

# Robert's African Adventure – flying a twin Comanche around Africa.

## AFRICA



## **Introduction:**

At the end of 2011 the Company I was working for was sold and as I had decided not stay with the new owners I had 6 months of “gardening” leave to enjoy. My thoughts turned to a flying trip around the African continent. I had always wanted to do this since reading the excellent book by Alex Henshaw “The flight of the Mew Gull”. While the story of him setting the single engine London – Cape Town – London record in 1939 was amazing and has until very recently (2010) been one of the most enduring records in aviation. The part of the book that sparked my imagination was the trip around Africa made by Alex and his Father in 1938 in their Vega Gull.

## **Planning:**

Over the Christmas and New Year holidays I started to see what might be possible in my Twin Comanche and with the help of Google Earth for mapping put together a preliminary plan. The Comanche family are amazing long distant touring aircraft as has been demonstrated by many pilots over the past 50 years. The pilot operating manual (POH) for the twin Comanche with tip tanks at a 55% power setting gives a range at 10,000 feet of 1200nm including allowances for start, taxi, takeoff, climb and descent plus 45 minutes reserves. As my August 1964 twin Comanche has a number of speed and other modifications at 10,000 feet it cruises about 5 knots faster than the POH book figures giving a TAS (True Airspeed) of 150 knots at 55% power. Despite this I planned the trip using the charts in the POH for a stock aircraft.

Over the next couple of weeks I spent some long days creating a detailed plan and started to follow the weather online for the airports and divisions I had chosen. I studied the winds aloft and the overall weather patterns to try and get a feel for what might be encountered. I then contacted Mike Gray at White Rose Aviation and Sam Rutherford at Prepare2Go to gain a better understanding of the clearances required, the availability of Avgas and other logistic issues both Mike and Sam are very experienced in these areas. I started building up a list of equipment that I believed would be needed for this kind of trip – Sam also provided his version which was also very helpful. When the weather cooperated I made a couple of test flights to check I got the expected performance quoted in the POH. I had also decided that my longest leg would be the first one to Faro to give a final shakedown of all systems while I was still in Europe.

By the end of the third week in January I decided that my proposed trip was doable and started the process of securing fuel in the few places that it needed to be pre-ordered and got Mike working on the overflight clearances (he actually can do them within a week, if necessary). I then determined the charts and databases I needed from Jeppesen and ordered them. I also contacted my insurance agents to arrange the coverage required. I was now spending significant amounts of money and in reality had pushed the go button. I set the departure date for February 22<sup>nd</sup> (4 weeks hence) this would give me a few days leeway in case the weather was unfavourable. Freezing levels across Europe and particularly the Bay of Biscay can negate a trip at this time of year. In addition to the Africa weather I had also been monitoring the usual Europe information and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in January it was looking unfavourable across most of Northern France and Spain!

The first week in February I visited my doctor for the first set of jabs and got the prescription for the Malaria tablets the second session was organised for the following week. I also ordered; the hand pump and filters for fuel transfer, 5 x 20 litre Jerry cans, Iridium satellite phone and interface, Mountain High Oxygen system (needed for airways primarily in East Africa) and the few items left to complete my



emergency/ditching bag. I then receive an e-mail from the insurance broker saying that my current underwriters were reluctant to provide insurance. After several calls to the broker they were back on the chase but the premium was now expected to be three times what had originally been anticipated.

The following week I flew N7EY down to Farley Farm for the 100 hour check and I am “assisting” Nick with it so I can learn more about the maintenance of the twin Comanche. Over the next three days we check everything possible. Nick is a very tolerant coach he also finds a potential show stopper as he is reinstalling the cowlings, the alternator on left hand engine is loose. We finally resolve the alternator problem. Mike and Nick have also prepared a very comprehensive spares kits for the trip. With the maintenance complete, on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February I head back to White Waltham - one week to go.

The rest of the week is spent gather the final few bits for the toolkit, food, cargo ties. I also fabricate a stand for the fuel filter and assemble the items to make sure I have everything required. I also fabricate a very thin plywood cover to protect the rear seat. I finally get the required insurance in place and send copies of the documents to Mike for the overflight clearances.

Saturday I attend a very comprehensive PRNAV/RNAV ground school at Coventry Airport that was put on by PPL-IR. This was an excellent IR refresher and learning experience before I head south. Sunday I purchase the food and drink I will be taking with me and meanwhile Chris Vincent is cleaning the in and outside of the plane.

On Sunday my daughter Sally gives me a Twitter lesson but I am slow learner. I will endeavour to Tweet when I have a chance. I also manage to link the Spider Tracker to my webpage so people can see where I am. <http://www.techman-uk.com/id1.html>



Packing the plane for the trip

It's now departure week. I weigh everything I am taking and redo the weight and balance calculations with the actual figures rather than my estimates. I have a useful load of 1297lbs and with everything loaded I will be at 1254lbs. Not much room for

souvenirs!! I fabricate a clamp for the EDS Oxygen control box. And then sort all the items into their appropriate containers and prepare a manifest for everything. I generate multiple copies of all the required documents (passport, insurance etc.) and forms (Flight plan, Gendec etc.) With the exception of South Africa nothing in Africa can be done online – it's all paper forms in triplicate with multiple approval stamps. I then check the weather for the first part of the trip and it's looking acceptable. I book my hotels for the first week

Tuesday morning I head to the airfield and refuel the aircraft. And then with the assistance of Tom McCormack we load and secure everything for the next day's flight. This takes several hours as it's like assembling a 3D jigsaw puzzle. Finally when I fully satisfied with the set up I put the covers on the plane and its put back in the hangar for the night. Back at home I file the flight plan using RocketRoute and e-mail the Gendec to the required recipients. I check the weather and Notams for the morning – all good.



The cockpit with everything loaded except me

I revisit the checklists I have prepared one more time to make sure I have not forgotten anything and after an excellent meal head to bed for a good nights sleep.

### **Departure Day:**

The weather is cold and windy but ok for my departure. At 07:30 Tracey and I leave home for the airfield. As requested the Donglers' have the aircraft moved from the hangar at 08:00 and I perform my pre-flight checks. The plane is soon ready to go and we spend sometime taking photos. I then spend about 20 minutes bidding everyone farewell and at 08:40 I start the engines. The Africa Adventure has started.



## **White Waltham to Dakar – 22<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> February 2012:**

Having departed White Waltham at 08:50 on Wednesday and climbed to FL100 the winds aloft were not quite as forecast (more on this later) and the trip down to Faro, Portugal was exactly 7 hours take off to landing and 1017 nm in distance giving average speed of 145kts with a fuel burn of 13.4 gph. The routing was SAM JSY NTS STG FTM to LFPR with ATC providing a few direct shortcuts which saved about 50nm. Across the Bay of Biscay on reaching LOTEI for transfer to Madrid Centre I could hear them but they couldn't hear me. Lufthansa flight 655A kindly provided a relay and shortly thereafter I was in two way communication with Madrid. With time to kill I tested the Mountain High on demand oxygen system and Oximeter, after about 10 minutes use my SPO2 count was up from 88% to 95% - all good. The approach into Faro was a non-event with vectors to the VOR/DME on Runway 10, not really necessary as it was CAVOK.

On arrival I was told that handling was mandatory and they had no Avgas!! I was informed that fuel was available at Portamao (LPPM) after 10:00 am. The handling agent (Jet Services) was very good and organised everything including transport to the hotel. The hotel Monaco was ok and had good wifi and was just 10 minutes from the airport. I filed the flight plan for the trip from LPPM to GCLP on Rocket Route. Landing Slots are required and I asked the folks at RR to assist they came back with a handling agent (Wimmaat) in GCLP who I called and he agreed to arrange everything.



Portamao Apron

After a good nights sleep I was at the airport at 07:00 am and after parting with €260 for landing fee, parking, approach communication fee!! and handling I got airborne for LPPM. This was a 15 minute VFR flight along the Algarve coast on a beautiful clear morning. I made blinds calls to Portamao and as I taxied in the tower called me and we had a nice chat. I parked at the pumps ready for the fuel man to arrive at 10 O'clock. Everyone was very relaxed and friendly and I had breakfast with Sergio the controller who said he would sort out the departure with Faro and would delay the flight plan if required as the fuel man was not always on time "this is not Germany we take a casual approach to schedules". As it happened Carlos the fuel man arrived 5 minutes early BUT they do not take credit cards only cash!! Of course I didn't have enough Euros for 400 litres of fuel a €2.62 per litre so went to visit the lady owner a

Hong Kong Chinese, who is the wife of Ken Tomsett of Aerobatics Algarve. She was very helpful, knew White Waltham and we agreed that I could pay in US dollars.

At 10:50 I was wheels up and on my way and on transfer to Faro ATC was given immediate clearance to FL100 direct to OSLAD. 10 miles before OSLAD I was transferred to Casablanca who told me to go direct to VEDOD some 400nm across the Atlantic and there was no traffic on my route. They also provided a back up frequency in case I could not talk to them on the primary frequency and I passed them my estimate for VEDOD (2 hours 45 minutes later). As I approached the Canaries FIR boundary I switched to the back up frequency to stay in contact with Casablanca. I was then transferred to Canaries who told me to fly the TETRO4A STAR. This arrival procedure is around about 200nm in length, obviously designed for the big boys.

I called the handling agent on my Sat phone and gave him my ETA. At 35nm for Las Palmas airport I requested decent and was cleared down to 3000ft. I had to fly outbound on the ILS for some 16 nm to provide spacing from a pair of German Air force C130's. Eventually I was vectored for the ILS for runway 03 Left with such a long approach I kept the speed up at 170kts until 4 miles and had the autopilot fly a fully coupled approach to minimums for practice. The STEC55X is really very good and despite a strong X-wind the needles stayed locked in the middle. All I had to do was monitor and operate the throttles; bringing the power back to 14" manifold pressure and the props to fine progressively slows the aircraft down allowing gear deployment then flaps in a smooth progression with very little power adjustments, quite satisfying and probably the safest way to fly a single pilot ILS.



Refuelling at Gran Canarias Airport

On landing I was directed to my parking stand and Raoul the handling agent quickly came to meet me. He arranged the refuelling but again cash only unless you have a fuel card!! Who has all the different ones required? I have BP and Shell cards but guess what; you need a CEPSA card in Las Palmas. So off we went to the terminal building to get cash from the ATM luckily not a big deal thru' the crew gate. Having got the readies it was back thru' security and a drive out to the aircraft to meet the fuel man. The fuel line from the bowser had the biggest nozzle I have ever seen, it took two of us to hold it and the tip JUST fitted the neck of the fuel tanks. I think it was actually designed for supplying water to a steam train. Consequently the flow rate of fuel was Niagaran and in the strong 30kt wind across the apron we both received a liberal showering of 100LL. Fuelling completed and flight plan given to Raoul for



filing it was off to the hotel for a shower, food and a good night's sleep.

Next morning I got the hotel shuttle bus and was soon in the handling agent's crew room. Departure slots, weather and flight plan sorted I was off thru' the crew gate and on the way to the plane. I really liked the part with my new pilot's shirt with 4 gold bars attached and a large gold set of wings above my breast pocket. I really should have been climbing the steps to a 747 or A380 rather trying to squeeze my, somewhat plump torso, into a packed twin Comanche. Even Raoul saw the humorous side, him being half Spanish half Dutch and even made a sly comment. I think he was also somewhat nervous about handing me his \$420 bill for handling, parking etc. etc. To be fair to him the handling charge was quite modest and he did a good job. It's really the big airports who are the bad guys as they don't want light aircraft near them. They even have the cheek to make an announcement on the ATIS that "light aircraft ops will be slow due to priorities"!!!

After a thorough pre-flight check I called on my hand held radio for clearance and taxi. Off Blocks at exactly 08:00 as filed I was instructed to follow the ATR72 and Ryan Air A320 (keeping a good spacing from Ryan air) I don't trust how gentle the teenagers might be with the throttles. I doubt if they have had the chance to acquire enough airmanship with their MCR course to know what it is like to operate a little aeroplane. The ATC clearance "You are cleared to Dakar on a Royal3A departure as filed, climb 3000 ft, on passing 1000 ft contact Canaries approach on 124.3, squawk 5332" starts me thinking; after 2 months of planning the adventure is really happening.



Mount Tiede on Tenerife above the clouds

Fortunately the big boys are using 03 Right and it's blowing at 30kts out of the North so no wait for Vortex Wake Turbulence separation. I am cleared for take off and even at close to max weight I am off the deck in about 400 metres. I decide to leave the throttles and props at maximum (the Twin Comanche is cleared for unrestricted continuous power) to expedite my departure and this sees me climbing at 1500 FPM. I am quickly taken off the SID and told to fly 090 and cleared to FL100. I reset the throttles etc. for a cruise climb and enter cloud at 3000ft and out into the dazzling sunshine at 7000ft. It's spectacular on top with Mount Tiede and parts of Gran Canaries island are sticking through the cloud layer.

I am soon told to go directly to Royal and I see on TCAS an aircraft pass behind me descending into Las Palmas. After levelling off at FL100 and when settled into the

cruise I am requested to change frequency to Canaries. They then request me to proceed directly to LOSOS which is just North of Nouadhibou in Mauritania and provide me with a back up frequency. I give them my estimate for LOSOS and soon have a view of the African Coast mile after mile of nothing. No settlements and just a single road about 5 miles inland from the coast. The Sahara desert runs right up to the Atlantic. You really wonder why the Moroccans have been fighting for so many years over Western Sahara. It's devoid of any green just sand and rocks. As the coast slips by I have a couple of granola bars and almonds for breakfast and a bottle of water - this is not BA First but my view from the cockpit beats any in-flight movie.



Nouadhibou Mauritania

Eventually I am transferred to Nouadhibou Tower. The controller is very friendly and I pass him various estimates for fixes down the track. By ATC standards it quite a lengthy exchange, he seems to want to talk I suspect I am his first aircraft of the week and it's Friday. He even asks me to report overhead the airfield; I guess he wants to see the English nutcase flying to Dakar. On leaving his area he hands me onto Nouakchott but I can't raise them so I go back to him and tell him I'll try again at noon in 10 minutes time. I retry as agreed and they report me as 5 by 5. Again ATC want to chat so I give him various estimates again and ask for the latest weather at Dakar and my diversion at Banjul. Dakar's giving 8000 m and 23C otherwise nothing of concern. Banjul is much the same.

I am now getting closer to the Dakar airspace flying about 100 miles off the coast in a huge bay that runs the full extent of Mauritania. Dakar is on a promontory at the Southern end of the bay. I am soon handed over to Dakar who asks for my estimate for the YF VOR. I give them an estimate of 14:00 and she responds with the weather and asks me if I would fly the LIMAX4A STAR. I load the arrival and activate it (no big deal it's a straight track to YF). After listening on the Dakar approach frequency for about 15 minutes a picture is beginning to develop of the traffic. We are all (about 6 aircraft) going to arrive at the beacon about the same time. The controllers change over and you can now tell that the older male controller is getting in a bit of panic. A UK charter flight (Kestrel XXX) request weather for Banjul and decent and is simply ignored.

About 10 minutes from the beacon and ATC is complete zoo with departures being dispatched on various radials from the YF beacon, communication is in a mixture of French, English and Pigeon? The controller tells me to descend and to be at FL80 by



the YF beacon and then tells each aircraft individually to enter the hold at Akuda. Akuda is a fix about 10 miles out on the ILS for runway 36. I can see the other aircraft on my TCAS and pick them out visually an Airbus 3000ft below me and a 737 4000ft above me. I reduce to holding speed and set the throttles to 16" MP while taking up the hold. The still panicked controller then starts handing out Expected Approach Times to the various aircraft. I finally get mine which is 16:24, in excess of 2 hours away! My response is simply that I am unable to do this due to insufficient fuel - not quite correct as I am now throttle right back consuming just 11gph but it was going to be tight. After some delay he gives me a new approach time of 14:34. I carry on in the holding pattern keeping a very careful eye on the TCAS blips on the EHSI. The Airbus starts on the ILS and I get told to descend to FL40 which I manage in one orbit and as I come back over the holding fix again I am told to descend to 2600 ft. I complete yet another hold and just as I am coming back to the fix I get cleared for the ILS and requested to report at 4 miles.

The ILS is fine but it's quite turbulent just as I am about to report 4 miles I get asked where I am so I tell him. Still no sight of the runway; judging from the height at which I eventually see the runway I reckon the visibility was more like 3 to 4000 metres not the 8000 being given in the weather report. As I come over the approach lights it's very bumpy and there are lots of birds of prey right on the glide path. Not sure what they are but wonder if they are Vultures!! Fortunately they are used to dodging aircraft as they get out of the way. I land in about 300m and it's quite a distance to the runway turnoff and I am told to expedite which is a little challenging in the gusty condition. I eventually exit the runway and get my taxi instructions. After parking I take my time shutting down and then fill in the paperwork. That was quite an arrival welcome to Africa!!



The first test of my refuelling system in Dakar, Senegal

Some minutes later the handling agent arrives he's very friendly and speaks excellent English. We discuss my plans and he organises the AVGAS as I want to refuel straight away. After about 20 minutes there is no sign of fuel. To pass the time I add a litre of oil to both engines. The agent calls the fuel people again and about 10 minutes later a buggy towing a trailer with three 200 litre barrels arrives. The fuel man is very friendly and I ask him if he has a pump. Yes is the reply but it's broken. Thank goodness I have my own. I unload the boxes from the baggage locker but have to be careful as it is really windy and don't want my valuable position being blown away. My new African friends are really helpful and assist in assembling the pump and my homemade filter and hose contraption- this is its first test. We put the

pump in the barrel and Ali starts cranking; the flow rate is impressive but fuel also leaks from around one of the filter fittings. We stop and put some Teflon tape around the threads and re-tighten the jubilee clip. We try again and this time it really works very well. We refuel the port side in about the same time it takes at White Waltham. It was definitely worth the chat with the man in Norfolk who supplied the pump, his recommendation was perfect. We then reposition the trailer and barrels to the starboard wing and start to refuel but after pumping about 4 gallons the barrels empty and we replace it with a new one.



Robert the handling agent assists at a windy Dakar airport

I give Robert, the handling agent, my camera and ask him to take some photos – he is really pleased to assist. Ali and I fill up the remaining tanks and we still have some fuel remaining in the barrel so we decide to fill up two of my jerry cans which I then put back in the baggage compartment. That takes care of the 90lbs buffer I had available below maximum takeoff weight.

