



Fairbanks X

BY MIKE CAMERON.

Scenery Overview:

Fairbanks X developed by SimWings and distributed by Aerosoft is an accurate version of Fairbanks International Airport (PAFA) for FSX. Fairbanks International Airport is a state-owned public-use airport located three miles (5km) southwest of the Fairbanks Alaska central business district. Alaska aviation services in the Fairbanks area was initiated at an airfield known as Weeks Field or Weeks Ball Park, in 1923. This multi-use facility gained importance in this community and throughout the Alaskan aviation system from the time that Carl Ben Eielson first flew into Fairbanks in 1923 to start Alaskan Airways. The majority of the area's general aviation and commercial air traffic was accommodated at this airfield until the late 1940's. Air carrier traffic at the time used Ladd Air Force Base today referred as Fort Wainwright for operations. Plans were formed in 1948 for a new airport – Fairbanks International Airport. Construction began on Fairbanks International that same year and flight operations shifted to the new airport in 1951, even though only minimal facilities and no terminal building were available at the time. Air carriers used temporary facilities until the passenger terminal was completed in 1954. Weeks Field is now a residential area. Notable facility improvements have occurred on the air side and the land side of the airport in the 1970's and 1980's.

Product:
Fairbanks X

Company
Aerosoft

Price as rated
\$23.49

Flight Simulator
FSX

The greatest capacity improvements came in 1971 with the completion of the general aviation runway which runs parallel to the primary runway and a major passenger terminal expansion in 1984. Fairbanks International covers an area of 3470 acres at an elevation of 439 feet above mean sea level. It has four runways:

Runway 2L/20R 11,800 feet x 150 feet (asphalt)

Runway 2R/20L 6500 feet x 100 feet (asphalt, general aviation runway)

Runway 2/20 (gravel, Ski runway)

Runway 2W/20W (float pond water runway)

Several domestic airlines serve Fairbanks International with Alaska, Era and Frontier Airlines being the most well-known. Air North, Condor and Japan Airlines all serve as international carriers. FedEx is the largest cargo air carrier serving Fairbanks. Per Capita, there are more general aviation pilots in Alaska than anywhere else in the United States. Fairbanks is the second largest multi-use airport in the state of Alaska. The airport has a total of 320 tie downs for wheeled general aviation aircraft and the float pond has 228 spaces. There is also a taxi-in on-airport campground equipped with fifteen parking positions for pilots that would like to camp with their aircraft. The airpark also contains two covered pavilions, BBQ pits, a pay phone and a shower facility & restrooms.



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



Installation:

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, read & accept the Important Information and License Agreement on the next page and select “OK” to the note that says that the install files are personalized during installation. 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 then answer the Ultimate Terrain Alaska question. 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. The Aerosoft-Launcher is a very useful utility because besides product activation it allows you to view the manual, download product updates and with this product, run the AES LITE (PAFA Traffic Tool) utility. The user manual, airport charts and a PAFA Traffic Tool are also available in the Fairbanks X folder in the Windows Start menu. The PAFA Traffic Tool allows you to turn on or off the traffic options at various areas of the airport. This tool is useful for people with slower systems. I recommend defragging your hard drive after installation because of the size of this scenery file.



General Scenery:

Just like my review of Anchorage X, I am approaching this review from the prospective of a general aviation virtual aviator. I am not experienced enough at flying the large airliners, so I will leave the accuracy of the airport departures & approaches, gate and jetways placement to other reviewers. After I install a new scenery product for a review, I like to do comparison of 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. I then like to jump into a ground vehicle to explore the area outside of the airport grounds. This is a very large airport area so scenery objects are limited to areas very near to the airport perimeter. Overall, scenery objects on the landside of the airport are very good looking. Everything is three dimensional looking even when looking at the scenery object from ground level. A few of the highlights from landside



FSX Scenery Area



Google Earth

area includes the satellite dishes at the flight service station, the static DC-6 aircraft that are being used for spare parts and the realistic looking electric & telephone poles. Even the road textures and the trees look great. As you would expect some of the building signage looked better than others but all were readable. All of the airport signage from warning signs to roadway signage was great looking. The only minor disappointment I had with the landside scenery which technically is on the airport grounds but I am including it here is with the campground. I would have liked to see some static aircraft parked here camping instead of just having a couple of buildings. The aircraft in the screenshot below is my aircraft. All of the static aircraft in this area of the airport are parked on the ramp next to the float plane lake.



