

South Again

Why do this again ? – Third time in this case. Hours in the cockpit with the endless landscapes flowing past and the interminable bureaucracy at the end of the end of each leg. When I left I was on just over 1000 hours total flight time.

Having properties in Ushuaia and Uruguay certainly makes the trip a lot more structured with bolt holes you can stop at without running up huge living expenses. It also makes the whole territory seem more familiar so the countries you pass through seem just part of a friendly route as you go from home to home.

This last trip was made especially relevant as I had a major work commitment in Valdivia, Chile and could land the plane at a small municipal strip a short walk from my hotel.

Lastly with the experience from the previous 2 trips under my belt the logistics came together quickly and easily. Having a Spanish speaker in the family running a logistics business was a lifesaver and really made the project possible.

Aircraft ownership is a very rewarding experience however you have to fly the thing. Just having it there and not using it is bad for the plane and bad for the pocket as all the expenses of ownership are still there.

I keep costs down by assisting my mechanic in the maintenance and learn a lot in the process. In doing so I am able to detect potential problems long before they become serious. Preparing the plane for the annual and taking the time while waiting for the AI to show up inspecting the plane myself has shown up those little things that were missed by the last inspection. As a result I like to feel the plane is in perfect shape every time I fly and can fly the plane with confidence but with that little twinge – did I get everything right ?

I compare this to my early days when I would get into the cockpit supremely confident and not having to worry about density altitude, fuel reserves and personal minimums. Which really brings us to the last two qualifications for a trip like this – Experience and maturity. The first time I did this trip I had a tad over 200 hours, I had become a safe cautious pilot but had no experience with aircraft maintenance and limited experience with international travel by light aircraft. Having many years of international sailing and several ocean crossings under my belt provided the background needed to make this whole thing work and provided the resources needed to fix things when they went wrong.

So this brings us up to trip 3 with 800 more hours and \$20,000 spent on the plane to bring every system up to higher standard while keeping the essential aircraft the same.

So What could possibly go wrong ?

17th August 2019

We are finally putting all the pieces in place for an August 20th Departure. Permits are all done as far as Chile with the exception of Ecuador and Peru (more about that later). Plans are pretty much as they were and I have a parking spot in Valdivia Chile that I will need when I do my chores there.

Aircraft has had it's final looking to. Fresh Oil and a look inside the old filter and trainer showed a clean engine. Oil sample has gone back to the lab. Last thing was a brand new battery. With a volt

meter on the plane it is very easy to see how a battery is performing and after 5 years although the engine was cranking fine it was time to change it.



Now on to the Peru saga. For some reason best known to themselves they are not accepting the USA Private Pilot's medical as a valid document despite their being signatories to numerous conventions. After Roxanna spoke to the top man in the ministry and basically met a brick wall I went down to EL Paso and upgraded my medical certificate to commercial pilot. Peru also rejected my airworthiness certificate as the Ink was too faded. The FAA Field office in Albuquerque were magnificent and made me up a new certificate on the spot. The next morning bright and early I took off before sunrise and landed without incident at Albuquerque International and the inspector came over checked the plane (always good to have another set of eyes) and swapped the certificate.

Today I top up the fuel on the last test flight and load up the plane. Roxanna is leaving for Uruguay tomorrow to man Mission Control and the adventure begins.

19th August 2019 San Antonio Texas

With everything ready I decided to leave a day early. With a hint of dawn on the horizon I shut the house down, pulled the plane on the apron, got in and took off into the twilight.

Getting the navigation into the groove I noticed something was not right. I could not input the destination into the GPS. The cursor was simply not where it should be. I have this process pretty

much automated so my first diagnosis was I was suffering from early senility. Turning the light on I realized the outer knob on the data selector was not working properly. Quite an important selector as I use this to set the comms frequency on the en route radio. This was a serious show stopper. The radio GPS is not supported any more. To replace the unit with a modern equivalent would be thousands of dollars and a week of downtime.

When I was not distracted by the radio I did get a chance to look out of the window. Got a great view of Jeff Bezos's launching site for the Blue Origin Nice setup with 2 rockets in the assembly

The plan was to spend the night at San Antonio so I felt it best to continue. I managed to get the radio tuned by spinning the dial hard and letting it settle on a random number between 18 and 36. The decimal tuning knob was fine. Also my backup radio was fine but it was not nearly as good range as the main unit.

Anyway I made it to Kelly Field in San Antonio. Amazing place. Full of grounded 737 Max aircraft. The air traffic control was very laid back with very little going on. Fuel was cheap so I topped off and determined that my best chance was next door about 4 miles to the East with Stinson field.

A quick hop and I was introduced to Randy – the avionics man. He started calling around to try to locate a replacement unit and then realized he had a replacement on his parts shelf. OK it is not IFR certified but pretty much everything I needed. We put it in and it all worked and I walked away with change from a thousand. More important my old unit can be cannibalized for spares or bench repaired to keep the system I have going for the life of the plane. Repairing obsolete hardware is a dead art in the developed world but something very much alive in the places I am going.

Today could have seen the trip come to an abrupt halt. However with all the good fortune of the last few days I think we are in very good shape. I even got an Email from the Peruvian authorities acknowledging receipt of the new documents I had to get.

Now I am kicking back on the Riverside walk in San Antonio supping a beer and relaxing after an eventful day.

Day 2 20th August 2019

Veracruz Mexico

Well I am sitting in the same hotel I was in last time I came through. It had changed it's name and I was looking for a hotel that matched the criteria I looked for and lo and behold it was the same place under new management.

Anyway – super early start and down to Dennys at 4 AM It had the advantage of being down the road and open 24 hours. Nothing else to recommend their breakfasts and the effects left their mark at the next 2 pit stops.

I was at the airport at crack of dawn. All the doors were open and I could get to the plane. I reflected on all the terrible things that go on in the US but so far small airports seem immune to crime.

The tower was closed so I transmitted blind and took off into a complex sky – clouds everywhere and I had to dodge around to get up to 9500 feet and clear cool air. The first stop was Edinburgh – South Texas regional airport. A lovely place and great fuel prices. I saw they had a very modern Customs station on the field so I put them to work to make sure my outward clearance was in order.

The upshot was I was able to push my departure an hour forward and had another smooth ride to 9500 feet and an uneventful border crossing. Normally when I go from one country's airspace to another you get a courtesy handover. Not this time. As soon as I crossed the border I was informed I was out of US airspace – goodbye. Anyway I made contact with Raynosa and was very efficiently handled to Tampico.

The Inward clearance was fast efficient – so much so that by the time I had the plane fuelled up it was 2pm. Weather ahead was flyable (just) so why not put some miles in the bank.

When you fly in the US you are dealing with a very unique situation. A flat continental land mass and 4 major air masses at war with other and these generate some really dangerous weather systems. Once you get away and work with just one air mass it gets a lot simpler. The weather looks really scary but is normally benign. One such system was there today. The vertical cumulus had stalled and created nasty looking black clouds at altitude but the air underneath was totally smooth and apart from a light sprinkling of rain there was nothing nasty there. There is a very good reason the first tribes of homo sapiens to cross the land bridge continued on South.

The second hand radio replacement was wonderful. Most important the horrible crackling that I have endured for 6 years was history. The new unit worked perfectly and interfaced with the autopilot just like the old unit. I am very happy with my overnight in San Antonio.

So far we are ahead of the game. I am one stop further than I planned and will have to slow down. I cannot go South of Panama till the 25th when my insurance kicks in. Other news. Peru approved my permit and a major road block opened up. Ecuador is the last hurdle and this is in progress.

Day 3 21st August 2019

Tapachula Mexico

A leisurely start for a change. A decent breakfast at the hotel and a taxi to airport. The dispatcher gave the usual highly optimistic briefing for the route. I had already pretty much had it worked out and expected some low visibility for parts of the route. All papers inspected, flight plans filed and then I had a long wait while 3 jets pushed back and took off. I thought it best to let them get away so I could have the airport to myself.

There was a pretty nasty tropical depression forming to the North West and this drew a lot of the active air out of my path.

At 5,500 feet I had smooth air. At one point I had to duck down under the clouds but otherwise I made reasonable time and even had winds in my favour for a while. I went down the Isthmus of Tehuantepec with massive volcanic cones to the North and a range of mountains to the South.

Lastly a long 180 mile beach with a featureless coastline. I remember looking at this coast from my 24 foot sailboat 35 years ago. That time it took 3 fraught days to cover the distance.

At Tapachula the authorities descended with a vengeance and I gave away copies of all my documents. Except for the comendante. He had to see the originals. Here I have to be very careful as there are 3 documents that have to be on the plane at all time and the remainder in my possession so this took a while so I could keep track on everything and return the plane documents to the aircraft as soon as I could.

So here I am in a bar overlooking the city square very much alive with all and sundry and sipping

a beer.



Tomorrow I hope to make it to Nicaragua. Always been a slightly dodgy place in my opinion however it seems to have settled down and the contacts we made there seem very positive. So lets give it a go. It will make a very good alternative to overnighting in Costa Rica – a country that actively discourages general aviation.

Day 4 22nd Aug Managua

An easy start to the day. A quick breakfast and off to the airport. Friendly and happy officials went through the mountains of paperwork as quickly as they could. I actually got away ahead of my planned departure.

It is always nice taking off into the dawn and smooth air climbing out of the muggy air in to cool clear air. It seems when you leave the ground you are escaping the bureaucratic world and are basically in a very special place.

Today the weather was exceptionally clear and I got my first really good close up of the huge volcanos that make up Central America rising 14,000 feet or more and a lot of them were active. Puffs of smoke coming out of them regularly while the valley floor was shrouded in mist. All a huge contrast to the lands recently departed.

Guatemala Was very easy. The pleasant chatty controllers handled me very efficiently speaking

excellent English and I was passed on to El Salvador. Last time I came here the weather was not nearly as nice so I was not treated to such a spectacular view.

San Salvador is very flexible about tech stops. Fuel is not a rip off and you can turn the plane around in about an hour. I did have a very thorough police inspection on arrival having to unload the plane. However it was all done with smiles and these guys were just doing their jobs. Once you get into the flow the interaction just becomes part of the fun.

On to Nicaragua. Flight plan was accepted no problems and then the fun started. El Salvador control called me and advised me that Nicaragua had not accepted my permit I was a day early despite requesting 23rd Aug +/- 72 hours as advised by the AIS. Oh well quick calculation based on headwinds and fuel burn. I could make it to San Jose Costa Rica with 2 hours in the tank and an emergency option in Liberia. No issues. El Salvador gave me weather for both. Non issue if Nicaragua did not want my tourist dollars so be it.

I asked El Salvador to alter my flight plan to San Jose and all looked fine. Meanwhile Roxanna was getting urgent Emails from Nicaragua and that freaked her out as she thought that I was in trouble. All they wanted was for Roxanna to request the date be brought forward a day.

I was meanwhile staying out of Nicaragua Airspace and heading to Costa Rica when ATC advised me almost pleadingly that I now had permission to enter their airspace. So I headed to the coast and inland. If the volcanoes before were impressive the landscape before me was just out of this world. Primeval crater lakes and symmetrical cones everywhere. It made me wonder how these countries could be in such dire straits with all this natural wonder around.

I was given a straight in approach and set this up for a Localizer and Glideslope. However the published Instrument approach goes right through a restricted area so I had to approach the runway sideways.