Fuel completed we disassemble the pump and flush out the remaining fuel from the hose and filter. The guys are really helpful and we soon have everything re-stowed. I hand over \$1500 to Ali for the fuel which includes a small tip for his assistance. He really appreciates the gesture and gives me his e-mail address and asks me to send him a photo for his face book page!! We finally load my bags into the handling agents van and head off to the control tower to pay the landing fee (\$10) and file the flight plan for Monday's flight to Ouagadougou. Everyone in the office wants to hear all about my trip. Ten minutes later we go back to the van and drive a short distance to the crew gate and walk straight through the terminal to the waiting driver who takes me to the hotel. From parking the plane to arriving at the hotel the whole process took just 1 hour 15 minutes, everyone I met smiled and was most friendly. We even discussed the Presidential election which takes place tomorrow and they advised me to stay away from the centre of Dakar.





Filling a jerry can with the remaining fuel

After checking into the room I proceed down to the bar for a well earned local beer (Gazelle) very acceptable and just what is needed after a long day. Chatting with locals they tell me about several pilots they know and almost as if prearranged a South Africa Beach19D captain arrives having just flown some BHP people from Guinea Bissau. A few minutes later the rest of the crew show up consisting of a very affable Irishman and a Mauritian. Very soon the drinks are flowing and later we have dinner while continuing to talk flying. They take me through the airfields I plan to go to as fortunately they have visited most of them. Their advice about Africa flying is excellent. As the evening progresses It starts to cool down so we move inside and the party continues with excellent profiteroles for desert. At about 11 PM we break and wish each other well the Mauritian First Officer is on a 2 AM flight to Paris for vacation and the other two have to be at the airport around 7 AM for their flight back to their home base in Lome in Togo.



Future premier league soccer players in the making?



The eclectic Maison Abaka - Dakar



Loading the local ferry boat



One of the hotel residents!



Dakar's sheep are very clean – a wash in the sea



## **Dakar to Cape Town - 27<sup>th</sup> February to 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2012:**

After a great weekend in Maison Abaka in Dakar it's an early start to get to the airport for a 08:00 UTC departure. Fortunately the hotel is frequented by many pilots so it's self service for breakfast with croissants and coffee at that early hour. The driver arrives on schedule at 07:00 and I am met at the airport by the handling agent Robert. The pilot uniform does its job and without customs or security and I am soon in the airside briefing room. The parking fee is calculated for the stay from Friday afternoon thru' Monday morning at US\$ 8.10. I hand over a \$10 bill to the man and let him keep the change. By this time Robert returns with a very comprehensive Met and Notams folder from the ASCENA man. The French have got this well organised and this is repeated in all the ex-French colonies across West Africa.

By 07:30 I am out at the aircraft and we stow the cover etc. The plane has a liberal coating of red dust. I perform a thorough pre-flight inspection and then bid farewell to Robert and pay his handling fee of \$400. The handling fees are the expensive part and you can't go through any of the airfields without handling. To give them credit they do organize everything from refuelling to ground transportation. I recently visited Liverpool for a 2 hour business meeting they also required handling and this was £164.00 for nothing.

I load the flight plan into the Garmin 530 and check it carefully against the chart and plog. At 08:00 I call for start, taxi and clearance. "Taxi to the holding point runway 36, are you ready to copy your clearance?" I respond "affirmative" then receive "N7EY is cleared to Ouagga FL090 right turnout direct to NUNAS Squawk 5106"

On reaching the 36 holding point I perform the power checks and then get clearance to back track the runway. I decide to use the full 11,000ft extent of the runway which means a 1 mile back track but it's already getting warm and at the town abuts the far threshold. I am cleared for take off and gently advance the throttles I am airborne in about 1500ft and passing 1000 ft at the upwind threshold at 2000 ft I make my right turn towards NUNAS and pass over the North East suburbs of Dakar.



The outskirts of Dakar on departure

On reaching my assigned cruising level the forward visibility has become very poor looking straight down I can clearly see the ground which is now desert with odd bits of scrub and an occasional road/track. On reaching NUNAS which is 80nm from Dakar and the edge of their TMA I am requested to change frequency to Dakar

information. They request estimates for Tambacounda, the FIR boundary at SISTU and finally Ouagga. I calculate them and with the current headwinds 22kts it going to take more than 7 hours to Ouagga. I may need the interim stop at Bamoko in Mali for fuel, good job it was added as an additional divert on the suggestion of the pilots over dinner at the hotel. They also confirmed they have Avgas and putting it as a divert gets round the landing clearance problem. I only have an overflight clearance for Mali.

After almost 2 hours 45 minutes I have covered 350nm and have reached the Senegal/Mali border and still over 300nm to Bamoko. Africa is a big place and looking down from my lofty perch I see very little sign of human activity just the odd track and several big rivers. I change frequency to Bamoko and give my estimates for their TMA boundaries and over the field. It's still looking tight on fuel but I eventually decide to make a final call abeam my other divert Bobo-Dioulasso. If the fuel situation is still too close for comfort and the weather at Ouagga is poor I can either divert to Bobo if they confirm they have Avgas or return to Bamoko for fuel.

As I approach Bamoko I am instructed to fly along the 270 radial to avoid overflight of the town. As I pass by I can see a smallish town and a big river and the airport. I have now been flying for 4 hours 25 minutes 572 nm covered and still 377nm to go. After another 200nm and 1 ½ hours I reach the Mali/Bukino Fasso border which is marked by a series of three sizeable rivers and instructed to call Bobo. I do this and pass on the usual estimates and Bobo Tower confirms that they have Avgas (phew!!) I tune in the Bobo VOR and setup the 360 radial on the HSI, that's the decision point and it's about 10 minutes away. I recalculate the fuel for arrival at Ouagga and will have 22 USG remaining. It is 180 miles back to Bobo which with the tailwind would be covered in 1 hour 5 minutes. This would still leave me with 8 USG which is just over 45 minutes at minimum holding speed (10usg/hr) so I am still legal. It's a go for Ouagga Houston!! The HSI centres on the 360 radial – decision point passed.

After another 30 minutes Bobo asks me to contact Ouagga. I try calling but no response. An aircraft (Gamali 292) offers to relay and I pass on estimates which he relays to Ouagga tower. I thank him for his assistance. The sun has now moved to the South so as I get within 50 miles of Ouagga I can see the terrain more clearly its desert and rolling hills with a few trees.



I am now in two way communication with Ouagga Tower. He passes me the latest weather: wind 090 at 14kts varying between 060 and 120, visibility 8km nosig,

Temperature 40 Deg C dewpoint 1 Deg C, QNH 1009. Obviously it is very hot and dry. At 35 miles out I call for descent and I am cleared down to FL50 and then 2800ft for the approach this goes without problem and I intercept the ILS. The visibility is very good and I can see the runway from the initial approach fix at 8.6 miles. It's very hot in the cockpit. After being in the air for 7 hours 20 minutes I eventually land. As instructed I vacate the runway and see a person giving me hand signals, I've not seen this variation before and I'm not quite sure what he wants me to do. Out of the corner of my eye I see another marshaller further up the apron jumping off a buggy and he starts signalling. Now I get the idea and eventually in a pool of sweat come to a stop. Shutdown checks completed I stop the engines and quickly open the door. No relief it's still hot as hell. A few seconds later the handling man arrives in his van. I introduce myself and he's called Mohamed and speaks excellent English. We discuss what I require and soon he's on the phone sorting everything out.

I unload the bags, put the cover on, insert the engine and air inlet plugs and install the pitot cover. Shortly thereafter a tractor towing a bowser with Avgas arrives. The people are all very helpful and we soon have the aircraft refuelled despite it all being hand pumped. I notice the engines are still very hot.



The refuelling bowser in Ouagadougou

There is a minimum of paperwork and formalities and I hand over \$1450 for 359 litres of fuel which includes a \$30 tip, which they are extremely grateful for. Bukino-Fasso is the 3<sup>rd</sup> poorest country on the planet. Mohamed drives me to the terminal and we just walk through and meet the driver in the car park and he takes me straight to the hotel which is 5 minutes away. I am quickly checked in and in the shower. Once I am dressed I go straight down to the bar for a large bottle of the local Bukasar beer which hit's the spot and then to bed. I am quite tired and I have a 04:00 UTC wake up for a 07:00 departure in the morning.

Next morning I am awoken by the alarm and soon in the lobby ready to go. I grab a quick coffee and a roll with some cheese before heading to the airport. Again I just walk thru' the terminal and I am soon at the plane. Flight plan loaded and handling fee paid (\$335 including all airport charges and taxes) I am quickly cleared for taxi and departure. The wind is calm so I take off runway 12 which is in the direction I need to head. No Squawk but the visibility is at best 2000m. I am soon at my cruising level of FL100 but I can't see anything. I am in a haze bubble at 10,000 ft and nothing is visible. I am soon out of Bukino Fasso airspace and transferred to



Accra I cross a small slice of Ghana and then I am requested to contact Niamtougou in Togo. I exchange brief pleasantries with the controller and in very short order I am requested to contact Accra again and head into Benin which they look after. I make several calls but cannot contact them. Then a kindly Delta Captain offers to assist (he's on his way to Lagos) I give him my estimates and he relays them to Accra and shortly thereafter I am in two way communication with them and in short order I am transfer to Lagos control.

Lagos is extremely busy and is more like dealing with London; they soon transfer me to the Lagos approach frequency. They seem very professional although worryingly they have no radar it's all VOR radials and estimates. Fortunately at my level there is little traffic except arrivals and departures and as I am passing directly over the VOR on the airfield which means I am well away from them. I can see Lagos when looking directly down and spot many of the places I have visited in the past. Thank goodness I am well above it all! After reaching the edge of the TMA I am transferred back to Lagos control. I give the usual estimates and they ignore me. Eventually I am getting close to Port Harcourt's TMA so I call them. The controller seems very professional and asks me to report overhead the beacon and then the edge of his TMA. I then get transferred to Calabar but the controller doesn't want to know me and transfers me to Douala.

I say a brief hello and he asks me to report a 20 miles from DLA beacon. I then loose contact with him. I am very concerned about the arrival into Douala as there is Mount Cameron at 13,500 feet within 30 miles of the field. I enter the track to the DLA VOR in the 296 (loaned to be very kindly by Tom McCormack) and see the track I am cleared on takes me straight into the mountain!! I decided to turn right and pickup the 260 radial to DLA which will avoid the mountain. Thank goodness for the drinks with the old Africa pilots in the hotel in Dakar they warned me about the mountain and the lack of control at Douala. I am still in 100% cloud so no chance of seeing the mountain. After several minutes I am back in contact with Douala and tell the controller what I am doing. Once established on the 260 radial I am cleared for the descent, I go through several severe rain storms and eventually I am cleared to descend to 2200ft to intercept the 12 DME arc to Initial Approach Fix (IAF). I do this and follow the arc which is over a swamp. In the 16nm around the arc I have to avoid several serious thunderstorms – not pleasant and eventually I am established at 12 miles on the ILS. The approach and landing are straightforward and I am instructed to proceed to stand C1. As soon as I shutdown Neville the fuel and handling guy says hello. I had called him on the Sat phone about an hour from Douala to give him my ETA.

He gives me the details on where the refuelling will take place (about a 3 mile taxi!!) and says he will meet me there. I call the tower and request taxi and back track which is all straight forward. Taxiing on the old military runway to the fuel depot is like driving down Maidenhead high street due to the number of joggers, animals and children playing on the old runway. Fortunately they have the common sense to get out of the way. Eventually I arrive at the fuel depot. We assemble my hand pump and filter system and the aircraft is quickly refuelled. I also add oil to each engine.

I then taxi the 3 miles back to the main ramp and park the aircraft. Neville meets me again and we proceed through customs which is controlled by a very slick and scary individual in a sharp suit and shiny shoes. He gives me the once over and gives Neville hell. We are instructed to wait in a room for immigration despite this in 10 minutes I am given my passport back with a transit visa. No money change hands.



### Refuelling in Douala, Cameroon

Neville leads me to the car park and he drives me to the Ibis hotel about 10 minutes away in town. On the way he gives me an explanation of Cameroon's history, he is from the English part. I check into the hotel and Neville and I have a large beer each and agree to meet at 6 am local time at the airport.

I have a quick shower, grab some dinner and hit the sack. In no time the alarm is ringing 04:00 UTC and it's time to shower grab a quick breakfast and head to the airport in the hotel shuttle bus. Neville says he will meet me airside!! I find the door that we exited from the previous evening. Despite the swipe card lock it is open and they clearly do not work. I walk out onto the apron. So much for security and old man politely asks me about my flight and assists me to fill in the necessary form. I then go to the aircraft and take the covers off and do the pre-flight checks. Neville meets me and once I am ready we go back to the terminal and get a stamp on my flight plan we then proceed to the tower walk up 6 stories to the MET man (the lifts are broken and have been for several years) who gives me the usual comprehensive briefing and then we file the flight plan and pay the parking and landing fees \$22 and I give him \$25 to include a tip. I can't use the CFA anyway and they don't have change. Everyone is very pleasant and after adding an EET to the flight plan for the Gabon FIR boundary I am ready to go.

I start engines and load the flight plan in the Garmin 530 and re-check it against the chart. Engines warm I do the power checks on stand as a 737 is taxiing out for take off. Once ready I call for taxi and get cleared to the holding point. As I approach the holding point I am requested to back track runway 12 and report when ready. I am soon airborne and heading South. I am requested to track the 180 radial and report on reaching FL100. I am crossing a huge swamp with various rivers meandering through it. The atmosphere is very oppressive, humid and dank. At 2200 feet I enter the heavy overcast layer and the aircraft seems to labouring to cut through the clouds as if in treacle.



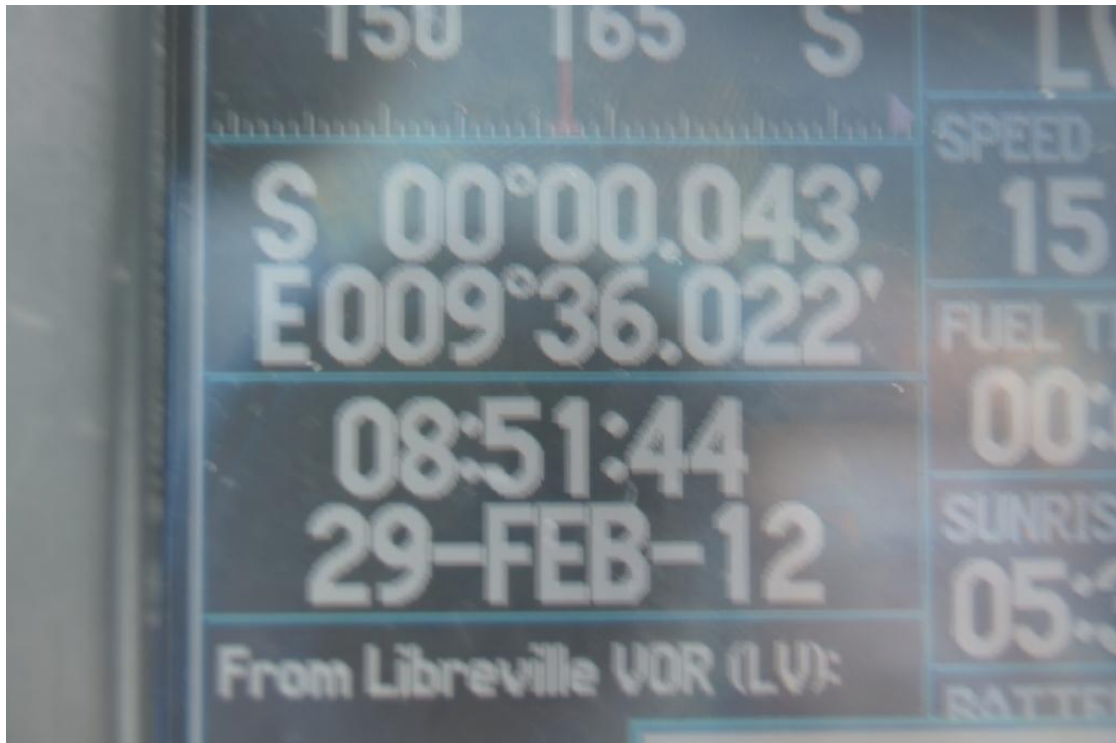
### Climbing out across the swamps south of Douala

At about 4500 feet it starts to rain very intensely and then all of a sudden I am being bounced all over the sky and have a hard job staying upright suddenly the VSI end stops we are climbing at more than 2500 FPM next thing I know I pop out of the top of a cloud at 7000ft but can see various build ups all around. The aircraft is still getting bounced around the sky. Sudden it starts rain it's much more ferocious than the first time and the buffeting is extreme. Again I try to stay roughly upright and the bang we are back in the elevator going up at a tremendous rate with the VSI pegged out. Almost as quickly as it started I pop out of clouds at 9500 feet and I am now in the clear with a few build ups which I manage to dodge around. I reach FL100 and everything settles down. My shoulders are hurting and I feel like I've been in a boxing ring. Interestingly there was no electrical activity shown on the stormscope and this seemed to be a line of clouds just along the coastline. This was very similar to the encounter I had the previous day when flying the DME arc for the approach but that was nothing like as intense.

I am now getting close to Libreville and Douala asks me change frequency. I give the usually enroute estimates and the estimate for arrival into Luanda. Libreville asks me to report overhead the beacon which follows shortly thereafter. I also climb to FL110 to maintain conformance with the semi-circle rule and decide to put on the oxygen just to be sure no hypoxia develops as I am on my own. There are several jets starting there approaches into Libreville and I am asked to maintain the 160 radial and report 20 DME. I pick the first jet up on TCAS and he's just descending through my level about 2 miles on my right, we pass safely. A few minutes later an Air Gabon 737 passes about 3 miles to my left. Thank goodness for TCAS in a non-radar environment – luckily I have the version which will interrogate other aircraft without the need for a radar return.

A few minutes later I am crossing the equator and as predicted by the experienced Africa pilots I met in Dakar I pick up a tailwind. Hurrah. I've been flying for about 1 hour 40 minutes.





#### Crossing the Equator

The clouds are beginning to thin out and I can see that I am over jungle with a few rivers and the odd clearing. There is very little sign of human activity except for the occasional village which seem to be composed of circular huts with straw roofs and pens for animals. These are quite clear as the exposed soil is an intense orange. I am then transferred to Brazzaville control but can't contact them. I check back with Libreville that I have the correct frequency and he also passed me an HF frequency which I can't use. I try several more times without any success but then a 737 registration T-RAFJ offers to provide a relay. The estimates are passed and I am told to maintain FL110, no traffic on my route and to contact Point Noire on reaching their TMA boundary at ONASA. I confirm the clearance and thank the crew for their assistance.



#### Flying over Gabon

After sometime I contact Point Noire and they ask me to report abeam the field. After 30 minutes or so I report abeam the field and I quickly transferred to Cabinda Tower

in Angola. The usual response is given “maintain FL110 no traffic on your route report abeam Cabinda”. In due course I report as instructed and then get transferred to Luanda control. We are now crossing the massive estuary of the river Congo and the associated prolific oilfields with their flares that populate the area.



