

AVSIM Commercial Aircraft Review

J-3 Cub



Product Information

Publishers: [Flight Replicas](#)

Description: General aviation add-on aircraft .

Download Size:
104 MB

Format:
Download

Simulation Type:
FSX

Reviewed by: [Bert Pieke](#) AVSIM Senior Staff Reviewer - May 11, 2009

Introduction:

My first question was: "Why a Piper Cub? Does not FSX come with one, and a pretty nice one at that?"

Well, after spending some time with this recently released add-on, I must say: "This one beats the default, hands down."

From the appearance to the flight model, to the little things like flying with the window down, to watching the cables move to... OK, I'm getting ahead of myself.

The Cub has always been one of my favorite planes, partly because it looks like it could have built it in my basement, and partly because it seems like one the simplest airplanes to get into and take for a spin. It actually reminds me of the great days, many years ago when I, with a buddy, would take our home built gas models out for a flight in a local park or meadow.

If you have seen the DVD: "One Six Right", you'll recall that it features, among many wonderful aircraft, a pretty yellow Piper Cub, taking off from, you guessed it, Rwy 16R at Van Nuys airport. After take-off, it lazily tours through a lovely valley... just inviting you to hop on board and join in the fun! If you have not seen the DVD, I urge you to find a copy and watch it. It is a visual delight and a great testament to General Aviation, past and present.

So, thinking of the One Six Right movie, I was really looking forward to trying this add-on, and can now report that I was not disappointed.

Installation & Documentation:

You can find the J-3 Cub, downloadable at the [Sky Unlimited](#) website. In keeping with the simplicity of the airplane itself, the Cub is priced under \$20 which is quite reasonable.

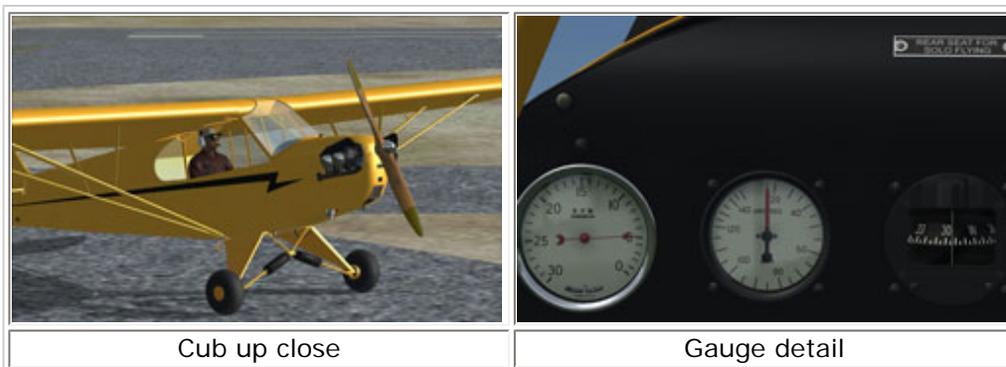
The installation is straightforward, using the Flight1 wrapper for security, and you end up with a choice of four distinct models, and several paint jobs. One thing that is hard to ignore, is that this relatively simple plane comes as a 104 MB download. This is the result of some high detail textures that make this model look gorgeous, but this also fuels a concern that there is no such thing as a free lunch, in this case a nagging concern about performance.

The documentation is simple, but adequate, and professionally put together. One thing to note from the manual is that the altimeter has a rotating scale that is manually set before take-off, to ASL or AGL, your choice!

Flying the J-3 Cub:

My first impression was that the yellow Cub was pretty much like the FSX Cub, until I started to examine the details. Outside, I noticed the chromed cylinder head covers, the adjustable stabilizer, the clean overall look, and the ROUND wheels! Funny how suddenly the FSX Cub does not quite measure up anymore.

Test System
Q6600 @ 3.2 GHz 2 GB DDR 800 Ram Nvidia 9600GT 512MB Video Card 22" LCD monitor 1680x1050 resolution CH Products USB Yoke WindowsXP Professional FSX run with "fps limiter" application set at 30 fps and freeway traffic set at zero
Flying Time: 20 hours



More importantly, inside the cockpit you notice the high resolution panel and gauges, the moving brake pedals, complete with cables and pushrods, and the impression that everything that is present in the real airplane is modeled, and in full detail. From the cockpit, you also notice that the fuel gauge, which looks like a bent coat hanger attached to a float in the fuel tank in front of you, is a lot longer than on the FSX model. I actually looked for a factory manual to verify the length of this gauge and found that it sticks out eleven inches with a full tank of fuel. So, just to make it look a bit less distracting, I made a habit of testing the plane with 50% fuel on board.

