

Guide to flying Panoche

Introduction

Panoche is a grass strip 30 miles south of Hollister in the Diablo Mountain Range. Unlike Hollister, Panoche is protected from the summer sea breeze. Thermal lift here often goes to higher than 10,000 feet. This Guide is for flying the Panoche Run from Hollister. You will aerotow from Hollister to Panoche, fly in lift at Panoche, land there, and then get an aerotow back to Hollister. You do not need to be X-C checked out to fly at Panoche.



Panoche Gaggle

Prerequisites

You need to be a licensed pilot and have the following tasks mastered:

- Spot Landing
 - Touch Down and Stop within 500 feet by Bronze Badge Standards
- Navigation
 - Correlate terrain and landmarks on the sectional with those seen from the air, fly a heading, choose speed to fly, use a glide ruler
- Rope Breaks
 - Be proficient with rope breaks, especially 180
- Weather
 - Predict lift from forecast sounding, understand upper-air winds
- Slack line in Retrieve Tow
 - Different balance of energy - don't rush for it to come out
- Thermal Turns
 - Maintain constant airspeed and bank in a 45 degree min sink turn

Equipment Needed

Since Panoche is in the middle of nowhere it's best to plan on bringing cross-country equipment even if you aren't flying cross-country. Be sure to have a working Radio and a Cell Phone so you can call Hollister for a tow back if needed. Bring plenty of water - it's hot down there on the ground. Here is a recommended list:

- Water
- Food
- Relief Bags
- Cell-Phone
- Map
- Radio
- Glide-Ruler
- Money

Before Flight

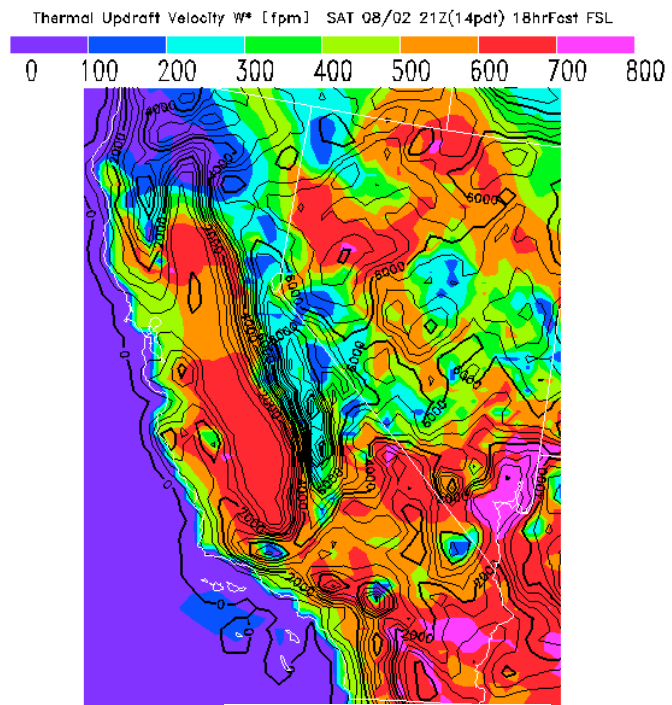
Before you leave Hollister you should check the thermal conditions and the upper air winds. Show your flight plan to one of the HGC instructors to make sure you've got everything down.

Predicting Local Lift

Lift is the reason we fly to Panoche. Panoche is almost always going up. The valley itself often works well.

The Cross-Country Gang has identified several Elevators along the Diablo and San Benito Mountains. The first Elevator is near a peak on the way to Panoche. The peak is called Cerro Colorado and it's marked on the Sectional at 3665 feet 5 miles north of Panoche Airstrip.

