



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



The beautiful coastal sunset in Albania.

Traveling the World in a Vision Jet ...

Discovering Eastern Europe, Part 2

by Amir and Tamra Hyster

Continuing on from our visits to Moldova and Romania, featured in the last issue of COPA Pilot, we headed to Bulgaria to continue our journey through Eastern Europe.

Bucharest, Romania (LRBS) to Sofia, Bulgaria (LBSF)

Before our departure, the highest-ranking immigration officer at the airport asked to see the airplane and wasn't really interested in our passports. Naturally, we agreed. He was astounded and took pictures and videos of the airplane, as it was the first Vision Jet in Romania.

The Baneasa Executive Airport at Bucharest has the most confusing taxiway lane markings of any airport we have seen. Everything is marked on the tarmac in sweeping lines directed to each parking spot. It is virtually impossible to read from the cockpit or to find the directed pathway alpha without a "follow me" car. We departed RWY 25 and were instructed to fly direct ETRIL and then BAILOVO for the initial approach fix (IAF) for

the ILS runway 27 at Sofia, Bulgaria. During COVID the skies were relatively empty, which allowed us to go DIRECT instead of the many convoluted airways in Europe. It was amazing to take off from one country heading to the other and receive landing instructions right after takeoff.

A swift 30-minute flight, only to FLT180, with procedures and checklists completed expeditiously was a much-needed practice for Amir due to our extended stays in each country.

Our handler in Sofia was Alex Ribarov, general manager of BAS-Bulgarian Aviation Services, who poached us on arrival from the hands of the international handling agents as they hadn't shown up to the airplane when we arrived. Competition is fierce at these airports striving to stay alive in the quiet times of COVID. We were glad, as the handling services were second to none and very cheap!



We didn't hire a car in Sofia (which was probably a mistake), but instead enjoyed walking around the city and taking it easy in the vibrant coffee shops. When traveling, we constantly are introduced to new friends and these took us to a traditional Bulgarian restaurant up on the hills overlooking Sofia. We saw Bulgarian cultural dancers including a couple that performed a fire walking ritual ceremony. A mix of the Orthodox and Pagan traditions, it was amazing to watch the couple walking barefoot on burning coal.

Sofia, Bulgaria (LBSF) to Tirana, Albania (LATI)

When going through the security checkpoint at LBSF to leave Sofia, we noticed our computer equipment was missing. We ran back to the taxi drop-off point and luckily, the honest taxi driver was still there, as he noticed the bag and was expecting us to return! That was a very close call and a devastating mistake that hopefully we won't make again. Since then, we have made it a practice to split

up all our electronics into two bags. In the aircraft, we keep a backup memory drive with all of our media and a secondary iPad with all flight planning tools, such as ForeFlight. Our ground services manager Alex gave us priority service and ensured our easy transit through the airport. We always try to make personal contact with each person we encounter on our travels as it assists with ease of transit through complex countries. It is gratifying to connect with people from different countries and all walks of life. The departure from RWY 27 was smooth and easy; Amir kept in practice with some hand flying as we were guided by ATC around the 9,000-foot mountains in perfect weather.

We continued overhead of the Accursed Mountains, also known as the Albanian Alps, then guided by ATC to fly in the beautiful nature valley with mountains at 6,000-8,000 feet on each side to join VOLBI for the only ILS approach not only in Tirana, but the whole of Albania. We climbed to FLT200 as it was a short flight of less than one hour, but very picturesque. Once clear of the mountains, the view opened to the blue waters of the

« *The anti-nuclear bunker domes among the streets of the now up-and-coming Tirana, Albania. This large, former bunker was built for the former dictator and is now a museum which provides the full history of the 50 years when Albania was completely closed to the rest of the world.*

Adriatic Sea and allowed for a smooth, long final over the flat landscape around Tirana.

The handling services met us at the airplane and ordered the bus to take us to the terminal. From there, we did not need any special escort and walked through passport control with a quick stamp and a "Have a nice stay!" The whole process was less than 15 minutes! The airport was busy with the arrival of several charter flights and plenty of people waiting for family members; there were no "COVID restrictions" there.

We reserved a rental car and drove direct to The Albanian Riviera, aka Bregu, the coastline along the north-eastern Ionian Sea. We also visited the districts of Sarandë and stayed in Vlorë at the newly opened Inn Hotel located right on the coast.

