



Anchorage X

BY MIKE CAMERON.

Scenery Overview:

Anchorage X developed by SimWings and distributed by Aerosoft includes three airports in Anchorage, Alaska for FSX. A FS2004 version will be released at a later time for an additional charge. The three airports are Ted Stevens Anchorage International (PANC), Lake Hood Seaplane Base (LHD) and Lake Hood Airstrip (Z41). Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport is Alaska's largest airport and serves as a destination for many domestic & international airlines. The airport was constructed in 1951 as Anchorage International Airport and was later renamed to Ted Stevens Alaska International Airport to honor the former Alaska US Senator who died in a plane crash in 2010. The largest airline to service PANC is Alaska Airlines and Anchorage is Alaska Airlines second largest hub with Seattle Washington being its largest hub. Most major US airlines and several international airlines also serve this airport. The international airport has two passenger terminals, the South Terminal handles all domestic flights and the North Terminal is used for international, charter and some cargo flights. Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport is also a major cargo hub, ranking fifth busiest airport in the world for cargo traffic

Product:
Anchorage X

Company
Aerosoft

Price as rated
\$29.87

Flight Simulator
FSX

as of 2008 after Memphis, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Seoul and Paris – Charles De Gaulle. FedEx and United Parcel Service operate major hubs here for cargo heading to and from the Far East. The eastern end of the airports southernmost runway connects to the former Kulis Air National Guard Base, which has been relocated to Elmendorf Air Base which is north of Anchorage, but the buildings and installations still remain. Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport has three asphalt runways. Runway 7L/25R is 10600 feet by 150 feet, 7R/25L is 10900 feet by 150 feet and runway 14/32 is 11584 feet by 150 feet.

Lake Hood Seaplane Base is located next to the international airport and is the largest and busiest floatplane bases in the world. This airport is the central hub for Alaska bush plane operations with daily operations to fishing lodges and remote fishing and hunting trips. Lake Hood Airstrip located adjacent to Lake Hood Seaplane Base is used mostly by bush planes equipped with tundra tires to serve remote land based fishing & hunting locations. The airstrip is also the primary general aviation airport for the Anchorage International area. Lake Hood Airstrip has a single gravel runway measuring 2200 feet by 75 feet.



Computer Specs:
Asus G72GX
Laptop

Intel Core2 Duo
2.53GHz

6GB DD2 Memory

500 GB Serial ATA
HD(5400RPM)

Nvidia GeForce
260M Video Card
with 1GB GDDR3
Memory

17.3" LED-Backlit
LCD Screen

FSX with
Acceleration

Logitech Extreme
3D Pro Joystick
Saitek Pro Flight
Switch Panel &
Multi Panel
CH Throttle
Quadrant

Flight Test Time:
12.5 hours



“The airport was constructed in 1951 as Anchorage International Airport and renamed to Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport to honor the former Alaska US Senator...”

Installation:

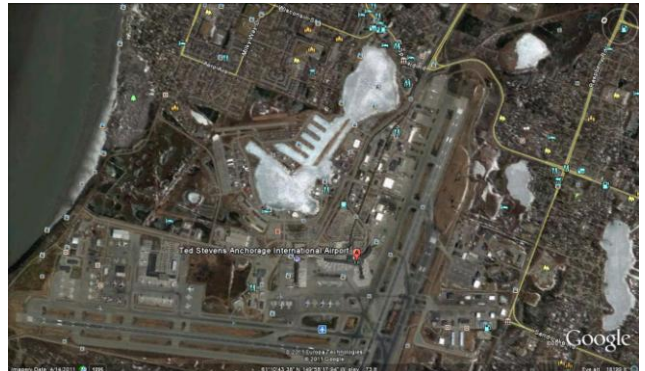
This review is based on the download version of the product. The size of the download is very large, 2.3GB, so if you do not have high speed internet, I recommend purchasing the DVD product. Something that other companies do with products with a large setup file that I would like to see Aerosoft maybe do in the future is have an option to download the product as a series of smaller files. If you have a connection problem, then you do not lose the entire file, only the one you are currently downloading. Installing Aerosoft products is very easy but does require an active internet connection for product registration and activation. After purchasing and downloading the product from your account page, run the install program. Choose the preferred installation language and read the Important Information and License Agreement on the next page. You will then need to enter your account email address and registration key. I recommend copying the key from your account page and pasting it in the space provided. The installation routine should automatically find the correct FSX location but if it does not click the “Browse” button and locate the correct location. The nice thing about Aerosoft products is that a summary screen is presented before the files are installed which allows you to verify that everything is correct. After the files are installed, the Aerosoft-Launcher program will start for online registration of the product. Click the “Activate” button, verify that your registration information is correct on the next screen then click on the “Online Activation” button. After the activation process, you may close Aerosoft-Launcher. A German and English language manual is included with the installation and is also available on the Aerosoft website. I like that Aerosoft sometimes provides the manual before purchase because it allows the potential buyer to read it and see if this is a product they would want to own. Because everyone’s system is different, I am not going to discuss FSX Settings other than ramp traffic. Anchorage X includes the AES Lite program for dynamic ground traffic. In order to avoid overlapping airport ground vehicle traffic and increase system performance, slide the FSX Ground Traffic slider to off. I will discuss this feature later in the review.

General Scenery:

I am approaching this review from the prospective of a general aviation virtual aviator. I am not experienced enough at flying the large airliners, that I will leave the accuracy of the airport departures & approaches, gate and jetways placement to other reviewers. Anchorage X includes a fairly large area around Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. All of the international airport's buildings and facilities (international terminal, domestic terminal, cargo & maintenance areas, Kulis Air National Guard Base, south airpark and more are included. The Lake Hood area has also been developed in high detail along with its water airport and nearby landing strip with many parked general aviation static aircraft. I compared the top down view of the area from FSX with a Google Earth image and FSX area looks pretty accurate when compared to the Google Earth image.