Congo River estuary

I am now in communication with Luanda control and they request me to report their TMA boundary at EXITO. I am then passed the weather and instructed to expect the NDB/DME/ILS approach for runway 23. I am asked to report 30 DME and start the descent for FL050 to proceed directly to the LU NDB. As I approach the NDB I am cleared down to 3000ft and requested to report the beacon outbound. This I do and then get cleared for the ILS for runway 23. I can see the airport and request a VFR approach to runway 25 which is better for them and me. I reposition for the approach to 25 and after landing exit the runway and the follow me vehicles is there to guide me. I am parked right in front of the international arrival terminal and just 100ft walk to the terminal what service. The handling agent meets me and starts to organise the fuel. After 20 minutes the bowser arrives and we refuel the aircraft. I have all the team assisting me, the handling agent (Pedro) and his assistant (César) and the 3 fuel guys. In 30 minutes we are all done 335 litres loaded which has already been prepaid for. They help me put the covers on the aircraft. We enter the customs/immigration building in front of the plane and in 2 minutes I am heading out of the terminal building to the waiting driver. Ten minutes later I am at the hotel and shortly thereafter in the shower, refreshed I head to the hotel bar which is full of oilfield guys that I am so familiar with. They are discussing their big boss who is a long standing friend of mine, small world.

Mario the accommodation guy calls me and indicates he would like to meet at 17:30 in the hotel lobby. In due course I meet Mario, he used to work for Schlumberger and we had met previously at a party at their staff house near the beach in Luanda in 1993. We have a good chat, he's big into off roading and has a ranch 30 miles North of Luanda and has done several epic motorbike trips across Africa. His two most recent trips were from Maputo to Luanda and the Serengeti to Luanda. Nice guy and we promise to stay in touch.



Parked in front of the terminal in Luanda, Angola

I have an early dinner and retire for the night as the driver is picking me up at 06:00. After what seems like a short night the driver knocks on the hotel door at 05:50. We proceed to the airport and traffic is already building. Luanda is booming and since my last visit almost 5 years ago has changed beyond recognition. We wait at the airport for about 30 minutes until the handling agent arrives and then proceed through security and immigration. No big deal but quite a queue, similar to what you would experience at terminal 5 most mornings. Formalities completed I prepare the aircraft and the handling agent goes to the dispatchers office to file the flight plan. A few minutes later I join him. There is a problem as they cannot find my landing and/or overflight clearance. I was hoping to be airborne at 0700 UTC but this is not going to happen. I call White Rose the clearance people and talk to Mike. He checks with folks in Dubai and 30 minutes later assures me everything is OK.

Another 1 ½ hours passes by but still nothing seems to be progressing. The manager of the dispatch office is most helpful but the problem is with Luanda Control downtown and they don't start till 9:00 local time. I call Pedro and he says he will get onto it. After about 3 hours I am get permission to depart. The \$120 landing and parking fees are paid and the \$200 handling fee. After a little bit of messing around the flight plan is approved and I am cleared to go. Finally at 09:40 I am taxiing for Runway 25 (3 hours 40 minutes after I arrived at the airport). It's now 32 degrees C. I taxi among the big boys and I am given my clearance "Fly runway heading to 8 DME then turn left on track to intercept the 194 radial report on reaching FL100 and proceed direct UDANO"

I do as instructed and cross over the city and the bays to the South of Luanda. The visibility is excellent and I am soon at my cruising level and giving estimates to Luanda approach. The quickly transfer me to Luanda Control who asks me to maintain FL100 and report NAMIBE. After a further 30 minutes I loose contact with Luanda. I continue to report my position on the inter-aircraft frequency 126.90. I am now tracking down the Angolan coast which is beautiful. After about 3 hours I call Namibe and the lady requests me to report over the beacon. I do this and she asks me to report at 15 miles. At 15 miles I call her and she tells me to call Windhoek North on passing OKDOL (the Namibian/Angola border). As I approach the border I see a line of CB's and the stormscope is picking up a lot of hits. As I cross the border the country is spectacular and so are the CB's I enter cloud and it starts to rain very



heavily. Fortunately the big strikes seem to be off my track. And after 30 minutes of being in and out of cloud and rain the view ahead is gin clear and the stormscope shows the major activity is behind me and about 40 miles to the East.



Islands on the southern edge of Luanda



Build ups on the Angolan/Namibia border



The stormscoop shows the thunderstorms

The Namibia countryside is just amazing and I have the best views of the trip so far. The geology is unique as desert, mountains and gorges all mix together I have never seen anything so beautiful. Initially I am in communication with Windhoek but eventually lose two way communication. A very affable Namibian in aircraft V5-JEB assists and Windhoek instructs me to maintain FL100 and to contact Walvis Bay on reaching APGEK.



The amazing geology of the Ugab, Namibia

After more than 6 hours I am now in communication with Walvis Bay and cleared for the descent. I pass over Swakopmund, one of the places that Alex Henshaw and his Father landed in 1938 as was told in the "Flight of the Mew Gull" one of the key inspirations for my trip.





### Swakopmund and the Skeleton Coast, Namibia

Shortly after passing over Swakopmund I can see Walvis Bay airfield and the huge dunes which have become so famous for dune surfing. The controller passes me the weather and clears me for the visual approach to runway 27. It quite dusty and hazy into the setting sun but he has kindly turned all the approach and runway lights on which makes things much easier. After landing I exit the runway to the apron and a marshaller guides me to my parking spot.



### Parked on the ramp at Walvis Bay, Namibia

The tower informs me that the fuel will be available in the morning from 08:00 am local time. I put the aircraft to bed for the night. The small terminal building is empty apart from the security guy. I call the hotel and they dispatch a driver and while I am waiting I learn about Namibia from the security guard. He also takes me back out to the ramp and introduces me to the ramp manager who will organise fuel and landing fees in the morning. The taxi driver arrives and we travel the 20 minutes to the hotel. He tells me that the crew filming the latest Mad Max movie are also staying there. It's a nice hotel on an seemingly endless beach and the desk man



checks me in, sorts out my wife and cook's me dinner – Weiner Schnitzel and chips (well it is an ex-German colony). I also have a bottle of the local beer – rather good.



The view from my hotel balcony near Walvis Bay Namibia is so well organised and everyone is calm and polite – so German after the frenetic and somewhat chaotic parts of West Africa I have visited in the last few days. I drop off to sleep with the sound of the waves crashing on the beach.

I get up at 7 am, have breakfast and get a ride to the airport at 08:30 The driver William is an IT guy but also has an off road tourist business. He is very knowledgeable and tells me about Namibia and what's going on. We soon arrive at the airport and I bi-pass the queue for immigration etc. Out on the ramp I talk to the ramp supervisor who quickly organises fuel and I pay my landing fee and parking \$23. I file my flight plan by phone with the tower.



As I am getting the plane ready and refuelling it I have a nice chat with the crew of the MD81 which is parked on the ramp and is flying back to Jo'burg. Everything is so professional and organised and there a large number of light aircraft mainly Cessna 210's on the ramp.

I am soon cleared to taxi and given my clearance which is simply climb FL100 on track ANSUX. All good and I am quickly climbing into a gin clear blue sky. After passing ANSUX I am told to contact Windhoek control. After several attempts and after checking with Walvis Bay that I have the correct frequency the Air Namibia 737 that took off just after me relays my estimates and I am instructed to report Alexander Bay which is where the Orange River enters the Atlantic. The desert is very beautiful and I am soon picking up the forecasted 15kt tail wind which is speeding me on my way to Cape Town. I track across the huge desert with its mountain ranges.



Namibia Desert

Straight after passing Alexander Bay I am transferred to Johannesburg Control who gives me a squawk and confirms I am under radar control. This is a first for the past several thousand miles. I also note that all the RT is familiar and it all sounds like back home except with South African accents. With a good tail wind I making 165kts ground speed and I are soon handed over to Cape Town centre. They identify me and ask me change my squawk. They also give me latest Cape Town weather and inform me to expect and Evuki1B arrival. In simple terms a straight in approach to runway 19 from 50 miles out. As I approach Lange Baan airbase I am instructed to give blind calls on their frequency and re-contact Cape Town approach when clear of their area.

In contact with Cape Town again they ask me to report when ready for descent. As always I use the VNAV part of the Garmin 530, I had already programmed in the IAF at 3000ft and 11 miles. I inform CT I ready for descent and they clear me initially to 7000ft then 5000ft and finally 3000ft for the ILS. I keep the ground speed up initially 190kts and then back to 170kts which the controller is very happy about as he has a 737 about 20 miles behind me. At 4 miles I slowdown to 120kts lower the gear and then apply flaps for straightforward arrival. The view of Table Mountain on the approach is truly memorable. After landing I am cleared to stand B1 on the main apron and soon shutdown to await the handling folks. After about 20 minutes they arrive and shortly thereafter a huge bus shows up to take me to immigration. My passport is stamped and we head back in the same bus to the plane which I then taxi to Executive Jet's ramp for parking. They organise a taxi which quickly speeds me to

the Commodore Hotel in the waterfront area. The weather is great and I have a fantastic view of Table Mountain from my hotel window.

So the journey South is complete and I will spend the next 10 days exploring South Africa. Monday its to Stellenbosch airfield for the 50 hour check then it's VFR flying along the coast and into the game reserves. The weather is ideal 29 C and clear blue skies. For the statisticians amongst you, total distance to Cape Town from White Waltham was 6,942 nm with at total airborne time of 51 hours 5 minutes for an average speed of 135.9kts.



Descending towards Cape Town



On the final approach to Cape Town International airport





Parked on the apron at Cape Town airport

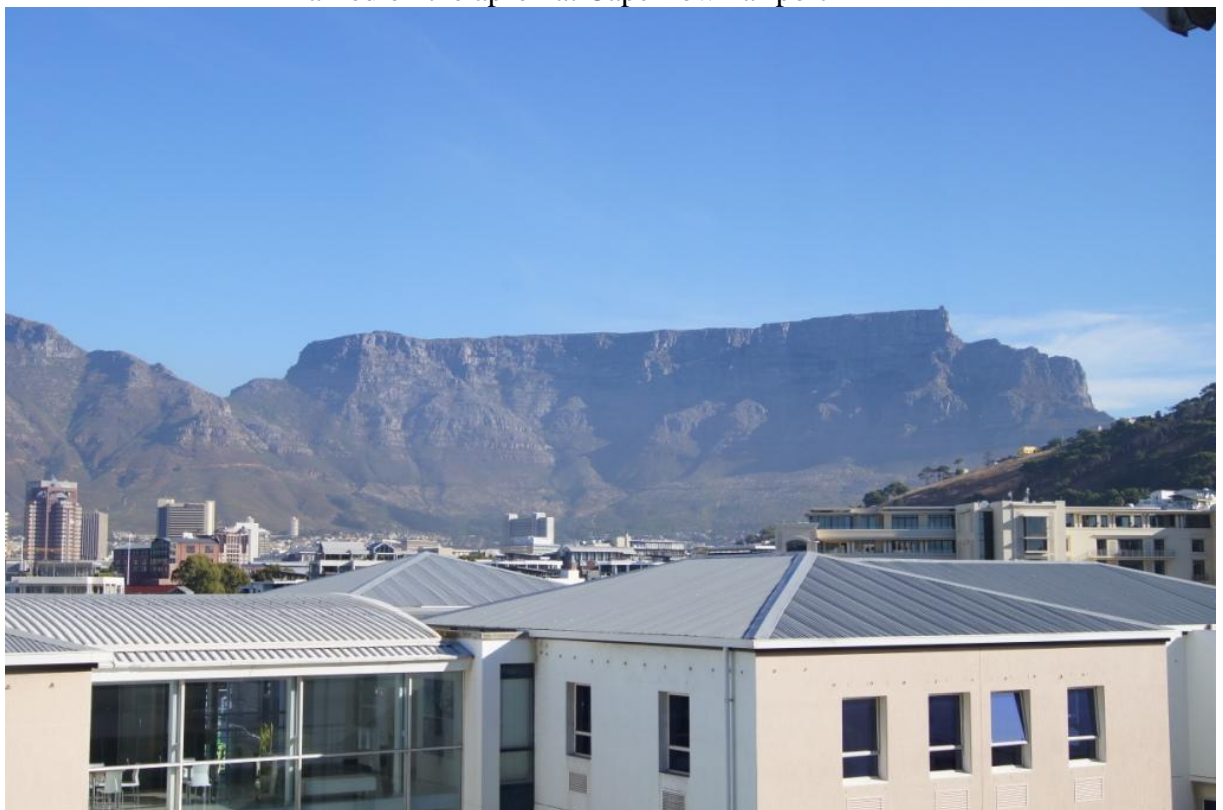


Table Top Mountain from the Commodore Hotel

## **South Africa - 2<sup>nd</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012:**

Having landed at Cape Town International on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March and the aircraft safely parked at Executive Jet for the weekend amongst the Global Expresses, Citations, PC12's and the like. The twin Comanche looks rather like a later day Fiat 500 in this company! I am quickly in my taxi via an ATM to my favourite hotel in Cape Town, the Commodore Hotel in the Waterfront Area. It may not be the swankiest hotel in town but it has character and a buzz. I spent the weekend chilling out and meeting friends and on Monday headed back to Executive Jet. The service was impeccable and with a bill to match £700 for parking and handling of which £400 was for all the associated charges from the airport – it is like landing at Heathrow or Gatwick so no real complaints. The challenge when you are coming from overseas is that you have to use “Airports of Entry” which are generally the major airports. Next time I make a trip to South Africa I will clear customs and immigration at Oranjemund by Alexander Bay and then go straight to a small GA field. As it happens, Executive Jet is right next to Thunder City and they were preparing a Jet Provost for an outing. I understand from local sources that it is about to get new ownership and restart some of the more exotic operations again. Let's hope so.



Jet Provost at Thunder City, Cape Town

Monday morning with the flight plan filed for the 10nm trip to Stellenbosch I was soon airborne with an immediate left turn out and within 5 minutes was downwind to land on runway 19. After landing I taxied over to Stellair, the maintenance organization that Simon Abbott had kindly helped arrange, to perform the 50 hour check. I met the team John and his son Gordon, Jonny and their helpers and the engine cowlings were soon off and the engine oil was being drained while it was still warm. Fortunately there are three other Twin Comanche's at the airfield which they also maintain and it soon became apparent that they would prefer to be left in peace.

I then went to meet the administration ladies who for a ZAR 50 fully refundable deposit gave me an electronic card for all the gates etc. I was quickly in the bar/restaurant and Jim the manager soon had me signed up for the Tuesday night members social. I then went to the excellent flying shop next to the flying school and the lady in charge (Rebecca?) sorted me out with maps and the “Pooleys” equivalent for all of Southern Africa, this provide to be invaluable.



The maintenance team at Stellair in Stellenbosch airport

In my opinion Stellenbosch is the jewel in the crown of airfields and everybody was really friendly and welcoming. I then got a call from my old friend Findlay Smith who came over to join me for drinks in the clubhouse and we were soon discussing what I should do during my tour of South Africa this proved to be extremely helpful. Findlay owns a flying school at Frisantekraal airfield near Cape Town and currently get's his aircraft maintained by Stellair. We then jumped into Findlay's new Porsche GTS and he very kindly gave me a lift over to Penelope's Guest House where I was staying while in Stellenbosch.



Stellenbosch Airfield

The guest houses in South Africa are amazing and if you are visiting South Africa I thoroughly recommend that you use them. At £45 to £50 per night including a full English breakfast they are great value.

In the evening Penny's son Edward gave me a lift into the centre of Stellenbosch. He is in his 3<sup>rd</sup> year studying Electrical Engineering at the University and soon pointed me in the direction of the bars and restaurants. Despite it being a Monday night it was



very busy and I had to sit at the bar for a few minutes tasting the local wine before a table "Al Fresco" became available. All the waitresses were students and the young lady taking care of me was from Durban and studying for a teaching degree. I had a tasty curry with several glasses of the local red and then was persuaded to try the desert; this was a local equivalent of sticky toffee pudding, no more said. After dinner I had a wander around the town which is an attractive mix of old style Dutch Colonial buildings with lots of art and antique shops. I then tried to find a taxi – nothing. In the end, I went to another bar/restaurant (Arpeggio's) where the owner Ryan organized transport for me. While I was waiting for it to arrive we got chatting and by coincidence Ryan travels all over South Africa in his friend's Piper Arrow. Once again I had more great suggestions of places to visit. I would now need an additional three months in South Africa alone!!!

The driver (Alan) soon showed up and we quickly struck up a partnership and he provided me with transportation during my stay in Stellenbosch – he was also very keen on aviation. On Tuesday morning I went back into Stellenbosch to visit the bank and explore the town in the daylight and then in the early afternoon Alan ferried me to the airfield. I checked how the work on N7EY was progressing, the 50 hour check being almost completed and they were just about to do the ground check. It was arranged that I could collect the paperwork at 8 AM in the morning.

I then proceeded to the clubhouse for a drink and was soon engaged by the ex-CFI and his friend Kevin Bell. Small world, Kevin knows Nigel and Cathy from White Waltham and asked me to pass on his apologies for missing them during their recent visit to SA. We spent an interesting couple of hours chatting and they regaled me with their travels across Africa over the years. The CFI had flown to Dusseldorf and back in a Cessna 210. As we sat there people started arriving for the social evening and I was soon at a table with several of the local pilots watching the sun paint the mountains a beautiful orange colour and the stars including the Southern Cross appear. I had a great evening and most notably met Graham Smith who is ex-RAF, SA Airways, ex-747 training Captain for Air Mauritius and the senior local examiner for the SA CAA. There is not much that Smithy has not done or flown – he even instructs on the Jet Provost and other aircraft at Thunder City and by coincidence had taught my friend Findlay to fly the JP. I gleaned much useful advice, tips and even more suggestions of things to do and see – 6 months in SA now required.

Wednesday morning I was picked up by Alan at 7:45 AM and soon at the airfield. I collected the paperwork for N7EY and loaded her with my chattels. I thanked the Stellair team for all their help and headed to the pumps for fuel. William, who has been at the airfield from the very beginning, refuelled the plane and told me of all the improvements including clearing the scrub for the original dirt runway etc. South Africa has to be close to flying nirvana as it gets: AVGAS £1.25 per litre; parking, landing, temporary club membership etc. for 3 days £18.64. I filed my Flight plan on-line at <https://file2fly.atns.co.za/aes/login.jsp> a free version of homebriefing that includes FPL, MET and NOTAMS, these South African's have got GA sorted.