Landed without incident and then the paperwork began. The Immigration officer wanted a thorough background check. Where were my passengers? And if I did not have passengers why not and would I be picking up passengers later? Apparently it was very difficult for him to understand why anyone would fly for fun. Well that took an hour and then I had to taxi to the “Aeroclub” for fuel. Well the “Aeroclub” was operated by the airport so there was no club of any description. To complicate matters I had to pre buy the fuel by the tank. How much in the left and how much in the right. No worries I carry a very accurate dipstick and was able to fill the tanks properly. After that taxi back to my stand and then 2 different offices one to pay the fuel – the shuttle bus to take me from the stand to the terminal, the security fee and a technician fee – they had to dispense a liter of fuel and test it for water before it could be put in my tanks.

So after 2 hours of fun and games I was allowed to get in a taxi and open Google maps and tell the taxi driver the way to the hotel. At last a cold beer and a meal. This hotel will have breakfast for me at 5 and get me to the airport at 6 for a 7 AM departure. Tomorrow Panama and a 2 day layover I hope. Guayaquil is getting particularly desperate asking for non-existent documents. Noise certificates etc. If my plane is too noisy they will have to close the airport. I think they will eventually grant the permit.

Day 5

Balboa Yacht Club Panama



Today was the route they said could not be done. Rather than listen to heresay, Roxanna and I called around and got the facts on the ground. The only problem is that people like to take long lunch breaks and you have to push to make things happen.

This route – El Salvador Managua Limon Panama is essentially over low ground. The established route goes via San Jose Costa Rica and at 3000 feet in hot humidity surrounded by mountains with prohibitively high parking fees is a dangerous recipe for disaster.

Some friends of the Aeroclub Ushuaia recently totalled a Cessna 152 they were ferrying South at San Jose.

This morning I discovered I was living 2 hours in the future. Central America is one hour different from Mexico however I found out later it was backward so even though I am flying East Central America is on New Mexico time. I was happily letting my circadian rhythms adjust to the gradual change in longitude and then realized next morning that I went to bed at 6.

It all worked out. I camped outside the flight planning office and gradually they woke up and processed my paperwork. In fact they had everything prepared and ready to go. The big delay was the exit interview from immigration where they went over my entire story again and then went away to compare notes. As the two interviews matched I was clear to go.

For everything in Nicaragua I was charged about \$180 in fees. For that about 4 people attended to me I had an air conditioned bus to take me to and from the airport and all my paperwork was done and an air marshal who was totally useless but meant well. At the end of the day I had to say they were efficient.

Anyway on to Limon. At 7500 feet smooth air but bad headwind. At least at that altitude I could lean out the mixture and get a decent fuel burn. It was flying through a magical kingdom of puffy clouds. Quite surreal.

Landing at Limon and the first time at an uncontrolled field South of the US this time. I announced in Spanish and landed no issues. Roxanna had done a splendid job of lining everyone up and I was fueled and on my way in an hour. Limon is my go to airport from now in Costa Rica. They have everything you need and no big airport nonsense.

The less said about the next trip the better except to say the plane arrived a lot cleaner than when it left. Visibility was marginal a lot of the way and I basically had to fly through a front.

Arriving at Panama I had to hold for about 10 minutes as the airport was super crowded. ATC handled everything very well and I was on the ground after a particularly interesting approach though a rain squall on final with hills on either side.

So now I am taking a 3 day break. I am ahead of the game and have to wait for my South American insurance to kick in and the Ecuador permit starts on the 26th So what better place to spend it but the Allbrook Whyndham with my room overlooking the airport and the plane.

Day 8
25th August Panama.



Last night here I hope. Weather is completely unpredictable but is visual most of the time. Panama is in the middle of the Inter Tropical Convergence that is slowly moving South. If I make it to Ecuador I will be in a completely different weather pattern and much cooler temperatures. Early starts will be a thing of the past as the early mornings tend to be hazy and no visibility to fly.

Tomorrow will be the longest mileage I will be doing in a day and I anticipate dawn to dusk. For the first time we are hiring a handler in Colombia who I hope will have all the paperwork and fuel lined up so I can stop and go with a minimum of fuss. Cali is one of the hardest airport to transit due to heavy bureaucracy and officials who may or may not know how to do their jobs.

I purchased a cheap kettle and boiled up some eggs to take with me. No time for breakfast so it will have to be taken in the air. Thermos of coffee is ready to go and a few liters of water. Some mandarins and dried fruit make up the rest of the hamper.

Immigration open at 5:30 and flight planning at 6. All taxes are paid plane is fueled and ready, documents printed. Flight plans have been filed electronically however that never seems to cut any ice. They still want everything filled out by hand in this part of the world I went over today and did a very thorough pre flight and started the engine and checked the mags and carb heat. Everything looks in good order.

Day 9

26th August Guayaquil Ecuador

Wake up call at 4 – flight planning update plates download and at the airport 5 minutes before immigration rocked up. 5 past 6 AIS showed up for work so I could get permission to taxi the plane to the customs ramp for outward clearance. 6:30 I was airborne.

Panama city departure in an underpowered plane is quite exciting. The traffic pattern takes you right through the skyscrapers rather than over the Panama canal. I guess they know where their priorities lie. I took off with 20 degrees of flaps and held her on the prop to get as much altitude as possible before turning into the city. It is only a matter of time before there is an incident. The buildings are much taller today than they were 6 years ago.

The next part of the trip was a known weather issue I had been tracking that morning. A big buildup of cumulo nimbus was in my path and I needed to divert around it. I saw one lightning flash that was a bit intimidating but it was smooth air all the way.

Negotiating the mountain ranges into Cali is always interesting. Basic rule is stay out of the clouds and that way you do not hit a rock.

Roxanna had hired a handler for me - \$150 for the services. They were extremely professional and I got away in under an hour. I just gave all my papers to the handler and anyone came asking questions I just passed them on to the handler.

Off before noon. With the weather I saw on the way in Guayaquil was a done deal however we had a high altitude airport takeoff at noon to deal with and it was a hot day to boot. Cali has published strict VFR departures. In the USA once you are out of controlled airspace you are the boss- not here. The climb performance for the departure they had assigned me was completely unrealistic for the lawn mower engine I have in the plane so I had to go looking for thermals West of the airport to get over the mountains. Slowed me up a bit but otherwise it was a smooth flight.

My Egg experiment turned into a messy disaster. 10 minutes in the Chinese kettle did not cut it and the eggs were a runny mess that ended up in the amnesty bin at Guayaquil.

However I was so focussed on the flight that none of this as a problem in fact the 11 hours of time on duty passed very quickly and were full of memorable moments. I always get asked “don't you get bored sitting there?”. In fact you are very busy all the time both in mind and body that the time passes in a flash.

And so on to Guayaquil. It always pay to prepare and I pay \$95 a year to RocketRoute who have a decent flight planning system where I can get a good briefing and most importantly all the airport plates. Last time I did this I purchased an expensive trip kit from Jeppesen. This time RocketRoute gives me the same plates and more. The VFR plates have been invaluable in Cali and Guayaquil. I had them ready to hand so when approach control assigned me an approach or departure I had the information at my fingertips. Arriving in Guayaquil I had to hold and happily had the procedure to hand

Finally getting to land, Ground control dumped me unceremoniously on an airliner stand. There I was in the middle of a wasteland wondering what the next move was. Fortunately a circling handler latched on to me and we negotiated a price. As soon as the deal was struck I was shown the red carpet. I was put in a Gulfstream IV parking spot and all the authorities were wheeled in to stamp

the various papers and I was finally able to get to my hotel that Roxanna booked as soon as she saw the plane had landed on the Iridium tracker.

Tomorrow I go to Peru. As I have a very specific permit in hand this should not be a problem. However in this world there are always surprises waiting around the corner.

Day 10

27th August Trujillo Peru

A late start. I had a conference call first thing and then off to the airport where my handlers had everything ready. We had a short wait for immigration to show up and I was on my way quickly weaving my way above the cloud layer while in class B airspace that gives you 1 mile visibility and clear of clouds to stay legal.

As the day warmed up the cloud base disappeared and I saw the green jungles of Ecuador quickly change to the barren deserts of Peru in a few short miles. Out in the haze the huge buttress of the Andes started to show itself. I was efficiently handed off from controller to controller. At one stage I put out a Pilot Report for strong turbulence at my altitude and realized the controller could only speak English, he could not understand it.

The last few flights I have had no say in my routing. I have been handed a flight plan I was expected to follow to the letter. Well most of Peru is restricted airspace so you have little choice. I was allowed to tweak my Altitude though and get the best tailwinds and so completed this leg in under 4 hours.

Then at the other end the endless waiting for officials to show up. We did get immigration eventually after 2 hours and customs may show up at some stage though as the sun was going down I was allowed to go to my hotel.

I now am experiencing the luxury of a chill in the air. I have been dealing with oppressive heat the whole time since leaving New Mexico. Time to break out the warm cloths.

The burly operations manager at the airport was gleefully making copies of all my documents and returned my new passport with a 3 inch tear in the information page. Not a deal breaker but it means I have to replace the passport before I travel on any commercial airline to the US or other sensitive places. Apparently this is a common problem for airline staff. It put a dent in an otherwise fairly decent day. A small piece of transparent tape at the back of the page restored it. The ID page is intact and that is the important one. It goes to show what a vulnerable outdated and impractical document a passport is.

Anyway I lucked out on the hotel. Modern room and decent Internet and coffee on tap. The restaurant had the choice of ham sandwiches or Tuna sandwiches but across the road there was a very modern bar and restaurant that offered excellent gin and tonics and a superb [cannelloni](#).

I cannot get my head around Peru. The gastronomy is superb and yet the country looks like it has been nuked. The houses are appalling and there is rubbish everywhere.

While in this part of the world it is going to cost me \$500 every time I touch the ground. The fuel is expensive and I have to deal with high user fees. It is almost worth fitting long range tanks and just leap frogging Colombia Ecuador and Peru. Anyway it is all in the budget and what I expected.

Day 11

28th August Nasca Peru.

Today started slowly as I had to wait for the clouds to boil off. This is a problem with the coast route. I had plenty to keep me busy. Various fees had to be paid, some in dollars and some in Solis. So I had to exit via the departure gate go to the bank, Pay the cash into the various accounts and go back through the boarding gates via the Xray scanner. Security theatre at it's finest

By the time most was paid up three customs officers arrived and thoroughly inspected my bags. All very cordial and handshakes all round. By 11 the weather was starting to clear and the flight planning office gave me the green light to go. However while taxiing Lima insisted I get an Instrument clearance. Who was I to argue as I was back tracking the runway. I had all the plates on board and the procedures in most of Peru are quite simple so I just went with the flow. The flight plan I signed was VFR and remained clear of clouds so who am I to argue with the powers that be.

There was a reason for all this. My destination was IFR on take off. Although the forecast was for VFR conditions by the time I got there, this could not be factored in. Basically if I went bey the letter of the rules I would be stuck permanently in Trujillo.

The flight was uneventful and I had the skim the edge of Lima Jorge Javez airport, one of the busiest airports on the Pacific coast of South America and I have to say the controllers did a splendid job. Almost none of the planes were fitted with Nextgen ADSB so I suppose the expensive retrofit I did on the transponder was of no help to the controllers.

Looking at the weather patterns in Pisco and seeing not go VFR until 2pm I decided to turn the plane around and fly to Nasca where I could get fuel and get VFR conditions early. I needed to get out of Peru.