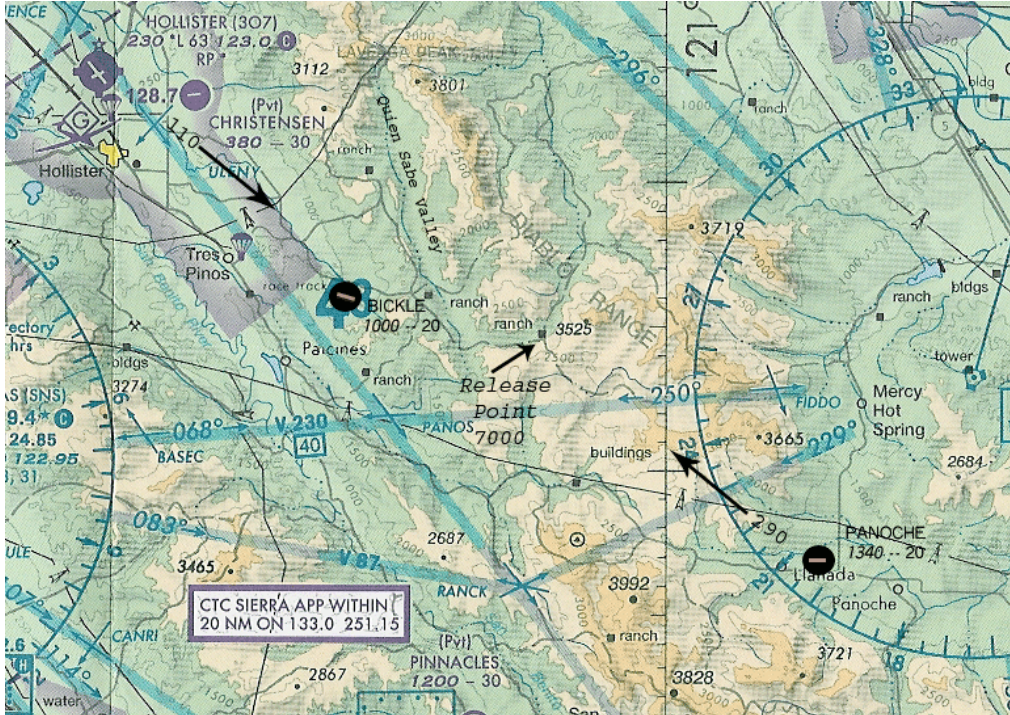
Lift is forecasted by BLIPMAPS and forecast sounding which are available on the web. Gliders often climb above 10,000 feet. Look on the web at www.soarhollister.com or www.flybasa.org for a list of weather information and predictions.



Blipmap

Aerotow to Panoche

The tow out should keep you in glide of Hollister, so if at any time you need to release turn around and glide straight back to Hollister. The compass heading from Hollister to Panoche is 110° . Note prominent landmarks as you fly out to identify your position. Watch the Quien Sabe Valley, find Bikle, Paicines Reservoir, and find the roads and ranches on the Sectional. Abeam Bikle you should be at least 4500 Feet.



Sectional of Panoche Area

Landmarks:

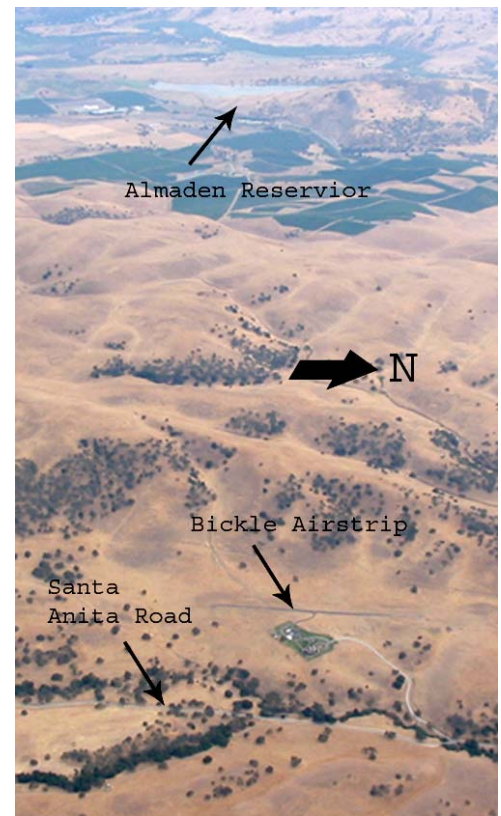
- Christensen Airport
- Bikle Airstrip
- Santa Ana Peak
- Quien Sabe Valley
- Ranches
- Roads
- Almaden Reservoir