I was soon on my way, climbing to 3500 ft into a very blue sky and soon heading East towards George. Approximately every ten minutes I report my position on the Cape Town East information frequency and as I approach George I talk to them and descended to 1500 ft to fly along the coast past Mossel Bay and onto Plettenberg Bay the coastline is pristine and the visibility is generally good with a thin smattering of clouds along the coast at around 1000 to 1500 ft. I am soon in communication with Port Elisabeth and they ask me to join downwind right hand for Runway 26. Shortly thereafter I am parked at the Sheltham FBO. The fuel is closed for the day but as always everyone is very helpful and they soon organise a taxi. While I am waiting a L39 Albatross is rolled out for testing, very noisy but great to see. Reg: ZS-JET



Flight along the coast from Stellenbosch to Port Elisabeth



L-39 jet at Port Elisabeth

Once again the guest house is superb and I am soon having a very welcome cup of tea sitting by the pool in the sunshine. I file the FPL for the flight to Durban in the morning and then head into town. This is a big seaside resort with a beautiful beach with a park right behind it including jogging tracks and refreshment kiosks. On the recommendation of the taxi driver I head towards the Casino and its associated bars and restaurants. I am soon in a bar talking to William the barman, he spent several years in Brentwood in Essex and is married to an Essex girl! He's an Arsenal supporter and we are soon talking about sports. On the TV the 20:20 cricket in Jo'burg has been rained off due to heavy rain but they are showing replays of cricket and then rugby. We are soon joined by Joerg, who comes from George, he works for a plant hire company and spends his weeks in Port Elisabeth he joins me for dinner and we have some more beers. After dinner I bid my new friends farewell and head back to the guest house.



Guest house Port Elisabeth

Next morning I am up bright and early and after breakfast proceed to the airfield for a



planned 10 AM local time departure. The apron at the FBO is a hive of activity. I pre-flight the plane and go and pay the landing fees £15.00 and no parking charge at the FBO if you buy fuel. I am in queue for the fuel station, that's why I normally try to refuel soon after I land. I eventually get served but while I am waiting I have a chat with the Chief mechanic who wants to know about working in the UK – I try to dissuade him. I am then ready to get on my way and start the engines as I go thru' my checks I see the left hand engines alternator light is indicating it is off-line. I slowly recheck everything and eventually discover that I have inadvertently turned the left alternator switch off, this must have occurred when I turned the pitot on and off during the A check. What a relief, I call for taxi and clearance and fortunately today we are on runway 08 which is in the direction I am heading.

I am cleared to the holding point and am soon climbing out on the runway heading to 1500 ft and then re-cleared to 3500ft direct track to Port Alfred. The coastline is beautiful in the morning sun. I am soon talking to East London who asks me to route slightly offshore around the edge of their TMA as they have a lot of jet traffic all very straightforward. After East London I am heading along the "Wild Coast" with my track taking me over Port St John airfield which is perched on top of a plateau with a 1500 ft drop over a cliff at each end of the runway, not for the faint hearted. There is a lot of traffic on the information frequency and I see several aircraft both visually and on my TCAS. I soon leave the Cape Town FIR and contact Jo'burg East who asks me to report my position on the common traffic frequency and also monitor their frequency.



East London Airport

I am now over the Transkei which is very hilly with lots of villages consisting of round mud huts. There are deep gorges and several tea plantations. Clouds are starting to build over the hills so I head slightly offshore to remain VMC. As instructed I contact Margate Airfield and the controller is very helpful and gives me a quick briefing on the process to get to Virginia airfield in Durban. It is on the beach right next to the international airport! It all works as instructed and I proceed up the coast to Durban at 1500 ft (Northbound – Southbound at 1000ft) as always I report my position at several VFR reporting points and finally at the harbour entrance I call Virginia who clears me for the straight in approach #2 to the Cessna on short final. The airfield is literally on the beach, with the short final very low over a links golf course. After landing I taxi to the pumps. Actually there are two stations next to each other both dispensing AVGAS and JET-A1 and both are giving marshalling signals

clearly competition is very fierce at this airfield and once the engines are stopped the service is outstanding. I am great believer in competition and this why. After refuelling I go and pay my landing and parking fee which is £18.00 and after parking the pre-arranged taxi is there to meet me and takes me to the guest house.



Flying over Transkei villages on the Wild Coast



Durban Harbour and City

Renay who owns the guest house is very welcoming and soon has me settle in my room and leaves me the key's for the bar in case I need a beer. Her son is a Puma helicopter pilot for the UN in Afghanistan and a director of Heavy Lift, the air transport Company. The guest house sits on top of a hill overlooking Durban and is surrounded by fantastic mansions with floodlight tennis courts and massive pools with high gates and walls topped with electric fences!! Despite this I walk to the local parade of shops and find a pleasant restaurant for dinner. On the way back I say hello to all the servants and gardeners who are sitting on the street corners chatting in their

uniforms. Not much seems to have changed from the old South Africa in this neighbourhood! When I get back to my room I am entertained by some wonderful singing from the huge church which is at the back of my room. To my surprise the hymns are all in English and the congregation all appear to be white. Next morning I have a delicious breakfast in the dining room looking at the ships coming and going into Durban, South Africa's busiest port. The driver runs me to the airport which is ten minutes away. I pre-flight the plane then go to the flying school where I ask for advice on my departure from Virginia airport due to the proximity of the international airport. The CFI is very helpful and it is as I planned with a warning to be careful about my height as I will pass directly under the ILS of the main airport. I am soon on my way, harbour entrance at 1000ft and then step climbing to 5000ft at Alverston Mast a VRP to the West of Durban. I am soon in contact with Jo'burg East and flying over the striking landscapes of Kwazulu Natal. No wonder Michael Caine and the troops had problems fighting the Zulu's. The terrain alone would kill you, simply trying to walk up and down the hills in your red tunic carrying your sword and rifle would cause a heart attack even before the battle started.



Kwazulu Natal

I climb to my cruising altitude of 8500ft and with a brisk tailwind I am soon approaching Kruger. I vector around the International airports TMA over a cloud layer at 5300ft and once I am sure of the terrain below I start my descent and soon pop out of the cloud layer at 4500ft with the whole Kruger Park before me. I head for the Sabi-Sabi VRP 10 miles to the West of the airstrip and call the lodge and descend to 3500ft. As I circle over the airfield I see the ranger making a quick sweep of the runway for animals and start my approach. The lodge confirms I am clear to land. The runway is excellent and I am soon parked next to the ranger's Land Rover.

Alistair the ranger introduces himself and helps me put the plane to bed. We then jump in his vehicle and head towards Selati Lodge where I will be staying. Alistair is a great guy and worked at St Paul's school teaching sport in his gap year and stayed in Barnes he had a great time in London. After completing his University Degree in Marketing he became a Ranger, the only job he had ever wanted to do. He's now been a ranger at Sabi-Sabi for 7 years and proves to be very experienced and knowledgeable.





Sabi-Sabi Game Reserve Airport – Kruger National Park

On the way to the lodge we pop by a couple of Lionesses who have killed a Cape buffalo the previous evening. Amazingly we are within 6 feet of them. We drive along bush tracks for about 30 minutes and pass many Antelope and Wilder Beasts. Once at the lodge I am shown to my room. The lodge manager Elaine tells me I have been upgraded to the Presidential Suite!! I get a tour, the bathroom is the size of a double garage and I have my own pool and veranda looking across the park. It's then time for lunch and I meet the other guests, a doctor and his wife from Woking and a couple with their daughter from BA, Argentina. Everyone is very engaging, the Argentinean's have just arrived like me and the couple from Woking arrived the previous afternoon, they're very excited about the game drives they been on.



My Suite at Selati Camp – Sabi-Sabi Game Reserve

After tea at 4PM we set out on the game drive and I am sat next to Alistair in the front of the Land Rover with Mike the Tracker on a seat mounted on the passenger side bonnet. The rifle is on the top of the dashboard in front of Alistair and me. We see lots of Antelopes, Buffalo and then a big Giraffe. Just as the sun is setting we stop on

a ridge for a sun downer, what a life. After the drinks are consumed it's getting dark and we head off in search of lions. We are soon up close and personal with the whole Pride as they hunt Antelope. We sit on a track and the whole Pride passes by my door they are just 3 feet away!! After an hour or so with the lions we head back to the Lodge passing a couple of Rhino's on the way – 3 of the big 5 in just a couple hours.



Sunset Sabi-Sabi



With Lions at night Sabi-Sabi





Rhinoceros



Leopold – she had just had cubs





Bull Elephant



Zebra





### With the Pride

Next morning we leave the lodge at 05:30 and are soon with lions once again. Overnight they have joined the couple of lionesses with the Buffalo kill and they are all looking fat and happy, there's not much left of the Buffalo. Next we see a large Bull Elephant, Zebras' and then a Leopard. The safari continues like this for the next couple of days and all too soon it's time to leave. Alistair drives me to the airstrip and I pre-flight the plane while he checks the airstrip for animals. A Beech19 departs just before me. I am soon taxiing out and climbing to 3500ft on my way to the Westerly VRP before being cleared direct to Polokwane at my cruising level of 8500ft. Within an hour I am landing at Polokwane and soon get refuelled and parked. As I exit the terminal building the forecasted thunderstorm hits, lighting bolts all around and it rains very heavily. I am very glad to be on the ground. 30 minutes later I am in the taxi and heading to the hotel. Tomorrow (Monday) I will be leaving South Africa and heading to Malawi.



Alistair my Ranger at Sabi-Sabi



Crossing the Sabie River after departing Sabi-Sabi



Polokwane 45 minutes after landing – the TAF was spot on



## **From South Africa to Kenya – 12<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012:**

After a good night in Polokwane at the Landmark Hotel, Flight Plan filed online, Met and Notams reviewed I am ready for my 05:30 pickup. The taxi driver, who dropped me off the previous afternoon at the hotel, quickly transports me the 20km to the airport terminal at Polokwane “Gateway to Africa” Airport and we unload the bags. It now 06:10 and the security screening people are ready waiting but no Customs people are present even though they are supposed to start work. at 06:00. After a 25 minute wait they eventually saunter into the terminal building and in no time I am through the system and on my way to the aircraft with three customs men in tow. They look at the plane and take photographs standing next to it but the inspection for my departure from RSA is quietly forgotten and I get on with the pre-flight checks as a King Air arrives and a Fokker regional jet departs. The morning is bright and clear with no wind. Checks completed and flight plan loaded into the Garmin database I call the tower on my Icom handheld radio for start and taxi and get an immediate response “taxi for holding point Echo runway 05 and report when ready for departure QNH 1020”.



On the ramp at Polokwane International Airport

As per normal the engines start straightaway and I am soon taxiing to the holding point as instructed. As I taxi out the tower gives my clearance and which is to climb runway heading to FL070 and then contact Makhado AFB approach. I am soon passing FL070; Polokwane Airfield is at 4100ft elevation, and bid farewell to the Polokwane controller and contact Makhado. A very cheerful lady instructs me to continue my climb to FL130 direct to the Greefswald (GWV) VOR, no traffic. I put on my oxygen and switch on the Mountain High electronic Pulse-on-Demand controller and set it to auto-regulated above FL100. After 20 minutes from takeoff I am levelling off at FL130 and reset the throttles, mixtures and props for the 55% power long range cruise. I close the cowl flaps switch to the tip tanks and we are soon recording a ground speed of 165kts thanks to a 15kt tailwind. 20 miles from GWV I am instructed to contact Harare Control on 125.10. I call Harare but no response so I check by SP02 % using the Oximeter and its reading 96%, all good. I then pass over a huge open cast mine. This is De Beers Venetia Diamond mine, the most productive in South Africa. It is now reaching the limits of opencast mining as the pit is almost 400 metres deep and they will start conventional underground mining within the next several years [http://www.mining-technology.com/projects/de\\_beers/](http://www.mining-technology.com/projects/de_beers/)



Venetia diamond mine

As I approach the Zimbabwe FIR boundary on the Limpopo River I re-contact Harare and eventually a very bored sounding controller responds. After multiple repeats he finally get's my call sign correct and I pass other requested details. He then gives me several frequencies to contact including BEIRA and TETE Radio in Mozambique. I try all the frequencies but get no response and go back to him. It must be breakfast time and he just wants to get rid of me and anyone else who wants to talk to him. I eventually suggest that I might call Masvingo Approach, if he is agreeable, as it's on my routing. He leaps at the suggestion and I am soon in contact with the new controller who asks for my estimates for the Masvingo VMV VOR and Harare VSB VOR, neither of which are operational! I give my estimates and am told to maintain my level and report when I am 15 miles North of VMV, no traffic. On reporting 15 miles North of VMV I am instructed to contact Harare Approach. I do this and repeat my estimate for VSB VOR. There are several jets arriving at Harare and they all conduct Visual approaches I suspect the ILS is also not working.

I am instructed to report overhead VSB and maintain FL130 as I turn over the VOR a Citation Jet is requesting decent I realise that he is on a reciprocal track to mine. The lady controller asks him to descend to FL140. I then tell her that I passed the VSB at 07:43 and I am maintaining FL130 on 041 radial from the VOR and just passing 8 DME (that part seems to work!!). Message past to the Citation and they tell the controller they are descending through FL170 for FL140 and currently at 22 DME from VSB. Good we all know where we are as there is no Radar. I switch on my landing lights and see the Citation on my TCAS. He soon passes overhead about 100m to the right of my track. He must have seen me as he requests further descent which the controller rejects. I then tell the controller that I was visual with the traffic and that he has passed me. She then clears him to descend to join downwind. The Citation crew read back the clearance and then thank me for my assistance. I believe I am starting to get the idea of how the Africa flying system works – Pilot to Pilot.



Harare Airport, Zimbabwe

My speed has gradually been slowing as the tailwind turned into a 5kt headwind and I am now making around 145kts across the ground despite this I am soon 50 miles from Harare which is the edge of their TMA and I inform the controller of this. She instructs me to contact TETE Radio. I am soon in two way communication with a friendly Portuguese sounding controller. He asks me for my estimates for KOBOD and ELEPA which are the Mozambique FIR boundaries. I pass these on and as usual am instructed to maintain FL130, no traffic.



Lake Cobra Bassa behind the dam

Not long after passing the FIR Boundary I spot the mighty Zambezi River and the



huge lake behind the Cobora Bassa Dam which bisects the river as it enters a large canyon. This is the biggest hydroelectric power plant in Southern Africa and consists of five 415Mw turbines. Construction started on the project in 1969 when Mozambique was still a Portuguese colony and the lake started to be filled in December 1974. Unfortunately during the 16 year civil war that raged after independence much of the transmission infrastructure was sabotaged. This has mostly been repaired since the war ended in 1992 but the dam and associated infrastructure continues to be a target in this volatile part of Africa. As I get closer the clouds beneath me begin to thicken so I can't see the full extent of the lake which covers some 2,700 km<sup>2</sup>.



Zambezi River – Mozambique

I am now getting close to the Lilongwe TMA and the Malawi FIR boundary and the TETE controller instructs me to contact Lilongwe approach. I do this immediately as I coming up to ELEPA which is only 80nm South West of the airfield. The controller tells me to expect the UTASI 1A STAR followed by the RNAV approach for Runway 14 and to proceed direct to UTASI and report when ready for decent to be at UTUGA at FL70. He then reads me the latest weather. I load the arrival and approach into the Garmin 530 and program the required VNAV profile which calls for me to start my descent in about 7 minutes. On reaching the Top of Descent (TOD) point I am cleared down to FL070 and throttle back and start my way down. It's quite bumpy as the forecasted afternoon CB's are starting to form and I have dodge around the worst ones. Fortunately as I reach FL070 and the Initial Approach Fix (IAF) for the RNAV Rwy 14 I am below the clouds and it becomes much smoother. I am then cleared to make my approach and cleared to descend to 5700ft the airport is a little over 4000ft elevation. I leave the autopilot engaged as it's an 11nm run to the runway threshold and at 5 miles lower the gear and shortly thereafter the flaps as required. It's a very clear approach onto the 11,614 ft long runway and the wind is straight down the runway. The countryside is very green and in the distance I can see the mountains that mark the edge of the rift valley and Lake Malawi.



Avoiding build ups on the Lilongwe STAR



2.5 mile Final Runway 14 Lilongwe

I am instructed to park next to the Seneca and very soon the fuel man arrives all very efficient. The best surprise of all is that fuel here in the middle of Africa is only US\$2.31 per litre which is 30% cheaper than back home in England. Refuelling completed I am soon through immigration and in a taxi to my hotel in the centre of the old part of Lilongwe which is about 25km away. By the time I am checked in its late afternoon and head to the bank to change some money before they close

The countryside on the way into town is very verdant and cows with herdsman wander along the road as we drive along causing some holdups. There are huge



queues outside every garage for petrol and the taxi driver tells me it can take up to 4 days to get the car filled up. I come to understand that most people are very fed up with the President and on the radio some government official is making a long a tedious diatribe railing against those who spread disinformation and criticise the high office of the President which is against the constitution and will not be tolerated blah, blah, blah. It sounds to me like they are loosing the plot and some of the posters along the road praising His Excellency the President for this and that great achievement only reinforce this view. This is one of the poorest countries in the world, officially 12% of the population are HIV positive and malnutrition is a serious issue. Life expectancy is 43 years old and over 50% of the population is under 15 years old. Despite all this the people I meet at the hotel and on my walks around the old part of town during my two day stay are very welcoming. There is a distinct lack of basic infrastructure in most of the town and many beggars and poor people sit around the street corners. The mosque is one of the most impressive buildings in this part of town and there is also a very modern shopping centre with fast food stores etc. which seems totally out of place. The new stores are clearly out of the financial reach of most of the local population and seem to be frequented by the many Western missionaries and aid workers. So as not to create a problem I leave my camera and other valuables in the safe in my room. It doesn't feel particularly unsafe but I don't wish to provide too much temptation as my Africa Lonely Planet guide warns to avoid some areas of town if alone.



Refuelling at Lilongwe

On the Wednesday morning I get up at 4 AM local time and as arranged previously the taxi driver who picked me up at the airport is at the hotel at 5 AM with fuel to run me back to the airport. We proceed with caution through the town as it is just starting to get light and the roads lack illumination but the sun comes up very quickly as we are heading through the countryside along the road to the airport. After about 35 minutes we arrive at the terminal building and the taxi driver has organised for one of the soldiers in the terminal to show me to the control tower. I am assured that no immigration or customs are required and once I have filed my flight plan, got Notams and weather and paid the US\$180 for navigation, landing and parking I am shown the way to the apron and my plane. No handling and everything seems to be very straightforward. I do the usual checks and by 6:55AM local time (0455 UTC) I am



requesting start and taxi. I am cleared to the holding point for runway 32 and as I taxi out I get my clearance which is to climb to 6000 feet then turn right on track to UTIDA and climb FL110. Power checks completed I back track to the runway threshold and am cleared for take off. Approximately 15 minutes later I am levelling off at FL110 and once I have set the aircraft up for the long range cruise reach the edge of Lake Malawi which seems completely still with not a boat in sight and just a few clouds reflecting in the water.

