



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: 2024.09.14  
York, Maine



*Nubble Lighthouse, York, Maine*

While hanging out in the Boston area, I found a web link about the *Best Place to Fly A Drone In New England*, or something like that. One was Scituate Light, which appealed to me right away. It was only about a half-hour drive from where I was camped, plus it made lunch with Wynn, my longtime dear friend and confidant (who lived in that area) a sure thing. And that's always good.

I also saw, though, another lighthouse, in York, Maine, two states away. Two whole states!

Now, when you live in Key West, crossing two state lines is a commitment. If you go up the East coast, through Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Boca Raton, Daytona, and Jacksonville, you're looking at a 535-mile ride to reach Georgia.

Google Maps will tell you to plan on 8:34, but it's gonna take you longer than that. With the 45 MPH speed limit prevailing for most of the Overseas Highway, it takes 3.5 hours just to get to Miami, and that's only the first 150 miles. You could cover the remaining 385 in 5 hours, I guess, if you could average 77 MPH through traffic delays, construction slow-downs, and a fuel/rest stop or two. I plan on more like 7.

From KW, if you trek up the west side of the peninsula, you'll need more than a day. Using Florida's Turnpike, the ride to and through the panhandle covers 838 miles. If you duck the tolls and use I-75 across Alligator Alley and up through Tampa and Tallahassee, you drive 874 miles.

(Surprisingly, it is actually 9 miles shorter – 865 miles -- to take I-95 up the east coast and turn left onto I-10 at Jacksonville. Weird.)

The panhandle will surprise you. You reach Tallahassee and think you've just about conquered the course, but you still have two hours to go. The last 168 miles are actually in Central Time! You can win quite a few bets on that: "What is the easternmost state in the Central Time Zone?" Even Florida people don't guess Florida.

That 874 miles is, in fact, more miles than it takes to cross the width of Texas. As you enter The Lone Star State on I-10W, you pass a mileage sign the tells you it is 857 miles to El Paso, at the westernmost point of the state.

Driving I-5N from the Mexican border to the Oregon border is a mere 796 miles.

But from the southwest suburbs of Boston MA, though the nub of NH, to York ME you need to drive 95 miles. Even with traffic, that's comfortably under two hours. I did not leave Big Bro's abode till 6:00 and I still made it with plenty of time to send my intrepid drone aloft before the sun went down.

There is something about lighthouses, right? Especially in Maine. The low, rocky coast seems to provide the perfect scenery on which to plant a tall, white tower and a quaint white cabin.

Little Bird and I were coming here fresh from an aerial video/photo episode at Scituate (MA) Light (photo, right), so the mood was right and ripe.



As soon as I pulled in here, I knew it was a winner. First of all, the weather could not have been more perfect: 72 degrees in brilliant, late-day sunshine, and a 2 MPH breeze gusting to 3 -- a drone pilot's dream.

The road to Nubble took Maxx and me along York Beach, and then wound through a quaint neighborhood to Cape Neddick. The parking lot for lighthouse viewing was just about full when I got there. I was fortunate to find a spot that someone had just vacated. There is a popular seafood restaurant and bar right there too – Fox’s Lobster House -- so many folks were here for that as well.



Before I launched my bird, I strolled around and snapped some iPhone pics. What a great look! A “nubble”, as I found out later, as “a mound or a hump”, in this case, a mound of large rocks about 50 yards offshore. So, the Nubble Lighthouse was named after neither Norm Nubble nor Ned Nubble. Nor Napoleon Nubble. Nor Nessie Nubble. (You get the idea.)

In this golden-hour light, with the Atlantic Ocean water sharing the blue of the cloudless sky and calming lapping the dark, shoreline rocks, this place looked so good. It was the kind of time-and-place where you’re just content to sit on a big old rock and drink it all in.

Unless, that is, you want to get some aerial photos of it all. So, as I strolled and snippy-snapped, I was also scoping out the best place from which to launch Little Bird.