Whilst the coast is for swimming and beach time, it is the capital of Tirana that is most interesting, especially walking around and discovering anti-nuclear bunkers. One of the bunkers in Tirana is now the Bunk'Art 2 museum – a large, former Cold War bunker that was built for the former dictator, who died before it was completed. Bunk'Art museum has the full history, photos and news footage on display depicting the 50 years when the country was completely closed to the world. It is hard to believe that Albania was only freed in 1998.

When you emerge from the depths of the bunker to the daylight above and

look around, it is astounding to see how this country has moved on and UP! Now a thriving economy is growing and expanding rapidly. The city is modern and hip with many bars and coffee shops and great restaurants. We were also amazed by their embarrassingly cheap fruits and vegetables with real flavor and color grown from their own protected seeds. The people there lived secluded from the world for so many years they needed to be self-sufficient with everything, which shows in their very high-quality produce.

"... the 50 years when the country was completely closed to the world. It is hard to believe that Albania was only freed in 1998."

Tirana, Albania (LATI) to Lake Balaton, Hungary (LHSM)

Hot weather in both destinations and winds being a concern in Hungary, we made a very early morning start. The bus dropped Amir at the flight ops office and continued on to drop me at the aircraft. I had the airplane ready by the time Amir returned from flight ops. We fueled up and noted that it is one of the cheapest Jet-A locations in the world.

The departure from LATI was on runway 17, heading south on the DIRE1W to DIRE5 which put us in a nice right turn over the Ionian Sea and along the

Adriatic Sea, heading north toward the Montenegro coast and over Croatia. We had flown the SR22 to these countries before and it was nice to see the magnificent Adriatic coastline again. To make the flight more scenic, Italy was just to our left and its unique "boot" shape was easy to see from FL300. We flew overhead Dubrovnic, passing Sarajevo to our right and Zagreb to our

left. Once we entered Serbian airspace, we descended to the Hévíz-Balaton Airport (LHSM) in Hungary. The only ILS is runway 16, and the wind was 15 knots at 90 degrees, a very hot and bumpy landing.

Hévíz-Balaton was a very busy international airport with all the needed services, however as passengers preferred to fly to Budapest Ferenc Liszt

THERMACOOL
Electric Air Conditioning
Cirrus SR20 / SR22

The Benefits Are Clear:

- ❖ Ground pre-cooling with GPU
- ❖ 20° plus temp drop in 5 minutes
- ❖ No take off, landing, or in-flight restrictions
- ❖ No impact on cruising speeds
- ❖ Easy-read digital temp / fan control – set it and forget it
- ❖ Full use of the baggage area
- ❖ Very efficient cooling – only 45 amps
- ❖ Light weight – only 52 lbs. installed
- ❖ Reliable and efficient hermetically-sealed, brushless DC compressor – R134A
- ❖ CG – moves only 2" aft
- ❖ One week installation time
- ❖ FAA STC No. SA04037CH – Kit No. KATS-13-003

KELLY AEROSPACE
Thermal Systems

KELLY AEROSPACE THERMAL SYSTEMS ❖ 440.951.4744
KELLYAEROSPACE.COM
Main Office: 1625 Lost Nation Road, Willoughby, OH 44094

International Airport (LHBP), all the airlines moved there, leaving Hévíz-Balaton for the exclusive use of general aviation. The airport has less than five daily aircraft movements, yet it still has all the infrastructure left for international flights. We handed over our passports to the border control agent and he looked at them and didn't look happy. "One moment, we have a problem," he said, reaching for the phone and had a short conversation with his superior, then explained to us that we can't enter Hungary. Our Australian passport is on their red COVID countries list and it didn't matter that we were not arriving from there. We are not on business and not taking passengers; we don't tick any of their boxes so we can't enter. This is the first time we had encountered this problem throughout all our travels.

The airport and operations managers were very embarrassed by this as they approved our arrival to Hévíz -Balaton. In the email with the approval to arrive in Hungary, we later found that they confused Australia with Austria, a green COVID country.

Feeling guilty about this hiccup, they embarked on a mission to find a solution to the issue and after a bit of working through every possible avenue with customs and border protection, they approached our friends who were waiting outside in the terminal area to see if they can get a business invitation letter for us. No problem, our friends are calling their friends and a few minutes later two very impressive letters on amazingly designed letter-head arrive for the authorities. This granted us entry without any limits.



