



The Flyin' Solo VanLife on the Highways and Byways of North America

RICK'S ROADS

Ride Along and Enjoy the People, Places, and Who Knows What



BLOG POST: 2023.05.15

Lakeland, FL: Florida Polytechnic University, IST Building



Welcome to Road Mode '23! Re-retired as of 5/4/23, I was eager to see a lot of new sights, and to repeat a few favorites in another amazing months-long tour of the highways and byways of North America.

I couldn't do my full-out launch just yet; there were a couple of things to attend to first: specifically, my photo shoots at two of Florida's State Championship Track Meets. They would be in Jacksonville, and I was heading thither from Cape Coral – the home of B&J, the former co-hoppers of my buddy Hops MacBarley, whom I'm sure you know from the web site Barhopping Bone Island (<http://keywestbarhops.com/>) – and Lakeland lay more-or-less on the way.



There is a show on the Smithsonian Channel called “How Did They Build That?” that I've enjoyed several episodes of. One such episode was about the building for Innovation, Science & Technology at Florida Polytechnic University. It looked totally amazing, and I thought, “Damn, that's here in Florida? I gotta go check it out some day.”

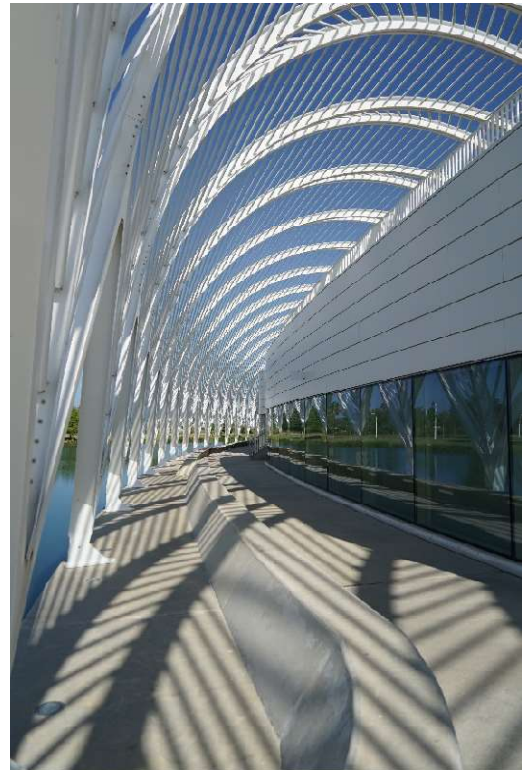
“Some day” turned out to be this day.

It was easy to get to, being right off a major highway (I-4). But every place is easy to get to with GooGirl on board. I can type in any place and she will guide me there in her almost-cheerful voice.

Classes and exams had recently ended, so only a very few people were on campus. There was nobody manning the gates to campus, so I didn't have to lie about my grandkid getting accepted here and wanting to see the place or any such humbug. I drove right in, right past the ISTB Building itself, and into the nearest lot, right across the pond from it.

Camera in hand, I set out to take a photo of any angle I thought was cool. Turns out, just about every angle was.

I crossed over the footbridge onto the ISTB's island and inside the crazy cage that encloses it but doesn't close it. This thing is so trippy. The curves and the bars and the shadows and the reflections in the mirror-ish windows all makes for a dazzling experience.



No one had questioned my presence yet, so I began to feel like nobody was going to. I proceeded down the walkway on the west side of the ISTB, snip-snappin' with alacrity.

Digital photography is the bomb; imagine that, not that long ago, I would have had buy film to take these pics, worry about how many I could take – usually 24 was a roll (I often bought 36'ers) – and then have to pay again to have them developed onto 5"x 3" paper, and only after you got those back did you find out if you took a good pic.

How primitive. Evolution has been great, hasn't it?

I got around to the north end of the structure and felt no desire to stop clicking away. I walked back to the south end to catch the illuminated entrance before checking out the more-sunlit east

side. I also worked up the moxie to climb the stairs to the wide-open deck at the second-story level.

It was even trippier up there because you still couldn't see where all those curved beams above your head ended, but you also could not see where the other end was. If you stood at the rail, you could, but from most of the deck, they came from some vague upper point and vanished out-of-sight to some vague lower point.

There were a few tables and seats, but it was 99% empty up there. There is not much about the ISTB that you'd describe as "a practical use of space." It's all for show and is quite showy about being that way. But, hey, it's the Innovation building, so it should be innovative, wouldn't you agree?



Still, how much did that big cage cost?? And it does nothing. It doesn't even protect you from the rain. Or even the sun!

The interior had a very modern lobby and staircase, but from what I had been able to see through the windows, the teaching-learning areas seemed to be a good bit more standard. I did not think at all that I should be allowed to wander at will around the inside.

Sated with pics from within the cage, and having taken enough of the outside from across the lake, I decided it was time to get some of my own innovative images. It was time to launch the drone.

My DJI Mini 3 Pro, quite compact at just 249 grams, would be plenty discreet enough to zoom up, fly around, snap photos from the sky and come back to papa without being seen.

I walked to the bridge on the far side of Pond #1 and sat down on a bench. I launched Maxy (clever name for a Mini, yes?) from there and loved the fact that I lost sight of him completely before he even got halfway across the pond. From there, I had to fly by what I could see on-screen. That fully-contained control box is tremendous. No need to attach your phone to it. The screen and receiver are right there with the flight controls. My prior drone – a Mavic EXO -- never seemed to be able to hold a connection with my phone, so I almost never used it.

In retrospect, I should have taken a fly-around-and-above video, but this was really the first time ever flying this drone and my piloting skills were rudimentary. Had I

grown up playing video games, I probably could have flown a lap inside the cage, maybe even slaloming the bases. But I didn't, so I couldn't.

I flew Maxy back to the bridge, set him down gently right in front of me, chuckled at my cleverness and prepared to depart.

It would still be a few more days before this would feel like true Road Mode again, but this was a good start.



Check out the full photo gallery on Smugmug:
<https://rickmackenzie.smugmug.com/20230515-Lakeland-Florida/>