Peru is strange. On the first impression you think everyone is living in the stone age and dealing with the bureaucracy it does not get any better. All the roads are lined with rubbish and discarded building materials. Most of the dwellings are unspeakably ugly and unfinished with rebar poking out of most of the makeshift ceilings. And then you end up in very nicely finished hotels, very good food (sometimes) and everything for the tourist being quite reasonably priced.



I ended up taxiing to parking stop and the airport getting me a ramshackle taxi adorned with the virgin of Guadalupe and going through the centre of the hideous town of Nasca and ended up going through a gate into a garden paradise of peace and tranquillity.



Day 11

29th August Tacna Peru

Well the day started with a thick fog. I was rather hungry from the horrible supper the night before. Asparagus soup out of a packet and a steak and vegetables and too salty to eat. So I tucked into the breakfast buffet and got to the airport at 9. All went fairly smoothly and I purchased the most expensive fuel to date (11 dollars a gallon) fortunately it was only a 9 gallon top off. On my way and relatively uneventful trip although ATC wanted me to fly 15 miles off the coast to avoid a restricted area. I was not totally comfortable with this being far to far to glide if I had issues – Oh well.

I am now well and truly in real desert. Not the fertile garden desert of New Mexico but real desert where nothing grows and the primeval landscape is totally alien. You may as well be flying instruments as the indeterminate haze and the unpredictable relief make a mockery of the norms of flying and you are really dependent on the instruments. I had force myself to fly a lot higher than I felt was right and even then saw some towers behind me that could have ruined my day as I descended into this ruined landscape.

Made it to Tacna an appallingly ugly town from the air. I was glad I was getting out. Roxanna had the authorities lined up. Piece of cake. - Wrong. To start with a young girl from customs was determined to make problems. Demanding paper after paper. Apparently she thought she was dealing with a car that you have to temporarily import. With aircraft it is totally different and is handled by the air permitting authority who control the movements of the plane minutely. After 2

hours and finally managing to locate a copy of my entry permit did she relent and allow me to leave. By this time Roxanna was raising hell in Lima and the customs girl was getting hit from all sides by officials who wanted me out. At this point I was stressed and not really happy to fly however I felt it best to get out while the going was good. Only to have my own screwup catch me.

I had been so focussed on lining up Colombia, Ecuador and Peru I forgot that Chile needed co-ordination. I got the Chile permit first of all as it was dead easy to apply for but the dates were wrong I was too early and the permit did not have the dates so there I was on the ramp requesting startup clearance and getting denied. Oh well Booking.com again and a night in Tacna was on the cards. To be fair to Chile they have been as helpful as they can within the framework of their rules and will be waiting for me tomorrow. Roxanna has been calling all the key players and they will be more than ready for me tomorrow afternoon.

In the meantime – I am in a tolerably decent hotel although the noise level is too high. Hell needs noise to saturation level in order to cancel out all the thought processes. In a situation like this all you can do is relax and enjoy the inevitable. Chile awaits in the morning I hope.

Day 12

30th Aug 2019 Arica Chile

The less said, gentle reader, about today the better. After 12 hours on duty the aircraft has moved 16 nautical miles, is out of Peru and is fueled and ready to run South exploring Chile. A magical land of splendid scenery, where the taxis have suspension and know the city they work in, where the Avgas is close to US prices and you are not gouged at every airport you land. You pay a fixed fee - about \$45 a month and get access to all the airspace and landing facilities that Chile provides.

I will not bore you with the ins and outs of all the paperwork and indignities I had to go through both on arrival and departure. Suffice to say I am here, I have a good meal inside of me and am ready to tackle the next leg and push South.

Day 13

31st Aug 2019 The Atacama Desert.

I had all my plans lined up – I was going to do the same legs I did last time and end up in La Serena. Only problem there was no fuel in Antofagasta and this had not been noted if it had it was at the bottom of the stack and I never saw it. Notams are the bane of aviation. Written for a 1920's telex with the baudot 5 bit character set in undecipherable abbreviations with no prioritisation. There is a lot of underground activation to modernize this system. Anyway I digress. The upshot was all my carefully prepared plans had a last minute revision at flight planning and had to go to Iquique 120 miles down the road and top up for the 420 mile leg to the Atacama desert airport. I pulled down weather and plates on my phone and took off into the morning gloom keeping 500 feet below the overcast at 3000 feet.

It was quite imposing skirting the huge cliffs towering into the mist.

Anyway I landed at Iquique and it was a building site. Half the airport was ripped up and so the main taxiway was interrupted making for a long taxi to fuel.

All the Chilean officials are as friendly and as pleasant as they can be and really go out of their way to help. It really makes things so much easier for everyone and has really made today really pleasant.

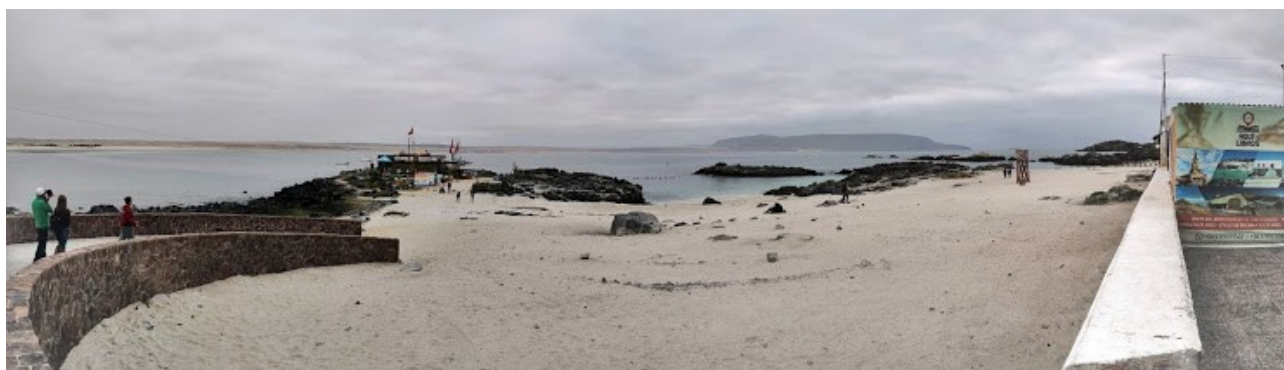
Anyway the turnaround took an hour as I had to be driven from flight planning to customs and back to flight planning. Customs have to approve every leg which is a bit of a slowdown. I wonder how this will work when I start to hit the smaller clubs airstrips.

The Chilean airspace system is probably the best in South America. You pay a monthly tax in my case \$75 and this gives you access to airspace parking and all the facilities you need. Every other country charges you bit by bit and it is totally inefficient and time consuming and frustration for all concerned. This system actually encourages air tourism and If you can run the gauntlet of Colombia, Ecuador and especially Peru, Chile is such a welcome breath of fresh air.

The next leg was a long one 440 miles and low to avoid the headwinds. When you are low you really have to watch the fuel mixture. Too lean and you burn up the valves and just slightly too rich and your fuel consumption really skyrockets. Having a fuel flow meter is invaluable to keep the balance. At 5500 feet I was being hit by 20 knot headwinds that would have stretched my reserves so I got under the clouds at 1500 feet and ran the thickening skud all the way running into the

occasional cloud. Anyway I made it without undue difficulty. I prefer being at altitude but skirting coastline and dodging clouds helps pass the time.

I am now in a rustic village Bahia Ingles on the Atacama coast enjoying a Kunstman beer and ceviche.



Day 13
1st September 2019
Valparaiso Chile

On the whole an uneventful but very fulfilling day. Getting out of the Atacama desert was the big one. I could see the overcast was set in for the day. I spent an hour valeting the plane and getting the dust off her after which it was time to move. Although the flight planning office declared the field VFR they had not told the tower. So I just requested a special VFR departure (1 mile vis and clear of clouds) and took off in the general direction of the sunlight showing through the clouds and got myself above the deck.

About this time the display on my gps radio I replaced in San Antonio decided it was time to start acting up and I lost the standby frequency display. Not a big deal but irritating. I have 2 spare radios. However none of this distracted from flying down the Andes with Aconcagua totally clear and looking impossibly close and easy to fly over despite being twice my ceiling.

I lost contact with ATC for a while as I interpreted 3 as 2 and ATC did not pick up on my read back. In phonic talk three is emphasised as “Tree”. The quality of English is going down the further I fly south and for a large part of the leg I had to operate in Spanish as Santiago radio did not speak English. It is changing even in Argentina and one day English will be universal on the airways.

Anyway I approached the city of Valparaiso located in a spectacular setting and in the cloudless sunshine looked from the air like a very pleasant place to be.

Landing at the Rodelillo aero-club was exciting. I totally misjudged it as it was a table top runway in a bowl of hills and I kept way too high flying by instinct instead of by the numbers. These kinds of airports you really need to do a once over with a guide to nail the altitudes on each leg. Anyway I came in with a full side slip and had some runway to spare at the end.

Roxanna had lined up a bucket and hose so I was able to drain the oil now on 60 hours and replace the filter. The guy helping me who I tipped a quick 20 turned out to be an Airbus mechanic preferring the easy job of keeping the aero-club fleet flying rather than the stress of airline work. They had quite a collection of planes – A new generation Archer – similar to my plane but costing half a million dollars, A turbine Cessna 206 and many others all in immaculate condition. Flying is

not a poor man's sport in this country.

Anyway after a mammoth session with Uber I ended up with a sea view room and decent WiFi in a room I do not need earplugs. Tomorrow is my last day for a while as I have to go back to work to support this expensive habit I have. There will be posts from time to time as I do major legs and the video I have been taking will be edited and placed on YouTube but that is for another day.



Day 14 Journeys End ?

Another lovely day's flying with everyone I meet being as kind and as helpful as possible. Departing Valparaiso Rodelillo is not without it's perils. There is an unlit and uncharted tower direct on the published departure path. At the end of the day – whatever toys you have on the flight deck it is really the mark one eyeball that gets you out of trouble.

For the first time my electronic flight plan filings were accepted. So much easier. I plan and go to breakfast. My briefings are delivered by Email over breakfast and I turn up at the airport and leave. So easy.

This time another clear day with the Andes clearly visible. Symmetrical volcanic cones one after another as I progressed South.



The all too familiar coastline of Valdivia came into view albeit 18 years since I was last here the memories came rushing back. Ahead was the Las Marias airport. Pichoy the commercial airport closed my flight plan and passed me on to the advisory frequency. I will post the landing on YouTube. It was gusty and interesting to say the least.

And now the icing on the cake. After haemorrhaging dollars on this trip, and having to put up with the indignities of petty officialdom I had landed within 400 meters of my next job. An hour after landing I was in the shipyard being inducted into the health and safety protocols and on board my next job assignment. I was so happy to see that the “dream team” had been assembled for this job. The finest captain I have sailed with, the best IT officer. This is going to be fun I think.

A fly in the ointment was dropping my Ipad on the Tarmac when my clipboard case clasp failed. The unit dutifully self destructed as it's designers intended. However taking the long view a critical piece of navigation equipment failing I can replace it anywhere and the replacement price is not going to bankrupt me. Looking in the aviation catalogs "Certified" equipment that can do what the Ipad can do; the price tag looks like a telephone number.

So an evening excursion into Valdivia to replace the broken unit and a cold beer finished the day off nicely.

I will continue to document my long flying legs. Right now it is back on the job.

Interlude Santiago De Chile 4th Sept 2019

Well the shipyard was behind and on day 3 I was not going to be productive so I decided to pull the plug. I had an airport scoped out outside Santiago to keep the plane. However when I went to start the plane there was a horrible noise in the headphones and I could not transmit.