⤴ **The view** from the Hilton Buda Castle suite of the Parliament House building, in the distance, in Budapest.

⤵ **Dinner with German friends** Karl-Heinz and Agathe who also have a home in Hungary, the reason for our stop in the country. We met the couple while both taking respite in Cyprus during COVID.

Just a few official stamps in the right spots on numerous pieces of paper and everything was fine. The airport staff was exceptionally helpful and went out of their way to accommodate us.

We came to Hungary to meet with our German friends Karl-Heinz and Agathe who live in Germany but also have a

home in Hungary, allowing us to visit an unusual place that we would not have ever thought to visit. We had met them in Cyprus, where they escaped Germany's harsh lockdown.

We rented a car and drove a few hours to Budapest, checking into the Hilton at Buda Castle with the view from our suite

of the magnificent Parliament House building and the historic Fisherman Castle. If it weren't for COVID, we would never have been able to get a suite there. Budapest is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, still rich in culture and arts.



Lake Balaton, Hungary (LHSM) to Bratislava, Slovakia (LZIB)

Into a strong wind, we took off straight to the north along the 48-mile-long Lake Balaton, we had a very short flight to Bratislava, Slovakia. Checklists and processes were completed quickly and at a lower altitude of 13,000 feet. Sitting between two layers of clouds is a little uncomfortable as the forecast was for moderate icing however, we didn't notice any on the wings so we remained at that altitude. The clouds soon cleared to smooth conditions. The ground in clear sight was pretty, flat agricultural fields. There was little time to marvel at the views as we approached Stefanik Airport Bratislava (LZIB).

We were booked in the Hilton hotel, but our friendly taxi driver recommended that we stay right in the center of the city near the Opera historical building. He

⤴ Bratislava, Slovakia street art of a workman peeking out from a maintenance hole.

⤵ The jet parked at Aero Poznan, a Cirrus Training Center. Amir renewed his SF50 type rating there and was given additional training for the long crossing over Russia.



showed us both hotels and we picked the near-empty Radisson Blu. They treated us to the presidential suite with views of the Opera and a fantastic breakfast, all at a budget price of 100 Euro! We walked the streets of the city and enjoyed the good restaurants, coffee shops and shisha bars at night, soaking up the European feel of this magnificent low-key city. These short flights to interesting countries wrapped up the European side of our trip and the weather was calling us to start our way back to the United States through the Russian Federation.

Bratislava, Slovakia (LZIB) to Poznan, Poland (EPPO)

We flew to Poznan, Poland, and landed at the magnificent Cirrus center to team up with our Argentinian friends Alex and Martijn whom we met on our South American tour. They were flying

their SR22 around the world and we arranged to meet in Poland and fly leg together through Russia – the Vision Jet and the SR22, finalizing our around-the-world adventures. The Cirrus center there is a modern facility and we were hosted by an amazing staff that made us feel at home. Aero Poznan has the training center for Cirrus, with SR2x and Vision Jet simulators. There Amir conducted his SF50 type rating renewal with Piotr Dlugiewicz in our aircraft in very hot summer conditions with moderate

convective activity. In addition to the regular requirement for the type rating renewal, Piotr knew we were about to cross the largest country on Earth and could encounter all sorts of conditions, so he focused on an additional training regime of emergency procedures in preparation for crossing the entire Russian Federation, which will see us flying the remote Siberia and the wild Far East to get to Anadyr in order to cross the Bering Sea into Alaska in the U.S. ⊕

“ ... we arranged to meet in Poland and fly leg for leg together through Russia – the Vision Jet and the SR22 ... ”

GET Your Airplane Built Into an Custom Desktop Replica

ORDER EASILY
866.580.8727
 direct: +1.602.635.4646

FACTORY DIRECT MODELS . COM

OFFICIAL CIRRUS SUPPLIER

FDM

Give your plane a new life, helping to change lives.

Wings of Hope's Airplane Donation Program

Give your plane a higher purpose by donating it to Wings of Hope. Your plane, even if it is no longer airworthy, can play an essential role in our mission of changing and saving lives through the power of aviation. Our donation process is easy and the tax benefits are significant.

wingsofhope.ngo

Questions? Contact Mike Piccirilli at 314-705-9250 or mike.piccirilli@wingsofhope.ngo.