FSX Scenery Area



Google Earth

The ground textures have been created using aerial photos with a resolution down to 15cm per pixel. I like to explore the scenery first using a ground vehicle to see the quality of scenery objects textures. All I can say is Wow! Everything is of such high detail with no blurry textures on any of the primary buildings and facilities. Even the signage on the buildings is clear and easy to read. I did notice a few blurry textures on a couple buildings in the outer areas of the airport, but this does not bother me. Sometimes with scenery products that have detailed buildings, static objects such as parked aircraft, cars and trucks are sometimes neglected. With these products, ground textures are produced with lower quality aerial photography and all of the parked cars & trucks at the various airport parking lots are blurry looking when viewed from the ground and are not three dimensional looking. This is not the case with Anchorage X, all of the parked vehicles look great and I am very impressed with amount of detail that went into making these objects. I also like the variety of the different types of vehicles that are parked which makes the FSX airport parking lots look similar to the real world counterpart. The first evening that I installed the software, I spent two hours just exploring the international airport area. There is an access road that connects the international airport with Kulis Air National Guard Base. The textures of

access road was also great looking. It looked like a road instead of a blurry image of a road and I like that SimWings took the time and made this road just as great looking from the ground as the main airport roadways, taxiways and runways. The buildings at the Air National Guard Base have great looking textures and because this base is now abandoned, there were no parked aircraft which adds to the realistic look of the scenery. Another access road connects the international airport to the Lake Hood area and the textures at the area around the lake, the seaplane base and the airstrip are just as good looking as the international airport. What I liked most about the Lake Hood area is when you drive around the lake; there are small private buildings next to the owner's float plane that is parked alongside it. When researching this product, I discovered a photo of one of these buildings and I love these small details that went into this product. Exploring the area from the air offers just as much enjoyment. Everything looks great from the air just as it did from the ground. Because of the high resolution scenery, performance may be an issue on some systems. I recommend following the recommended settings in the manual and adjust if necessary. On my modest system, I had very brief performance issues when the scenery loaded but it was not any worse than any of my other high quality scenery areas or airports that I have installed on my system.



Animations, Sound Effects & Extras:

Sounds, animations and ground vehicle traffic in Anchorage X are controlled by the included AES Lite application. Vehicles include airport ground vehicles & busses, cargo trucks, surrounding area vehicle traffic and the train servicing the area. These vehicles are intelligent and will yield to your aircraft before continuing to their destination. A side effect of this AI is that when I was exploring the Lake Hood area, vehicles travelling in the opposite direction would stop until I passed. This is minor and I will gladly take this in order to have the intelligent airport ground vehicles. Also, when exploring

the international airport area by car, a truck approached from the opposite direction and had an animated turn signal indicating that it was about to turn on to a side street. This is very cool and small things like this greatly add to the Anchorage X experience. Other animations include parking/gate marshaller, airport access gates on the taxiways from Anchorage International to Lake Hood Seaplane Base & Lake Hood Airstrip, and functional train crossings. The access gates open automatically when you are close enough and close after you have pass. Lighting effects are also impressive with 3D runway & taxiway lighting and great night lighting effects. The lighting effect that impressed me the most is the taxiway red/green lighting strip before access to runways. This lighting system is also very good and will remain red if there is traffic on the runway. This system also corresponds nicely to ATC commands, ATC says hold short, lighting strip is red and when told to proceed, turns green.

“SimWings & Aerosoft has produced an outstanding product with Anchorage X.”

-Mike Cameron



The primary sound effect sound effect is the train whistle & horn and they are loud! This is my only complaint with this wonderful scenery product. I wish Aerosoft had included an option in the AES Lite Control Panel to turn down the volume of this sound effect. I was able to lower the volume by sliding the Environmental Sounds Slider in FSX to the left but this affects all FSX sounds so I have to remember to slide it back to the right when flying to other airports in FSX. It is possible to disable the train in the AES Lite Control Panel but this also disables the train animation, which is I would like to keep enabled. If performance is an issue with all of the animations enabled, the AES Lite Control Panel allows you to disable/enable animations for the various areas of the scenery. On my system, I left them all turned on. The other extra feature is the Aerosoft Launcher which has been included with recent Aerosoft products. Besides program activation, this application allows the user to view the product manual, update & uninstall the product and launch the AES Lite Control Panel.





Conclusion:

SimWings & Aerosoft has produced an outstanding product with Anchorage X. With the inclusion of Lake Hood Seaplane Base & Lake Hood Airstrip, there is something for all types of virtual aviators to enjoy. I have approached this review from the perspective of a small aircraft VFR virtual pilot. Everything has been reproduced in great detail with outstanding textures and animations. The only complaint that I have with the product is that the train horn & whistle sound effect is way too loud.

. Hopefully Aerosoft will come out with an update that allows the user to turn down the volume on this sound effect without disabling the train animation. On my system, performance was about the same as the other high quality scenery but your experience may be different. Also this product has a very large download size, so if you have a slower internet connection or have internet size restrictions, a DVD version of the product is available. Despite the issue that I have the train sound effects, I have no problem awarding Anchorage X from Aerosoft with a four star rating.

Good Points:

- **Three airports to enjoy**
- **Great looking textures**
- **Intelligent ground vehicles**
- **Animated train, access gates and train crossings**
- **Wonderful lighting effects**
- **AES Lite Control Panel**

Bad Points:

- **Would like the ability to turn down the volume of the train sound effects.**

Rating: ★★★★★