



<https://skysight.io/>

SkySight is a paid service – about \$79 per year for soaring forecasts (they also provide services for power pilots). At the time I first tried it they offered a one-week free trial. It is browser-based – I don't think there's an app version – so I assume it will run on other operating systems, but I've only tried it from Windows 10.

It seems to be quite popular with competition and serious x-country pilots, especially out west and in other parts of the world. There are a lot of features, for example, to help forecast and analyze wave conditions. I think their team has been supporting the Perlan team in their stratospheric wave explorations.

The things Phil Marks likes about SkySight relative to Dr. Jack

- Forecasts go further out – not just the current day/day + 1/day +2 available on Dr. Jack. For example, today I can get a spot forecast as far out as Saturday, which is helpful when deciding which day to go out to the field. Obviously, the forecasts get less reliable as you go further out, but it is still valuable for planning.
- The underlying forecast model that they use has a higher resolution and faster update cycle than Dr. Jack. You can zoom in to a small area like our local soaring area and still get a meaningful forecast. It is also possible to overlay airspace boundaries (e.g., Allentown's Class C), which helps in getting oriented on the maps.
- It has a "spot forecast" feature – you select a point on the map for the day in question, and you get a very nice hourly profile which is easy to read and understand, with graphics showing the forecast cloud cover at low, medium, and high levels (i.e., will there be Cus? Will there be high cirrus blocking the sunshine?) Other hourly parameters are the forecast surface and "top of boundary layer" winds, thermal strength and height, soarable height (equivalent to Dr. Jack's "critical updraft height" parameter, and condensation level (i.e., forecast cumulus cloud base).
- On the main maps (i.e., not the spot view) you can see all of these parameters and can also overlay things like the forecast wind (barbs or streamlines) at selectable altitudes (in 1000' increments).
- It is generally easier to use than Dr. Jack
- It seems to take upper-level clouds properly into account – Dr. Jack can be significantly too optimistic if there are mid-level clouds, and especially if there is a high cirrus layer cutting down the surface heating.

Dr. Jack is of course free, but the software is not maintained any more, but the source data is current. I still use it for comparison, though. SkySight also seems to me to be a bit optimistic about how early the thermals will start and how strong they will be in the first usable part of the day. Of course, it may be that an expert pilot in high-performance sailplane might see the values predicted. SkySight does not provide an explicit value for the buoyancy/shear ratio – if they think it is significant, they overlay some stippling onto the thermal strength map.

Phil Marks – August 2019