The Aerotow is specially designed to get you to 7000 ft within glide of the Panoche strip. The release point is directly abeam of a ranch 18 miles from Hollister and 12 miles from Panoche. Talk to the HGC instructors about modifying the release point to account for strong winds. The ranch is easily spotted - it lies in a wash basin between two sections of the Diablo Range. Dirt roads form a 3-way intersection directly before it.

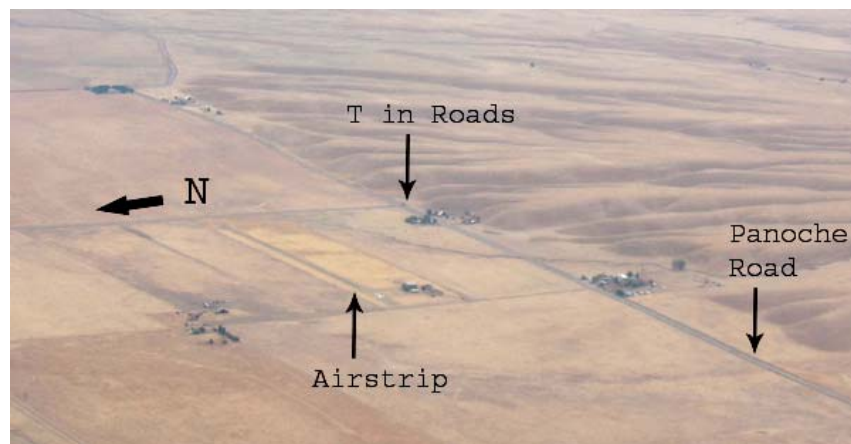
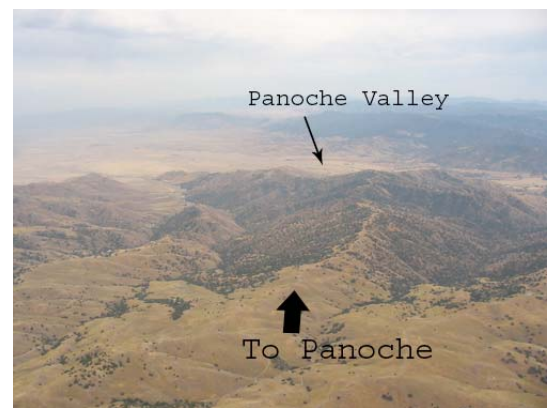


Release Ranch

When you release you should have the Panoche Valley in sight and in glide. You are now flying local to Panoche not Hollister! Panoche Airstrip is about 5 miles out in the Panoche Valley. Find Panoche Road as it comes out of the hills on the west and follow it until it meets Little Panoche Road. The two roads form a T intersection and the Airstrip is right on the west side of the T.



Bickle Area



Panoche location

Landing at Panoche

When soaring in the Panoche area use the glider frequency 123.3 for communications. On good soaring days there may be several gliders in the area so be vigilant in reporting your position and keeping track of others. Keep a sharp eye on the field - the airstrip is small and easy to lose sight of.

When it comes time to land you'll need to know several things about the strip itself, as well as the glider pattern we've established. Take everything into consideration when flying your approach.

The length of the usable dirt strip is about 2000 feet. It runs approximately true east to west, hence we've designated the 'runways' to be 26 and 08 in their respective direction. The strip runs slightly uphill in the 26 direction. The field elevation is 1340 feet.

