

TRAVELOGUE

» Places to Fly and Explore



Using three weather radar systems to navigate around Florida storms.



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 and Northeastern South America

by Amir and Tamra Hyster

Leaving Panama City, Florida (KECP), and flying directly to Kingston, Jamaica (MKJP), took more preparation than usual as we needed a permit to over-fly Cuba. It was pretty straightforward with an email to Cuban AEROCIVIL, the Cuban government department that issues the permits. We were pleasantly surprised by an immediate response and clear instructions on how to obtain the permit. Payment is handled through Mexican agents of AEROCIVIL and only after the flight is completed. The charges are based on the actual miles you fly within the Cuban airspace.

En route over Florida the convective weather activity spread from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean. Our Vision Jet G2+ has the new Garmin automatic radar that also includes the additional feature of turbulence detection. We monitored the weather cells with all the available weather systems running, SiriusXM weather and FIS-B weather, finding the best option to cross the extreme weather and constantly consider a place to divert. The radio was full of commercial and private flights asking Air Traffic Control (ATC) for deviations and altitude changes. We diverted around a huge cell and crossed the weather inside thick clouds clear of connectivity for at least 30 miles on each side. The automatic radar has proved to be an amazingly accurate weather avoidance tool and a significant improvement on the Garmin radar of the SF50 G2 and earlier models of the G2+. We broke into beautiful blue skies shortly after exiting the IMC. We were handed over to Havana, Cuba ATC who were very friendly and offered us a shortcut that saved us the fuel the Florida weather avoidance burned.

Handling at MKJP was good but expensive. Jamaica is not one of those islands we would return to. The experience out of Kingston was interesting in the sense of understanding how a country with a lot of resources and good economic

The view flying over Cuba.

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^ A typical storefront on the streets of Jamaica.

industries can be classified as a dangerous no-go zone. The advice was not to go out at night, which we followed. Still, we couldn't help our curiosity, so we drove through the streets on our way to the other side of the island. We were promptly stopped by military police with large weapons, asking us what we were doing in the area. We can see why they were concerned; it was a little like a war zone and the strange looks we were getting from locals were a bit disturbing. Little has been done to combat the problems on the street, which is a shame because Jamaica has a lot to offer. The highlight for us was visiting the Blue Mountains to tour the coffee processing, which is mainly exported to Japan. The resorts are thriving and the music of Bob Marley waits out everywhere. For such a small island, there are many other music legends, such as Shaggy and Jimmy Cliff, to name a few, which makes us wonder if there is some island magic at play.

Kingston, Jamaica (MKJP) to St. George, Grenada (TGPY)

We departed Jamaica on the TIBEL3 SID to our next destination, St. George, Grenada (TGPY), a flight of over 1,000 nm. We flew along the coast of Haiti, liaising with Port-au-Prince and then continuing alongside the Dominican Republic with very lush green rainforests. En route, we encountered some headwinds but maintained our fuel consumption as planned. When we were getting closer to TGPY, we were slightly ahead and a few thousand feet below a JetBlue flight. ATC politely requested the JetBlue flight to hold over KAPAM, the initial approach fix (IAF) for the RNAV RWY10 and "follow the Vision Jet." Every time we descended 1,000 feet on arrival and later on the RNAV approach, the JetBlue airliner was cleared to descend 1,000 feet but to continue orbiting within the hold. The Grenada ATC made sure not to put us at risk of their wake turbulence. We organised SVG AIR handlers who had us through customs and in our rental car within 10 minutes after landing.



The beautiful Gran Anse Beach in Grenada was one reason to extend the stay.

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The full moon shining down on the beauty of Grenada.