The switch panel had come away from its mounting and I suspect a loose wire back there. Anyway well beyond my grade. Avionics are a black art. Speaking to the mechanic at the Valdivia aero-club it was Santiago or bust to get it fixed.

I pulled out the handheld and hooked it up to the emergency antenna. Brilliant bit of kit it came with a headset adapter and a 12 volt charging kit. Only problem was I had to disconnect the tracker so you will notice a big jump when I reconnected it at the end of the trip. Wires all over the place but I was able to communicate. During the trip the winds were forecast to be on the nose 30 – 40 knots so I put her on the deck and kept about 1000 feet above ground level and followed the main North South Motorway making good time.

The radio performed reasonably well and I was able to maintain contact with the various controllers. What was really annoying was interference from commercial radio stations. It got quite bad in Santiago.

Throughout the trip being so low I had good cell coverage and was able to keep in touch with Roxanna who got me hooked up with the aero-club for parking. I could have opted for a hangar at \$100 a night but declined. All very useful to have things lined up ahead of my arrival.

Even at 1000 AGL I was just above the haze level and the volcanoes on the horizon. One of them had the decency to salute me with a plume of smoke that the plane insisted on placing on the twitter feed.

Santiago has improved its airspace since I was last there and they have decent visual corridors so you do not have to talk to Santiago radar at all.

I forgot about the downhill landing at the GA airport – last time I used all of the 2600 foot runway. This time I made it off the runway at the mid point.

So tomorrow I go back to the airport to see what we can do about getting this fixed.

5th September En Route to Montevideo

Well this had a happy ending. A bit of metal had lodged itself between 2 contacts and it was shorting out the audio to the headphones. I felt it was more teamwork with the Avionics guys. I had everything pulled out for them and gave them a few hints to help the diagnosis. Some long nosed pliers fixed it and we were back in business.

Well everything got a thorough inspection and the mounting racks were all properly re-installed (not one of my strong points) and I limped away in reasonably good shape as the price was about half what I would pay in the US. In San Antonio the avionics people were quite straight up about their only installing new equipment not fixing anything . Down here where resources are scarcer there is a lot more repairing going on.

Could the day get any better ? I found a hundred dollar bill lost under the seat from when I was counting stacks of bills getting ready to land in Colombia.

I am now hopping over the andes in an A320 – somewhat better service ceiling and I am getting a break in Uruguay while the shipyard gets it's act together.



13th September Valdivia

Another lovely day. The Santiago Metro is so well done and unfortunately very well utilized. I had 3 trains loaded to capacity come through in 2 minutes and could not squeeze on board. 4th time lucky and space opened up as I got away from the centre.

Last time I tried to get from Hotel to plane in Santiago via Uber it took an hour. This was a lot faster and the train dropped me almost at the airport.

The people in the aero club were so pleasant. I informed them I was leaving and wanted to settle accounts. No problem – have a nice flight. Eventually after insisting they called the president to find out if I owed anything. No nothing. So I then asked if I could make a hundred dollar donation for all the help they had provided and after another phone call they reluctantly accepted that and smiles all round. The club is hugely wealthy with a rich history and there is no way I can really repay them providing a parking facility in downtown Santiago but at least I can make a small gesture of thanks.

Flying out of Santiago it was unusually clear and the dramatic setting of the town was in clear view. The very simple VFR departure was followed to the tee and I climbed to my assigned altitude of FL075 setting the altimeter to standard at 4500 feet and into a clear blue sky with the ever spectacular Andes flanking my left.

Then it was pretty much the milk run I have been doing the last few times only the flying is so rewarding. The scenery so rich and varied and the workload such that time passes in a flash.

The occasional volcanic eruption off to the left just helps to pass the time.

Moving further South you have to watch the temperature as the freezing level was forecast to come below my cruising altitude and I started encountering cloudy conditions. So you are dealing with known icing if you have to go through the clouds so this is a thoroughly bad idea. I found a hole and pushed plane into the yellow arc dropping at 2500 feet per minute while checking carburettor ice all the way down. So far so good under the cloud deck and 11 miles to run.

Landing was an anticlimax. Gentle wind down the runway and an easy refueling. Company sent a driver to the airport to pick me and my stuff up and I am back on the job again.

1st October

Finally job done – Another monumental tome written, Dragons slayed and a ship brought online against fearful odds however the details are corporate confidential so I do not have to drag you through the rather frustrating but personally satisfying adventure.

Having an aircraft here at the low points of the job when the sun was out was a bonus beyond measure when waiting for a project checkpoint to be made. My Australian team mate and I could pile in the plane and wander off into a fairy land of volcanoes and lakes for a well deserved break and camaraderie at the numerous aero-clubs that exist here. All well ordered and putting our New Mexico strip to shame.

So at the conclusion of the job and the Southern cone still in the throes of a bitter early spring what better plan than to hop over to Uruguay, see the better half before she goes off to her day job in Ushuaia and find a hospitable hangar where I can shelter the plane, focus on work and get some much needed maintenance done.



So tomorrow is probably going to be one of the highlights of the trip when I cross the Andes. My original plan was to make a 200 mile detour North as I know how the conditions deteriorate rapidly as you go South however things are a bit ambiguous.

In this game you have to absolutely obsessive about the weather. I have spent literally decades pouring over satellite imagery here on on a spur of the moment decision have decided on a Southerly route via Puerto Montt- one of my least favourite cities, We have alerted customs in Argentina and Chile and the stage is set for some spectacular flying.

2nd October Neuquen Argentina

Fog was on the menu we knew this 24 hours in advance. Sure enough Valdivia was stuck in a real “pea souper” as the sun came up. I had a car booked just before 8 at the hotel to ferry all the tools and aircraft parts I carry around and decided to just keep the schedules going and arrived at the plane caked in melting ice in a gloomy dawn. A rather damp start to the day so I delayed my flight plan and called up Valdivia tower to ensure all my plans were in sync and active and waited.

Had a long chat with the mechanic whose thick Chilean accent challenged my limited Spanish but we managed to have a decent chat. All the while the sun was trying to break through. About 10 AM it all started to clear and I took off into broken cloud. A very pretty climb out over the city with the green poking through the white.

With usual Chilean official efficiency I was whisked through the clearance. General declarations stamped and I was on my way pushing the plane through her best climb performance while keeping the throttle backed off. I am sure a rented plane could out perform mine any day. I am always thinking of wear and tear and baby the engine as much as possible.

The climb out took me alongside Mount Osorno a symetrical volcanic cone the dominates Puerto Varas. We breezed effortlessly above the 9000 foot peak.



About this time I got out the pulse oxymeter for the first time this trip and saw I was down in the 80s. A quick puff from one of the oxygen bottles got it up again and I kept the bottle handy and

descended down 30 minutes later when the drab pampas started to show ahead.

After that it was relatively featureless Patagonia grasslands to my destination. Always an anticlimax after the lakes and pine forests of Chile.

Still the ATC was completely professional and the inward clearance at my destination relatively painless. Immigration is now charging a \$20 land tax and the AIS are charging a per kilometer navigation tax emulating Peru. While the amounts are not horrible it does involve a huge amount of paperwork that slows things down. Chile just has a flat tax for the month and that is it. So much simpler. The net result is I have to allow 2 hours minimum per fuel stop to jump through all the hoops – so be it relax and enjoy the inevitable as I work my way through a superb fillet steak and contemplate a late start and an easy hopefully stress free single flight in the morning.

I have been battling headwinds ever since leaving the US. Even on today's trip where the winds are invariably Westerly I had forecast strong North Easterly winds. Looking at the weather charts I decided to make a dogleg East to the middle of a strong Anticyclone and avoid bashing into a 40 knot headwind.

So another visit to Bahia Blanca where I messed up with the radios last time I visited. Basically the tower radio had such limited range I declared lost comms, put 7600 in the transponder and circled the tower waiting for a green light. This time the radios worked, they had fixed them and I could get them 60 miles out.

Hours and hours of featureless Patagonian wilderness and so I hooked up the Intercom to Spotify and let Mendelssohn lighten up the featureless landscape.

The stop in Bahia Blanca was pleasant. Everyone there was as helpful as could be and I was able to fuel, do an inward clearance, get the flight plan filed and even have time for a coffee and a snack while the flight plan cooled down.

And back into flat featureless provincia de Buenos Aires. Was this going to be another milk run ? No Way. The first hint of trouble was the strange look of the sky. Unusual clarity and stratiform clouds under a very dark high overcast.

All the while I was being vectored by Buenos Aires and everything seemed perfectly normal. Cleared into San Fernando runway 05 Wind was 090 at 20 knots 40 degree crosswind component no worries well within the specs.

The first hint of trouble was the runway was in the wrong place and I had to fly 45 degrees to keep it lined up and my headwind component was no 40 knots.

Far from the 10 knots and CAVOK forecast when I took off

The Landing – Well judge for yourself – skip ahead a bit I have not edited it yet.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5-Dr4Hwrjw>

Anyway as you see I made it through the most challenging landing in my flying career.

So time to relax. Short hop tomorrow to home. Weather not great but we shall see. I am no super hurry and am in a nice place.

4th Oct Lazy day in Tigre

A lot worse places to be stuck by weather. Even in the perpetual drizzle that the dawn brought this is a picturesque town on the outskirts of Buenos Aires and comparatively safe. There was no way to fly. Completely IFR.

I have rented a nice apartment. Difficult to work out what anything costs in a crumbling economy. I saw to my horror that the cash withdrawals from the ATM were charged at 50% the official exchange rate so everything is cash only.

The layover gave me a chance to catch up on the maintenance records. Just got the oil analysis back from the last oil change and the iron content is way back in the green. I had an issue 6 months ago after leaving the plane for several months idle where the iron content was a little high. One of the more experienced pilots in the airpark suggested CamGuard additive that makes the oil more sticky and helps preserve the engine. Now I am on my third sample the trend is obvious. The elevated phosphorus indicates the presence of the additive and the resulting drop in iron matches. This is why oil analysis is so important so you catch those little anomalies and correct them before they become a problem.

Weather looks excellent tomorrow so I can fly East to the small republic that has no name but lies to the East of the Uruguay river. Hopefully there is a hangar waiting for me.

9th of October Piriapolis Uruguay

I got over to Uruguay on Saturday. Compared to the ghastly weather during the 2 days previous , the day started warm and sunny. I ubered over to the airport and paid off the parking and 6 quarts of oil. Never know when you will need it. I started with 12 quarts and used up 9 on the trip (one oil change).

Clearance was easy. It was Saturday morning and nobody was in a mood to charge for anything so my papers were cleared and customs came out to check the plane and I was free to go.

On the Uruguay side I encountered low clouds and managed to keep 1000 feet. I flew right over Anahera in the shipyard glowing with her fresh coat of paint and ready to be launched. On to Montevideo and another cross wind landing in Adami airport. Very easy clearance. Customs was just as thorough as Argentina but with an air of professionalism and courtesy.

Last short leg to Punta Del Este and I had a chance to fly over our newly purchased forest now very clearly marked as we have just cleared the boundary to put in a fence. The air traffic controller at the International airport was very concerned that I knew how to operate at an uncontrolled airport. I assured him I would be fine and he passed me on to the advisory frequency and I landed at a deserted airport.

