

# “Fly Visual” Trap!

"Fly visual" segments are typically seen on approaches to airports in mountainous areas. **Treat them as red flags:** If you see one, take some extra time and give the procedure a closer look. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, the visibility required for the approach is sometimes less than the length of the "fly visual" segment—meaning that the pilot can legally continue beyond the DA/MAP without the runway environment in sight, provided he/she has the required flight visibility (this seems to conflict with 91.175). Obviously, this leaves a certain amount of room for “pilot interpretation”. If you find yourself in such a situation, and there's any doubt about whether to proceed (particularly if you're not familiar with the local terrain and landmarks), it's best to opt for the missed approach.

It's also worth thinking about why the "fly visual" segment exists in the first place. Why did the designers of the approach essentially choose to "slide" the entire approach away from the airport by the distance of the visual segment? In many cases, the underlying reason is that terrain in the missed approach area would necessitate unreasonably high minimums if the MAP were in its normal position. By displacing the MAP a few miles, the designers can build a missed approach segment that doesn't have terrain problems (a situation well illustrated by the RNAV (GPS) X RWY 1 approach at Jackson Hole). Notice you are allowed to continue past the MAP/DA flying level with no runway in sight!!

Of course, the terrain is still out there, and the danger for pilots flying such procedures is that the unanticipated need to initiate a missed approach beyond the MAP can lead to obstruction conflicts (or, to put it more bluntly: a collision with a mountain).

**The bottom line?** For procedures like the one at Jackson Hole, never continue the approach past the MAP unless there's absolutely no doubt about the outcome.