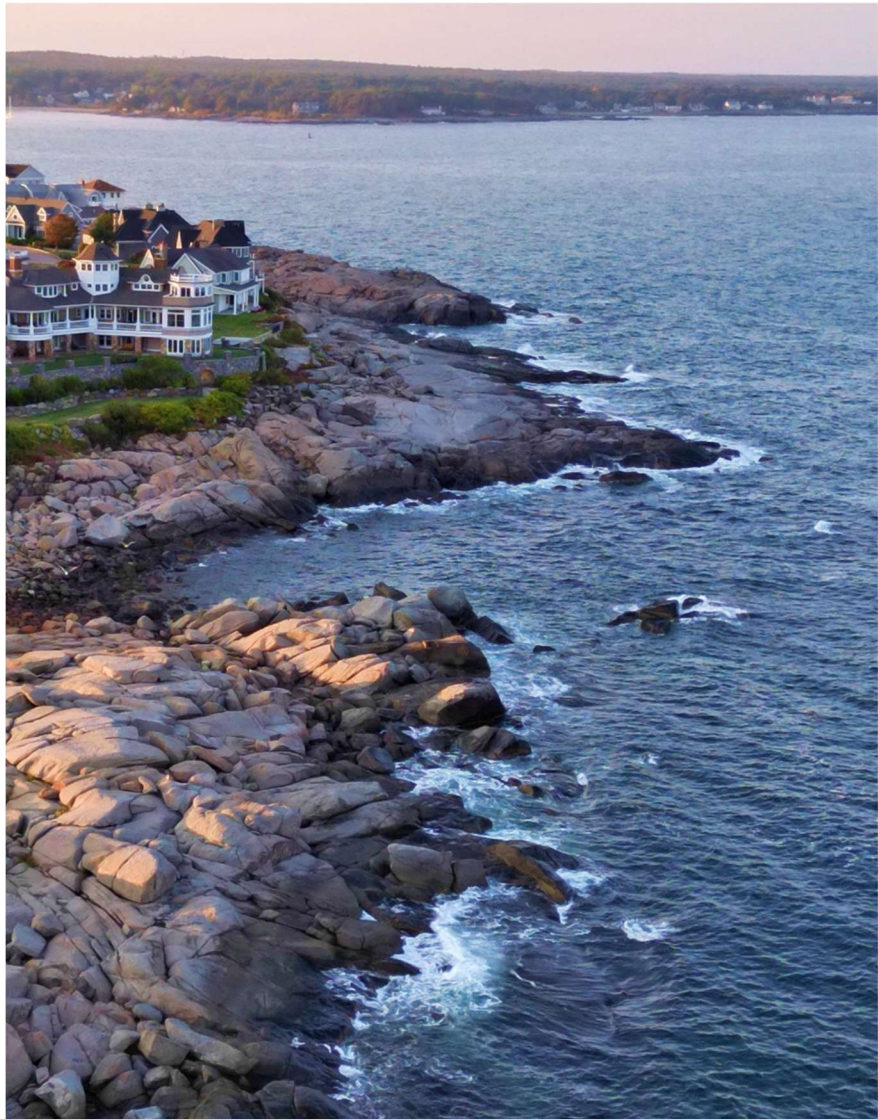
There were a *lot* of people here! (Beautiful evening, great sunset venue, cool eat-and-drinkery, go figure.) I did not want anyone freaking out about one of those goll-durn drones flying over their precious little heads, so I sought a discreet spot for take-off and landing.