As I start across the lake the controller at Lilongwe asks me to contact Dar-Es-Salaam Control. The new controller instructs me to maintain FL110 and route as filed. I also provide him with my estimate for Dodoma and Nairobi-Wilson Airport. I reach the Tanzanian side of the lake and pass over a small settlement on a river which flows into the lake and it soon starts to get quite mountainous with villages dotted around the valleys and on the slopes of the mountains. I believe there are quite a lot of Tea and Coffee plantations in this region as well as significant coal deposits. It's also strange to think that I am passing over one of the key areas that we believed is responsible for the start of human evolution more than 2 million years ago. I am also starting to intersect the Rift Valley which will be a significant geological feature for the next 3000 miles of my journey. As I pass over this mountainous area at the Northern end of Lake Malawi I also run into some light rain showers and the weather looks significantly more threatening fortunately much further to the West of my track to Nairobi.



Early morning over Lake Malawi

A little over 3 hours from take off and 470nm distance I am approaching Dodoma in Central Tanzania. Dar-Es-Salaam ask me to contact Dodoma approach. There has been a steady stream of aircraft on frequency flying in and out of the various towns along my route. About 15 minutes early I had listened as a Beech 19D make his approach into Dodoma and he was now on the frequency lining up for take off for his short hop to Kondoa as he made his "milk round" stops. He is cleared to FL090 and is requesting higher I can see him on my TCAS about 2 miles ahead of me and pick him up visually. I inform the controller of this then have a discussion with the Pilot I making 145kts and he can climb as 150kts ground speed. I let the controller know I am happy for him to climb thru' my level and he climbs to FL150 and gradually edges ahead of me after he levels off for the cruise. The pilot thanks me for my assistance.

After a further hour I am getting close to the Kenyan FIR boundary and I am soon requested to contact Nairobi Control. They are very busy and despite repeated tries I am unable to raise them. I am close to some very high terrain (Kilimanjaro 19,000+) and there are mountains at 9000 ft or so that I must fly over to reach Nairobi. I keep following my filed route and about 10 miles before the start of the Nairobi TMA I am able to establish two way communications. I am requested to proceed direct to IBRAT for a Radar Vektored Visual Approach to Runway 07 at Nairobi-Wilson (HKNW). About 15nm before IBRAT I am requested to descend to FL090 and shortly thereafter to 7000ft. Nairobi-Wilson is on your left at about 7nm report when visual. It's quite hazy but I eventually spot it and am told to contact the tower who clears me Right Base number 2 to a Caravan on a 1 mile final. I see the traffic and I requested to expedite my approach which I do. Nairobi-Wilson is 5537ft elevation and the landing speed is noticeably higher than at sea level with the density altitude well in excess of 6000ft. Runway 07 is only 4800 feet in length and I exit at its far end onto the Apron and contact ground. This is a very busy almost manic place. There are so many aircraft and vehicles dodging around that I proceed with great care.

I request taxi to the pumps for fuel and have to hold to cross runway 14. I also notice that the engines are running somewhat roughly and decide to lean them a little as I suspect they are running a little rich. After several minutes waiting and getting hotter I eventually reach the Shell refuelling area and shutdown. A yellow car approaches and I get out and have a discussion with the driver (Moses) he eventually asks me what I want and I explain parking for three days and to refuel. He talks to Shell who say they have no AVGAS – strange as I spoke to them on the phone yesterday and they said it would be no problem they were also just finishing off refuelling a Cessna 152. Moses tells me to sit tight for a few minutes and he will sort everything. He is soon back having arranged a “Safe” parking place for me and gives me instructions on its location. I restart the engines and request taxi and after several minutes I re-cross runway 14 and soon see Moses and a marshaller guiding me between a King Air and an ATR72 almost under their wings. I shutdown the engines and we move the plane into its final parking spot by hand.



Right Base for Runway 07 at Nairobi Wilson Airport

Moses tells me that Total also have AVGAS so we jump into his car and proceed to

their yard. On the way I find out more about Moses he is head of security at the airport but also has a sideline in handling – we agree a deal and he's happy to help me. We arrive at Total which is close to the threshold of Runway 07 on the other side of the airport. They are happy to assist and I calculate how much fuel I need at US\$2.49 per litre. I need \$700 so we go back to plane to get the cash and eventually return to pay them. They have a machine to verify the banknotes, luckily the ones I have are new and except to two \$20 bills are OK and I replace them with notes that pass the test. We then head back to the plane and await the bowser which arrives in due course and we top off the tanks. While we a refuelling Moses takes my passport and arranges my customs clearance. Finally after covering and securing the aircraft we walk through the security gate and Moses sorts a taxi to take me to the Ole-Sereni hotel which is just on the other side of the airport looking out onto the National Park.



The ill-fated LET410FG

I pay Moses \$200 for his help with a promise of a further \$200 when I return and the plane and fuel are all OK. He is happy with the arrangement and we agree the plan for Saturday's departure. I check in at the hotel which is excellent and very soon I'm showered and in the bar overlooking the park with a large cold bottle of Tusker Beer which is quickly followed by another. Back to the room for a nap and then down to dinner on the hotel terrace for a Chicken Teriyaki with Won Ton Soup and a glass of wine. After the beverages a good nights sleep was not a problem. I awake refreshed at 9:00 am and go down to breakfast where I am sitting opposite some pilots discussing various aviation things. I decide to ask their advice about Wilson Airport etc. and very quickly they invite me to join them. Csaba (CL) and Jorge are in Kenya to pick up a Swaziland (3D) LET410FG and ferry it via Cape Verde Islands to Buenos Aires for a parachute club. It's quite an adventure and Csaba who is a Hungarian American has been in Nairobi for 5 weeks trying to sort everything out. Jorge a Columbian American arrived a week ago. We soon strike up a great friendship and I help Jorge with his Garmin 496 which is playing up. They also have a driver and are very happy for me to use him. Jorge and I eventually head to the airport to check on things and visit the Avionics shop which is working on a panel mounted GPS for their flight.

After a fun afternoon looking at aircraft and meeting various people around the



airfield we head back to the hotel for the obligatory “Sundowner” on the terrace. Csaba is already there. After several hours of pilot chat we order dinner and finally at 0200 when the bar staff are closing up around us we shuffle off to bed. Csaba has flown everything from F4 Phantoms in Vietnam to MIG’s in Serbia and Hungary and 747’s for a living in the USA. He returned to Hungary two years ago from La Jolla in Southern California where he had lived since escaping Communist Hungary at age 15. He is keen Yak 52 Pilot and now having reached 65 does some ferrying flights and was helping out his friend Jorge. Jorge has owned an airline with several MD80’s and now has helicopter support and training businesses in Columbia and Costa Rica. His passion is flying the big Russia helicopters like the MI18-MTB and MI-171.

Next morning we all meet up for breakfast on the terrace. Jorge has decided to head down to Swaziland because the lawyer working on all the paperwork they need for the ferry flight is not progressing as rapidly as required. After breakfast I head back to my room to sort out the final arrangements for my trip to the Masai Mara and organise my hotel in Lokichogio for the following Monday evening. I then meet Jorge and we go with his driver to get money from the bank once that’s done we proceed to the airport to finalise my arrangements for tomorrows departure to Masai Mara and purchase some VFR charts. This completed we go to the East Africa Aeroclub for lunch. The club is a pleasant old colonial style set up and looks over the airfield. It is very reminiscent of the clubhouse back home at White Waltham with many interesting old photographs and flying memorabilia adorning the walls, including the obligatory propellers attached to the roof beams.



East Africa Aero Club terrace



Lunch on the Aero Club terrace

It's Friday evening so we rendezvous in the bar for some drinks followed by dinner. I then get an early night as I have to depart for the airport at 06:15 in the morning for my flight to Kichwa Tembo in Masai Mara. Jorge and his driver will drop me off at Wilson and Jorge will then head to Jomo Kenyatta Airport for a commercial flight to Jo'burg and onto Mbabane in Swaziland.

After breakfast on Saturday morning I check out of the hotel and I am soon at the security gate at Wilson airport. I bid farewell to Jorge and wish him all the best for his upcoming ferry flight to Argentina. I am then met by Moses my handling agent and we are quickly through security and at the plane. Moses has already paid the landing fees and parking all I need to do is file the flight plan for today's flight and Monday's flight on to Lokichogio in Northern Kenya. I fill in the appropriate forms in the Kenya CAA dispatch office and then wait for approval to depart. After several minutes the friendly lady tells me that there is a problem with my clearance to fly in the Nairobi FIR. She then discusses the details with an older gentleman in the office and he is soon on the phone to the main flight centre. After several calls and some problems logging into their computer system the lady tells me that my overflight clearance will only permit me to fly from Nairobi to Lokichogio but she is trying to get hold of the manager of the CAA to get his permission for my detour via Masai Mara. Everyone is very helpful; the lady makes many calls and the older man also tries to persuade someone at the main office to give me approval. After an hour of trying the lady apologises but tells me they cannot get hold of the manager and no one else can give me the necessary approval.

During the time I have been in the office several flight crews have been in and out to file their flight plans etc. I finally head back to the plane and meet Moses and explain the problem. As I am securing everything again for parking until Monday a couple of Kenyan pilots (Jonathan and Isaacs) come up to me and ask about my plane and trip. Moses explains the problem I have and next thing I know they are offering to drop me off in their Cessna Caravan at Kichwa Tembo. Evidently they are taking several passengers to another lodge about five miles away, they also very kindly offer to pick me up on Monday morning as they will be collected several people in the Masai Mara and returning them to Wilson. Thirty minutes later we are taxiing out in the Caravan and soon on our way across the Rift Valley to Kichwa Tembo which is on its Western flank. The other passengers are a family from Louisiana with their two children and



the lady's parents who are visiting from the USA. They family live in Nairobi and are making their first visit to the Masai Mara. Commercial flying in Kenya seems to be very relaxed and we seem to spend most of our time ridge hopping about 50ft above the ground. We fly over several Masai farms and after about 35 minutes we start our approach to the lodge to drop off the American family.



A Maasai farm

We are soon in the air and now the boys are really flying low. No more than 30 feet off the ground at about 140 knots. This is fun. Jonathan then points out some Giraffes which we quickly dodge around before making a curved approach into Kichwa Tembo airstrip. The Murram surface is good but quite rough, I am somewhat glad that I did not land on it in the Twin Comanche especially as the loose gravel could have damaged the propellers. I thank my pilot friends for the excellent flight and then meet the people from the lodge who have a much needed welcome drink.



The Caravan at Keekorok Airstrip





Flying over Giraffe in the Masai Mara



Turning final for Kichwa Tembo Airstrip

The game drives in Masai Mara are excellent and the Ranger guide Protus is very knowledgeable being from the region. My companions on the drives are a great couple Oscar from Valencia and his wife Asmara from Casablanca. They are on their honeymoon having just come from a few days in Dubai for a couple of nights in the Masai before heading to Tanzania and then onto the Seychelles. Oscar lived in Singapore at the same time as we did so we have much in common and Asmara went to University in Brighton for two years. Oscar has recently set up an agricultural business which exports fruit and vegetables from Morocco to Europe primarily Spain. They plan to live 50% of the time in Morocco and 50% in Spain.



The ridge that the Tiger Moth flies along in the film “Out of Africa”



Bataleur Camp Masai Mara

The animals in Masai Mara are wonderful and we see the big 5 and much more besides. With so much space and a feeling of tranquillity the environment is very different from that I experienced in Sabi-Sabi in Kruger. I would recommend both as each are unique.





Hot Air Balloons taking off at dawn for a flight over Masai Mara



Cheetahs in the Masai Mara

After an excellent weekend with great hospitality and food it's Monday morning and time to head back to Nairobi and onto Lokichogio. At 10:30 AM we say good bye to the staff and head to the airstrip in our Land rover. As promised at 11:00 am the Cessna Caravan arrives and without shutting the engines down I hop on board and we are soon on our way to the North part of the Masai Mara to pick up several groups of people from different airstrips. Once everyone has been collected we make the 35 minute flight back to Nairobi Wilson Airport. As soon as we land I am met by Moses. I once again thank the pilots for their assistance and give them \$50 to have dinner on me. We then walk the 100 metres to my plane. Moses has completed all



the formalities and I have the approved flight plan, Notams Met etc. With the assistance of the ground crew and their supervisor Patrick we move the aircraft to a clear spot on the apron and I perform all the pre-flight checks with great care. The density altitude at just after noon is 9000 feet (the airport elevation is 5540ft OAT 36 Deg C). From the performance calculations I will require a good deal of the available 5200 foot long runway to take off. I will also be well above the single engine maximum altitude of 5500ft so little room for problems or error.

I request start up and I am soon given clearance to taxi the 200 metres to the holding point for runway 14. Power checks are completed and I am then cleared to line up and wait. A Dash lands on the crossing runway 07 as soon as he is out of the way I am cleared for take off. I power up the engines and hold on the brakes for a final check, happy I release the brakes and we accelerate quite rapidly down the runway rotation is at 90MPH indicated airspeed which is actually a ground speed of about 105MPH it definitely feels quicker than normal. Once clean and climbing at 500 ft/min I make a gentle right turn as requested and am then cleared to my cruising level of FL100. As the flight is relatively short I have filed VFR. I am instructed to contact Nairobi Approach but cannot raise them. After several frequency changes given to me by Wilson I finally get in contact with Nairobi Control. I give them my estimates for NAK and LOV VOR's and for Lokichogio. The lady controller then asks me for something but I do not understand her request as she has a quite strong accent. After several further attempts a male voice comes on and I can understand him. Please report your position to us at 13:30 UTC. I respond with WILCO – all understood.



Moses and Patrick at Nairobi Wilson

I am now flying up the Rift Valley, the visibility is quite poor due to haze but I can make out several lakes which appear to be in old calderas. The steep edges of the valley are quite impressive and I can also see Mount Kenya off to my right some 50 miles or so away. The VFR charts I obtained from the flying school make the trip more interesting. I am soon reporting my 13:30 position and I am requested to contact them when I reach Lodwar and if unable to call Lokichogio Tower.



Flying over Lake Bogoria in the Rift Valley, Kenya

At Lodwar; the green of the lower part of the Rift Valley has now been replaced by dry rocks and scrub. I bid farewell to Nairobi Control and call Lokichogio. The controller clears me to enter Danger Zone which runs along the Sudanese boarder, gives me the latest weather and airfield information and asks me to call when ready for descent. About 25 miles from Lokichogio I request descent and I am cleared to join downwind right hand for runway 09. The airfield is only at 2000ft elevation. I am soon on the ground and the fuel man Stephen marshals me to my parking spot next to the terminal building and fuel depot.

Engines shutdown and paperwork completed I say hello to Stephen who goes to get the single 55 gallon drum I will need to refuel. While he's doing this I get out the hand pump, filter and hose and start to assemble them. Very soon we are refuelling the plane and it is completed with about 5 litres left in the barrel which is perfect. Stephen and I disassemble the refuelling set up, clean and restow all the items and cover up the plane for the night. It's very hot and I am soaked in sweat. Stephen then organises the filing of the flight plan for the morning, paying the various fees and the other paperwork which is soon completed and total cost for landing and overnight parking is \$25. I had already prepaid for the fuel. Everyone is very welcoming and they explain that the airfield is very quiet since the UN largely moved into South Sudan following independence. They are primarily supporting two aircraft which work for Medecins Sans Frontieres. With everything completed the driver from the hotel I am staying at arrives in his Toyota Jeep and we head off towards the town. It's very poor with sand for roads and mud huts and the odd basic shop on either side of the street. We stop at one shop and I help load some boxes containing water bottles onto the flatbed. We also give a lift to a young lady who works at the hotel.



Lokichogio Airport

We arrive at the hotel which is a compound with round huts with straw roofs and a large open bar/restaurant with a pool table and TV it's all very lively. I am soon shown to my room (hut) which is clean but somewhat Spartan. A quick shower, cold water only, but somehow very refreshing then I am dressed and back at the bar having my first beer of the evening. It's dark now and several of the guests arrive for a drink/dinner. The clientele are mainly UN people. There's a teacher from the UK and she is discussing with other local UN people how they can improve the training for the teaching assistants. It seems quite a formal meeting. The pool table is fully occupied by the local boys who seem to be having a good time. I say hello to an American lady who I had seen at the airport. I understand that she is a Doctor and has like me an early flight in the morning. I get another beer and then I am asked what I would like to eat. As it turns out there is only one thing on the menu and that's chicken. OK I'll have chicken. Actually it's quite tasty with a spicy sauce with rice and vegetables. I order my third beer and finish my meal. I ask the waiter what time the serve breakfast and he tells me it starts at 05:30AM which is perfect. I look at the weather on my IPAD thanks to the United Nations they have a good internet connection. I even found and booked the hotel through a link on the UN webpage. It seems that Lokichogio is a UN staging post. After reviewing the Met, Notams etc. for tomorrow I turn in for the night. The bed has a Mosquito net and a spray can attached to the wall which I activate. There is no air-conditioning but the fans seem to do the job. Tomorrow I'll be leaving Kenya and heading to Sudan and into the Arab part of Africa.





The Cabin at the 748 Hotel - Lokichogio Camp

## From Kenya to White Waltham 20<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> March 2012:

Awaking before dawn in my mud hut in Lokichogio I dive in the cold shower and I am soon dressed and heading for breakfast which is in an open sided hut and consists of toast jam and coffee. The lady doctor who I saw at the airport comes to breakfast just after me and I wish her good morning. I pay the bill which includes dinner, drinks, transportation and the room and round it up to \$50 including a tip. I get my bags from the room and at 06:00 head to the airport and as we pass through the town it is beginning to stir as dawn breaks. At the airport I am waved through the security hut and walk to the plane. The support team for the Medecins Sans Frontieres Caravan are at work and a Russia Cargo aircraft has just started its engines and is taxiing down the runway for take off. Quite a bit more activity than I had been led to expect. I pre-flight the plane and load the flight plan into the Garmin database and check it against my PLOG and the airways chart for correctness. You don't want to be off course in Sudan as they will shoot you down with a missile or something similar. And I have to fly at or above FL120 because of potential targeting from the ground – not a particularly comforting thought.