Spice Island was a part of the British Monarchy which gained the island from the French initially in 1762 and again in 1783. It declared independence in 1976 and we were there for their 50th celebration. It was lovely to see the local communities all taking responsibility for cleaning and painting the national colors on everything from roadsides to tree trunks. Another beautiful island with an interesting history, especially involving the very airport we landed at, Maurice Bishop International – named after a prime minister who was killed in a military coup in 1983. The U.S. intervened and overthrew the coup, returning the island's power back to the Governor General and the Commonwealth. The island's primary university houses many students from all over the world studying medical sciences, and there is a buzz of young students bringing nightlife to this magnificent island. We were told by the sea mariners that it has one of the safest natural harbors in the Caribbean and also to keep the little treasure island a secret and we know why: it is quite possibly one of the best places on this earth that we want to keep coming back to. A few-day stopover turned into a few weeks of lying on the Gran Anse Beach at the Radisson Hotel.

St. George, Grenada (TGPY) to Paramaribo, Suriname (SMJP)

Departing from Grenada toward South America was only after a slight delay in getting our clearance from Trinidad. There is no SID from TGPY but instead we received from ATC a heading flying directly toward Trinidad. The outside temperature at FL250 was a "hot" 10°F and our climb was very slow. Welcome to equator flying. To expedite the climb, Amir increased the angle of the climb, which in turn reduced the airspeed but improved the climb, giving us an indicated airspeed of only 130 knots at FL250 with a slow ground speed of 160 knots. By the time we reached a cruising altitude of 310FLT, we had managed to increase speed – we were already past Trinidad and tracking along the coastline of Venezuela and later along Guyana. On the crossing of Suriname and into the approach there is nothing but jungle below for many miles. As we got closer to SMJP, we were assigned the ILS Y RWY11, which took us above a straight dirt road in the middle of the rainforest and guided us to the hail-lighted threshold.



« *The Neveh Shalom Synagogue and the Keizerstraat Mosque sharing adjacent and some common facilities. Worshipers have lived in a peaceful and friendly relationship over many years in Suriname.*

We stayed in the capital city of Paramaribo at the brand-new, luxurious YOGH Hospitality Hotel. The first thing we did was try a local Dutch-Suriname beer – Parbo. It is one of the best beers we have ever had. The city is full of interesting wooden buildings in a mix of Dutch colonial and European architectural styles, all painted in multiple bright colours.

Many prominent old Dutch buildings are preserved under UNESCO heritage listing, including the Surinamese Museum in Fort Zeelandia. Next to the fort is the old jail that once housed the enslaved people shipped to work in the agricultural fields. The same jail was the execution site of 15 civilians in 1982, drawing condemnation from the Netherlands and States, which suspended aid to the newly independent country of Suriname. One of the main tourist attractions is the Neveh Shalom Synagogue, established in 1665, and the adjacent Keizerstraat Mosque, both magnificent buildings sharing some common facilities and the worshippers have lived in a peaceful and friendly relationship over many years.

The country is the smallest in South America by land size and population, with just over 600,000 people. The official spoken language is Dutch and over 90% of the country is covered by rainforests. Suriname has the world's highest proportion of forest cover and the most diverse population, including Indians and Maroons (descendants of enslaved Africans). There is a lot of immigration from Cuba to Suriname and the average wage is around \$200-\$400 per month.

We visited Jodensavanne, a Jewish plantation community from the 1600s originally from the Netherlands. The community moved to Brazil before being pushed out and settling along the banks of the Suriname River. They established crops of sugar, cocoa and spices and brought enslaved people from Africa to work in the fields, houses and communities. The ruins of the synagogue remain and it is one of the earliest synagogues in the Americas. The grave sites are interesting, with the symbols of each person's role in the Jewish community.

SkyLux arranged a limo for the hour drive to the J.A. Pangel Airport and again escorted us through the airport without needing to attend immigration or customs. They did everything and we went straight to the aircraft.



⤴ *A roadside market in Suriname.*

We parked next to an old Gulfstream 100, formally known as IAI Astra SPX, that had been sitting there for a few years. This wreck of an aircraft had a bit of history. Apparently, it came from Canada to be used for nefarious purposes and was stopped by the authorities; the Astra sits there now as a monument and no one knows why it hasn't been moved.