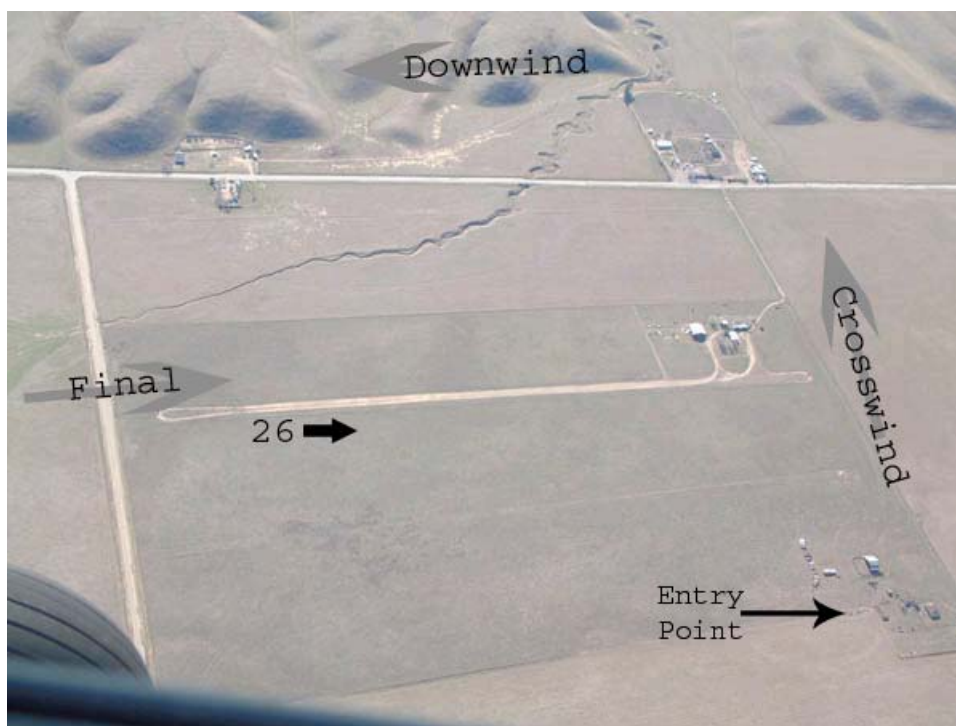
Towards the end of 26 is a house area containing a hangar, some other buildings, and several trees. Out in front of that area is a windsock, and two turn-off areas perfect for a towplane and glider. Defining the end of 26 is a fence and a few feet more are telephone wires, which are an obstacle to an approach to 08.

Before you land check the windsock. It's sometimes hard to see. Look carefully out in front of the biggest tree, right in the middle of the two pull-off areas. Also check the field for cows and other obstacles. If you have a cell-phone you may want to call Hollister for a retrieve tow before you get down to Pattern Attitude. Cell-phones don't work close to the ground.

We've developed a standard traffic pattern for gliders. It is much like the crosswind entry pattern for 24 at Hollister. However, do not be limited by the standard pattern: you should take all factors into account and fly the best approach for the given conditions.



Panoche Pattern Entry



Panoche Pattern

The left crosswind entry point for 26 is over a barn area to the north of the field. We recommend at least 2300 MSL for pattern entry. This is about 1000 feet AGL over the 1340 foot field elevation. Use the RUFSTALL checklist and make standard pattern calls. Remember that there may be many other gliders in the area.

At an unfamiliar airport it is a common error to fly a sloppy pattern. However, now it is more important than ever. Identify your Aim Point and your Touch Down Point early on. Fly the pattern by angles: 30° to the runway on downwind, 45° angle out on base adjusted for the wind. Shoot for a 1/2 - spoiler approach directly to your Aim Point. Make a low energy touchdown with tail wheel first. On the roll out concentrate on staying on the center of the runway and keeping the wings level.

Once on the ground pull off into the little pull-off area. It tends to be hot on the ground at Panoche so be sure to drink lots of water and stay in the shade whenever possible. There's a Bar right across the street where you can get a drink or call for a retrieve. Say hi to Larry for me!