Medecins Sans Frontieres Caravan

I am soon ready to go and call the Tower on my handheld radio for start and taxi which is given immediately. I proceed to the edge of the apron for power checks and once complete I am given the latest weather and cleared for back track down the runway. Take off has to be towards the East and I must fly about 70 miles in Easterly direction before joining the airway and flying North because of the military area on the border with Sudan. As I back track down the runway the Tower gives me my clearance which is climb on track ANTAX (which is in an ESE direction) and when passing FL070 to contact Nairobi Control on 121.30. He also gives me a squawk. Once I have turned around at the end of the runway I am cleared for take off and soon on my way into the clear morning sky. Loki tower confirms my take off time as 04:05 UTC. I climbing directly into the sun so I can't see too much but very soon I am passing FL070 and bid Loki goodbye and contact Nairobi Control who clear me to my final level FL120 and ask me to contact Addis Control on reaching the FIR boundary. Although I am actually entering Sudanese airspace this part of airway A727 is under the control of Addis Center. I put on my oxygen and set the controller

to auto-regulate above FL100. After 40 minutes I reach the FIR boundary. I call Addis and get a quick response and pass the usual estimates and am asked to report AMATO and maintain FL120. There is quite a lot of communications on the frequency but its mostly high level jet traffic on its way to Nairobi and elsewhere further South from Europe.



Pre-flight checks at Lokichogio



Back tracking down Runway 09 at Lokichogio

My ground speed is around 135kts as I am experiencing a 15kt headwind as I fly over the Ethiopian highlands. About 80 miles before I reach the reporting point Adono Addis asks me for my latest estimate for Khartoum which is now 20 minutes later than I had originally calculated at 09:40 due to the stronger than predicted headwinds.



A little later Addis tells me that Khartoum airport is closing between 09:00 and 13:00 UTC and had I not read the NOTAMS. I respond that I have the NOTAMS given to me in Lokichogio and there is nothing about Khartoum closing today. After a further wait Addis calls me back and tells me that Khartoum cannot accept me until after 13:00 which is in about 6 hours time and what do I plan to do?! I tell him to standby. I weigh up my options: I can proceed to Dongola which is my Alternate but they may not have fuel and it would be very tight to return to Khartoum after getting there. I have landing permission in Sudan but not in Ethiopia and I doubt if Addis has AVGAS anyway. Looking at the airfields in Sudan I have two viable options: Malakal which is 136 Nm to the West of my track and 364 Nm from Khartoum and El Obeid which is 366 Nm away and a further 201 Nm from Khartoum. I get out the plates for both options and they are both suitable airports. I elect for Malakal as the nearest to my planned route and the shortest overall distance to Khartoum. I contact Addis and explain I plan to divert to Malakal which they relay to Khartoum.

I am now approaching the AVONO intersection and the airway runs straight from AVONO to Malakal so I reprogram the Garmin and on reaching AVONO set course for Malakal. I bid farewell to Addis and contact Malakal Information they pass me their weather which is hot 43 Deg C and quite windy 330 with 17 kts gusting 28 kts they are using runway 04. They ask me to report at 50 Nm which I do and they then ask me to report when ready for descent. At about 40 miles I start my descent and they ask me to report downwind right hand for runway 04. As I get closer the visibility is quite good and I can see the airfield which is right next to the White Nile. I report downwind and turn base leg and set up my final approach over the Nile to land. It's quite turbulent with the gusting wind. The airfield is at 1290ft elevation and the runway is 6562 feet in length. I touchdown smoothly and keep the aircraft straight in the gusty conditions but as I lose rudder authority at about 40 kts I get caught by a strong gust and I touch the brakes and use the nose wheel to keep on the centreline of the runway as there is quite a bit of rubble at the edges of the runway even though it's reasonably wide.

I must have hit the brakes rather too hard because as I finally slow down for the runway exit on my right to the apron I realise I have a flat tyre. Fortunately I am able to clear the runway and move to a suitable parking place on the very wide apron. I shutdown the engines and complete my paperwork then get out to have a look at the tyre. It is completely flat. Very quickly about 15 people show up in a pickup and by foot and I explain I have a flat tyre and need a jack as I have a spare tyre and inner tube. Almost immediately a man appears with a truck jack and some breeze blocks. He speaks good English and I show him the jacking point under the wing. We have a discussion about how far I need to jack the plane up and then he slowly starts to organise everything. He seems very knowledgeable and tells me he is a driver and a mechanic, he even makes sure the good wheel is chocked. In a few minutes we have the aircraft jacked up and I have got the tools and spares from the baggage compartment. I show them how to take the wheel off and we soon have it free but the brake pads are still around the disk. After some further discussion someone unscrews the hydraulic line and the wheel is free but hydraulic oil is starting to leak out of the hose which I try to plug with a rubber glove.

The mechanic (Blair) soon has the wheel halves apart and the new tyre and inner tube installed. As we are doing this a South Sudan 737 arrives and I wave at the pilot to be careful with his jet blast as the jack is OK but not fantastic. He is not as careful as I would like and many people grab the wing to stop the jet blast knocking the plane off the jack. The 737 is soon pointing away from us and he shuts the engines down. Blair the mechanic apologises but has to race off to ferry some people from the UN he returns about 20 minutes later. In the meantime I and another helper have got the wheel with the new tyre installed on the axle and are in the process of fitting the brakes. We still need to inflate the tyre which I should have done before fitting it to the axle but I was concerned about the ground clearance. After a little messing

around we get a truck and use its air supply inflate the tyre to the correct pressure. We now need to bleed the brakes. I have a small quantity of the correct hydraulic oil but despite valiant efforts by Blair using a redeployed Oxygen Canular hose to act as a hydraulic line to the bleed valve we are unable to get all the air out of the line.



Final checks to the replacement tyre and wheel

The right brake on the unaffected tyre is fine but the left brake is soft due to the trapped air. I now have two good tyres but only one fully working brake. The team has to race off again to meet another UN flight before they leave I give Blair \$200 and ask him to buy a meal for everyone who helped me. He initially refuses the money but I insist he takes it.



Showing the flat tyre and damaged inner tube to the UN Operations Manager

I decide to repack the plane and prepare the PLOG and program the Garmin for the flight to Khartoum. It is now around 12:00 UTC and I would like to leave in the next 30 minutes. I call the handling agent on my Satphone and give him a revised ETA for Khartoum. I also decide to empty the two jerry cans I have with additional fuel into the tanks just in case. As I am getting ready to leave Blair and the UN WFP (World Food Program) team return with drinks which is most welcome. I also have a chance to thank the operations manager (a very well educated Ugandan) and his assistant for allowing his people to assist me. He is very gracious and says "that's what they are here for". He is also keen to learn to fly and has relatives living in the UK, we exchange e-mail addresses. Without the help of the UN WFP folks I would have been in trouble they were extremely helpful and Blair was an excellent mechanic. After thanking everyone and taking lots of photos I call the tower and request start up and taxi. I had previously asked using my handheld radio if I needed to file a new flight plan but they said that it was not required.



Adding Fuel from the jerry cans before leaving Malakal

Fortunately the gusty conditions that prevailed when I landed have dissipated. I carefully back tracked down 04 and after power checks I am cleared for take off. Climbing out from Malakal I cross the White Nile again and I am soon up at FL100 and on the airway heading northwards to Khartoum. Malakal soon transfer me to Khartoum information but I am unable to contact them. Another UN organisation assists flight UN767 with an American crew relay my estimates to Khartoum and they instructed me to maintain FL100 and report at RABAK. I thanked the UN crew for their assistance. At RABAK I still can't make contact with Khartoum but Sudan Air 311 relays my revised estimates and I am asked to call again at SUVRI. This I do and finally establish two way communications with Khartoum they tell me to expect the ILS for runway 36 and instruct me to proceed direct to LAGRA. They then give me a squawk and ask for my estimate for LAGRA which is at 15:17. The controller passes me the latest weather which includes: visibility 4000 metres in a Sand Storm!! About 30 miles from LAGRA I requested descent, I am initially cleared to FL080 and then down 4000ft on the QNH 1010. An Egypt Air 737 is cleared for the ILS and I am number 2 with a KLM 777 behind me. The sun is starting to go down. I repeat my approach brief and check all the Nav aids one more time I am then cleared for the approach and asked to keep my speed up. This I do and I am soon fully established



on the ILS using the autopilot for a fully coupled approach. I can see the lights of the city as you fly right over it and at about 2.5 miles pick up the runway lights. Just as I land the KLM 777 reports he is at 8 miles.



Blair the mechanic in the pink shirt



Most of the WFP support team that helped me in Malakal

With only one fully functional brake I am careful exiting the runway and used differential power to follow behind the ramp vehicle. Khartoum airport is a very busy place and I am parked next to a monster Russian helicopter. After shutting down the marshaller asks me what time I plan departing in the morning as he is concerned that the helicopter would blow my plane over. Fortunately my departure time is well before that of the helicopter. The handling agent and fuel people are soon at the

plane. And accompanying them is a soldier with a rifle who stands guard. It is now getting dark but I am unable to take any photos due to the presence of the security people, I don't fancy a night in jail. I assemble the fuel pump, filter and hose and we are soon refuelling the plane. With the first barrel empty we have a problem opening the 2<sup>nd</sup> barrel, it appears to be pressurized. I leave the fuel people to sort it out. Eventually it is opened and we completed the refuelling process, I also refill the two Jerry cans with the remaining fuel.

I dismantle the pump system, repack everything and finally secured the plane for the night. A bus picks up the two handling agents and me and takes us to the terminal building which is quite busy. As I am waiting in the flight crew line for immigration I meet ex-White Walthamite Richard Cambell-White who has just flown in from Dubai in a Hawker Jet. We have a chance for a brief chat and I am also introduced to his Captain, they are both very interested in the trip I am making. They are staying at a different hotel so we wish each other well and part company. Due to my delayed arrival it's going to be a very short night. Mohammed drives me via a supermarket where we purchase water and juice and on to the hotel. After making sure I am checked in I wish Mohammed good night and we agree that he will be pick me up at 06:00 – it's now gone 9 PM. I am soon in my room and after a long shower, trying to remove all the oil and dirt from the day's exertions, I decide to skip dinner and settle for a cup of tea, juice and some biscuits while checking the weather, NOTAMS etc. on line. I finally jump into bed and set the alarms on my IPAD, IPHONE and the on the hotel phone for 05:15 local time.

Refreshed from a good nights sleep I check out and stand outside the hotel enjoying the pre-dawn air, a few minutes later Mohammed arrives to pick me up. We have a good chat on the way to the airport and I learn he is a frequent traveller to the UK and will be flying to London in a couple of day's time. We go via their office, which is adjacent to the terminal to collect some paperwork and also visit the, not very impressive, Met and dispatch offices to get the latest weather and Notams. It appears that most of the night shift are asleep on the floor!! After a little wait I am given a briefing folder, they seem to use the same US government (NOAA) web pages that I refer to on my IPAD but at least it is a hard copy. Back to the terminal building we pass through the crew/employees channel and after no less than 6 security scanners for my bags and metal detectors we finally arrive at a departure gate and board a bus to take me to the plane. I do my usual pre-flight checks, load the flight plan into the Garmin and get the weather from the ATIS on my handheld radio. I am handed the bill for landing fees, navigation, transportation and handling charges which comes to US \$650.00 which I pay in cash. I thank Mohammed and his colleague for their assistance and call the tower for start and taxi – they wait by the plane until the engines are both running. At 03:40 UTC (06:40 local) I taxi to holding point D which gives me almost 8000 ft of runway and keeps me well away from the big boys. Power checks completed I receive my clearance "N7EY is cleared to HELX via Flight planned route climb and maintain FL100 on take-off maintain runway heading until 3500ft and contact Khartoum Approach 124.70 Squawk 3676" As I read back my clearance an Emirates Airbus rolls down the runway in front of me and is soon airborne. Khartoum tower confirms read back correct and asks me to line up on runway 36 and wait. After a couple minutes or so for Vortex wake separation I am cleared for take off.

Climbing out maintaining the runway heading I can see the confluence of the White and Blue Nile and track Northwards along the enlarged Nile. On passing 2000 ft I am ask to change frequency to Approach and they request me to proceed direct to GOLPA and climb FL100. I am then asked to track the 010 radial from the KTM VOR they are obviously trying to keep me away from the departing traffic being much slower than the jets they are accustomed to. Twenty minutes after take off I'm levelling off at FL100 and as I am setting up the aircraft for long range cruise Khartoum tells me to proceed directly to Abu Simbel (SML) and report abeam the

Merowe (MRW) VOR. Reporting abeam MRW I am then told to report approaching NUBAR which is the Egyptian FIR Boundary and if no contact to call CAIRO on 124.70. The Nile River is now far off to my West but is still a distinct bright blue line in the haze over the Nubian Desert.



The lake in the desert formed by the dam of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cataract on the Nile at Merowe



Crossing the Nubian Desert in Northern Sudan

After a little over two hours flying I am now approaching the FIR Boundary with Egypt. I sign off with Khartoum and contact Cairo Control who almost immediately asks me to contact Abu Simbel. I am crossing over Lake Nasser and after a few calls



the controller in Abu Simbel finally replies by which time I am turning over his airfield. He asks me to report at 15 miles on the 013 radial from SML which I do shortly thereafter he asks me to contact Aswan Approach. Aswan asks me to maintain FL100 and report at BOVAR and gives me a new squawk. On reaching BOVAR I am transferred to Luxor Approach. I have already got the weather from the ATIS 6000 metres in haze, wind 070 01kts, temp 21 C Dewpoint 0 (it's dry) QNH 1018 but from the digital voice I am not 100% about the runway in use (20 or 02). The controller tells me to expect Radar Vectors for ILS/DME runway 20 and report when ready for descent. I run through my approach brief from the plate and load the procedure, set, identify and recheck all the Nav aids and set the alarms. I am now ready for descent and inform the controller who asks me to descend FL070 and fly heading 020. He then brings me downwind left about 6 miles out from the runway and then further descent to 4000ft. At about 10 miles from the airfield I am asked to fly a heading of 270 and descend to 2300 ft and then to fly heading 240 and report localiser established. Once established I am cleared number 1 for the approach report field in sight. It's quite bumpy but I manage a reasonable job of keeping the needles centred. Final landing checks and the runway is now in view with DME reading 3.5 nm to run. The airport and apron are enormous but I only see one other aircraft which looks like an M-registered Hawker! I taxi behind the follow me vehicle at a reasonable distance and then very gentle move to the parking spot indicated by the marshaller. I am still nervous with only one fully functional brake.

As soon as the engines are stopped I complete the paperwork and the ground crew install the chocks. I open the door and greet the handling agent Allah. We have a discussion about the hydraulic oil for the brake which I asked them to try and source and an engineer from Egypt Air also joins in. Unfortunately his only container with the required fluid is empty!! He can order a new one from Cairo but with a minimum of 20 litres – I only need about 200cL. After much discussion we are joined by two other mechanics on the shuttle bus. I show them the maintenance manual with the brake bleeding procedure but they only seem to want to take issue with the instructions. After going around in circles for about 30 minutes I thank them for their efforts and bid them good bye. While they are still debating the procedure in the manual I observe a MIG-21 being towed across the apron and take a photograph.



MIG 21 Luxor airport

After securing the aircraft the bus takes Allah and me to the terminal building which is large and very modern but empty. After a little while Allah finds an immigration official and we are able to exit the terminal and take the taxi to my hotel. Allah used to be an accountant at the hotel and has secured a good rate. He has also organized a visit to Karnak Temple for the light show in the evening and tomorrow a guide and taxi to visit the Valley of Kings and a few other archaeological sites. After checking in, I proceed to the hotel restaurant for lunch and the obligatory beer which is most welcome. The hotel is on the Eastern bank of Nile and from my balcony I can see across the river to the Valley of the Kings. After lunch I go to my room for a well earned afternoon nap.



Karnak Temple Light show

Just before sunset I head down to the pool bar for an early evening refreshment and watch the sunset across the Nile. It cools down quite rapidly as soon as the sun has set so I nip back up to my room to put on some warmer clothes for the light show. At 7 PM Allah and the taxi driver pick me up. They give me a quick guided tour of the town pointing out the various sites such as the Luxor Temple, Avenue of Sphinxes and then drop me off at Karnak Temple for the light show. It is arranged that the taxi driver will pick me up after the show at 09:30PM. The show is very well done and the temple is extremely large and impressive. Fortunately for me since the revolution in Egypt tourism is down by at least 85% which means that all the tourist sites are quite empty. After the show the taxi picks me up and I am soon transported back to my hotel.

I am up early next morning and after breakfast the taxi with my guide (Salah) picks me up at the hotel. We cross the Nile and follow the road along the West bank to the Valley of Kings. Again no queues, I am given a very comprehensive overview of the various tombs and the history by Salah who is an archaeological graduate. Unfortunately cameras are not allowed in the Valley of Kings but the tombs are very impressive. I am able to visit the tombs of Ramses II, IV and Tutankhamen. Thankfully due to the lack of tourists I can take my time and even find myself alone in one tomb. After the Valley of Kings we go to Hatshepsut to see several tombs constructed for high officials all very interesting and in many ways more revealing about the daily lives of the ancient Egyptians. Following this we go to the impressive temple complex at Medinat Habu stopping for tea in a nearby village.



Painted Columns' at Medinat Hebu



Mohammed my taxi driver



Much to the amusement of everyone some children have got into the local mosque and are broadcasting across the PA system. For me the most impressive thing about all the monuments and tombs is the richness and vibrancy of the painted murals and columns after 3500 years of exposure to the elements.

Returning to the hotel I spend the afternoon down by the pool reading and relaxing and in the evening explore the city centre of Luxor. It's all very pleasant apart from the inevitable hassle from the horse drawn carriage drivers trying to get me to take a ride with them. Back at the hotel I grab a beer in the bar and study the met forecast etc. on my IPAD for the relatively short flight in the morning to El Arish, Sinai on the Mediterranean Sea.



Medinat Hebu Temple complex



Hot Air Balloons over the Nile a dawn – Valley of Kings behind them

Next morning I wake at 06:00 and when I open my curtains I can see several balloons taking off from the West bank. The air is very still and the Nile reflects like a mirror. After breakfast the taxi driver and Allah pick me up and we head to the airport. We quickly pass through security and I am soon at the plane. I need to refuel before departure and the bowser soon arrives. I have to pay in cash but the price per litre is US \$5.293 which is the highest I paid anywhere. I need to get some more money in the terminal building BUT they want to charge me \$30 each way for the bus to travel the 150 metres. I not happy but that's the rules!! I go into the terminal and eventually have to take Egyptian pounds from the cash machine and get them exchanged into US \$. All because the fuel Company will not take Egyptian Pounds! Greenbacks in hand I return to the plane to continue the refuelling process. I uplift 250 litres and handover US\$ 1328 exactly, no tips at these prices. I pre-flight the aircraft and check with Allah that the Flight Plan has been accepted and he says "yes, all good". I then receive the bill for handling which also includes the hotel, guide and all transportation it totals US\$846 AND he needs to charge me another \$60 for the trip to and from the terminal to exchange money. I speak to his boss Mohammed on the phone and ask for a reduction. Eventually they halve the charge but blame Egypt Air as these are their standard charges. To be fair overall the handling service was good. Allah's not the sharpest fellow but friendly and helpful but the Egypt Air charges are definitely excessive.