El Jaguel Punta del Este is a strange airport. They have fuel, 5 people manning it and a 24 hour air force MP on duty. However the landing fees and parking fees tend to discourage anyone coming here. I was keen to get out of sight into a hangar but unfortunately I had to settle for grass parking as the hangar was totally full.

I took the opportunity to take some friends flying in the 3 days I was there. One of the advantages of being in the grass. You can get the plane out and fly any time.

Anyway Roxanna phoning around we lucked out and found hangar space at Minas 40 miles inland from the house. Probably the best option all round. So this morning I took off and did the short leg in 30 minutes.

The strip is 1800 feet long grass at 500 foot altitude. I think only now do I have the confidence and experience to attempt this. Last time I was here was the first time I did a grass landing and that strip was twice the size. The landing was relatively easy – 15 knot tailwind uphill landing – piece of cake. Getting off will need the right wind and the grass will need to be dry and the ground hard but that is another story.

The people at the flying club were super friendly and really happy to have me there. They invited me for lunch in the club house and drove me to the bus station to catch the afternoon bus home.

So now the log goes quiet as I work my Antarctic season start. Going to be a busy one I think December I should be able to get moving again.

13th November 2019 Santa Rosa La Pampa Argentina

Been a lot happening work-wise. I had to make a whistle stop to Ushuaia to support a ship having issues.

Made it back to Uruguay to participate in the air festival at the flying club in Minas. I exhibited the plane with a map of the route and spoke to interested locals about the trip. All a very low key affair

which culminated in my leaving at the end for the start of the next leg of my voyage, heading to Punta Arenas for another job. This is a three day trip breaking the 1200 mile journey into manageable hops.

First it was back to El Jaguel the tiny strip in Punta Del Este where I could drive my spares to the plane and load it up. Then a short hop to the local International airport. Here I took a \$200 hit for the convenience of having an International clearance on my doorstep. Basically a 20 minute taxi ride from my house to the airport and a 10 minute clearance and away no fuss. Well that was the plan – the officials were all asleep at their desks and had to be woken up. Then on preflight I noticed the Tires could use a little air so that slowed me down a bit more as I got the pump out and serviced all tires.

Into a brilliant sunny day with a few clouds and 2 hours later I was in Argentina. Clearance was all quite gentle and once again no money was asked for.

After filling up I had my first scare when the tower vectored me into the path of another plane. We both saw and corrected in time. We came within 100 feet at the same altitude. Rather sloppy controlling in my opinion. I was tempted to make a report but thought better of it. Just put it down to experience after all I am the person responsible for maintaining proper separation.

Apparently shortly after takeoff there was a lightning ATC strike. I had opted for a departure via uncontrolled airspace and so was not affected. However I heard second hand it was chaos throughout the country as a result.

I was expecting a bumpy ride as I had to go through a weak front. It was there very well developed but completely stable. Mostly high clouds and no rain. North and South looked pretty bad. The European computer weather model is working very well thank goodness.

Landed at a very modern but largely unused airport – one scheduled flight a day. Everyone was very friendly and I was fuelled and parked in no time.

As I need to be on the road early I am doomed to eat in snack bars as the restaurants tend to open after I have gone to bed. Oh well the food even in the snack bars are OK and the beer is all locally brewed. Life could be a lot worse.

Tomorrow into the Southern cone and the cold and the windy.



I am including the packing list of everything I took off the plane. Almost nothing of the spares kit used so far except oil and filters.

13th November 2019 Comodoro Rivedavia.

So how can I write about featureless flat landscape all day and make it interesting ? I know certain readers I know are reading this and would be thinking about boring raised to another level.

However I see it more as a great chess puzzle. You are going out on a flat plain and in fact embarking on a great adventure. The hazards are invisible. I was flying into a hole where no official forecasts are forthcoming and am relying on computer models, old satellite imagery and blind intuition. So all I had to go on officially was a convective sigmet I had to fly through and a winds aloft forecast that was all over the place.

This is one of the loneliest places on the planet. There is flat featureless grasslands in all directions except where a river meanders through and is surrounded by lush agricultural land.

My main enemy was headwind. This was a long run of 400 miles and if I went up to altitude I was guaranteed a 50 knot headwind meaning I could not make my destination so I went down to 1000 AGL and kept the wind component to as close to zero as I could manage. To the North there was a line of thunderstorms bearing down on me and South a rack of lenticular clouds indicating turbulence. Oh well – it was a fraught four and a half hours bashing my way through to Trelew. There was no weather information on all my planning sites so I was just going to have to wing it. The worst computer model had a 40 knot crosswind forecast. In that case I was ready to make an off field landing on a road and deal with it later.

Fortunately the wind was reasonable and down the runway. There was a host of aircraft waiting mid field to back track the runway so I made a long landing so they could get on their way.

Trelew has not improved the fuelling process. The Avgas pumps are conveniently located on the ramp and fuelling takes scant minutes however the process of payment takes forever. You have to ride in the Jet A fuel tanker to the fuel plant. This means calling out a detachment of the security police to open the gate and wait while we complete the paperwork to allow them to ding my card.

After this has been completed we get back in the fuel tanker and I get dropped off at the plane so I can pick up my documents and then go and make a courtesy call to flight planning and then file the next stage of the voyage.

Comodoro Rivadavia was reached after a very bumpy ride that saw my fuel flow meter pack up and then start working again. I got quite worried as no fuel flow can lower quality of your day very quickly. However the engine was fine and her usual cheerful self and after a while the instrument came to life. I always keep a paper record of fuel management – the only paper in the cockpit.

So the on to the only disaster of the day – all the hotels in Comodoro Rivedavia were booked out except the presidential suite in the most expensive hotel in town. After a day of being pummelled I just said “Bring it on”. Four rooms a spa bath and Panoramic views actually make this town look quite decent. I will just have to work a little harder to bridge the budget gap and after the fuel bills so far it is a drop in the ocean.

Finding the restaurant that caters for those who want to eat whenever they feel hungry actually turns up very avant garde pleasant places. The food is decent and the ambiance 21st century. So as I relax

after a very nicely prepared cannelloni and salad I sign off. Early start tomorrow for Rio Gallegos and Chile.

14th November Punta Arenas

Considerably more interesting terrain and tailwinds made for a very pleasant day's flying.

The hotel offered breakfast at 6 AM – Excellent I was on the flight line by 7 AM and in the air at 7:30 and with the winds a lot more settled I made excellent time still keeping the plane on the deck. As well as strong winds, 5000 feet and higher gets you into the icing zone. So I was quite happy at 2500 feet and with a 10 knot push, very happy.

The run from Comodoro Rivadavia to Rio Gallegos is quite pretty. A lot of the route is an infant Grand Canyon about 500 feet deep but extending as far as the eye can see many layers of striated rock with salt pans in the base. A bit further on massive mine workings that have become more numerous over the last 6 years since I started plying this route.

It would be nice to venture further afield but the lack of airports and fuel availability limit me to very narrow lines of navigation. Here is an undiscovered national park in the offing and no means to explore it.

And so on to the border crossing. Sad to say I had to give Argentina top marks with Chile a dismal far second place.

Roxanna had all the Argentine officials lined up and they stamped the papers with courtesy- the young girl from customs tried to drag the whole thing out but I think because she wanted more details of the adventure and had to hide behind officialdom to ask the questions she really wanted to ask – what it is like to fly for fun rather than as a vocation. Once she started there was no stopping.

With Chile there were no phone contacts except for operations and they only give out email addresses so Roxanna could only blindly email out the arrival notice. In I previous era one phone call would have everyone lined up and ready.

The short hop to Punta Arenas was fast and easy. I had a British Antarctic Survey Dash 7 on my tail landing and then on to clearing. Customs was nowhere to be found. I avoided the ire of agriculture by having a can of bug spray in the back seat and listing the contents of the can on my general declaration certifying I had discharged it in flight.

A very gentle immigration officer checked me in but the lack of customs on the field means I need to go the head office and chase them up in the morning. Chile used to be the model of efficiency when entering and leaving the country. Now it is a total shambles. Coupled with this, the landing permit I had obtained had not been transmitted from Santiago so the plane was arrested on the spot until I could show them my confirmation email. Still everyone was so pleasant it as hard to get angry or irritated.

Most important the plane is in a hangar paying serious money but while I am earning it is fine and more important the money is funding private aviation.

However we have to end this on a sombre note. For the first time in all my visits to South America I have been advised to stay in the hotel after dark. Chile is not a happy country right now and even in this far flung outpost at the height of summer the winds of winter are blowing.

30th December 2019



Just arrived Comodoro Rivedavia after an easy trip from Ushuaia. The weather was brilliant for a change at least for the hour I needed to get out.

I have a co-pilot. Lucas the young lad who bought Anahera is a pilot in training and wanted a ride back to Uruguay so I am giving him a ride and letting him fly the plane when I feel it is safe.

The weather in Ushuaia has been atrocious for most of December and it was great to see things improve dramatically every mile we sprinted Northbound.

While in Ushuaia I did manage to get a few local flights in catching those rare moments when it was not blowing and raining cats and dogs. The Nave were also super hospitable lending me ample hangar space to work on the plane and keep the scheduled maintenance up to date.

Tierra Del Fuego tried to keep us with 50 knot headwinds crossing the straits of Magellan but they relented as we crossed the Northern shore and approached Rio Gallegos.

That was a very quick turnaround – even quicker than normal as I am paying cash for fuel this leg. Since the government changed credit cards are out of fashion and parallel market dollars are in.

The Vacuum pump packed up on the next leg. So no artificial horizon or directional Gyro. I have been expecting this for quite a while and have a spare in my kit. Just need time to fit it. I will fit it

before the big push North through Brazil.

This is my 6th overnight through this airport and it is starting to become routine. Not sure If I will be coming this way again. However everyone I am dealing with is very pleasant so it does have it's benefits.

31st December. Bahia Blanca

Really tricky weather. Cold moist air from the is creating instrument conditions at a lot of the airports. Having a busted gyro is really a good safety aid as it stops me from attempting anything stupid especially with another person in the plane.

So we did the short hop to Trelew quickly and at altitude catching the good tail winds with Lucas flying the whole trip except the landing. I had to take over as there was a heavy breathing down our neck and I wanted to optimize the landing to get out of his way.

With 2 of us on the job we could split tasks. I left Lucas with a fistfull of pesos to organize the fuel while I did all the paperwork. The weather report from Bahia Blanca was very poor conditions 12 hours ago and no updates so I had to go back to the weather office to get them to update. It was marginal but well within limits and getting better so we continued. Lovely weather most of the way except for a few low clouds over the destination airport that did not present any problems.

We fuelled again and tried to park as far out of the wind as possible.

I though New Year's eve would present some problems with catering so selected an upmarket place that advertised a restaurant on site. Of course it was closed along with every other restaurant that was not hosting a private party. They did manage to scrape up some ham sandwiches for us. In any other major city in another country there would be some ethnic diversity so life goes on over major holidays. Not here.

Anyway another early night and hopefully the weather will be kind to us. Forecasts are fair. Computer models are not however the computer models are all over the road today so I am not making any decisions until I see a satellite picture in the morning.

1st Jan 2010 The return of Ulysses

With the weather set to deteriorate into days of gloom caused by a marine airflow over the Rio La Plata I decided to make a last push to home.

Fortunately the hotel was serving breakfast so we had a chance to get some victuals before staring

We took off in marginal conditions and found a hole to climb out into bright sunshine and to our cruising altitude of 9500 feet with ATC all the way. Slight tail wind. Great.