The handling service at Suriname was SkyLux Services and its young, energetic owner Jo-Ann is quite possibly the fastest and best we have encountered. We landed at the same time as a KLM 777 full of Dutch tourists, yet we just walked straight through the terminal and out of the airport in less than three minutes. We never saw any government officials; we just handed our passports to a SkyLux representative and walked out. Within minutes, they met us outside the terminal and returned the passports saying, "Welcome to Suriname!" with a big smile.

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Paramaribo, Suriname (SMJP) to Canouan Island (TVSC)

After takeoff, we turned left, heading to north of Guyana. In previous months, we worked hard to get all the clearances and permits to fly to Guyana but decided not to go to that country as the process of getting the approvals and permits was bizarre. For example, they refused to give us the airport and navigation costs and just insisted it would be fine. That got us worried and on top of that, Venezuela started threatening to invade Guyana for its newly discovered gas and oil fields; we decided maybe we would visit at another time.

En route to Canouan, we received a NOTAM that part of the runway was closed, leaving 4,400 feet available. We only needed a maximum of 3,200 feet to land and take off, and the extra thrust of the new G2+ made a big difference. We continued, knowing also there was a good alternate airport 10 minutes away.

We tracked directly to DARID initial approach fix (IAF) for RNAV RWY 13 at TVSC Canouan. The tower called the winds at a comfortable 11 knots, however the wind anemometer was not

working and this was just a guesstimate by them. The runway sits between two sizable hills. The approach coming straight from the sea was relatively smooth until those hills start rolling the air around us like a washing machine. The mountain waves and turbulence made us feel like the aircraft didn't want to sink as it was pushed up by the mechanical turbulences and the mountain waves and of course we were able to descend to the very rough runway. Resurfacing work was being done, hence the NOTAM, which restricted the usual larger tourist airplanes from landing. On taxi the wind indicator in the airplane showed a 39-knot wind with a crosswind component of 15 knots. We later found out that many pilots, including the island's residence CJ4 fleet, complained to the tower about underestimating the wind strength and requested urgent action to fix the issue.

The terminal is a thatched roof wooden building; one might think we just landed on a tropical island surrounded by beautiful blue water. Our handler was the same as in Grenada, SVG AIR handling services. The Canouan branch manager, Rania, quickly got us through the airport. There are only a few hotels and car rentals on the island, but Rania found us accommodations on aircrew rates. She also has a side business, Tito's Concierge,

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» *An aerial view at departure highlighting the beauty of Canouan Island.*



with golf carts to rent, organized tours and a yacht charter to visit the islands around St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The island is a gateway for the ultra-rich of the world. Mega-yachts frequently visit, bringing dozens of support staff and filling up the island accommodations, restaurants and bars. Usually, the airport is full of G650s and Global Express aircraft, but due to the runway limitations, they couldn't land so many of the hotels were empty.

Enjoying the aircrew rates we stayed at SOHO Beach House, then moved to Sandy Lane Yacht Club Beach and Marina, a sister property of the famous Sandy Lane Barbados. It was a real luxury treat to stay there. Driving around in a cool petrol motor golf cart/buggy courtesy of Rania, we explored the island and Canouan Estate Golf course and Villa

complex, which has the oldest church in the St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Our path back to the U.S. from Canouan was a fuel stop at Aguadilla, Puerto Rico (TJBQ), for the cheap Jet A. We also cleared U.S. Customs and Border Patrol here, which allowed us to fly as a domestic flight to any destination in the U.S. that our fuel endurance would allow. We chose Fort Lauderdale because the

approach and landing there are spectacular, especially at night and there is cheap fuel. We flew all day, watched the sun set over the Bahamas and floated to the approach over the city lights. On the ILS RWY 10L, ATC announced, "Caution wake turbulence from an airliner," so we immediately changed to do a sidestep and land at 10R. Night landing there is fast-paced and spectacular! ☺

The approach into Canouan straight from the sea and two sizable hills on each side of the runway made for challenging conditions.