Aerotow from Panoche

Both the Pawnee and the Cherokee can tow out of Panoche. Be sure you talk to the towpilot on the ground so you both know and agree to the same set of procedures. Take-offs are typically done down 08 to avoid the power lines and to take advantage of the downhill.

The dust is all encompassing on take off. Be sure to close all vents. You will not be able to see the towplane until you are off the ground. Focus on following the direction of the rope you can see in front of the glider and flying the glider straight ahead. Don't take-off prematurely and don't get high on the towplane - if the glider pulls his tail up he won't be able to get off the ground.

Take note of the indicated altitude on the ground as a reference for Rope Breaks. The towpilot should veer to the right on the way out to set up the glider for a left turn back to the field at 200 feet. Rope-breaks are very simple:

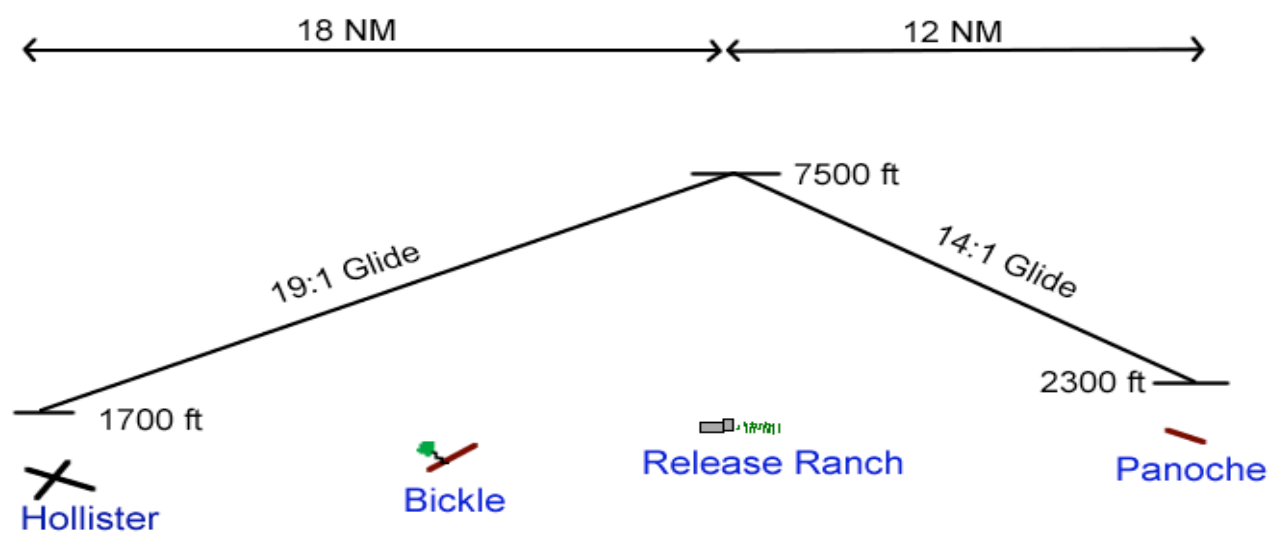
Rope Breaks flying off Panoche 08:

- Field Straight Ahead
- 200 feet make 180 back to 26
- At comfortable altitude fly an abbreviated pattern

Towing back from Panoche to Hollister uses the same release point as the tow down to Panoche. Release at 7000 feet over the ranch 18 miles out of Hollister. Santa Ana and Almaden Reservoir stand as good landmarks to guide you back to Hollister. Also look for the Quien Sabe Valley and the two mountain ridges on either side. Bikle is 11 miles out of Hollister on the far side of Santa Anita Road. Christensen should come in sight below Santa Ana. Notice the haze in the picture - it will be necessary to guide yourself with the landmarks until you see Hollister. Welcome Back!



Quien Sabe Valley from about 20 miles out of Hollister



Glide Distances to Panoche



Takeoff at Panoche

Written by Brett Hinze for the Hollister Gliding Club
Photos Courtesy of Russell, Brian, Jeremy, Dr. Jack