San Fernando was a breeze. Most general aviation had not got over their hangovers so we had no delays and I was able to return Lucas to his mum 30 minutes ahead of schedule. The officials were all there. Fast professional and efficient as always and then my last stretch home. I filed for the small Punta Del Este airport however weather was deteriorating fast and I was basically ordered to make a special VFR landing at my alternate – the expensive International airport. Oh well so be it.

I created a bit of a dilemma at the airport. They could not get my head around the fact that I had cleared customs already and insisted on calling immigration who basically realized the situation at once and apologized on behalf of the staff.

To make matters more complicated I had friends picking me up at the small airport and they did not have my cell and I did not have theirs so we could not get in touch. The only place I had their cell was in the house so I jumped in a taxi so I could call them and tell them what had happened.

Then the homecoming really hit me – the bedroom shower glass had shattered into a million fragments making the house uninhabitable.

So there you have it – a detour – arrival not as planned and my house in a sorry state and needing a million unwanted guests expelled.

2 hours later all the glass was removed and frame cleaned so I can replace the glass in the morning.

So with some semblance of order restored time for a decent meal. Self catered so no surprises.

13th Jan Bage Brazil

On the move again. Uruguay was a lovely rest after fixing the damage at the house and I paid the various taxes and fees that owning property entails. After that it was some maintenance. I hired a supposedly certified A&P mechanic who was pretty useless for the most part. Had very few tools and had to use most of mine and I suspect he broke one of my magnetos setting the points so I am running on the spare I took. It is a good spare as I had it from brand new and it has not reached full time yet so I half anticipated a problem like this. The Vacuum pump was replaced so the plane is back to 100%

Lovely weather today and was given a lift by one of the English expats here to the airport. All very efficient on the Uruguayan side. Plane was checked out and all was good. A fast flight to Melo where customs and Immigration were waiting to check me out.

Then a long wait till Brazil authorized the inward flight. Caught up with some Emails and then waxed the plane. My plan is for the plane to get back to New Mexico in better condition than she left.

The hop to Baje is 50 miles and a decent little town I have stopped in before. Immigration was quick and then I had to do my customs declaration on line. It took a while as I had to list all electronics. Well I listed the big ones.

Then the customs did all the paperwork at their central offices and drove out with the paperwork 2 hours later and I was set.

The last hurdle is flight planning that is now completely broken. While waiting for customs I engaged the lad in the AIS office. The flight planning offices are no longer allowed to receive flight plans – all have to go through a central number and in the unlikely event you can get through the plan often does not make it to the system.

While waiting for customs to rock up I tested my online flight plan filing system I use from the UK and it made it on to the Brazilian system so I am somewhat ahead I hope.

I had my hotel scoped out and a taxi took me there. The cab driver took plastic fortunately. Then I

had to locate a source of local currency and with the help of Google Maps that issue was resolved. I hopefully have enough to pay aviation taxes for a couple of days. They only take cash – local.

Next Comms - Three UK roaming was completely useless barely working so time to get kitted out with a local SIM. The local cell company could not sell me a SIM as I had to have a Brazilian Tax ID so they told me to go to a street vendor and buy a SIM come back. They activated it and sent me to a pharmacy to charge it up.

Trying the Hotel restaurant was a bit of a disaster – they did not serve even soft drinks – you had to go down to reception and at reception they advised me to go to a decent restaurant and gave directions.

We are in 100 deet country. The extremely nasty insect repellent I hate to use is now in my flight suit pocket and getting regular use. Brazil is home to most of the nastiest insect borne diseases and it pays to take precautions.

Today was a very short trip – about 200 miles but in Bage I am in a different universe. The locals can understand me pretty much but I can hardly make out their dialect. Also good to do a short trip to check out the extensive maintenance.

Anyway onto points North. We have at least 3 days pushing through Brazil. The adventure has started.

14th January Lins, Sao Paulo State.

The day started with a long wait for the tax collector to arrive. I would object a lot less to paying these exorbitant user fees if they could be quick about it however the computation of the taxes is a labour intensive process that takes valuable flying hours out of the day.

Still I got away before the flight plan timed out and I was on my way.

The first leg was relatively uneventful. Nasty weather that was not showing up on infra red was crowding my destination but it was still VFR. I was in for a bit of a shock as the rustic bush airport I had scoped out was now a full fledged modern passenger airport. So another \$100 bill for landing with a twist. I was not allowed to pay it. I had to open a bank account in Brazil and transfer the money to their account when they get round to Emailing me the bill. We shall see how that one turns out.

The next leg was a lot more interesting. Checking weather an Infra red it was supposed to be clear all the way to my destination however a horrible cloud was hanging over my path and I diverted far East to get around it. I had to climb and descend to avoid the clouds and got caught once, very glad I had fixed the gyro instruments.

I made it to my destination basking under clear skies and the fuel man lounging in the shade ready to fill my tanks.

Again we are shedding money. I spent \$750 on fuel and airport taxes. Those who can afford to fly here are so rich it does not bother them. Makes for an interesting dynamic where pilots are an elite class.

Being off the beaten track I am totally immersed in a culture where no English is spoken however I manage to make myself understood and all the radio work today was in Portuguese after leaving Bage.

Despite all the warts flying in Brazil is an immensely rewarding experience. The countryside is superb and the contrasts are amazing,

15th Jan 2020 Gurupi, Tocantins Brazil

I am in ranch country – vast grasslands with small towns but mostly ornate estancias. The better ones have dirt landing strips. I had hoped to go further inland however the inter tropical convergence is quite fierce and thunderstorms are an issue

So my plans to fly via Arthur Conan Doyle's Lost World will have to be shelved. I am doing the route I know works and is largely via uncontrolled fields so I do not have to pay these wretched airport taxes and the attendant delays they entail. Today get was a breeze – my electronic flight planning app is finally working albeit having to get technical support as they cannot keep up with the constant changes to Brazil's airspace system. Anyway finally managed to get everything filed.

I was a joy to turn up at the airport and just get in and go. The winds aloft had me clipping daisies keeping as low as possible to get the best speed. The morning leg was uneventful except for none of the Goiana approach frequencies were working so I kept under the controlled airspace veil navigated to the visual gateway, Made contact with my destination and proceeded the last 6 miles to the field. As with most attended uncontrolled fields the attendant merely makes you call your legs and the pilot is in control It helped that this guy spoke good English. He could not read a windsock

though and I landed with a tailwind uphill.

The plane was turned around really quickly as there was no paperwork to do and I went on my last leg. Now the thunderstorms were building. However as we are well in the tropics they look a lot worse than they really are. They do not develop the supercell intensity they do in the US as the airmass is largely homogeneous. The US great plains attempt to mix Arctic and Gulf of Mexico air and this results in very dangerous conditions.

So I landed largely uneventfully. There are 2 rival fuel companies on the field so 2 marshals were begging me to use their facility. I have my preference – the bigger one has all the infrastructure I need and I was fuelled and whisked to my very modern but sterile hotel a little out of town. All very pleasant and perfect to relax. Breakfast is at 6 and taxi is at 7 Hopefully airborne at 7:30. Long legs to get to Macapa and ready for my border crossing on Friday. It is all full on travelling this week. At this rate I can be in Puerto Rico on Monday when I can relax while the plane gets an oil change and a check up.

16th January Macapa Amapa Brazil



A long day. Airborne by 7:30 with no paperwork to deal with and into a bright morning climbing gently to 9500. Radio contact with Palmas and no issues with the flight plan this time.

At my cruising altitude I got the planned tailwind and made good time on the longest leg (380

miles) of this trip. There was a bit of a build-up of towering cumulus and I had to duck under to get to the Airport making a very fast descent.

My Mid day stop – Maraba is a must stop as it is the only place to get fuel for miles around and we passed a new record \$10.55 a gallon. The most expensive fuel I have ever purchased.

The dysfunctional flight planning system had not received my flight plan this time so it took 30 minutes for the flight planner to phone it through. Why they have stopped the airport flight planning offices from receiving/transmitting flight plans beggars belief. The upshot is that if you fly now in Brazil without a flight plan the controllers just accept the system is broken and deal with it as best they can generating a lot of extra work.

The next leg was a lot more interesting. The towering cumulus was a lot better developed now and I had to climb quickly. I always baby the plane to altitude however this time I opened her up and hung her on the prop and got to 9500 in less than 30 minutes. After that it was weaving around huge white mountains of cloud. I am well and truly in the inter tropical convergence now and one has to just push through. The clouds look intimidating but the air is usually very smooth.

On my landing there was a rain squall coming in to cut me off so I expedited and got on the ground before it hit.

Oh well tonight is my last night in Brazil and in the morning I leave for Cayenne. Customs this time were on the ball and let me drop off the paperwork at their office this afternoon on the way to the hotel so my temporary import is already cancelled and I am cleared to depart.

Looking back on the fast trip – the user fees are not too bad considering the price of living is very low. A decent hotel room is about \$40 and you can eat (if you call it that) for \$10. However the range of food is pretty poor and I am looking forward to stopping in Cayenne for 2 nights. I am ahead of schedule and my Suriname overflight permit does not kick in till Sunday. I will book my hotel as soon as I am all cleared out of Brazil.

17th Jan -Civilization.

As I expected leaving Brazil was very frustrating. Surprisingly Customs and immigration were easy. It was the dreaded flight planning that screwed everything up. For some reason their lines of communication were messed up and all the plans were being deleted so eventually with the flight planning manager talking to Amazonas control he got a special dispensation to file a flight plan on my behalf.

The delay took all morning and by the time I got airborne the inter tropical convergence was alive and I was dodging cumulonimbus again. I have to say this makes the flight a lot more interesting and keeps you on your toes.

There was one ridge build up I could not get around and just ploughed on through it. I was through it in no time and was able to see a way to the ground and negotiate my way into the Cayenne airport. I am sure the controller in Uruguay who forced me to land at the International airport at Punta Del Este would be surprised how the French define VFR. This was pretty marginal for the inexperienced but perfectly doable. I was on the ground and getting fuelled in short order.

Unloading my bags a bit hard unexpectedly broke a bottle of olive oil I had been carrying North. Uruguayan olive oil is the finest on the planet in my opinion– oh well it stays here in a puddle on the tarmac.

It was nice to be dealing with decent officials educated and with reasonable English. Customs gave me long lecture of the dangers of flying in the Inter tropical convergence and under no circumstances should I fly over the Rain forest as there was nowhere to land. I did not mention what I had been doing the last three hours.

An expensive taxi ride took me to my beachside hotel. I have a lovely corner room with a beach view out of both windows. Good restaurants all over the place so I will not have any problem getting a bite tonight.



We have a 2 night hold as my overflight permit for Suriname is not active till Sunday. I am so far keeping my schedule and a 2 night rest makes sense.

19th Jan 2020 St George's Grenada.

This was the big push and a lot of it over open water. The weather forecast was perfect and I was up at 4 – flight plans reviewed and taxi booked for 6. Only the taxi did not rock up. The poor receptionist was pulling every string to find an alternate taxi. However Sunday early morning the taxis go to sleep. Eventually an hour later he managed to find a car and I was sped off the airport.

You have to give the French credit the whole clearance process was super smooth and I actually managed my 7:30 departure time. The flight plan I had filed electronically

After that it was clear skies to Georgetown Guyana. Some snack food I purchased sufficed for breakfast Pate de foi and crackers and pure gold the hotel room had a decent coffee maker so I left with a full thermos of decent coffee. West travel brought an extra hour of daylight – a welcome

asset on the most mileage in a day.

