

## TRAVELOGUE

» *Places to Fly and Explore*

*A view from the Old Cataract Hotel in  
Aswan – the sun setting over the Nile River.* »



**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](http://www.VisionJetTravel.com)

# Traveling the World in a Vision Jet

## ... Continuing on in Egypt

by Amir and Tamra Hyster



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*In the last issue of COPA Pilot, we shared our adventures as we flew to and visited Iceland, Austria, the Netherlands and Greece. We started exploring Egypt along the Red Sea coastline in Hurghada, while driving to Luxor located along the Nile River and visiting some Temples. Next up was Cairo.*

**Flying from Hurghada (HEGN), we chose to fly into the Cairo Sphinx Airport (HESX) anticipating an overfly of the Giza Plateau.** Heading north flying along the Red Sea between Egypt's main coast

and the Sinai Peninsula, visibility at FL240 was good with Sharm El-Sheikh in the distance. We could see some of the best diving spots in the world below us in crystal blue waters, deep blue holes and the surrounding coral reef. As we turned to Cairo our request to fly above the pyramids was granted and ATC vectored us directly to the Giza Plateau and advised us to take our time! The weather had changed to haze and the visibility was poor, still there was no way we would miss the historic opportunity, completing several rotations and capturing







⤴ *Flying over the Giza Plateau allowed us to see the entire complex of pyramids, here you can see the Great Pyramid and the Sphinx.*

*“Although we have seen all the top sites in Egypt before, we visit them each time and discover new things.”*

the entire complex of pyramids in the vast Giza Plateau, even managing to capture the Sphinx. It is rare for private jets to be granted scenic rotational flights over the pyramids as they are below the active ILS for RWY05L and ILS RWY05C of Cairo International Airport (HECA).

Reluctantly, we turned back to the Sphinx International Airport for landing. The airport had historically been a military air base but was renovated and newly opened to civil and commercial flights to capture the tourist market in Egypt.

As this was a domestic flight and the only one for the day at the airport, we were

moved through very quickly to our driver and longtime friend Ahmed, waiting for us at the exit. Cairo is one place in the world that we will not drive ourselves. Amir first met Ahmed 30 years ago and he has been our constant driver, tour guide and friend for over 20 trips to Egypt. Although we have seen all the top sites in Egypt before, we visit them each time and discover new things.

Currently under construction, New Cairo City will replace Cairo in accommodating government offices, industry and residents. Egypt's population is over 100 million, growing at a rate of 2.5 million every year. To assist that growth the government is actively developing initiatives for low- and middle-income home ownership. There is no shortage of land in Egypt, a few hours east of the



Nile there is nothing but flat desert, every now and then a power plant, a petroleum plant, or huge industrial plants – all being accessed by a 14-lane highway just for cars; there is a separate four-lane road for trucks and service vehicles. There is also no shortage of vision, the new infrastructure could support hundreds of manufacturing and industry businesses. With a massive, reliable, hardworking workforce they could easily compete with China or India.

Egypt like all the developing countries of the world has a great division and abject poverty, unfortunately there is rubbish everywhere. What gets built doesn't get

**Tamra and Amir with their longtime friend, >>**  
**Ahmed (middle),** who is their driver when they visit Cairo.



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***“If you ever visit Egypt, a trip inside the pyramids is a must.”***

maintained and what gets broken is never replaced or repaired. There is no rain to wash away the fine layer of dust that coats everything and builds up turning white buildings to beige. It is difficult to

walk on the streets that are full of rubbish.

There are a few areas that live in a bubble of organized modern cleanliness, the most affluent city of Heliopolis, established in 1905, has many palaces. The first Baron Empain Palace built by Belgian industrialist Edouard Empain and Boghos Nubar, son of then Egyptian Prime Minister Nubar Pasha. The current president's Heliopolis

Palace is also there as well as the Cairo International Airport. Cairo is home to interesting and significant architecture;

mansions lining the Nile River are beautiful buildings of mixed cultures, once a grand exotic destination for the elites of the world.

The following are the most significant pyramids (fourth dynasty circa 2500 B.C.):

**The oldest:** Djoser or Step Pyramid on Saqqara area is 4,700 years old and 196 feet high.

**The largest:** The Great Pyramid at 4,500 years old, was originally 480 feet high and is now 450 feet, having lost its coating of Alabaster, removed for other building projects in Cairo like the Muhammed Ali Mosque in the mid-1800s. For almost 3,800 years it was the tallest building in the world with 2.3 million limestone and granite blocks weighing 6 million tons.

**The most colorful:** The Red Pyramid is 4,600 years old with a height of 341 feet. Built with impeccable precision,



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*A close-up of the Sphinx with the Great Pyramid in the background – the largest pyramid at 450 feet.*



the inside chamber tombs have step layered walls that angle up to the ceiling forming a triangle shaped roof in a rectangular chamber of solid 6 x 5-foot, red granite blocks.

**The biggest mistake:** The Bent Pyramid at 4,600 years old is 334 feet high. They started building it with a 54-degree slant, but as it started to collapse midway to completion, the angle was changed to 43 degrees.

In “normal” times it is almost impossible to get inside the pyramids; there are very limited tickets available. COVID allowed us entry to every location we wanted. Amir bravely entered the Great Pyramid through the “Robbers Tunnel,” a narrow tunnel just 2.9 to 3.9 feet tall and 2.8 to 3.5 feet wide. Crawling on his knees for 500 feet descending into the claustrophobic

yet majestic super structure through the Grand Galley that is a truly spectacular example of precision stonemasonry deep in the pyramid, to the Kings chamber containing the single hollowed-out granite sarcophagus. The chamber’s flat ceiling is formed by nine slabs of stone weighing 50 tons each!