I pay Allah in cash and thank him for his assistance then call the tower for start and taxi. Engines running I get my clearance but it's not as filed. I ask the controller to repeat the clearance and write it down. I then tell him to standby for taxi while I update the FMS system. I reprogram the Garmin 530 with the new routing which takes me to ASRAB, Hurghada, Sharm El Sheik, TABA and finally El Arish. This routing over Sinai will take me up the Red Sea and vey close to the Israeli border. I check the route one more time and prepare a quick PLOG. The requested level is FL100 with the overall route about 50 Nm shorter than the one I filled so that's OK. After 15 minutes with the engines running I am ready to go. I am cleared to taxi for the holding point runway 02. Power checks completed I'm ready for departure and cleared to line up and take off with a right turn direct to ASRAB on passing 2000 ft on the runway heading.



Hurghada Airport

It's almost 10:30 local time and it's quite warm so the climb to FL100 is done at the

optimum speed for best cooling this takes almost 30 minutes. At FL100 it is +3 Deg C after a few minutes I am told to contact Hurghada. I call several times before getting a response which is "continue as filed and report overhead the HGD VOR". He then changes his mind and asks me to proceed direct to Sharm El Sheik and contact them. Sharm instructs me proceed direct to the SHM VOR and after that to Nuweibaa NDB (NWB), report 15 miles North SHM. There is a lot of traffic routing in and out of Sharm, my TCAS has more targets than I've seen for quite sometime. I hear Easy Jet, Thomson, Virgin and a significant number of German aircraft on the Radio. Despite this I appear to be well away from the traffic and enjoy the views of the Red Sea and St Catherine's Mountain. I am soon 15 miles north and inform Sharm who ask me to contact Taba. I do this and the controller asks me to route direct to the TBA VOR and report with 10 miles to run. I am now running up the Eastern coast of the Sinai Peninsular and in the haze can make out the Saudi coast on the far side of the Red Sea. I soon report at 10 miles to TBA the controller doesn't respond immediately so I try again (I am quite aware that I am in a very sensitive area and make sure my radio calls are clear as I know they are being monitored by the Israeli's and they have one fighter airborne at all times to reduce response times). At 8 miles to TBA I am told to proceed direct to the ARH VOR at El Arish and report when 25 miles from the TBA VOR.



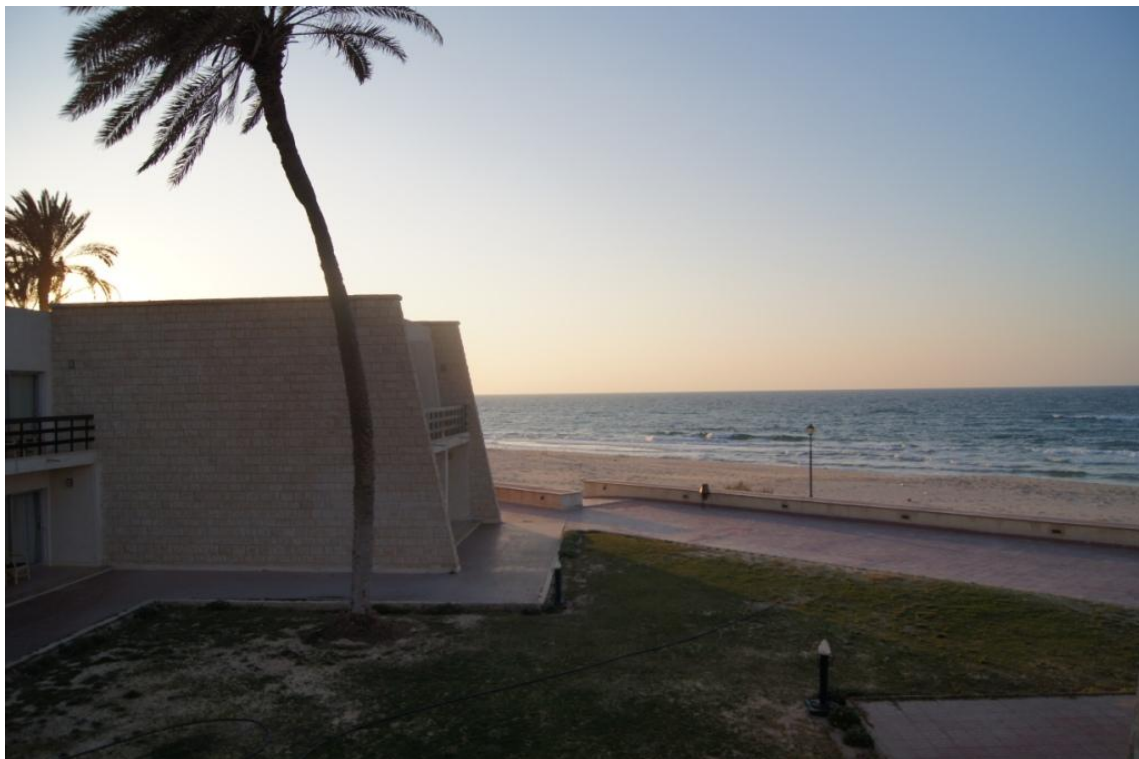
St Catherine's Mountain, Sinai

At 25 miles from TBA I am asked to contact El Arish. El Arish gives me their latest weather they are using runway 34 and I am told to expect the VOR/DME approach. About 30 miles from El Arish I request descent and once I confirmed that I am visual with the surface I am cleared to start down. At 15 miles I can clearly see the airfield and request a straight in visual approach for runway 34. The controller clears me for the Visual approach number 1 report at 8 miles. To ensure I am clear of the terrain I follow the VOR/DME vertical profile which works well. I report 8 miles and fly from the desert over the green oasis which is El Arish. On landing I follow the marshaller to my parking spot on the Apron in front of the terminal. I shutdown the engines and open the door as it's quite warm and say hello to Osman the handling agent. I request that we refuel straightaway to allow an early start in the morning. The fuel is provided by the Egypt Air training school and is dispensed from a fuel pump rather than a bowser. This means calling for the follow me car and taxiing 250 metres to the pump. I could do without all this taxiing with only one fully functioning brake. Once at the pump the tanks are filled, the fuel is the same high price as at Luxor. And after



paying \$800 in cash for 150 litres I prepare to taxi back to my parking place on the apron. I ask the people to assist me in man handling the aircraft away from the pumps as there is a post quite close to the wingtip. I am also concerned because of the brake situation but don't let on about this. With the follow me car ahead I taxi the 250 metres back to my parking spot on the apron. Chocks are installed and I remove my bags from the aircraft. But I can't find the key for the plane. After further searching still no joy. It slowly occurs to me that with all the comings and goings in Luxor I may have inadvertently left it in the door. Up to this point I have been meticulous with a set procedure for the key but this was rumbled by all the hassle with refuelling. The golden rule is: always refuel on arrival. With the exception of Port Elisabeth where the fuel was closed for the day I had stuck to that rule except in Luxor.

Osman calls the guys in Luxor; they belong to the same handling company, to see if they can find the key. I ask him about security at the airport and understand this will not be a problem. We then board a bus for the 60 metre journey to the terminal and after a short wait while the immigration official checks my passport Osman tells me that I have to have an armed guard and police escort to the hotel due to the security situation as we are close to the border with Gaza. We get in the taxi and with the police escort we proceed at speed to the hotel in town. Every few hundred yards there are tanks, soldiers and some anti-aircraft installations dug in beside the road and about every mile in the middle of the road there are large mounds of sand which need to be slowly negotiated like a chicane while a machine gun covers the area. It all looks quite serious but the police just wave to their colleagues at the check-points. I am more concerned about the AK-47 that the policeman has in the front seat going off by accident. After 20 minutes we arrive at the hotel and I check in with a bunch of trainee Egypt Air pilots. Evidently El Arish is home to the pilot training academy. The hotel sits behind the beach facing the Mediterranean Sea. Once I am checked in I go for a wander around town and also look for a cash machine it's very quiet.



Hotel at El Arish

There is not a lot in El Arish and while the beach is very nice it is not looked after. I find the cash machine and get some more money to pay handling etc. I am running out of US \$ with the high fuel prices here in Egypt. I go to the hotel bar (no alcohol) and order a diet coke. I am asked by a local family what I am doing in El Arish and explain. They all speak good English and the mother explains that she was a tour guide in Cairo. They ask my opinion of the revolution, I respond that until we see

who is elected President and how the constitution evolves it's difficult to gauge. They also correct my geography by explaining that I am now in the Middle East not Africa, I am east of the Suez Canal. I hadn't thought of that - good point.

The bar fills with people from several football teams who have been attending a tournament it's all very lively and they have a trophy and pictures are being taken with different groups. It's approaching dinner time so I return to my room to put on some warmer clothes as the temperature is dropping. After more than 4 weeks in sunny Africa I am not used to the cold. The dinner is an excellent buffet spread, freshly cooked I make sure I get my share as the football teams are depleting it at an alarming rate and I haven't eaten anything since breakfast. After dinner I manage to get on the wifi system after some messing around and help from the hotel staff. I do my usual checks for weather, Notams etc. I was also told by Osman that there is no office to provide this information at the airfield. After satisfying myself that everything is OK for my planned trip to Corfu I head to the bar for a Turkish coffee and then to my room for an early night.

I sleep well but will be quite sad to be leaving Africa (Middle East) after what has been a great adventure. I pack my bags and head down to breakfast. As with dinner, breakfast is also good and several people have already arrived even though it's only 6:00 AM. I notice a few people hobbling around no doubt from injuries sustained during the football tournament the previous day. As I am checking out Osman arrives to take me to the airport, no police escort at this time of day!! He informs me that they have found the key in Luxor and will mail it to my home address in the UK (I actually received it just before Easter). We then proceed to the airport and I surreptitiously shoot pictures of the soldiers by the roadside using my Iphone. Osman and the driver are oblivious to this as they are chatting in the front of the taxi. This is working well until they spot the immigration official from the airport by the roadside and stop to give him a lift. I place the phone in my pocket and turn it off.



Military checkpoints in El Arish, Sinai

At the airport we are quickly in the terminal building and while we wait for the immigration official to stamp my passport I pay Osman with a mixture of US \$ and Egyptian £'s which he is OK with. All in the bill comes to US\$ 657 with the usual array of Egypt Air excessive charges. We then take the bus 60 metres to my plane as we are pulling along side the driver says something about a flat tyre! I get off the bus and can see that the tyre on the main gear on the side opposite to the one that blew in Malakal is deflated. What to do? I discuss with Osman and we decide to wait for the

Egypt Air training people to arrive. The bus takes us the 250 metres to their workshop. I examine a tyre on one of their 17 brand new G1000 Skyhawks and it is the same size and type as on my aircraft. Now that's a bit of luck. It's now 7:30 am local time and the training organization starts at 08:00. We wait for them to arrive and pass the time wishing the security team and the other people coming and going good morning. Once the maintenance people have arrived and settled Osman will go and talk to them.

A little after 8 Osman goes to talk to the manager of the maintenance workshop and I have a chat with a few of the instructors at the flying school. They all seem to know I have a flat tyre and we discuss how it could have happened. I don't say too much about the brake situation! A few minutes later Osman returns and introduces me to the manager who is happy to assist me. We go in the workshop and they allow us to borrow their air compressor with its reservoir and hose and pressure gauge. We wheel this across to my plane and in no time have the tyre inflated. However, there is a slow leak and we can hear the sound of air escaping. The maintenance manager comes and has a look along with several of the mechanics after further discussion we all agree that the tyre needs to be looked at and thankfully they are willing to assist. I need to taxi across to their workshop so we call for the follow me car and request permission from the tower. Once I am on the apron in front of the workshop the mechanics come out with their jack – a proper aviation one and after a little adjustment the wheel/tyre are clear of the ground. I have a discussion with the manager about the type of tyre and show him the details in the maintenance manual on my laptop. He also confirms that it's the same type as they use – I am in luck Enshallah. We inspect the tyre but it seems in good shape but the air seems to be escaping from the valve assembly or where the inner tube inflation hose passes through the wheel. We remove the tyre and they are quickly working the problem and I leave them to it. After a while they call me over and it appears that the air is leaking around the valve itself – they suspect damage to the brass thread or seal.



N7EY on the jack while the tyre is repaired

Osman has a discussion with the manager in his office and he is willing to sort everything for \$300. I am happy with this but need to go and get some more money. Osman tells me he needs to check with immigration if I can leave the airport. Fifteen minutes later he returns but I am not allowed to go in to town. I ask Osman if he



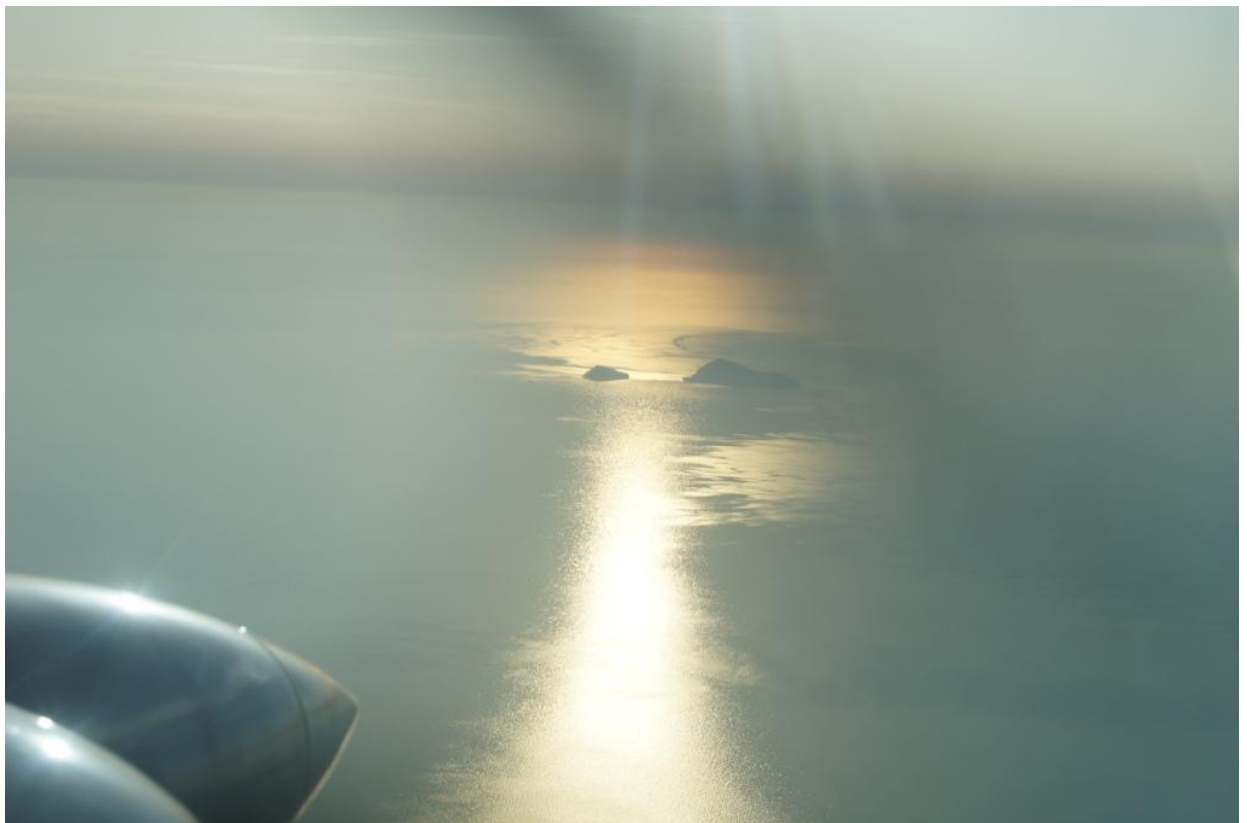
would be willing to go to the cash machine for me and he kindly agrees. I hand him all three of my credit cards and give him the pin numbers and ask him to withdraw EGP 2000. Osman heads off to town and in the meantime we carry on working on the tyre. A new inner tube is installed and the wheel reassembled as they are doing this I observe that next to the bench they have a pump for hydraulic oil. I ask the manager if we could also purge one of the brakes as I think it has some air in the line – he is happy to assist. They are soon replacing the wheel and I have to assist them with the slightly unusual axel arrangement. Like all good mechanics they enjoy a new challenge and one of the younger guys is really very good and taking charge. With the wheel going back together I undo the screws and remove the cover on the nose bay as we need to see the hydraulic reservoir. The avionics guys come out for a look and we are soon discussing inverters and I shown them the panel. The wheel and brakes are now back together and the jack is lowered and removed. All good and they have the hydraulic pump to bleed the brakes. I show them the procedure and after adding some addition hydraulic oil to the pump the brake system is purged of air.

I reinstall the nose bay cover and I am doing this Osman returns with the cash and returns my credit cards. Then Akmal Tammam the CFI of Egyptian Aviation Academy comes over for a chat. I show him the plane and we discuss the trip I am making and he asks if he can show the students around. I am soon conducting a tour and shaking hands with everyone. We then have a photo session with the mechanics and I pay the manager and thank him and the team for their help. We move the plane by hand onto the main apron and request the follow me car. I taxi back to my original parking place. Everything is now working correctly. Osman has been calling Cairo Centre, for some reason the flight plan has not yet been received in the El Arish Control Tower Osman asks me what time I landed the previous day and I tell him 11:15 UTC. It's now 11:10 UTC and Osman tells me that I will have to pay for another 24 hours parking which is \$60!! I also pay him for the taxi to and from town with a tip for his much appreciated assistance. Amazingly at 11:20 the flight plan has finally been received by the control tower and I am ok to depart. At 11:30 UTC I start the engines and get clearance to taxi to the hold of runway 34 and receive my clearance "N7EY is cleared to LGKR via G183 exit PASOS FL100 Squawk 2713". Power checks completed, I am ready to go. I get several calls on the radio from the instructors and Akmal the CFI wishing me all the best for my trip.