Crossing Suriname was a surreal experience. I had to jump through a few hoops to get a permit and when I rocked up I was the only one in the airspace. I was minutely controlled getting asked for numerous ETAs as I transited the flyspec of a country with no other aircraft on the frequency.

I get the impression that Guyana does not want visitors. The officials were as obstructive as they could be. 4 different agencies searched the plane – badly, fortunately as I did not want anyone to injure themselves on the broken glass from my olive oil disaster.

Then the air navigation tax – I had read the Guyana AIP and I knew it was coming but could not believe it - \$230 making this the most expensive country to fly in I have encountered so far. However after delaying me 2 hours with useless paperwork I got away and into what should have been a simple hop albeit over open water.

Getting closer to the US my “Fish Finder” was starting to show traffic as ADSB is now mandatory in US Controlled airspace and all the big boys were broadcasting.

At Trinidad the weather turned very nasty. I basically had to hit the deck to get any visibility. The Airport was reporting nice VFR conditions so I did not want to disillusion them. I requested 2000 feet on the East side of the island and basically pushed through torrential rain. As soon as I was clear of Trinidad the weather was lovely again and I landed at a sunny St George's Grenada.

Sunday in Grenada could be a bad move but I think I found a decent Indian Restaurant right next to the hotel so all is not too bad.

Reflecting on the day and looking at the weather in hindsight – I see Trinidad has gone IFR so I probably did the best thing to put the plane on the deck and tough it out, out of the way of commercial traffic.

I doubt I will take this plane back to South America again. The engine is getting up in hours and really flying in South America with a positive bank balance is a matter of staying up in the air. Landing is a hugely expensive proposition in so many places and the restrictions have become visibly worse in the 7 years I have been doing this.

20th Jan 2020 Guadeloupe Bas du Fort Marina.

Another 4 AM start. The half mile walk to the airport caused one of the wheels on my rolling luggage to self destruct and the rolling got progressively harder. It is one of the problems being loaded with \$100 bills needing a short ride – no taxi will touch you and you are relegated to being an abject pauper. Any time you do get change it gets snapped up.

Anyway at the airport the single immigration officer was quite happy to hold up passenger departures to whisk aircrew through. A quick stop at customs and I was in the air – autopilot on and climbing to cool air.

Well life takes some interesting turns. Doing a documents check in flight for the USA leg I found I had taken the wrong expired passport. With the amount of travelling I do I burn up a Jumbo in about 2 years and have a big stack now. Unfortunately I took the one without my US Visa. Oh well – better to find this out in a French paradise than rocking up in Puerto Rico and being refused entry or worse.

I ran the options – I was landing in Guadeloupe – a very general aviation friendly airport. Refuel and jump to Hispaniola Bahamas – apply for a new visa ?– no point – best sort this out in Guadeloupe.

My friends in Uruguay have already found the correct document and it will be consigned to DHL in the morning. I am therefore de-stressing. Looking at the possible accommodations there was an intriguing one on a yacht in a marina. And the French know how to build marinas and make them pleasant so I have numerous cafe's and restaurants to choose from. A nice departure from munching crackers in the cockpit and trying to find an eatery on landing as the daily lives of those around me providing services do not run on my schedule.

So I have decided to put down roots for a week. I have rented a beachside villa on a last minute deal at a fraction of resort rates for the rest of the week and pick up a car at the airport. And so I will just let matters take their course and enjoy the Caribbean. Could this have been a subconscious slip up ? I have been overly driven by trying to put in flying hours. So I can only feel this enforced sojourn to be positive.



28th Jan Old San Juan

My week in Guadeloupe was wearing thin. I pretty much drove to every corner of the island, climbed one of the pitons in my totally inadequate city shoes – chosen for comfort flying and not hiking muddy terrain.

All the time I was watching the tracking page as my old passport made it's way through the DHL

network. Yesterday it arrived at the airport and was to be ready for collection today. I was waiting on the door at 8 AM when the office opened and a few minutes later I had everything I needed. I drove to the Avis drop off and they took me to the International terminal. There everyone was totally confused. I wanted to pay my aeronautical taxes, file a flight plan and have my Gendecs stamped.

The immigration policeman drove me around the airport to the General aviation terminal since there was no paperwork to do. Clearing out involved putting a completed general declaration in a drop box and going. The airport taxes were voided for some reason. One of the airport officials came to me and told me I did not owe anything. Flight plan was filed over the phone as RocketRoute once again failed to properly file my flight plan.

After that I took off into one of the best flights I have made in the Caribbean. Smooth air, spectacular views of the lesser Antilles and the familiar Virgin Islands where I have many fond memories.

Customs clearance in Puerto Rico was quick and easy. A very helpful customs officer summed me up at once and I did not have to offload the plane.

I then taxied over to the maintenance hangar where the team were waiting for me. Oil was changed while I filled out the analysis forms. This time I am sending in the filter for detailed analysis. They pulled the lower sump strainer and it was totally clean and particle free. They also pulled the spark plugs and rotated them. I was glad to see none of the fouling that happened after my dip into Argentina. Plugs were all looking fine.

So now I am in Old Town San Juan. A living museum. I am here for 2 days as there is some naty weather forecast over the Bahamas for Thursday. So I will delay and push North West to the Dominican republic on Thursday and push for the Bahamas and Florida on Friday.



30th Jan 2020 Puerto Plata.

An uneventful trip – leisurely start for the short hop. This sets me up for the long run across the Bahamas to Florida.

Less clouds than I normally get on this run and could see the whole coast of Puerto Rico. As I headed into the Mona Passage my fuel flow indicator started to give erratic readings and then stopped reading at all. Engine was running fine and the fuel pressure was good so I ignored it.

As I throttled back for landing it started to work again. I had another outage like this in Patagonia Will see if it keeps acting up.

At Puerto Plata I had to wait 2 hours for fuel but I was in no hurry. Off to the hotel. An oasis in the fairly seedy town of Sosua. Having dinner in the best restaurant in town you have a good view of the main street and the drama being played out with the ladies of the night and the local police.

And then planning and more planning. My original plan was to enter at Fort Lauderdale Exec however this weekend is Superbowl and the Miami area is over crowded and there are notams out warning of long delays. However a new customs post has opened up in Stuart North of the main crush and handles all the displaced traffic when Trump comes to town and shuts down Palm Beach so I am using that this time. All paperwork filed and telephone confirmation made so we should be good to go. Lastly a call to Stella Maris to confirm they have fuel.

As upper level air has a strong Northerly component I am going to have to fly low. I usually go as High as I can over open water but this is not an option today. Lets see how it goes.

Anyway another early night and early start. Breakfast in the plane as we fly.

31st Jan 2020 Back on the mainland.

A chaotic day started fairly quietly with my taxi driver picking me up before sunrise and driving me to the airport. Then we had to wait for immigration. While that was happening I went to flight planning and they verified my electronic plan – all good. An hour later immigration showed up and stamped me out then the fun began. The tower had not received my plan so back to the flight planning office and we had to copy the electronic message into a form and fax it to the tower. Then everything worked. So I took off 2 hours late – no matter we had it in the schedule and I was making good time. The winds aloft allowed me to make the first leg mostly at 6500 feet and when the headwinds kicked in I had to duck down to 2000 feet. By this time there were plenty of islands about. This is the smoothest air I have flown the Bahamas in and being low giving me splendid views of the reefs and varied colours.

Landing in Stella Maris was the usual quick turnaround. Customs takes \$50, the taciturn fuel guy fills the plane and you are on your way.

The next leg was a lonely challenge. With the coming of a frontal system above 3000 feet the headwinds got progressively stronger so I was flying this one on the deck. My Fuel flow meter has packed up completely so I am having to estimate the mixture by feel. You get it wrong and you burn a lot more fuel and that low down it is hot and muggy and you lose the horizon.

Stuart is North of the concentrated traffic that is coming to Florida this weekend. As I write this all the airspace has been closed so Pres Trump can play his round of golf. Anyway The Northerly leg got decidedly lonely out there in the middle of the Grand Bahama Channel far away from any land with that lovely little engine purring away never skipping a beat.

The big hurdle here is crossing the ADIZ – Air defence identification zone. You need to be on a flight plan and radar identified before entering this area. Miami flight service were not answering the radio so prior to entering I climbed to 4500 feet pushed the headwinds and go Miami center to put me there with the big jets and made a fully assisted approach despite the insane amount of traffic. Coming from the laid back backwater flying of South America you are plunged in the deep end.

And on to Stuart. Brilliant US air traffic controllers competently handling a mix of pros and hopeless student pilots and keeping it all together.

Say what you like about US customs. They are super fast when it comes to general aviation. I was cleared in 5 minutes and I decided to Fly North to Vero Beach for cheaper fuel and a quieter airport.

An uber took me to my hotel and I am finally getting a decent meal after a day snacking on granola bars.

Epilogue Back in the USA.

Flying back in the USA is a complete contrast to flying outside the country. My first welcome back was the Emergency beacon going off in the high humidity of the Florida winter. My emergency contact in California was called and he emailed me while I was having breakfast next to the plane. I rushed out there and hit the off switch on the remote control. That did nothing at all so I had to open the access panel on the side of the plane and pull the wires out and isolate the battery. How junk like

this gets certified I do not know but I will create merry hell with the manufacturer.

After telephoning the manufacturer they agreed to take back the unit, replace the circuit board and re-certify the battery.

The weather that set off the alarm grounded me for a day. During that time I was able to get a new phone line set up and attend to host of minor chores. Next morning I was in the air an hour before sunrise battling headwinds keeping the plane as low as possible. 3 landings later I was in Lake Charles and a splendid FBO lent me a car for the evening so I could get to my hotel.

Next day I was supposed to make an early start but the Alternator belt felt slack so I got permission from the FBO to pull the cowling with the help of 2 of the linemen and fortunately the main mounting was intact. The tensioner was loose fortunately so it was comparatively easy to tension up and safety wire.

Another day of hard windward work and landing at Odessa – a short hop home from here and into the arms of an FAA ramp check. Of course my documents were in perfect order and so it took less than 5 minutes to get rid of them.

However Odessa was a trap. I had planned to get out ahead of a cold snap unfortunately it came early as I was on my way to the airport the temperature dropped 10 degrees and thick clouds came out of nowhere.

There was no argument. Into the expensive hangar and 2 nights in a hotel while thick snow blanketed a town totally unequipped to deal with it.

I finally got away at 11 in the morning as the sun finally melted the black ice on the runways. Still it was a slog with the Guadeloupe mountain pass and 40 knot headwinds and major turbulence. As I go closer to my home base the GPS cut out on both the main unit and the transponder. I was not the only one having issues. The Big boys up there were complaining. Obviously it was military jamming. Strangely enough the “illegal” kit I have uses Glonass as well as GPS – Good thing too I think.

After a seriously challenging landing with winds at traffic pattern at 40 knots I taxied to my front door very happy to be home and able to relax after a very eventful trip.

A post mortem on the parts and maintenance. I pulled the cowling and did a thorough inspection and clean.

The plane landed in good working order however the high altitude of the home base revealed wear on the carburettor as the setting was over rich and needed leaning at start and the engine barely shut down. The O rings on the Gascolator and the primer were worn. Spares were carried fortunately they did not need to be used. None of the tires or wheels needed to be used this time but are still essential spares. Tire pressures were at spec holding from Ushuaia and the gear struts were holding pressure. The main NavCom lost a display line. Not critical but the displays are known for failure. I am buying up obsolete spares on Ebay so we can keep the legacy avionics going. The plan is to keep the basic aircraft as is for the future.

