

Tamra and Amir Hyster

Vision Jet in Egypt

Flying in Egypt is easy



It is a great time to own a Jet! Traveling the world for 2 years in the Vision Jet is progressing along nicely despite the uncertain times of Covid-19. John Lennon sang "Life is what happens while your busy making other plans." The US is the best place in the world to fly but our time there had come to an end or rather our Visa so we left the USA from KLWM in Boston and flew to Iqaluit in far North East Canada our starting point to complete the Arctic crossing over Greenland, landing in Iceland, enjoying a few weeks in a tourist free island, then onto enter Europe through the magnificent town of Bergen Norway.

The Vision Jet again showing outstanding capability and comfort on our clear day crossing the largest ice mass in the Northern Hemisphere. Cruising over Greenland and Kulusuk Island rugged yet pristine ice-filled fjords and glacial bays in summer is truly beautiful.

Flying into Finland, the Vision Jet drew the attention of the local media when we landed in the historical Malmi Airport in Helsinki. We were welcomed by the avid aviation community and media. Malmi airport scheduled to be closed gave the Vision Jet the honor to be the main exhibit front line for the last ever

air-show, attracting over 150,000 visitors and capturing the attention of Sweden and Finland's TV and other media.

We spent months enjoying Europe, the Jet had a spa treatment at the Cirrus Servicing in Groningen Netherland then we continued to travel on to Vienna, Austria, Kelfalonia - Greece being hosted by a good friend Nigel in his majestic Villa Venturi.

As the weather turned into winter we headed south to Rhodes Greece and Cyprus until one by one they all closed due to Covid-19. We made a pact not to ever be in a locked-down situation so we continued to get in our bird and fly free through the wonderful world.

On to Egypt, completely open with no Covid restrictions; flying permits to enter are easy to obtain and a short flying distance from Cyprus; an easy flight in the Vision Jet or the SR22. We flew to the resort city of Hurghada, Egypt (LCLK to HEGN), just 580 nautical mile following along the southern coast line of Cyprus heading SW and climbing to FL310 in an airway that is completely vacant of other aircraft except some military operations in the area. The Turkish military has been conducting training exercises and encroaching very closely to Greece and Cyprus. The radio calls were interesting: "Aircraft from Turkey you are about to enter Greek airspace turn left immediately!".

One of the most promising enterprises in this region is the East Mediterranean Gas Project a joint venture between Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy and Jordan. The Mediterranean basin has vast gas reserves and the project combines a gas production and gas pipeline extending into Europe building partnerships and a good foundation for stability and peace in this region providing a Middle East co-operative.

At point RASDA in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea we turn due South, lining up for entry point to Egypt just overhead Alexandria to cross the Egyptian coast line and follow a path along the great Nile river, over flying the Cairo VOR in low visibility due to haze that only gives us a glimpse every now and then of the vast metropolis of Cairo a city of 10 million people. The entire length of the Nile river bleeds green growth, abundant with fields of rice, cotton and a large variety of agriculture. Egypt is working towards self sufficiency and produces an abundance of food to the population of over 100 million.

With the Red Sea and Suez canal to our left, the landscape gives way to dry red mountainous desert and the subtropical jet stream that we are crossing is giving us a bumpy rocky ride, parallel to the tip of the Sinai coast line we commence our descent approach, flying past the airport, hovering over flat red desert at the same level as the red mountain range on our right and turning a wide left 180 degree out over the Red Sea to head back to line up on the ILS runway 34L into Hurghada.

We float very low over 25 miles of Red Sea shore line crowded with hundreds of massive luxury resorts, amazing water parks and entertainment facilities.



The airport was empty as the tourist flights have stopped and the customs and immigration process was friendly and very smooth thanks to our new friend and handler service; Hanny Soliman from World Air Operations who also organized a doctor that takes our Covid test next to the Vision Jet.

Amir is feeling at home from the first time we opened the aircraft door, having been to Egypt many times and growing up in the Middle East he loves and understands the mentality and the social structure that enables us a smooth friendly transition through this organized confusion.

In Hurghada we tried a few resorts like the Steigenberger Pure Lifestyle, high end style resort on the vibrant Hasheesh area and the Le Maison Bleue an opulent extravagant 10 suites fantasy. They all offer a half or full board options, there are many people here and it is the first time since pre-covid that we have seen hotels and a city with this much activity.

Never are we discouraged by a challenge so we leave the Jet parked at Hurghada airport, rent a car and drive to Luxor the pharaoh's capital and the one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world to visit Karnak Temple, Luxor Temple, the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens, a three hour drive through several checkpoints that you really don't know how you will be received.