The maintenance team and me (yellow jacket)

At 11:37 I take off towards PASOS and the Nicosia FIR boundary. As I'm crossing the Mediterranean coast El Arish asks me to report at 25 miles from the VOR. I am just passing through FL80 when the DME show 25 miles El Arish asks me to contact Cairo on 124.70. After a couple of calls to Cairo they respond and as I am levelling off at FL100 they ask me to contact Nicosia. Nicosia comes back immediately and gives me a new Squawk and tells me to maintain FL100 and report at PASOS. At PASOS I am cleared direct to ABILO which is the Athens FIR boundary maintain FL100. There is not a lot to see in the middle of the Med but I think I can just make out the snow on Troodos mountains in Cyprus. Two hours after take off I am approaching ABILO and Nicosia asks me to contact Athens on 123.725. Athens gives me a new Squawk and tells me I am cleared direct Milos (MIL) direct Tripolis (TRL) maintain FL100. It's 304nm to Milos across the Aegean Sea and as the miles countdown I start seeing many of the Greek Islands, Karpathos, Rhodes, Santorini and far to my south Crete. I am flying directly into the gradually setting sun. I'm asked to change frequency a few times and the controllers ask for a radio check every ½ hour or so. There's a lot of jet traffic on the frequency routing to/from Europe and the Middle East and the occasional island hopper but not much to interfere with my progress. The sky is very clear above me so I work out which flight is which as they route overhead. As I approach Milos I am given the rest of my routing which is Tripolis, Araxos, and finally Kerkira on Corfu. I am now reaching the Peloponnese and it's quite mountainous with a good deal of snow on the peaks, it is also getting dark. I switch on the navigation lights and adjust the panel lighting. On reaching Araxos I can see the lights illuminating the towns on the islands in the Ionian Sea, it's quite picturesque. The last streaks of the setting sun have now disappeared.



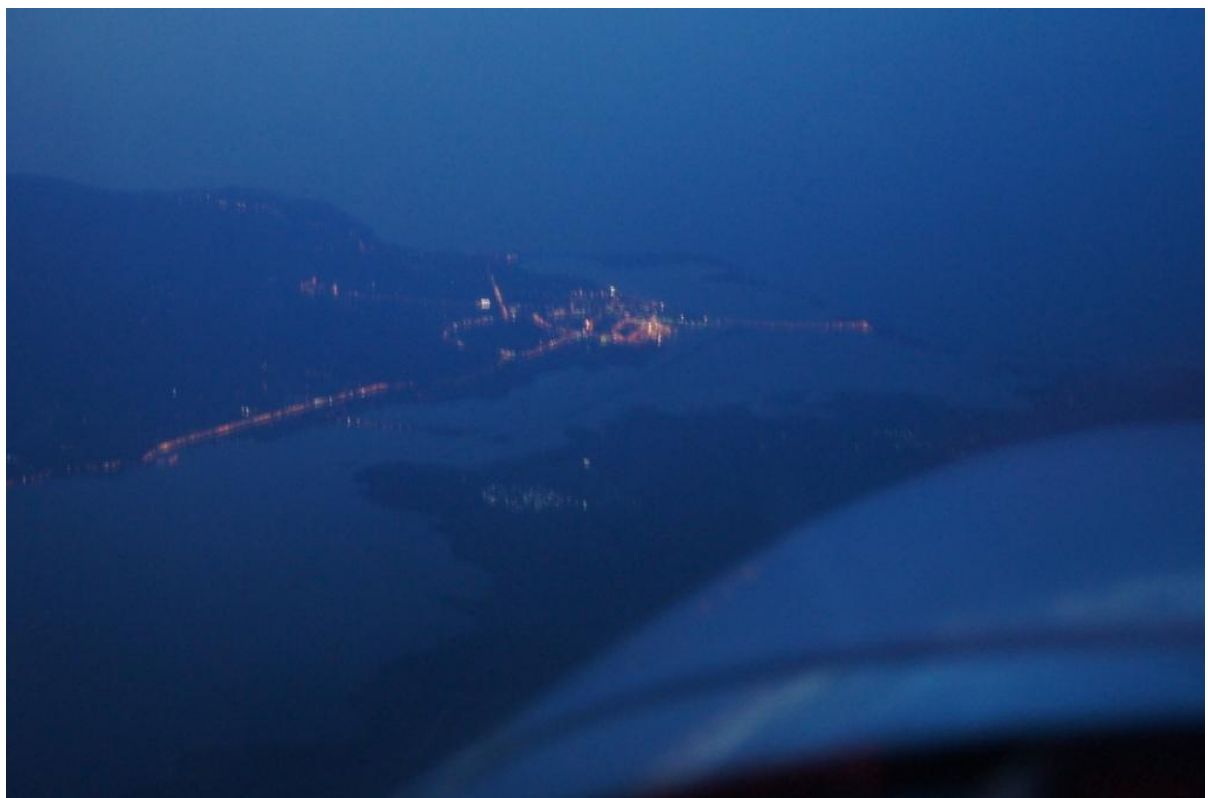
Sunset near Milos, Aegean Sea

I pick up the ATIS from Kerkira (Corfu) airport. Information Romeo time 16:50, wind calm, visibility 10km, Few 1000, Sct 1000, Bkn 2000 Temp 17, Dewpoint 12, QNH 1020, transition level 60, Runway in use 35, expect VOR W approach Rwy 35. I load the approach into the Garmin 530 and set all the Nav aids and brief the plate. Athens asks me to contact Kerkira Approach on 122.35. I am given a new Squawk and told to Ident. The controller confirms I am Radar identified and it will be Radar vectors for VOR W approach. There's a Citation ahead of me and then a Turkish Airlines 737 reports on the frequency he's some way behind me. I am asked for my

heading which is 345. Make your heading 310 and descend FL080. I read back. At 20 miles I'm asked to descend to 4500ft 1020 and to intercept the 163 radial from the GAR VOR. At 15 miles I'm told to descent to 2900ft cleared number 1 for the VOR approach runway 35 report when visual. As I approach 10nm I can see the runway clearly and the lights of the town. At 9 nm I call visual and get cleared to land. I track along the coast and across a bay. Gear Down – Green light, final checks, flaps and a finally a nice gentle touchdown which is quite satisfying after a long day. I carefully exit the runway onto the apron and the follow me car is there to lead me.

After landing checks completed I follow him the short distance to the GA parking, the Citation crew are just disembarking as I am marshalled to park on an adjacent stand. I complete the shutdown checks and stop the engines. The handling agent (Takis) is there and requests permission to install the chocks. I check everything is turned off with my flashlight and then unload my bags and secure the plane for the night. We are soon in the terminal building the Policeman/Customs have a cursory look at my passport – welcome to Corfu. I arrange with Takis to meet him after the Easy Jet flight arrives in the morning. My wife Tracey will be bringing the spare keys for the plane and I'd like to put the cover on as soon as possible. Takis shows me to a taxi and in 5 minutes I am at the Hotel Bella Venezia close to the centre of town. The owner Stelios bids me a warm welcome and takes my bags to my room and shortly thereafter gives me a welcome drink in the bar. Drink finished I head up to the room for shower and change. I then go into town and have a look around I finally end up in Bar Bristol for a few local beers. Feeling weary I walk the short distance to the hotel and in no time I'm sound asleep.

I get up unusually late for my trip and have a leisurely breakfast and order a taxi. Then catch up with some e-mails in my room as I am doing this Takis calls to say the Easyjet flight has landed 15 minutes early. I hurry downstairs, fortunately the taxi driver is early and in 5 minutes I am at the terminal. We pull up just as Tracey exits and I go to meet her. Takis waves at me from inside the terminal. We go to meet him and leave Tracey's bag in the office and then proceed through security and across the apron to the plane.



Lights on an island in the Ionian Sea

With the spare key I soon have the cover and various plugs installed and we head



back to the terminal and then to the hotel. It's a lovely warm day and a special parade is just getting going to commemorate the islands liberation from the Turks. After dropping off Tracey's bags at the hotel we find a small square for a lunchtime drink in a bar while watching the parade.



The parade in Corfu town

The next couple of days are spent exploring Corfu including a tour of the northern part of the island in a rental car. The tourist season has not got going so many places are still closed but we find some good restaurants and bars to enjoy the relaxed ambience and sunshine.

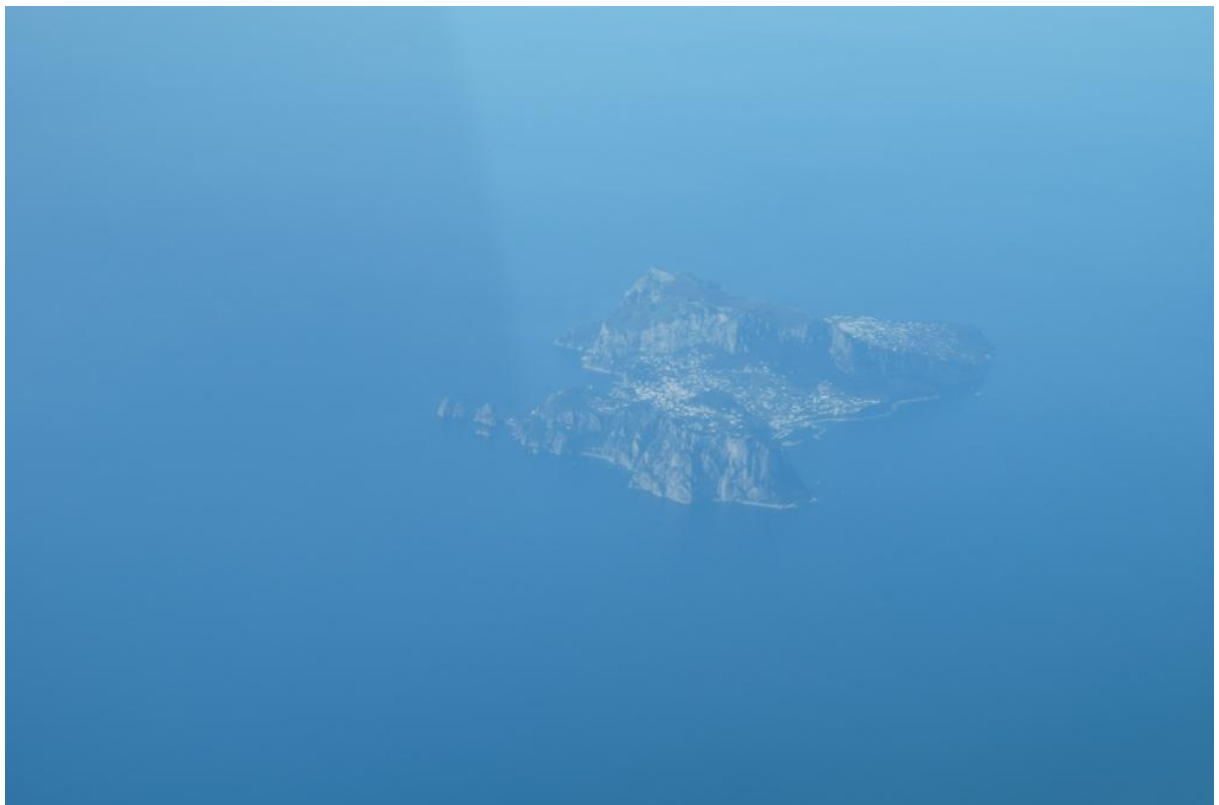
Wednesday morning we are up bright an early I use RocketRoute to file the Flight plan and get the usual weather, Notams etc. for our flight to Cannes-Mandelieu. We check out of the hotel and meet Takis as agreed at 09:00 at the airport. We are soon through security and at the plane and by the time I've removed the main cover, plugs and pitot cover the fuel bowser is alongside. We load 322 litres of AVGAS and then Takis drives me to the fuel company depot to pay the bill by credit card. AVGAS is €2.176 per litre but the VAT in Greece is 23%. If I had an AOC there would be no VAT, the total bill €861.82 the equivalent of £2.22 per litre.

On the way back to the plane Takis hands me a folder with all the NOTAM's Weather etc. all very professional. His handling fee is €100 and the other charges are for parking, communications and the landing fee which is another €70. After Egypt this all seems very modest and good value for money!! I complete the pre-flight checks and then spend about 10 minutes loading and checking the flight plan in the Garmin 530. We secure all the bags say thanks to Takis and Tracey managers to squeeze into the passenger seat without dislodging the bundle of cables for the Satphone and interface, tracker, ipad and garmin 296. I close the door and request start and taxi on my handheld radio. Permission granted I start the engines and once warm perform the power checks on the stand, the main apron is very small and it's quite a back track to the start of runway 35. We then taxi towards the holding point and then given permission to back track. I also receive my clearance which is as filed with a Tiagra 2F SID. We are soon cleared for take off and very quickly we are turning over the bay to the north of Corfu town on track to Brindisi.



Corfu Town on departure

At our cruising level of FL100, Kerkira transfers us to Brindisi Control. They do not pick us up on Radar until we are within 50 nm of the BRD VOR. As we turn over the VOR we are asked to climb to FL110 and to fly LUXIL then Sorrento (SOR). I put on my oxygen just in case. As we pass over the mountains to the east of Salerno the winds are changing very rapidly from a sudden 25kt tail wind to a 10kt head wind and back to a 25kt tail wind amazingly it's relatively smooth flying conditions. There is quite a lot of snow on the mountains. Turning at Sorrento to fly across the bay of Naples I have a great view of the island of Capri on my left side and Vesuvius on my right. We are asked to descend to FL100.



Island of Capri



Vesuvius

We fly up the west coast of Italy being passed from Naples to Rome Control as we turn over Elba we are told to contact Marseille, just as this is happening I get a TCAS alert 400ft above me. A minute or so later a DA42 passes overhead heading northwards. I report the TCAS alert to Rome but they have no knowledge of the aircraft. I contact Marseille but they immediately ask me to call Bastia. Once in contact with them they tell us to route direct to KERIT. On reaching KERIT we are instructed to contact Nice Approach and are given a new Squawk and then given a Radar heading to fly. I pick up the latest Cannes ATIS and Nice informs me to expect a LOC A follow by VPT A to Rwy 17. The latter is a visual manoeuvre with defined waypoints mainly to reduce noise. Nice then starts us on a gradually decent to get us below their approach traffic which are landing on runway 22. It's very busy at Nice and the controller is using all the airspace offshore Nice to provide the required separation for her inbound traffic. 12 miles from Cannes we are at 2000ft and closing on the localiser track. Nice instructs us to contact Cannes Tower. I report visual with the field and am told to fly to LUXUS which is the entry point for the visual manoeuvre. We follow the procedure and after a flight of 4 hours 50 minutes land on runway 17. We go straight to the fuel pumps and after refuelling (£1.785/litre) we are requested to park just below the control tower. Bags unloaded we are soon in the taxi heading to our hotel on the Croisette and then go to the beach for a bottle of our favourite Rose Chateau Minuty.





Landing on Runway 17 at Cannes, France

After an enjoyable two days in Cannes we head to the airport for the return flight to White Waltham. After the usual checks we are soon airborne, the winds up the Rhone Valley are strong as per the forecast and we see up to 48kts of headwind. I am not using the long range cruise setting so our TAS at FL100 is 172kts but we are only seeing an average groundspeed of around 135kts. It's quite a long trip as ATC do not give any shortcuts so we have to fly to Marseille before heading North up the Rhone Valley and finally around the North West of Paris then to Dover. London does manage to shorten our route a little and leave us up at FL100 until we approach Midhurst. A rapid descent over Farnborough and we are soon handed over to White Waltham for the final landing of the trip on Runway 29.

Very generously (thanks Catherine and David) a welcoming party had been arranged for my return and I am soon enjoying the Champagne.

For the statisticians amongst you the total distance travelled on "Robert's African Adventure" was 14,233 Nautical Miles as recorded by the Spidertracker. Total flight time was 104.8 hours. Fuel consumed was 5365 litres or 51.2 litres per hour. Average speed 135.8 knots. 24 landings were made AND 24 takeoffs!!!

Amazingly the only problems were a flat tyre on landing at Malakal and a deflated tyre whilst parked overnight at El Arish. Despite being almost 48 years old N7EY never missed a beat, a true testament to the quality of build and design of the Piper Twin Comanche.

## Details of flights

					NM	Hours	Litres
Date	From	To	ICAO	Country	Distance	Flight Time	Fuel Used
22-Feb	White Waltham	Faro	LPFR	Portugal	1017	7.20	0
23-Feb	Faro	Portamao	LPPM	Portugal	37	0.40	381
23-Feb	Portamao	Gran Canaria	GCLP	Canary Islands	732	5.20	269
24-Feb	Gran Canaria	Dakar	GOOY	Senegal	892	6.80	360
27-Feb	Dakar	Ouagadougou	DFFD	Bukino Faso	957	7.40	359
28-Feb	Ouagadougou	Douala	FKKD	Cameroon	904	7.10	360
29-Feb	Douala	Luanda	FNLU	Angola	827	5.80	211
01-Mar	Luanda	Walvis Bay	FYWB	Namibia	882	6.50	327
02-Mar	Walvis Bay	Cape Town	FACT	South Africa	695	4.70	0
05-Mar	Cape Town	Stellenbosch	FASH	South Africa	13	0.30	212
07-Mar	Stellenbosch	Port Elisabeth	FAPE	South Africa	354	2.40	153
08-Mar	Port Elisabeth	Durban-Virginia	FAVG	South Africa	388	2.80	167
09-Mar	Durban-Virginia	Sabi-Sabi	FASE	South Africa	350	2.60	0
11-Mar	Sabi-Sabi	Polokwane	FAPP	South Africa	133	1.20	213
12-Mar	Polokwane	Lilongwe	FWKI	Malawi	686	4.90	251
14-Mar	Lilongwe	Nairobi Wilson	HKNW	Kenya	776	5.40	281
19-Mar	Nairobi Wilson	Lokichogio	HCLK	Kenya	404	2.80	160
20-Mar	Lokichogio	Malakal	HSSM	South Sudan	534	4.00	0
20-Mar	Malakal	Khartoum	HSSS	Sudan	367	3.00	340
21-Mar	Khartoum	Luxor	HELX	Egypt	624	4.70	250
23-Mar	Luxor	El Arish	HEAR	Egypt	371	3.00	150
24-Mar	El Arish	Corfu	LGKR	Greece	873	6.30	322
27-Mar	Corfu	Cannes	LFMD	France	690	4.70	258
29-Mar	Cannes	White Waltham	EGLM	UK	727	5.60	341
					14233	104.80	5365.00

## Update:

Unfortunately the ferry flight of the LET410FG from Nairobi to Buenos Aires crashed in Equatorial Guinea on a road 6 miles from the Airport. No one was injured or killed. Csaba the Hungarian-American had withdrawn from the trip as he felt the aircraft was not up to his mechanical standards. It just goes to show you can never be too careful in aviation.

## Thanks:

A big thank you to Tom McCormack for lending me his Garmin 296 and for helping me load and prepare the aircraft. Tom was also the first responder for the Spidertracker alerts and had to cancel a couple when I messed up turning the tracker off at the end of the flight. Thanks also to Sam Rutherford at Prepare2Go for helping to organise fuel and handling it some of the difficult places and to Mike at White Rose Aviation for sorting the overflight and landing clearances. Thanks to Simon Abbott for assisting organise the 50 hour check at Stellair in Stellenbosch. Thanks to Mike and Nick Smart at Farley Farm who maintain N7EY and who prepared the aircraft and made up a spares kit for the trip. Thanks to my wife Tracey for giving me the support and time to make the trip. And finally thanks to all the generous, welcoming and friendly people in Africa and elsewhere who assisted me and made this a wonderful adventure.