

TRAVELOGUE

» Places to Fly and Explore

*Flying over Isla Carmen
on the VOR approach into
Loreto.*



Traveling the World in a Vision Jet ... A Trip to Mexico

by Amir and Tamra Hyster



AMIR AND TAMRA HYSTER are active aviation travelers, flying themselves throughout the world and writing about their experiences. The Vision Jet is their fourth Cirrus aircraft, 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

We were informed by other Cirrus Life friends that using both Loreto and Puerto Vallarta Airports as a Port of Entry (PoE) provided for a smooth customs and immigration clearance into Mexico. Learning from their experience, the advice didn't disappoint.

Loreto

Before leaving for Mexico, we received all the necessary permits; the process

was easily done by emailing some basic scanned documents such as passports, certificate of registration, airworthiness certificate and insurance documents to our PoE handlers in Mexico – Loreto Aviation Services.

For this trip, we were going directly from the Cirrus Vision Jet Converge held in Tulsa, Oklahoma (KTUL) to Loreto International Airport (MMLT). Once crossing into Mexico, the Mexican ATC



One of the sites from window shopping in Puerto Vallarta.



directed us to fly overhead the Loreto VOR (LTO). Loreto tower offered us a choice between a visual or VOR approach to runway 34. The VOR approach is much longer but takes you on a spectacular sightseeing route over the intense blue water of the Sea of Cortez and Loreto Bay National Maritime Park, over the Isla del Carmen and a complete 360-degree overhead of Isla Danzante, to line up for a long, low approach to the runway on the sea. The scenery of the islands against the desert of the Baja is unique. Being a long VOR approach and if weather is expected, adequate fuel planning and an alternate airport must be taken into consideration.

We were met at the aircraft by Mr. Horacio, the manager at Loreto Aviation Services, with a cold drink and warm

hospitality. The customs and immigration officers were ready to receive us and asked the FBO staff to remove all the contents of the airplane; they had a quick look inside a few bags then we were good to go. The process took less than 15 minutes and the handling, including a one-year multiple, unlimited entry permit to Mexico, cost US\$300. Quotes from different destinations in Baja California Sur, such as Las Cabos International Airport (MMSD) and La Paz International Airport (MMLP), are much more expensive than Loreto, with fees more than US\$1,000.

The FBO, Loreto Aviation Services, also performs typical FBO services similar to those in the U.S. with full assistance in completing the general declaration and providing hotel accommodations and transportation rates. We stayed at the

new Hotel La Misión Loreto, which was well situated on the coast.

Loreto was the first capital of the Californias, and its historic mission in the town square is well worth a visit. It is a small quaint town with fabulous restaurants. The Baja 1000 race had just been completed, so the town was full of off-road vehicles adding to the regular traffic of tourists enjoying the activities of boating, fishing expeditions, water sports and desert adventures.

Puerto Vallarta

Our next stop was to head south to Puerto Vallarta (MMPR), positioned on the Pacific Ocean side of Mexico. We departed on the LORETO 4A Departure from runway 16. The SID took us south

(continued on page 58)



A panoramic view of the beach and Bay of Bahía de Banderas,
from the hotel room at the Hilton
Vallarta Riviera in Puerto Vallarta.

(continued from page 55)

over the Sea of Cortez with a sharp left turn to fly over the Loreto VOR. However, once we were airborne, ATC instructed us to fly directly to MZT, the Mazatlán VOR, a significant savings of time and fuel. Cruising at FL310 over the Gulf of California and the Baja California Sur is spectacular. On approach to the mountainous MMRP, we were assigned the RNP LNAV for runway 22, with vectors to descend to 5,500 feet by MUVBA, the initial approach Fix (IAF).

Aerotron is the sole FBO at Puerto Vallarta and has in-house customs and immigration facilities. It is one of the busiest we have seen, with big private jets coming to enjoy the resorts. They hold a Cirrus dealership and its owners Guillermo Stein, and Henri and Enrique Tron are *COPA Pilot* magazine enthusiasts welcoming all of the Cirrus Life flyers to come and receive special treatment when you arrive. The FBO operates a

fleet of chauffeured luxury vehicles to transport you to your accommodations in style at a very reasonable price.

We are Hilton reward members and choose this chain all over the world as we know what to expect and receive bonus upgrades as available. At Puerto Vallarta, there are three Hilton hotels to choose from, but only two are worth looking at and we stayed at both. In the trendy area of Punta Mita just north of the main city on a private peninsula, there are the most luxurious hotels in the province with long stretches of beach. It has a very tropical feel with mangroves, alligators and a relatively flat landscape. The weather has dryer, sunny days compared to the Puerto Vallarta Bay area of the city. The new Conrad Hilton is the top of the Hilton luxury hotels, located in beautiful surroundings with excellent restaurants, spacious apartment-type rooms, personal plunge pools and huge

(continued on page 60)



Tamra and Amir at the Teotihuacan Pyramids, located about an hour's drive from Mexico City.

(continued from page 58)

bathrooms. The resort has several large, heated pools, spas and a beach where you can safely walk or swim for miles.

