

TRAVELOGUE

» *Places to Fly and Explore*



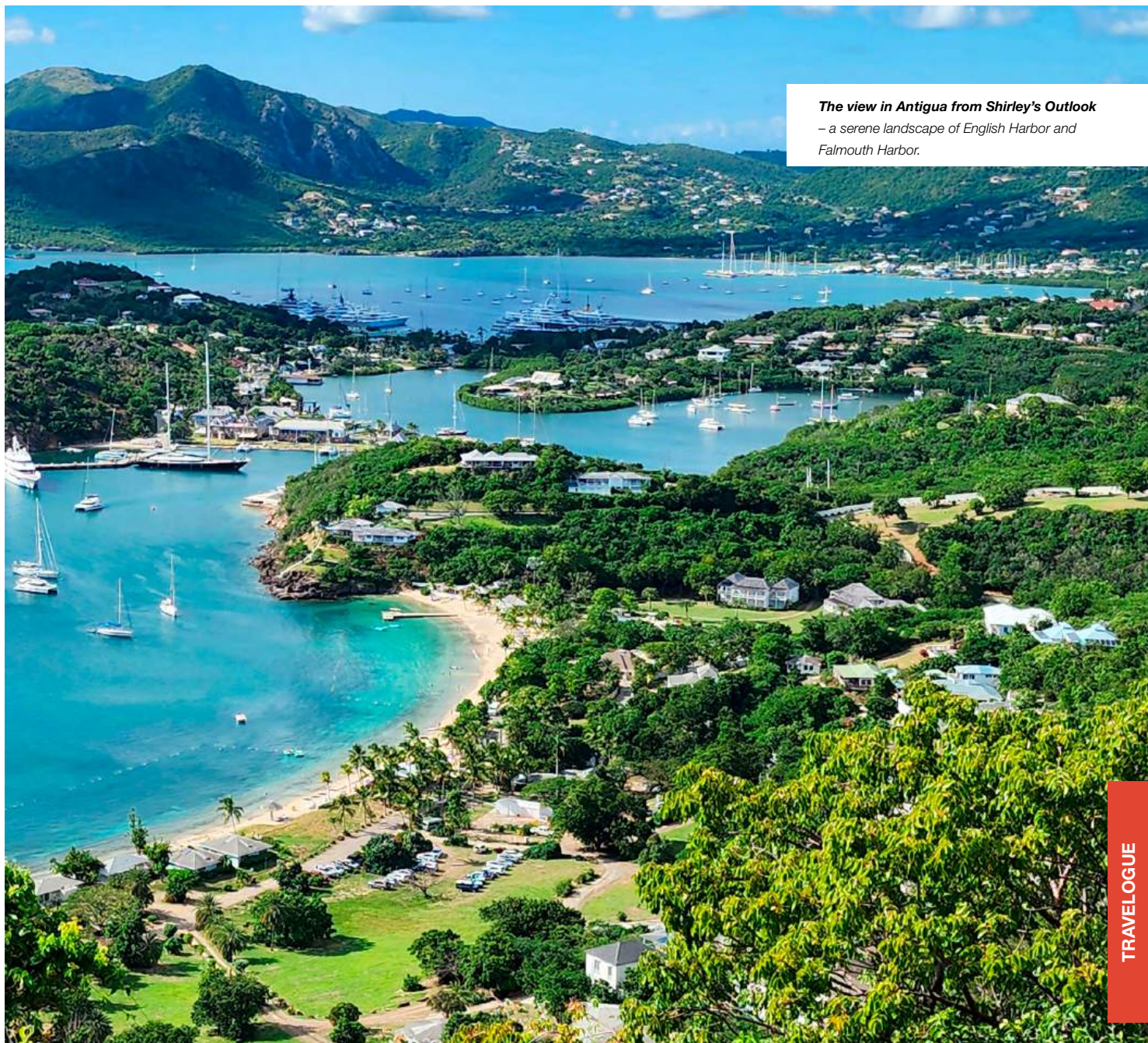
AMIR AND TAMRA HYSTER are active aviation travelers, flying themselves throughout the world and writing about their experiences. The Vision Jet is their fifth Cirrus aircraft (they recently upgraded to their second Vision Jet), a progressive move from their previous SR22N, SR22TN and SR22T that they previously flew on their world adventures. Visit their website for more stories and information: www.VisionJetTravel.com



Traveling the World in a Vision Jet ...