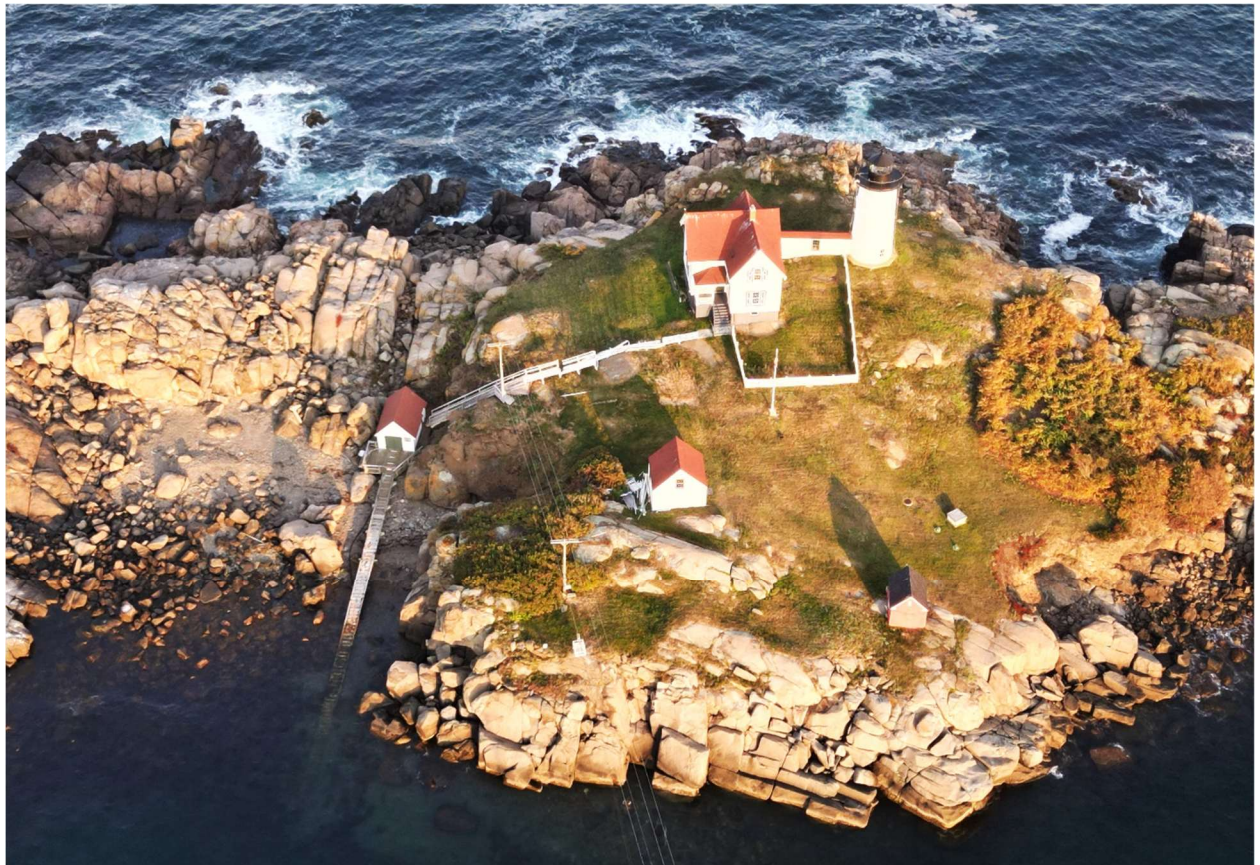
My UAS (Unmanned Air System) pilot's app showed no restrictions hereabouts, but OOP (Operation Over People) is always prohibited without very special advance permission. So, it was not just the paranoid opinions of some Mainiac that I was avoiding, nor was it purely courtesy; it was Fear o' th' Law.

As it turned out, the very best spot of all was right beside Maxx's right front fender. There was a 4' x 4' wooden platform, almost like a picnic tabletop, but without legs, that was serving as a cover for some sort of plumbing or waterworks control box ... or something like that. I didn't care what was under it, only what would sit neatly on top of it (i.e., Little Bird).

We were on the northern side of the small Cape Neddick peninsula, and most people were on the south side or the western point. I prepped my Bird in BM, then took him out to the platform and launched him before anyone even noticed.