Further examination of the carburettor ensued after I lost RPM on the take off run that was fixed by leaning. I immediately grounded the plane and ordered a replacement. Examination of the carb showed movement between the float bowl and the body so at low RPM fuel was being sucked in via the seam.

Otherwise the plane is in great shape and ready for more flying. I will probably do a quick trip to California and Colorado to see the daughter and then put the plane on ice until annual inspection.



For Photos and tracking Visit www.anahera.org
To Unsubscribe from this group send an email to anahera-unsubscribe@xaxero.com

Logistics Country by Country

Note – this was correct at the time of flight however things change rapidly in this business.

For Flight planning I used RocketRoute. The flight plan filing rarely worked. Most countries have their own in house systems. When they get a flight plan from outside it confuses everything. However VFR and IFR plates are available for all the countries here and easily downloadable for use during the flight. This more than anything else was a real benefit. The briefing was not as complete as you get in the US but better than nothing.

Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador – plenty of Information online – no need to re-invent the wheel.

Nicaragua

You need to apply for a permit in advance VUELOS NICARAGUA <aisfpl86@gmail.com>

They will send you the current form. You must arrive on the date you specify or up to 48 hours later.

Airport fuel handler- Easy Aviation Logistic +505 8808034

The reason I chose MNMG MRLM - Panama is that I can wait for weather without stress in Managua and when I go it keeps me in low terrain shorter legs with more options and the weather is a lot more reliable. I do not want to get stuck in San Jose surrounded by high terrain paying massive parking waiting for weather.

Avgas at \$7.50 a gallon

The place is highly bureaucratic even by Mexican standards and they have an internal security problem hence my background was probed for an hour by Immigration. After this I was free to taxi to the "Aeroclub" to purchase Avgas. Note you need to know the exact amount you need as they will program the pump to deliver that and not a drop more. If you end up with less I do not know. I was lucky and they dispensed what I needed.

Fees - \$105 for the permit. About 80 in other fees - Fuel testing(you have to buy a liter of fuel for testing) Terminal Bus service etc etc. Your landing permit has to have the date and time though a shore contact can alter this when you are in flight.

Costa Rica

Costa Rica has brutal parking fees and an overnight can easily run \$300 so you want to get through as quickly as possible.

Great tech stop in Limon Enroute MNGM MRLM MPMG

Going South East you usually have to deal with headwinds and weather. As an alternative to a high density altitude (MRPV) take off with mountains all around, Limon is sea level and the prevailing winds keep the Airport VFR. This route I had 220 mile legs Lots of CU inland nothing over the field. Field is 90 degrees into the prevailing wind so be prepared for a crosswind landing.

After Limon I had to deal with dense CU and expended extra fuel going round them. Very nice to have full tanks in these circumstances.

Also call ahead 24 hours notice for the authorities and have a realistic landing time - best mid morning. Everyone was very friendly and helpful on arrival and I was able to fuel and go.

Runway condition excellent.

Phone Number at the Airport: +50627581379

Email: Gcamero@dgac.go.cr

(Sra. Gabriela Cameron)

Phone Civil Aviation Costa Rica: +506-22428000

Operations/ Extension: 9053/9048 Sr. Jorge Herrera

Extension Number Limon Airport: 9155

Panama

Advance permit required Apply online

https://www.aeronautica.gob.pa/transporte_aereo_nacional/form_ta.php

AUTORIDAD AERONÁUTICA CIVIL: Tel: (507) 501-9078/501-9076, Fax: 501-9079 (Lun-Vie 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.)

Simple and free. Airport fees and fuel all reasonable – approx \$50 a day

Colombia – Cali

Handler essential

Used Caribbean Flight support itc@csfs.aero.

Charged \$150 plus airport taxes.

Fuel was inexpensive \$3.40 a gallon for Avgas and the total stop cost \$470 including fuel. They had all the paperwork lined up on arrival (ADSB 1090 is a real big help here) and I was away in less than an hour.

Fast and efficient. They were in phone contact with my ground crew at all times.

Make sure you have the VFR plates on board. They have very specific Arrival and departure routes.

Ecuador

Permit required

Teléfonos: 593-2-2602080 /593-2-2947444 /593-2-2947400 Ext. 1082 / Teléfono Celular: 593-961430267

In Guyaquil I had to use a handler FBO premium Agency (one of the smallest operators) they were very good as well and the stop cost \$250 plus fuel (\$5.80 a gallon)

Make sure you have the VFR plates on board. They have very specific Arrival and departure routes.

Peru

Permits required Applied to pvint@mtc.gob.pe and then the Email train grew to the following people.

fgranara@mtc.gob.pe

They will send the current form.

You will need a minimum FAA 2nd class medical (within 1 year or Less than 6 months if over 60 years old) - 3rd Class or basic Med not accepted and all aircraft documents need to be clean and new (I had to renew the Airworthiness certificate from 1974 as it “was too old”). If possible try to Overfly and not land – A turtle pack and form 337 will be cheaper than landing.

Chile

permit needed – fast and easy:

<https://www.dgac.gob.cl/formulario-de-autorizacion-overflight-and-landing-clearance/>

Ideally 48 hours notice needed though some airports will allow 24 hours. You need to contact the airport of entry and arrange Customs, Immigration and Agriculture. Airport will give you contact details.

Very easy you pay a fixed rate a month (\$36 a ton approx) and this gives you access to the national airspace system and public airports.

There are many private strips most in excellent conditions run by the local Aeroclub uncontrolled. You are expected to broadcast your intentions in Spanish if you use these fields. The local aeroclubs are very hospitable and I have never been charged for parking however I do insist on making a donation – around \$100 for a week stay and this is always very well received. Fuel cost slightly more at the aeroclubs.

Fuel 100LL is about \$6 a gallon.

Argentina

No permit needed though you need to call the airport of entry/ Exit to arrange Customs and Immigration (except SADF).

Remember the 45 day rule per calendar year is still in force though now downtime for maintenance is no longer counted. 24 hours notice required at all border points except SADF

International air navigation taxes are charged. Domestic taxes are extremely low by comparison. International - Puerto Montt SCTE to NeuquenSAZN cost U\$25. Immigration landing tax was about U\$50. You are required to make the equivalent of an international arrival and departure at every airport with the police needing a full general declaration inwards and outwards and they will unload and inspect the aircraft at every stop. General declarations have to be individually hand written. Pre printed or carbon copies are not accepted.

Avgas 100 LL is about \$5.50 a gallon.

Do not use the ATMs in Argentina. They give you about 60% of the official exchange rate.

Leaving Argentina at San Fernando no advance notice needed – quick and easy. Avoid overnight at San Fernando you will be required to use a FBO – about \$50 a night for a stand no tie down.

Uruguay

No Permit needed – no Advance notice at SUAA SUMU or SULS. All other airports need 24 hours notice for International operation.

Montevideo Adami SUAA is the best port of entry. Fast and efficient though the place shuts down from 12:00 to 13:00 local for lunch.

Landing fees at all public airports are assessed at \$25 -\$50 depending on airport regardless of whether you are a G4 or a light single piston and you pay by the hour for being on the ground. At the bigger airports you can easily end up paying a \$100 a day.

If you are making an extended stay arrange with one of the flying clubs in Uruguay to rent hangar space. You will need to brush up on short grass landings.

You get a landing and circulation permit for 1 year although I also hear you can only stay 4 months in a year. However .

Fuel in Uruguay and Brazil is 110 130 Avgas (green) about \$4 a gallon. Higher lead content – keep the mixture lean.

Brazil

The permit Application process is electronic

https://sistemas.anac.gov.br/SIAVANAC/pouso_sobrevoos/SolicitacaoPP.asp

Expect \$150 in fees at controlled airports. I used non towered fields where possible. Avgas is still \$10 a gallon on average. You need to be partially conversant in Portuguese.

Flight planning is a mess. The flight planning office is now prohibited from accepting flight plans so they need to be filed electronically. Half the time the system does not work and nobody is aware of the flight plan. The plus side of this is everyone is aware of this and the controllers will be flexible.

Try to sign up for the official flight planning website. They now have an English language version that may or may not work. – I used Rocketroute and it was hit or miss.

French Guyana

No advance permit needed. All very civilized.

-Landing \$30 parking \$30 a day for a light single. Very easy no advance permit needed. Avgas \$9 a gallon approx

Suriname

- Overflight permit needed <http://cadsur.sr/forms/>

Easy to apply and give 72 hours notice.

Guyana -

Brutal air navigation charge \$230 for a technical stop. Avgas \$7 a gallon approx. Very heavy handed officials - 3 different "Rumage" searches one after the other requiring the plane to be unpacked and repacked 3 times. 90 Minutes on the ramp. This is another place that can justify long range tanks being fitted.

Spares Kit + equipment = 92 LB – With usage report

New 6x600 Inner tube -0 not used
Complete front wheel with tire and inner tube ready to go – not used
spare 6x600 tire and inner tube - Not used
Brake seals - not used
Brake pads (4) - not Used
Brake pad riveting tool and rivets – not used
Brake bleeding tube – Not Used
Cowling Latch (2) – Not Used
Magneto with impulse coupling – Used as Left Magneto ran rough
Dry Vacuum pump – Used as installed unit failed
EGT sender – Used as installed unit failed
Propguard repair kit with tool Not Used.
Oil Filter (2) – Used – 3 Oil Changes Purchased additional for Puerto Rico
Alternator Belt – Not Used
Safety Wire (thin and thick) Used extensively
Safety Wire twisting tool - Used extensively
Solder Iron and solder - Used extensively
Electrical meter - Used extensively
Self amalgamating tape - Used Professionally but not on aircraft
Electrical tape - Used
Assorted sockets screwdrivers Allen keys and wrenches. - Used extensively
Small torque wrench - Used extensively
Nitrile Gloves - Used extensively
Misc Piper screws and washers - Used extensively Almost ran out
Oil 16 Qt All used
Camguard Aviation 2 Pints All used
Oil analysis kit (2) All Used – Purchased additional
Primer repair kit Used at end of trip
1 pint Hydraulic fluid – Not used
3x Underwater epoxy putty 20 % used
1 x Super Glue gel Not touched
3 x Super Glue liquid Not Touched
O Rings – gascolator Used at end of trip

Onboard and Survival: 10 Lbs – All used extensively

Lifejackets x 2
100 Deet repellent
First Aid kit
Water
6 cannisters boost oxygen 2 used
Pulse Oxymeter
24 Kind Nuts and spices energy bars all eaten
Personal EPIRB
Iridium Phone used once
Handheld Aviation VHF with antenna coupling to outside – used once when we lost all comms
Marine VHF/ HAM UHF

Plexus Cleaner
Thermal underwear
1200 lumens Flashlight (3)

Utility 10 Lbs – all used regularly

Tie down Rope (3)
Chocks (2)
Tow Bar
Aircraft Cover

What I will carry in addition if we do this again:

Magneto Buzz Box and timing Pin – Timing should only be carried out by an A&P however in an emergency one is strongly advised to know the procedure and exactly where the timing marks are.

Grass Tie downs? are heavy. There was one place I may have used them however unless you get a really good system I would always hangar the plane if leaving for an extended time.

Ferry Tank – With an 18 Gallon Bladder you can overfly Guyana and halve the stops in Brazil with a potential fee savings of close to \$2000. Well worth it in my mind.