As you settle into the rear seat which is used for solo flying, you begin to feel right at home, and ready for a first flight. BTW, I should mention that there is no 2D cockpit. I never missed it, but I know that for some, that is an issue.



I just had the pleasure of testing Bill Womack's Plum Island scenery, so that is where I took the Cub for its test flight. It

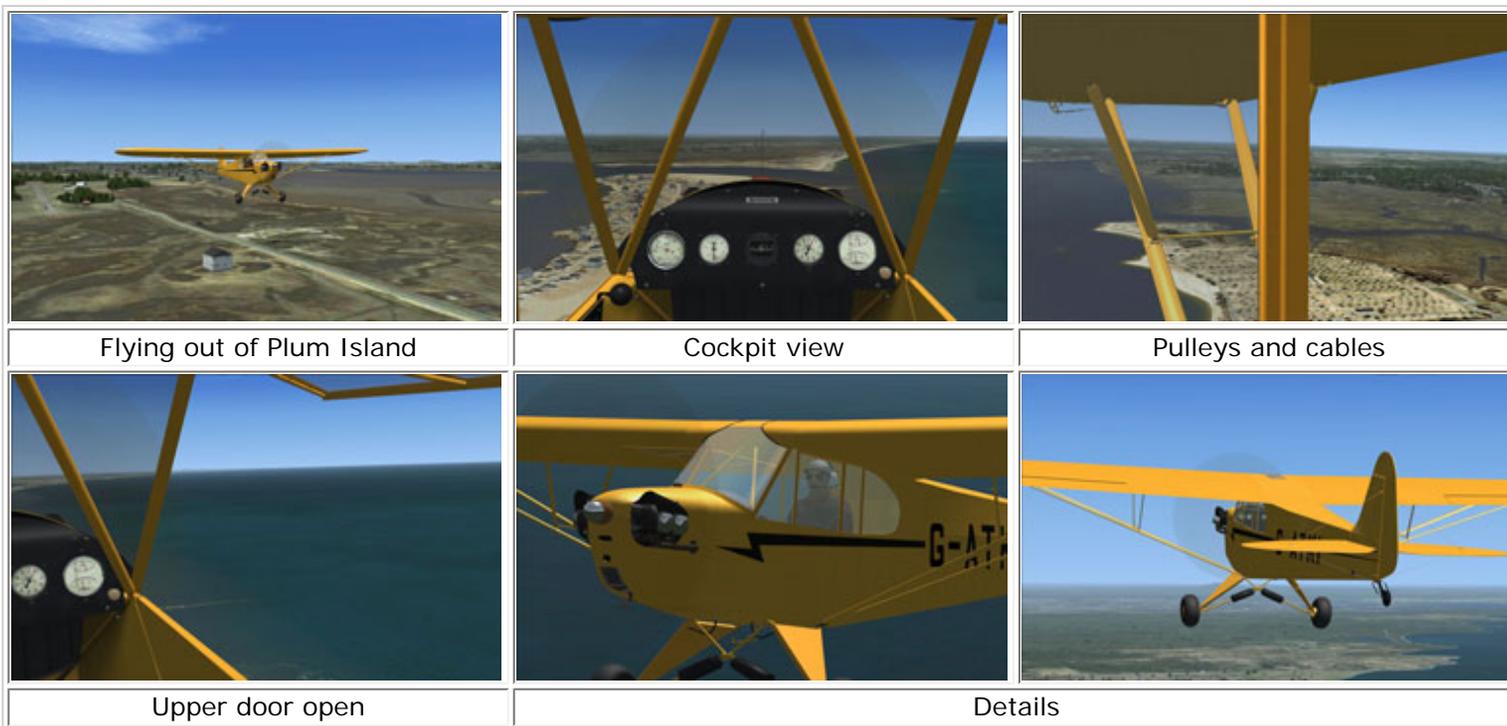
is quite simple to start in this plane. Set the take-off trim and the altimeter, adjust the seat for maximum visibility and run up the throttle. In almost no time, the tail wheel comes off the ground and you are flying. A great ways to see the scenery, as you are going low and slow, at about 75 mph.

The plane handles really well with a great "seat of the pants" feeling. You've got lots of time to find the airport and adjust your landing approach since you are descending at 50 mph when coming in on final. One thing I noticed is that it is possible to reach the limit of the elevator "full up" trim, when trimming for a gradual descent. After consultation with the author, I was given a fix to the aircraft.cfg file, increasing the elevator_trim_limit to 20.0. This fixed the problem.



Setting the altimeter

After a few take-offs, the plane begins to feel very comfortable. It goes where you want it to, and it has this wonderful lighter than air feel which makes it all a lot of fun.



