 430 2.5 Core 2 Quad 6 GB RAM Nvidia GeForce 9800 GT Vista 64
Flying Time: 10 hours

way into Orbx's version, but nothing looks like it's missing.

As with all Orbx scenery, it blends best if you have the appropriate color series for regional terrain, in this case, Australia Gold. But even without it, so much territory is covered that there are no abrupt and unpleasant transitions to worry about.

Depending on where you set your sliders, Hervey Bay City is a bustling place with lots of vehicular traffic. Judging from the numerous detailed store fronts, video rental places and even a Target that are modeled, they must be out shopping. Residential areas are depicted with distinctive roofs that remind you that you are not in the USA. The beaches are long and inviting.

Hervey Bay looks photoreal, but it would be more correct to say that the tiles are vastly improved and photoreal with a generous serving of particular scenery elements.

Showing Heidi the Whales

The Piper Cub is perfect for the low and slow sightseeing this scenery demands. If you have the A2A version, you can take Heidi over the water to find the whales. It is the whale-spotting capital of the world, after all, so would Orbx leave the cetaceans out? If you answered anything but "no," you don't know Orbx. I had included a picture of the whales, but decided to let you have the fun of finding them yourself.

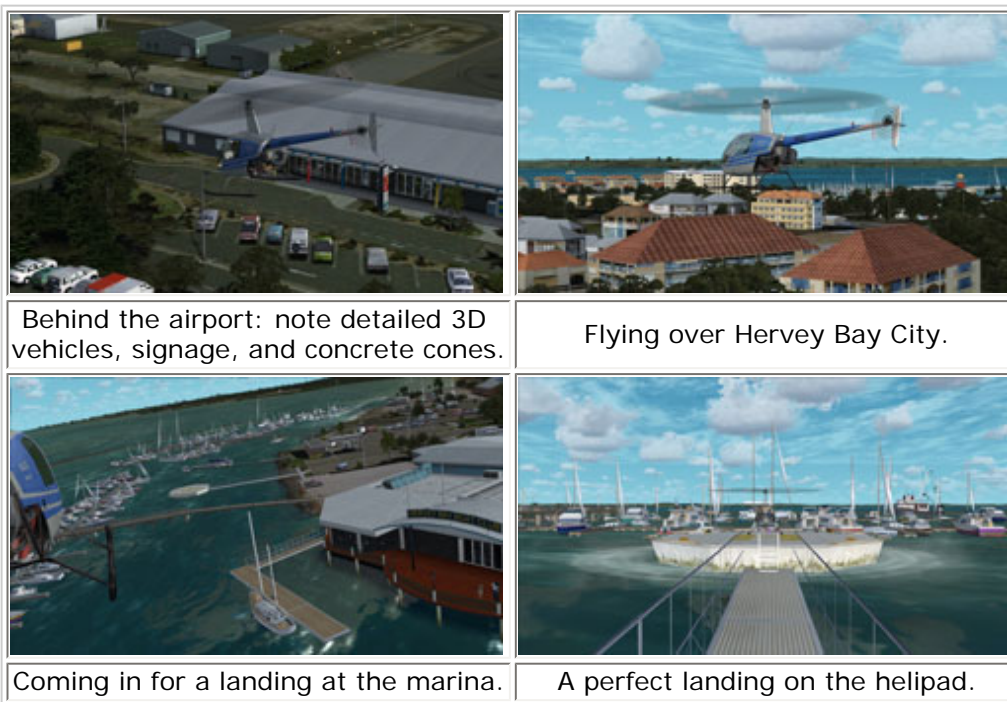


As you turn onto the active, notice how FTX Aero has improved the runway texture (assuming you have set it up). Heidi's tour will take us over the water, along the coastline after a left turn, then directly toward the small island with the boat bobbing in the surf nearby.

"Thar she blows!" might not be in Heidi's vocabulary, but she will see the whales – two of them – near the yellow boat. Turning back toward the point of land tipped by a long pier, you'll notice how Orbx has realistically blended shallow, muddied-looking water close to shore into the pristine ocean. The effect is beautiful.

The Helipad and Marina

After trading your Cub for a helicopter, you can enjoy the pontoon helipad at the marina. Of course, the marina is nearly as finely detailed as the airport, with many sailboats and pedestrians. The helipad may be fictional, but you could not tell from looking at it. It makes a nice challenge to descend slowly past the on-looking tourists on the deck of the boat club to the just-big-enough helipad.



Of course, all of this graphical goodness does not come for free, and frame rates at the recommended settings are going to challenge anything but the latest and greatest system. This should not deter anyone with an adequate system, however, since it is quite flyable if not quite silky smooth in some situations, I had no problems with sliders pushed well to the right on my Best Buy off-the-shelf test system.

Summary

Some developers are known for recreating big airports. As ambitious as that sounds, Orbx is recreating an entire continent, bit by bit.

Hervey Bay is among the best examples of the loving detail Orbx lavishes on its projects. The sights, the sounds, the attractions, the challenges, the ordinary and even the ugly are all there to pull you into a virtual representation of this tiny piece of Australia.

What I Like About Hervey Bay

- Photoreal-looking unimproved land with dust, ruts and weeds
- Detailed town surrounding the airport itself
- Strikingly realistic water that shows muddy shallows deepening into pristine sea
- Whale-spotting
- Marina that looks alive
- Ambient sounds

What I Don't Like About Hervey Bay

- Can't really think of anything, other than, like many add-ons, it makes me wish my computer were state-of-the-art

Printing

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