Normally when exploring the airside of the airport, I load an aircraft with good visibility and explore the airport by taxiing around. For this review I am going to do things a little different. I am going to plan a flight with a starting point at one direction of the airport that is on the opposite side of the airport from the active runway, or as close as the nearest general aviation parking location. This should allow me to see the maximum amount of scenery features for the Fairbanks X product. The first thing that I noticed is the excellent small details of the static general aviation aircraft, they all had some form of tie downs to reflect that the aircraft parked in cold and dark configuration. The Beechcraft Baron in the foreground on the screen grab below is my aircraft. All of the buildings on the airside of the airport look wonderful with realistic three dimensional shapes, some with aged looking textures and some of the hangars had their doors open to be able to see inside. As with the building signage on the landside, some looked better than others but still readable. All of the ramp & runway signage and ground textures all looked awesome. Seasonal textures are also very good with snow on the ground in the winter and trees with different colors depending on the season.



Animations, Sound & Lighting effects:

The animations of Fairbanks X are very impressive and are controlled by the PAFA Traffic Tool. The first time that I landed at Fairbanks and went to my assigned parking from ground control; there was a ramp marshaller to direct me to my assigned spot on the ramp. This is really cool and adds to the overall experience of the product. Aerosoft sells a product called Airport Environment Services (AES) that provides realistic airport services for various FSX and FS2004 add-on airports including support for this product. Fairbanks X includes a lite version of AES which controls the marshaller and the various airport vehicles which can be turned on and off with the included traffic tool. The full version of AES is required for animated jetways, passenger boarding, etc. Even without the full version of AES, the vehicles behave realistically without driving in front of your moving aircraft. Fairbanks also has impressive animated lighting with custom PAPI's, wigwags, beacon's and more. The night lighting effect is also very good. The animation that was included with Anchorage X that is not included with Fairbanks X is security gates that open and close when you approach them. The PAFA Traffic Tool has an option for Security but when I asked about this the Aerosoft forum, the reply was that this is for activating the police car that patrols this area of the airport. This is a small feature that would really add to the overall experience, especially when exploring the around the perimeter of the airport. The animation that I really enjoyed is the train. The locomotive will be shunting on the track at its destination and will leave with the wagons attached. On my modest system, performance was not an issue with all the animation features turned on. Sounds are very good with this product. You can hear the engines of the animated ground vehicles when they are near and the train whistle has just the right volume level.

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-Mike Cameron





Conclusion:

SimWings & Aerosoft has produced another outstanding product with Fairbanks X. At \$23.49 USD or 21.95 Euros, Fairbanks X is a wonderful value. The scenery has great looking building textures on both the landside and airside of the airport, static vehicles & aircraft look great, seasonal textures are included, impressive airport vehicle, landside vehicle, train animation & sound effects, the lighting effects and animations are also very good and system performance was not an issue at least on my modest computer system with all of the animations activated. Unfortunately, there were a couple of minor issues that prevent me from awarding Fairbanks X with a perfect four star rating. First I would like to see at least one static aircraft camping at the airport campground. One of the animations that added to the realism of the Anchorage X product was the animation of the security gate that opens and closes when you are near it. None of the security gates with Fairbanks X are animated which is a disappointment to me. My reasoning for this is that if you are going to have realistic moving airport vehicles, at some point they going to use one of these gates. As I said at the start of this conclusion, even with these two minor issues, Fairbanks X is still an outstanding scenery product that I will enjoy having installed on my system.

Good Points:

- Great looking building, static aircraft, passenger and airport vehicle textures.
- Impressive animation and sound effects.
- Seasonal textures.
- Ground textures, airport signage, lighting effects.
- Reasonably priced.
- PAFA Traffic Tool.

Bad Points:

- Would like to see at least one static aircraft camping at the airport campground.
- I miss the animated security gate that was included with the Anchorage X product.

Rating: ★★ ★ 1/2