It helps in this part of the world to have a little bit of cheeky smarts about you, giving only absolute minimal answers to questions and having a little "baksheesh" (small amount of cash as tip) ready to pay for that pass or imaginary fine by Policeman that can pop up out of nowhere. Most times we are waved through checkpoints with a smile as it is very unusual for tourists (and even more so during Covid) to be driving around Egypt so they generally just don't know what to do with you. Most parts of the country are very safe to traverse through, there is an understanding that every move you make is under surveillance, there are eyes and ears everywhere. It is not uncomfortable and not noticeable to an unsuspecting tourist but this is what makes traveling here very safe. Each time you move through a checkpoint they take your registration and ask your destination, by the time you reach the next checkpoint they already expect you. At some checkpoints they have already alerted the tourist police and will give you a royal escort with lights flaring and sirens blaring, they part the traffic for you to your next destination.

The highway is through the dry red desert mountains, until getting to the basin of the Nile river here the real life of Egypt starts and with that the mass of traffic, not just any traffic this is an interesting mish-mash of; cars, vans, trucks, touk touk, motorcycles, horse or donkey carts, donkey riders and many people walking and weaving their way through all of the chaos.

Driving in Egypt is not for the faint hearted!

There are no rules here, just a unified understanding that you must push your way and not relent to anyone. It is a sign of weakness to relent and the most unexpected foreign couple doing the same type of driving surprises them into submission. Constant horn beeping, which means I'm over-taking you, move over. The people walking in your path don't stop and you know you must weave around them, there is no adherents to lanes or traffic lights or roundabout rules. A red light is just a suggestion but don't stop there because the car behind you will soon start beeping at you to go!

Driving here takes a great amount of situational awareness and at all times the most important driving rule is "expect the unexpected", Amir loves driving like that and is enjoying himself immensely!

In normal times there are plenty of tour buses for day trips from Hurghada to Luxor but it is not possible to see everything Luxor has to offer in one day.

The heat even in the winter months is exhausting so to really enjoy the ancient wonders we spend five days staying at the best hotel in Luxor the Hilton Luxor Resort and Spa, the only hotel actually on the river Nile, just a short walk from Karnak Temple, securely nestled in the heart of the busy City. From here it is possible to book cruises in a Felucca sailboat up and down the Nile, tours to the many sites or sit and relax around the many pools.

We visited the two main temples; Luxor Temple Complex (1400BCE) which



contains four major magnificent temples and the Avenue of Sphinx also known as Luxor Dromos, 1.6 mile line of Sphinx lining a road to Karnak old City.

Karnak Temple dating (1700-2000BCE) is the second most visited site in Egypt. The most famous aspect of Karnak is the Great Hypostyle Hall with its 134 massive columns some reaching 69 feet tall and weighing 70 tons. One of the obelisk in the complex was transported from a location 100 miles away, it is 95 feet tall and weighing 328 tons.

On the western side of the Nile river is the Theban Necropolis burial grounds and the Valley of the Gates of the Kings containing a network of tombs cut into the rock mountains; 63 pharaoh tombs have been excavated, the most known resident was King Tutankhamen tomb, whilst very well known is not as impressive as the other tombs of Rameses's dynasty but a must see as it is the only tomb with his mummy still inside. In ancient times no living person ever resided on the West side of the Nile, as it was reserved only for the dead. Hence the saying when someone dies; "They have gone West".

On the road back to Hurghada in the Qena district, is an unknown gem, the fascinating Dendera Hathor Temple the inner Temple dating between 2030BC and being modified over 2,000 years right through to around 30BC in the Roman period, in our view it is the best Temple in Egypt as it is the most intact of any temple we have seen, with the original patina of the wall carvings and the vibrant colors on the roof still in place, supported by magnificently decorated columns also with their original carving. We were shown down the underground tunnels where the walls show the purpose of the chambers for food storage mostly.

Egypt history always mentions the Upper and Lower Egypt prior to the unification of the lands and the many carvings and hieroglyph give a clear view of the interactions and way of life between the realms. A picture tells a 1000 words and we are grateful for them as otherwise this culture would have been lost. The importance of worship, agriculture, food storage and dedication to the nobility is repetitively shown on every wall.

Hurghada (HEGN) to Cairo Sphinx airport (HESX) 251NM -

We chose the airport Cairo Sphinx (HESX) in anticipation to over fly the Giza Plateau. Heading north flying along the Red Sea between Egypt's main coast and the Sinai peninsula, visibility is good, Sharm El-Sheikh is in the distance and below some the best diving spots in the world in crystal blue waters, deep blue holes and surrounding coral reef. As we turn to Cairo our request to fly above the pyramids is granted and ATC vector us directly to the pyramids, advise us to take our time! The weather has changed to haze and the visibility is now poor, still, there is no way we would miss this historic opportunity, completing several rotations and capturing the entire complex of pyramids in the vast Giza Plateau and even manage 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 turn back to the Sphinx International Airport for landing. This airport was historically just a military airbase but has now been renovated and newly opened to civil and commercial flights to capture the tourist market in Egypt.