The other choice is the newly renovated Hilton Riviera, an all-inclusive resort on the Bay of Puerto Vallarta. The beach here is like being in lagoon heaven; protected, calm azure blue water, full of swarms of fish and feasting, dive bombing pelicans! We were expecting all-inclusive resort shenanigans with loud music and mass-produced food, but we were pleasantly surprised. The music was a live band playing good music for just a few hours, so we weren't overwhelmed with loud music. It was just

enough good entertainment and plenty of exquisite a-la-cart restaurants to choose from every type of cuisine you desire. We had an amazing room, more like a small apartment, with a personal jacuzzi, ocean views and two personal butlers to assist you with all your needs.

Puerto Vallarta is safe to walk around, mixing with Mexican culture; most bars and restaurants cater to the tourist trade.

Mexico City

The departure out of MAMP on runway 22 is over the bay, gaining some altitude, then turning left to the 10,000-foot Sierra

Madre Mountain range and climbing to FL200 at VOLAT. We were flying at FL310 to Mexico City and landing at Toluca (MMTO), a general aviation airport in the southwest of Mexico City, and flying over MMGL, the airport of Guadalajara, the second biggest city in Mexico. The approach was ILS Z RWY 15, an interesting route through the mountains to final; following a long valley to a runway that has an altitude of 8,463 feet! Once on the ground, we needed directions to navigate the taxiways lined with huge hangars to find our FBO and handling agent, EOLO.

We had never seen such an airport setup, more like a small city of private hangars

full of high-end jets and numerous FBO services to match. Generally, FBOs at MMTO are very expensive. EOLO provided hangar space, cleaning and fuel at a very reasonable rate and the service was first-class.

We were hosted in MMTO and Mexico City by our good friend Isaac, a pilot who owns and flies a beautiful C206 and an Embraer Lineage 1000 that are both hangared at EOLO. He arranged our accommodations at the luxurious St. Regis Mexico City. This newly renovated magnificent hotel is in a very safe area within walking distance of good restaurants, shopping and the historical district.

Mexico City, at an altitude of 7,250 feet, was a must-see for us, as there is a lot of history and cultural significance there. We took things slowly due to the altitude sickness, which is strange given we fly so much, and those flights are usually in a cabin pressure of around 8,000 feet.

The Teotihuacan Pyramids, named by the Aztecs, are just a one-hour drive out of the city. The area of San Juan was the largest city of the Mesoamerican (pre-Columbian Americas dating first to seventh AD). The complex has the Temple of Quetzalcoatl, the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon, and are laid out on geometric and symbolic principles. Paintings and sculptures show the significance of religion and cultural life, linked by an avenue of the Dead. The complex is different from the Mayan sites in the south of Mexico.

We must have a compass for protests and political rallies as we keep getting caught in huge gatherings of people. Our attempt to walk the Alameda Central, the historical side of the City of Mexico, was hindered by the Presidente giving a speech in the main square. All day there were hundreds of thousands of people grouped in their supporting political party banners, chanting their factions and being led into the main square.

It was the largest mass of people we have ever seen, causing a complete city



Aerotron, the FBO in Puerto Vallarta, is a Cirrus Aircraft Dealer and its owners promise special treatment at arrival to all Cirrus pilots.

gridlock. Hundreds of buses delivered the groups, it was very concerning because they had very poor crowd safety measures. Corraling people through small entrances and blocking streets providing little access is a recipe for disaster if there is an incident. We escaped to a local restaurant and watched the chaos from a safe distance.

On our international departure, the flight plans needed to be logged in the tower manually, and the FBO provides this service. There is only one FBO in Toluca with in-house customs facilities; airplanes at all the other FBOs have to taxi to the customs special ramp and park in a designated spot to clear before departure. This annoying process must also be done on all international arrivals; the EOLO FBO provided full assistance.

Filled up with a good belly of cheap fuel, we departed MMTO on the SID OMPER 2A departure RWY15 using the 13,780-foot-long runway that is required due to the high altitude; the cold temperatures helped us achieve a good rate of climb.

The SID minimum, at waypoint TO721, is FL260 (26,000 feet), which is one of the world's highest altitude SID waypoints. Amir has found that the Vision Jet's best performance to achieve this

is maintaining a steady 140-knot climb speed, which provided a sufficient rate of climb. The SID's route took us on an amazing sightseeing tour above the huge metropolis of Mexico City and a slight zigzag through the mountain range.

We returned to the U.S. through our organized port of return, Brownsville, Texas (KBRO).

Our trip to Mexico was short and only touched a few places, but it gave us a good starting point to know that we could certainly go back and explore this wonderful country again, taking in more small towns and villages. The FBO services were better than most of the world, and the flying experience was superb. Mexico is reasonably safe as tourist spots are usually left alone. The general comment we heard was if you stay out of their business, they stay out of yours.

Mexico has so much to be proud of, with an array of big industries. We always think of tequila and mescal. However, the climate is perfect for agriculture; avocado, banana, berries, pineapple, many large farms, and the hospitality and manufacturing industries, all mixed into a rich culture and history. We certainly were surprised and will definitely go back for more. ☺