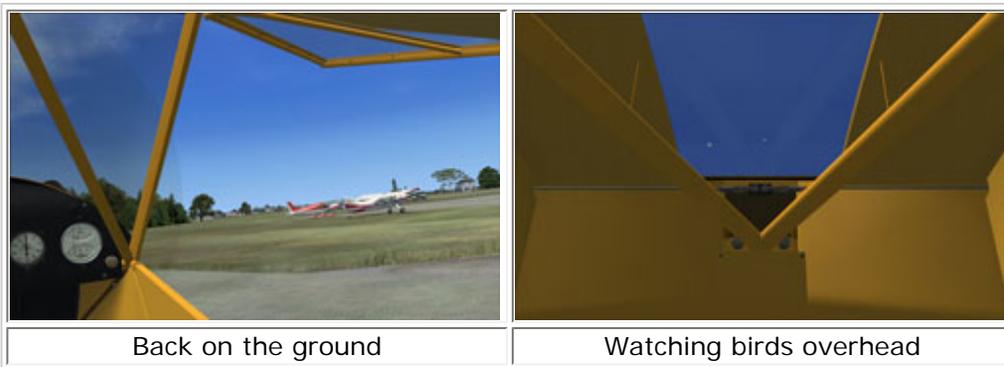
Flying out of Plum Island

Cockpit view

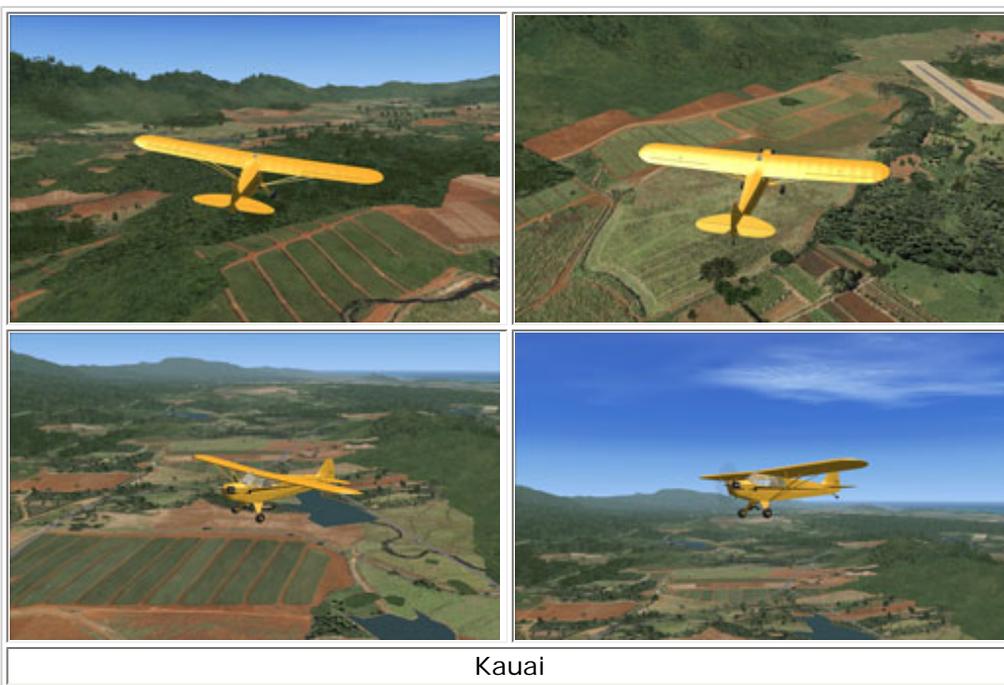
Pulleys and cables

Upper door open

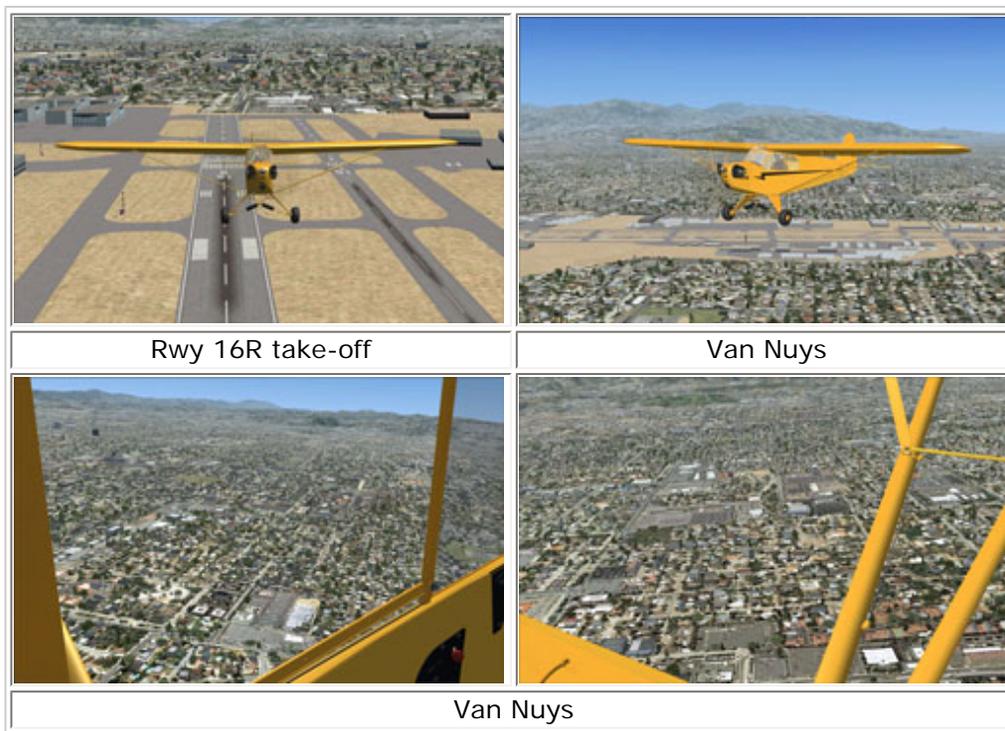
Details



Some of my favorite flights with the Cub were in Kauai, where FSX provides spectacular scenery (if you have not been there, try flying out of Lihue airport). Here are some pictures that capture the scenery. I've included the full 1680x1050 screenshots, just click on the pictures to view.



Of course, I took the Cub to Van Nuys airport as well! And below, the shots. Again, a nice, but very different area to explore low and slow.

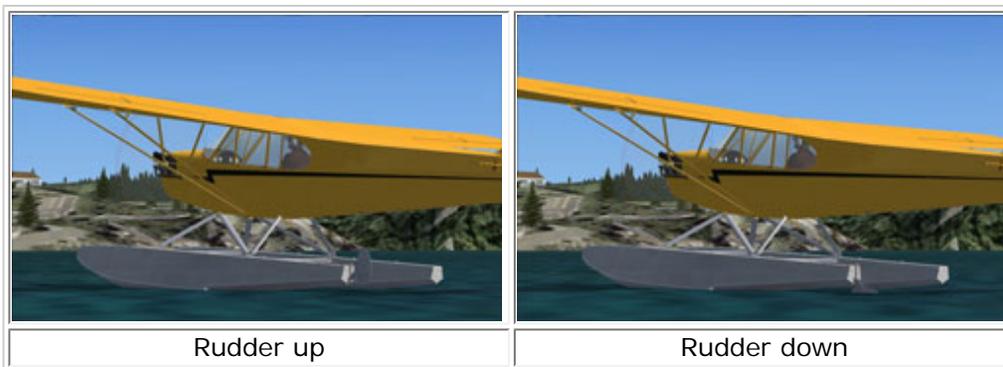


Just a note on performance: There is a noticeable delay in loading the external textures on this airplane, and in complex sceneries, I noticed some scenery stuttering/hesitation. Although the model looks great, others have managed to create really good looking aircraft with much smaller texture bitmaps. Something to consider for future updates!

Animations and special effects:

The complete modeling of all features on the Cub, extend to a left window that can be opened and lowered partly or in full by grabbing and moving with the mouse, as well as a two part door on the right side that also opens and closes by clicking on the handles. You can happily forget about Shift-e and shift-e-2. It is really nice to fly with the left window and the upper right door open when the weather allows.

Another nice animation is the nifty water rudder lift mechanism on the float plane version that looks like it belongs on a sea going kayak. Why make it complicated if a simple design works?



Summary:

The Flight Replicas J-3 Cub is a nice package. Since this is simple airplane, it is not a question of “what is modeled”, but “how it is modeled”. As best I can tell, every screw, nut, cable, lever, and pulley is there and moves. Well, not the screws and nuts.

Moreover, the view from the back seat is spot on and it really feels like flying! Although FSX comes with a nice Cub as part of the default hangar, this one is clearly superior in every way. I did notice some jerkiness in complex scenery environments, which I attribute to the high detail textures, but in most of the places where I took this plane; there was no noticeable performance impact.

What I Like About The J3 Cub Package

- Beautifully modeled interior and exterior
- Float and Ski versions to explore
- Handles well, and grows on you, like riding a bicycle
- Neat details like the sliding window and the rudder pull on the float version
- Reasonable pricing

What I Don't Like About The J3 Cub Package

- Large texture bitmaps can impact performance in demanding scenery areas

Printing

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[J3 Cub](#)

[\(adobe acrobat required\)](#)

Comments?

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