The Caribbean: Puerto Rico, Antigua, Dominica, Martinique and Aruba

by Amir and Tamra Hyster



*The view in Antigua from Shirley's Outlook
– a serene landscape of English Harbor and
Falmouth Harbor.*

We keep getting lured back to the Caribbean and we know why: It is like a treasure hunt! Some islands are a pleasant surprise, and we discover some we won't visit again. For an adventurous pilot, it is a bonus to fly to different countries and territories, all within the range of a Cirrus SR22 or Vision Jet.

After 10 years of flying overseas in the SR22 and the SF50, our life raft needed a repack and recertification service. We chose Winslow to complete this as their service, price and short turnaround time ticked all the boxes. With our life raft and vests on board, we departed Vero Beach, Florida, (KVRB) for Puerto Rico. We were vectored directly over the beach to our destination flight path. We climbed slowly for

the 916 nautical mile (nm) flight and were soon overhead the azure waters of the Bahamas with Cuba and Haiti on our right.

The radio was relatively quiet though the TCAS showed a steady stream of aircraft, most heading to San Juan. We were going to Rafael Hernandez Airport (TJBQ) at Aguadilla on the western side of Puerto Rico. TJBQ has the largest runway in the Caribbean at 11,300 feet and is the southernmost U.S. customs clearance in the Caribbean. It has three huge, arched concrete-reinforced hangars built by the U.S. during World War II to house the military base that was part of the strategic air command. It was an active military facility until 1973. We chose Copeca as our handling agent for their reasonable rates and cheap Jet A.

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We conducted an RNAV approach to Runway 08 for a smooth landing, and within minutes we were in the rental car for our two-hour drive to San Juan, the capital and an ancient city dating back to the 1500s. It was established by the Spanish and is now the oldest city under the U.S. jurisdiction.

Long, narrow streets leading from old city fortifications on the sea to the castle were reminiscent of any medieval European city. The many restaurants, bars and town squares made us feel like we were walking around Europe instead of a U.S. territory.

We hadn't come here for beaches, which were mostly gray sand; we came for cheap fuel and stayed for a few days to look around the island. We trekked to the top of the nature reserve in a forest of bamboo, drove to the opposite side of the island to stay at a resort, then we explored Ponce on the southern coast.

Antigua – V.C. Bird International Airport (TAPA)

On our departure from Puerto Rico, we saw that the island's best beaches were behind the airport, next to the largest golf course.

We overflew the Virgin Islands and St. Kitts and Nevis. The entry into St. John's, Antigua, on the RNAV approach to Runway 07 took us over the island with spectacular views. To our left were Five Island Harbor, Heritage Quay, Runaway Bay and Fort James Beach; to our right were Hermitage Bay and Jolly Harbor, full of white beach bays, mega yachts and cruise ships.

On long final we were followed by a French military CASA 212, which landed and parked next to us. After military personnel debarked, the female captain approached us and asked to see the Vision Jet. In return, she took us to see the CASA 212 that had flown in from Martinique for military exercises with the Antiguan army.

Express Handlers greeted us and said of our resort choice, "It is where all the celebrities go!"



➤ **Customs clearance in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico**, is generally similar to other U.S. locations since it follows the same federal regulations set by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).



➤ **Amir** with the CASA 212 pilot.

➤ **Landing in St. John's** – the 10,500-foot runway can accommodate large international flights.



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⏮ *The turtle hatchlings make their way to the ocean.*

Hodges Bay Resort and Spa offers full-size luxury apartments on a private beach with its own island just offshore. Sectioned-off areas of the beach protected sea turtle nesting; some hatched during our stay and we watched more than 130 baby hawksbill turtles emerge. The sand came alive with wriggling, paddling, tiny, fresh baby turtles. An on-site conservationist picked them up, counted them and released them close to the water so they could continue waddling their way. The females of this nest will return here to lay their own eggs when they mature at 25 to 35 years of age. The initial waddle to the water sets in their brains a permanent “GPS” for their return, if they survive.