Immediately, I was excited. These aerial views were blowing away the ground-level shots. Even the northward views, away from the nubble, were inspiring. But when I yawed LB to the east and flew him out over the chilly water, it was spectacular. Man, I was loving it! You should see the videos!













BLOG POST: 2024.09.15  
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So, I flew around the north end of the nubble till LB's battery ran down, then brought him back, put in a fresh one, sent him up to the south side for a second round of video and photos. The vid finished with a nice sun-setting shot with a glimmering golden trail across the surface of the near-shore waters. Sweet.

But Little Bird and I were not done here. A few miles away, I found me a nice middle-grade hotel that would pay no attention to its parking lot, put all my drone batteries on the charger and went to bed early. I'd be up early in the morning, flying again.

Not that I'd be there for sunrise. That would probably be pretty cool, but pre-dawn and me do not get along. 7:00 was early enough. When I got to the same parking lot, there were five other vehicles there. Discreet launch points would be easy to come by.

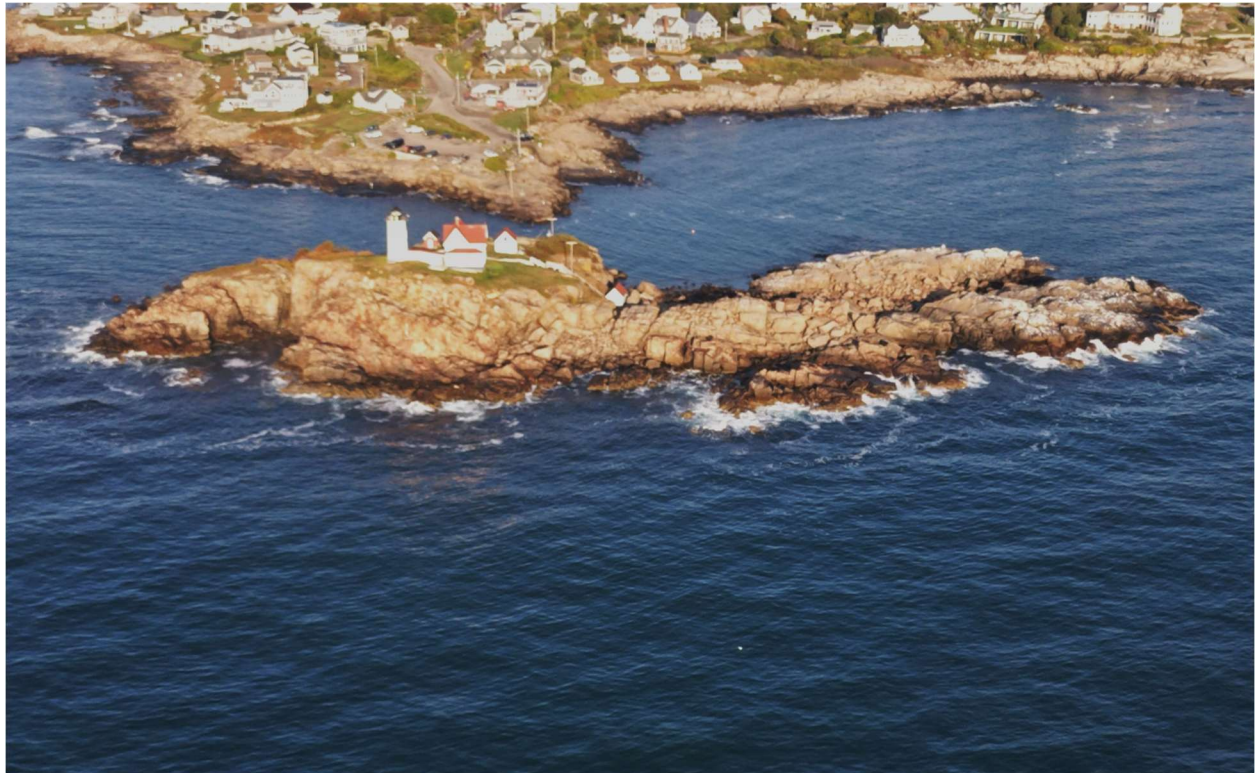
At ground-level, early-morning Nubble Lighthouse is a not-at-all good photo. It is all silhouetted against the rising sun.



