

Cruise Clearance



What is it and why would you need one?

Cruise Clearance

In this lesson we will learn what a Cruise Clearance is, when it is appropriate, the benefits, things to be cautious of, and pilot and controller responsibilities when one is issued.

Cruise Clearance

A Cruise Clearance is used for IFR aircraft flying into less busy airports. This clearance assigns a block of altitude to a pilot, and authorizes any type of published instrument approach, or visual approach, to the airport of intended landing.

Cruise Clearance

A cruise clearance can aid pilots in avoiding icing and/or turbulence, allow pilots to transfer to the CTAF in a timely manner, and can reduce controller workload.

Cruise clearances can be requested by the pilot, or initiated by the controller.

Cruise Clearance

Some scenarios where a Cruise Clearance would be appropriate...

Scenario 1

You are at 5,000 feet, landing at an uncontrolled airport which is 25 miles away. There are scattered clouds and intermittent turbulence. You would like to begin your descent, but may want to level off, or even climb periodically to avoid clouds and turbulence.

Scenario 1

You request a Cruise Clearance...

Pilot:

“Chicago Center, Skyhawk 571JA request cruise clearance to the Marshall County Airport (C75).”

Controller:

“Skyhawk 571JA, cruise 4,000 to the Marshall County Airport.”

Pilot:

“Skyhawk 571JA, cruise 4,000 to the Marshall County Airport.”

Scenario 1

Altitude

Since you are at 5,000, you will need to make a normal descent to 4,000.

You now “own” 4,000 down to the Minimum IFR Altitude (MIA).

You may climb or descend at your discretion between those altitudes.

Scenario 1

Altitude

However, once you VERBALLY report leaving an altitude, you may not return to that altitude.

For example, if you say, “Chicago Center, Piper 26CQ is leaving 4,000.” You now “own” 3,999 down to the MIA.

This allows ATC to assign 5,000 to another aircraft in your vicinity, maintaining at least 1,000 feet separation between you and such aircraft.

Scenario 1

Altitude

You are not allowed to descend below the MIA until you either have the airport in sight for the visual approach, or are on a published segment of an instrument approach.

Scenario 1



What is the MIA in the area I am in?

Scenario 1



Controlled Airspace

1,200 Feet AGL
On the “hard” of
the magenta
designation.

700 Feet AGL on
the “Soft” side of
the magenta
designation.

Scenario 1

When flying VFR you are required to be at least 1,000 feet above the surface over congested areas or 1,000 feet above the highest obstacle within a 2,000 foot radius. You are required to be at least 500 feet above the surface above other-than-congested areas.

When flying IFR in non mountainous areas you are required to be at least 1,000 feet above the highest obstacle within a 4 nautical mile horizontal distance of the route to be flown.

Scenario 1

If you are not sure of the actual MIA in your area, ATC can give you that information upon request.

Note that these altitude restrictions do not apply when taking off, landing, or on a published segment of an instrument approach.

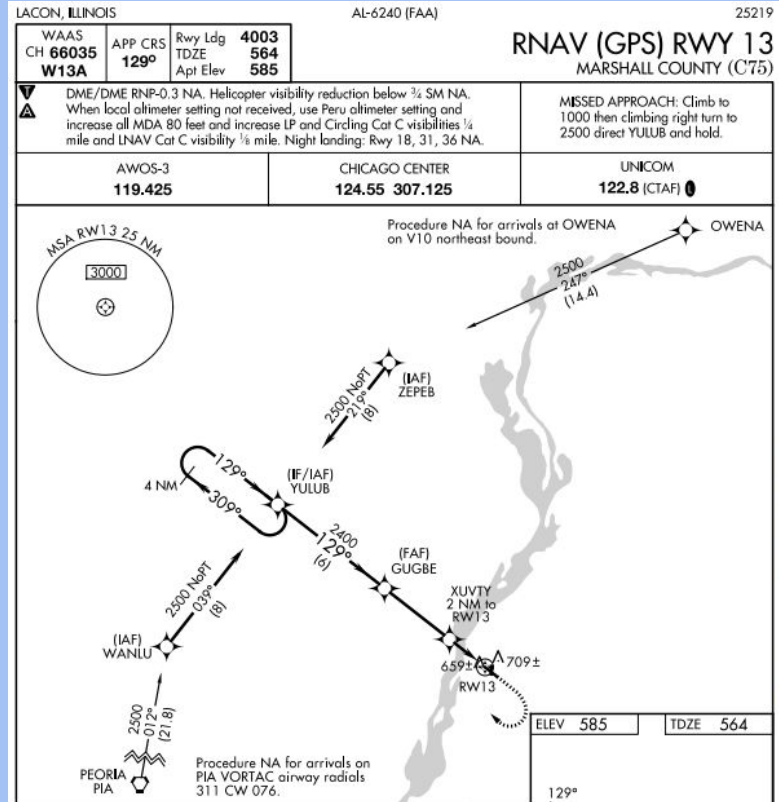
Scenario 1

Route

A Cruise Clearance is also an approach clearance. This allows you to get closer to the airport in an attempt to get it in sight for a visual approach. You are authorized, at any time, to fly to an initial approach fix or position yourself for any published instrument approach to that airport.

If you will be executing an instrument approach, contact ATC as soon as possible and advise them of your intentions.

Scenario 1



Scenario 2

You are 12 miles from your destination airport. The weather at the airport is indicating it is VFR. The controller wants you to be able to broadcast your position and intentions to any VFR aircraft in the vicinity of the airport on the Common Traffic Advisory Frequency (CTAF).

Scenario 2

ATC issues you a Cruise Clearance...

Controller:

“Skyhawk 571JA, Marshall County airport 12 o’clock, one-two miles.”

Pilot:

“Skyhawk 571JA is looking for the airport.”

Controller:

“Skyhawk 571JA, cruise 4,000 to the Marshall County airport. Cancel IFR this frequency. If unable, forward downtime through radio. Change to advisory frequency approved.”

Scenario 2

ATC issues you a Cruise Clearance...

If you are uncomfortable with a cruise clearance, you can say “unable” and request vectors for a specific instrument approach.

Cruise Clearance

Pilot Responsibilities:

When accepting a Cruise Clearance, pilots are responsible for maintaining terrain and obstruction clearance, avoiding other VFR aircraft in the vicinity of the airport, in the traffic pattern, and on the airport surface.

Cruise Clearance

Controller Responsibilities:

ATC is responsible for separating your aircraft from other IFR aircraft until receiving cancellation of your IFR flight plan.

Cruise Clearance

References

FAR/AIM

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Pilot/Controller Glossary (Cruise)

Questions?