Though the resort was beautiful, we booked a rental car to explore the island. We navigated poor roads to see Shirley’s Outlook, up a high mountain with a spectacular view over the original Nelson Bay Harbor and Dockyards. Captain Lord Horatio Nelson discovered the area in 1784 and used it as a base for the British Royal Navy.

Driving through the local housing areas was quite shocking – there was a clear divide of poverty compared to the tourist and expat communities. This was the section of the island that we flew over on the approach; it never ceases to amaze us that the view from the cockpit conjures up a different perspective than the view from the ground. The capital, St. John’s, has a small section of historical wooden buildings around the cruise ship docks but venture just a few streets past that and the dereliction is hard to comprehend for such a busy port.

Cruise ships dock at St. John’s Harbor
Redcliffe Quay and Heritage Quay terminals.



“We took an unusual path for the three-hour flight from Martinique to Aruba – specifically planned to avoid the flyover in Venezuelan airspace.”



Dominica – Douglas-Charles Airport (TDPD)

We departed for the short flight to Dominica, not to be confused with the Dominican Republic. We flew over the butterfly-shaped island of Guadeloupe to line up for the RNAV approach to Runway 27. Avionics were set up and ready to land from the sea, which was virtually a straight-in approach for Runway 27. There was no ATIS system in TDPD and Amir asked the tower to provide a wind report. The tower answered: “The wind measuring instrument is not functional but by my estimate, it is 12 knots from the east.” He added that he “feels the wind is more like 15 to 20 knots from the east.”

Amir immediately kicked into action and commanded an RNAV approach to Runway 27 and at the minima to circle to land for Runway 09. This airport allowed only two categories on the RNAV Runway 27, A&B planes with a maximum of 135 knots, to use this approach – categories C&D were not allowed to use this approach. There were no approaches to Runway 09, as just to the west of Runway 09 on the threshold is the 4,747-foot volcano Morne Diablotins. On the circle to land from the RNAV Runway 27 to Runway 09 was a warning on the approach plate that stated, “While circling north of the runway on left down-wind RWY09, visual contact with the runway will be obscured by ridgeline, from the point of passing abeam the threshold RWY09 until completing the turn from base to final.” Simply put, when flying there is a mountain between you and the runway, you cannot see the runway, and when you find a hole in the ridge that is when you turn left and “hope” to get to final Runway 09.

With all this in mind we continued heading to Runway 27, disengaged the autopilot and turned right, heading directly to the mountain, reported on downwind and commenced the 180-degree sharp left turn only a few hundred feet from the mountaintops to complete the circle to land. Finishing the turn, we nose-dived down in a rapid descent into the valley. At this point the avionics started to go crazy: “sink rate” warning sounded, then “check runway” – the GPS still thought we would land on Runway 27.

The next warning was “terrain pull up” awareness, and Amir had a great time! At the point of the piano key of Runway 09, we finally leveled out and glided to a smooth touch down into a 26-knot wind right down Runway 09. This was one of the most interesting and fun landings we had ever had.

We backtracked to the terminal and noticed a lot of people taking photos.

The InterContinental Dominica Cabrits Resort & Spa offers a perfect blend of luxury and nature within the Cabrits National Park. Its eco-conscious approach means guests enjoy world-class amenities while being mindful of the pristine environment.



« **A 22-foot spaceman sculpture** by Brendan Murphy has become a standout attraction at the resort.

» **On our way** to visit part of the “Pirates of the Caribbean” movie set.

We checked into the InterContinental Dominica Cabrits Resort & Spa, an amazing property on expansive grounds at the edge of Cabrits National Park and near the Indian River. The beach was black sand and rocky; we didn’t come here for a traditional beach as there are none on this volcanic island. Dominica offered hot springs, a boiling lake, waterfalls, a champagne-bubbling beach (springs under the sea) and the most magnificent jungle we had ever seen! Giant bamboo, elephant ear palms, flowers of every color and hummingbirds fluttering around – it was an underdeveloped paradise. An Indian River boat ride took us to the “Pirates of the Caribbean” movie set and the hut of Calypso, the medicine woman, that Jack Sparrow and other pirates visit in the film.