Inside the Pyramid of Khafre (the second largest pyramid) are similar access tunnels and granite burial chambers that groups like to visit and meditate over the sarcophagus which is directly in line with the top of the pyramid; the area has spiritual energy and the chamber resonates perfect acoustics. If you ever visit Egypt, a trip inside the pyramids is a must.

Recently opened to the public is The Serapeum of Saqqara, a burial place of sacred bulls thought to be incarnations

of the ancient Egyptian deity Ptah. It was believed that the bulls became immortal after death. The underground tunnels are filled with dozens of huge 50- to 70-ton sarcophagus of red granite; it is a mystery of how they carried them to the site.

In all these visits we had Ahmed’s daughter Doaa guiding us. She was just a young girl the last time we visited and now is a grown woman with her tourism degree. She told us many things we didn’t know and deciphered many symbolic tablets. We are always amazed that each time we visit Cairo, there are new things to learn and still many things we don’t understand.

Our next flight was 390 nm south to Aswan, on the border of Sudan. There was a very heavy fog over all of Cairo and





**A Nubian village in Aswan.** The Nubian people are native to the area with their original line of heritage going back to ancient Egypt civilization.

after a delayed takeoff we could see that the fog was over most of Egypt, a rare moisture in the air of this dry country.

The population of Aswan is 1.5 million, a majority of which are Nubian – ancient native people who lived from north of Sudan to the south of Egypt, their original line of heritage going back to ancient Egyptian civilization. The Nile enters Aswan from Southern Sudan and the two countries share the great 2,000-square-mile Nasser Lake that was formed from the completion of the 1968 “High Dam” project that replaced the original lower dam built in the 1920s. The Aswan Dam is 13,000 feet long, 3,220 feet wide and 364 feet tall. It is the world’s largest embankment dam and the start of the entire water management system for Egypt.

The formation of the Nasser Lake flooded the lands which held many ancient sites

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***"We stayed ... at the majestic Old Cataract Hotel ... where Agatha Christie sipped cocktails and was inspired to write 'Death on the Nile.'"***

of temples, some still sit under the lake. The most important structures, statues and monuments were saved and reconstructed on higher ground such as the Abu Simbel Temple (1265 B.C.). The reconstruction was finished in 1964 and is considered one of the largest major structure relocations ever done.

We stayed in the Agatha Christie Suite at the majestic Old Cataract Hotel, a historical ex-palace of King Fouad, where Agatha Christie sipped cocktails and was inspired to write 'Death on the Nile.' It's positioned on pink granite cliffs overlooking the longest river in the world and the ancient ruins of a 4,500-year-old Nubian village that sits

on an island in the Nile. The atmosphere is magic, with still waters and swaying palm trees in the backdrop of red, dry desert hills. You can almost feel the noble history and connect with the soul of one of the greatest civilizations that once lived there.

Our original flight planning was to continue south and fly to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, then to Djibouti, South Africa, for three days, followed by Zanzibar, Tanzania and Uganda. Clearances and permits had been issued, however at the last minute Djibouti denied permission to stay for three nights, instead issuing a technical stop permit only for fuel. This would mean flying for too many hours over our self-imposed limits and our goal is to always enjoy each place we visit, not to fly like it's a marathon. In addition, the political situation and war in Ethiopia,

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*“... the political situation and war in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan with its heavy usage of surface-to-air missiles added to the challenges.”*

Eritrea and Sudan with its heavy usage of surface-to-air missiles added to the challenges.

As we were checking our options, Cirrus issued a Mandatory Service Bulletin that required an engine inspection within the next five flight hours; we knew it was going to be a challenge getting a service crew to Cairo.

Cirrus service response once again was outstanding, sending a crew of three technicians in a Vision Jet from South Africa to Egypt for this service. They first needed to complete the Service Bulletin on their own SF50! We offered the flight services and handling of our contact at

World Air Operations, who despite the world panic, flight bans and restrictions over the South African COVID-19 variant organized all the flight permits, airport clearances, hangar, workshop space, security access and transport, for both the South African service team and us.

Whilst waiting for the South Africans, we flew from Aswan back to Hurgada to enjoy the Red Sea for a few days then back to Cairo to meet with the mechanics at Cairo International Airport (HECA). We had beautiful flying conditions with amazing visibility and clear air on the flight back to Cairo. We crossed the Red Sea coastline and suddenly lost our navigational GPS due to electronic jamming; our reaction – let’s ask for vectors to the pyramids at the Giza Plateau, again the super professional ATC guided

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*“Impressions of Egypt in a few words: Wow, what a place! Whilst there are massive hurdles to overcome, there is every hope for greatness.”*

us directly to the area. They were very happy to show their greatest treasure, and the entire Plateau was clear and visible from the Saqqara region to the Great Pyramid. Whilst the Vision Jet was busy flying over the pyramids and Sphinx, ATC again cleared all incoming flights to Cairo International Airport from ILS RWY 05L or RWY05C to ILS RWY 05R giving us space to rotate around this wonder of the world. Flying above the pyramids was

one of our fondest aviation memories – pure magic.

Impressions of Egypt in a few words: Wow, what a place! Whilst there are massive hurdles to overcome, there is every hope for greatness. The people are warm and welcoming, inventive and highly driven, fighting for a space to succeed. English is spoken everywhere, the hotels are fantastic, and the resorts are some of the best in the world, with great

diving spots in the Red Sea and top wind kite surfing clubs, excellent food and historical places to visit. A dream flying destination for the SR22 and SF50 with great ATC, good aviation facilities, easy to obtain fuel and lots to see and enjoy. ⊕

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