Now, if you had some clouds above the horizon, and you caught it just before (or as) the sun crested the horizon, you might get a colorful, crisp, black, backlit shape.

Getting there when I did, though, you got a lot of glare and not much else.

But aloft, well, that turned out to be tremendous. LB flew around the south end of the nubble, yawing leftwards to keep the lighthouse in shot, then way out to sea and northward with the sun at his back, getting a beautiful view that nobody else could see.

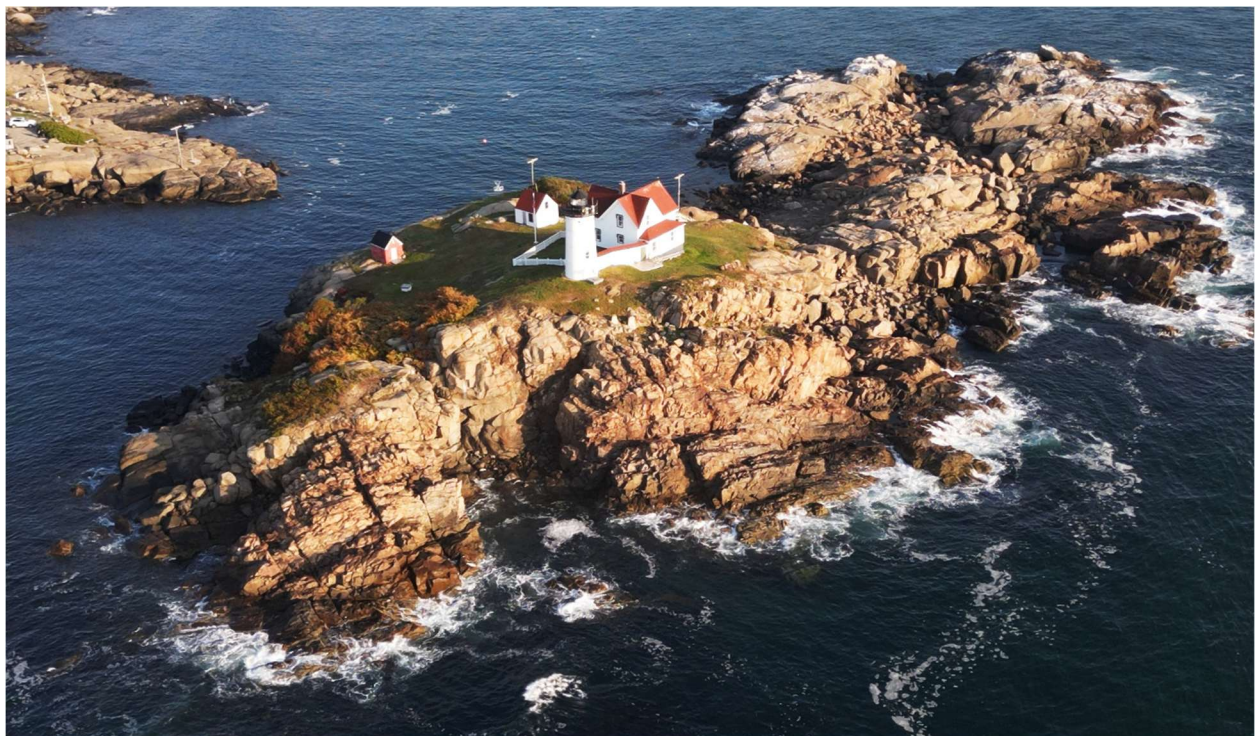
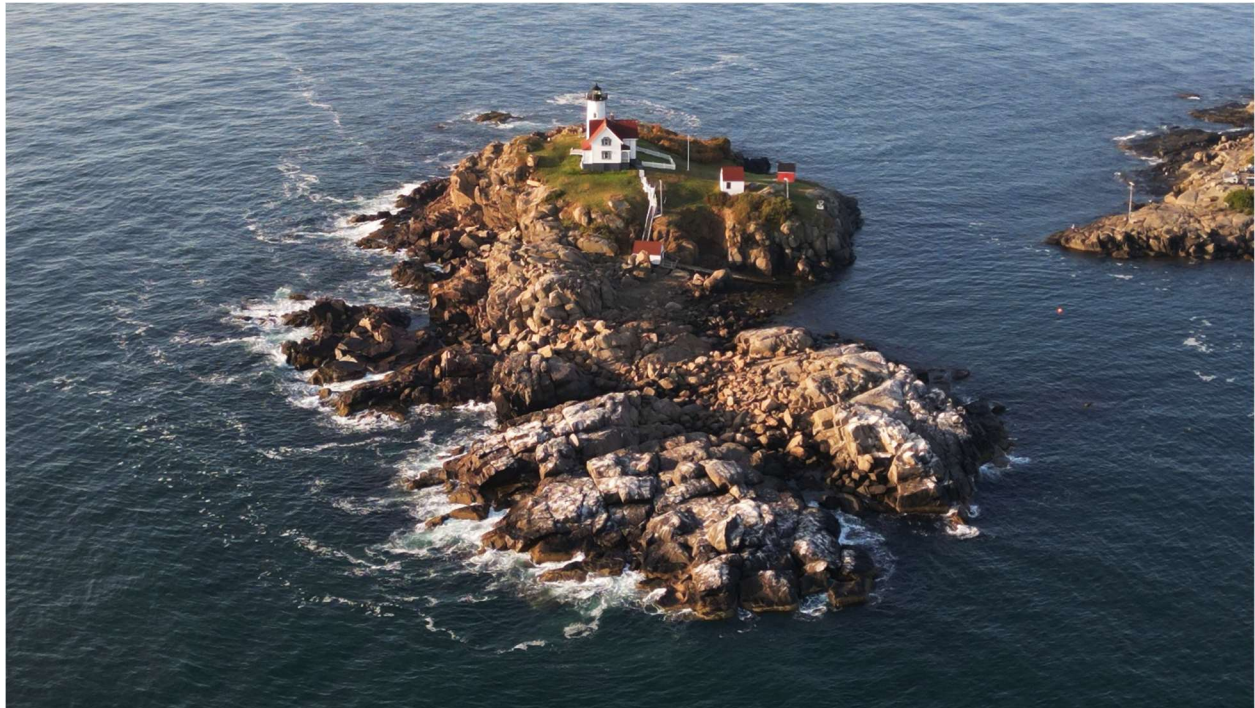


I spent most of the next hour getting videos and stills from various angles. One vid started with an overhead shot of the surf on the rocks, then panned up to reveal the lighthouse before flying away backwards. Another started low in the southeast and flew straight at the lighthouse before sweeping left over the parking lot and out to sea. It was funnnnn.

My launch point this morning was down on the wide, rocky shore on the south side of the peninsula. There was nobody down there, and flat rocks were plentiful.

When I was done flying, I sat in the parking lot for another hour or so, downloading and editing the videos and photos. My Bird had performed beyond all expectations.

Then, finally, it was off to the west. This was, after all, a roadtrip to Florida. Going from MA to ME was an odd way to start such a trip. Driving to western NY did not make much sense either, but I did have A Plan...





Check out the videos at:  
[LittleBirdVideo.com](https://www.littlebirdvideo.com)  
[Nubble Lighthouse PM 2024-09-14](#)  
[Nubble Lighthouse AM 2024-09-15](#)