⌵ Tamra, Amir and Blaze Grubbs

Martinique – Martinique Aimé Césaire International Airport (TFFF)

Leaving Dominica TDPD wasn't as dramatic as the arrival. We were assigned the KAROT1D that led us to the SIDs final point FOF, which is the VOR at Martinique Aimé Césaire International Airport (TFFF). Martinique is a part of the European Union and a quick 72 nm from Dominica. Our handlers, Martinique Jet Aviation, were exceptional. By the time we got our luggage out of the plane, they had finalized our handling including passport control and saw us out of the airport within minutes!

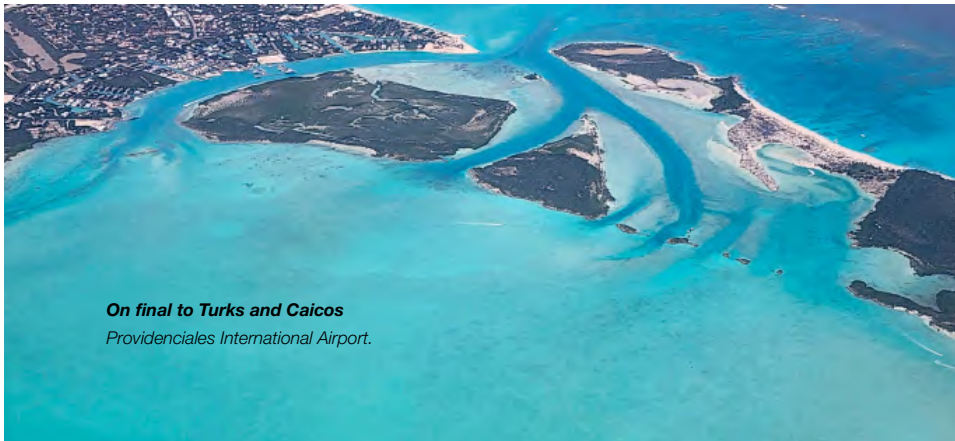
We were advised that the food on this island was outstanding and the many restaurants we tried around the Village Creole didn't disappoint. Martinique is the birthplace of Josephine, the Empress of Napoleon. There is a museum in her family home and estate. Dominica is a rather difficult destination for tourists from the U.S. as the commercial flight connection will take you through several stops before getting there. Europe has direct flights, so the language on the street is French.

Aruba – Queen Beatrix International Airport (TNCA)

We took an unusual path for the three-hour flight from TFFF to Queen Beatrix International Airport (TNCA), specifically planned to avoid the flyover in Venezuelan airspace. The restrictions for N-registered aircraft were removed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) some time ago. Above FL 260 it was not a conflict; however, the general information received from Aruba Civil Aviation Authorities noted that aircraft arriving from Venezuelan airspace would not be allowed to Aruba's FIR. With a notice of this type we figured it was wiser to avoid any problems so our path took us northwards until clear of the area.

Dutch-speaking Aruba has a complicated "independence" as a territory of the Netherlands. The tourist industry is thriving with great beaches and resorts, and the island feels tropical though it has a dry cactus desert in the centre.

Heading back to the U.S., we invited Blaze Grubbs, a top competitor for USA Water Ski and one of the youngest freshly



On final to Turks and Caicos
Providenciales International Airport.



⤴ **Blaze Grubbs** at the Tampa International Airport.



⤴ **As the sole fixed based operator** in Aruba, JET-TNCA provides full FBO services under the ownership of Aruba Airport Authority N.V., one of the leading airports in the Caribbean region.

certified SF50 pilots, to join us for the flights. He caught a commercial night flight from California and joined us the next day for the flight to Providenciales International Airport (MBPV) on Turks and Caicos Islands. Taking off from Runway 11 at Aruba was Blaze's first international crossing flight and his opportunity to gain more experience in the Vision Jet.

The procedures out of Aruba were the same as leaving the Netherlands or Europe, and arrival at Providenciales was the same as arrival in the U.K. That is the marvel of flying the Caribbean – it gives you the experience of flying to many international countries in a small space. Blaze nailed the landing at one of the prettiest airports in the Caribbean; we fueled up at Provo Air FBO and soon were back in the air for the flight to Tampa, Florida (KPTA). ⊕

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