As this is a domestic flight we are moved through the empty airport very quickly to our driver and long time friend Ahmed, waiting for us at the exit.

Cairo is one place in the world that we will not drive. Amir first met Ahmed 30 years ago and he has been our constant driver, tour guide and friend for over 20 trips to Egypt and although we have done all the top sites in Egypt before we repeat them each time and discover new things as well as new sites.

Under construction is a New Cairo City that will replace Cairo, 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 drive a few hours East of the Nile and there is nothing but flat desert, every now and then a power plant, a petroleum plant, huge industrial plants. All being accessed by the 14 lane highway, just for cars and there is a separate 4 lane road for trucks and services. Just like the availability of land there is no shortage of vision, the infrastructure happening 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 have a great divide of classes and abstract poverty unfortunately there is rubbish everywhere, what gets built doesn't get maintained and what gets broken doesn't get replaced or repaired.

There is no rain to wash away the fine layer of dust that coats everything and just builds up turning white buildings to beige, it is difficult to walk on the streets that are full of rubbish and animal waste, the street sweepers employed and armed with a straw broom and dust bucket form piles of rubbish around all the obstacles, dedicated and hard working against an impossible task. The households and businesses dump all their rubbish in a pile in one section of the street and if they live along the Nile irrigation channels then it is dumped there, including trucks dropping their loads. Horrifying to watch but once you understand the rubbish system here it starts to make sense. They are dropping the rubbish in one area for others to pick



over re-use, re-purpose and animals to feed from. The remains (mostly plastics) is picked up and removed to landfill.

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 by Boghos Nubar the son of the then Egyptian Prime Minister Nubar Pasha. The current President's Heliopolis Palace is also here and the Cairo International Airport. Cairo is home to interesting and significant architecture, mansions lining the Nile are really beautiful buildings of mixed cultures, once a grand exotic destination for the elites of the world.



Here are the most significant pyramids in a nut shell or Pyramid Trivia on the Giza Plateau (fourth dynasty circa 2500BC).

The oldest:

Dojoser or Step Pyramid on Saqqara area, 4700 years old, 196 feet high

The biggest:

The Great Pyramid at 4500 years old it originally was 480 feet high, now reduced to 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, 2.3 million limestone and granite blocks weighing 6 million tonnes.

The most color:

The Red Pyramid, 4600 years old with a height of 341 feet. Built with impeccable precision 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 ft x 5ft Red granite blocks.

The biggest mistake:

The Bent Pyramid 4600 years old - 334 feet high. They started building with a 54 degree slant but as it started to collapse at mid point 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 second biggest Pyramid of Khafre 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 position has spiritual energy and the chamber resonates perfect acoustics. If in Egypt a visit 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 tonne sarcophagus of Red Granite it is a mystery how they carried them to the site.

In all these trips we have Ahmed's daughter Doaa to guide us, she was just a young girl last time we were here and now a grown woman with her tourism degree she tells us many things we didn't know and deciphers many symbolic tablets. We are always amazed that each time we come here there are new things to learn and still many things we don't understand.

Our next flight is South to Aswan, 390nm on the border of Sudan. There is a very heavy fog over all of Cairo and after a delayed takeoff we can see that the fog is over most of Egypt, rare moisture in the air of this dry country.



Sunset over the Nile

The population of Aswan is 1.5 million, a majority of which are Nubian, an 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 South 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 spanning 13,000 feet long, 3,220 feet wide and 364 feet tall 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 of temples some still sit under the lake. The most important structures, statues and monuments, were saved and reconstructed on higher ground

such as Abu Simbel Temple (1265BC), the reconstruction finished in 1964 is considered one of the biggest major structure relocations ever done.



Felucca sail boat in Aswan

We stay in the Agatha Christie Suite at the majestic Old Cataract Hotel, a historical ex-palace of King Fouad and where Agatha Christie sipped cocktails and was inspired to write *Death on the Nile*.

Positioned on pink granite cliffs over looking 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, still waters and swaying palm trees in

the back drop 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 here.

Our original flight planning was to continue South and fly to Jeddah Saudi Arabia, Djibouti for three days, Zanzibar, Tanzania and Uganda. Clearances and permits had been issued. However Djibouti at the last minute denied the permission to stay for three nights, instead they issued us a Technical Stop permit only for fuel. This would mean flying for too many hours over our self-imposed limits and our goal is always to enjoy each place we visit not to fly like a marathon.

As we were checking our options Cirrus issued a Mandatory Service Bulletin that required an engine inspection within the next 5 hours of flight, as difficult as it would be to get a service crew to Cairo it could have been a disaster.

Cirrus service response once again is outstanding, sending a crew of three technicians in a Vision Jet SF50 from South Africa to Egypt for this service. They first needed to do the Service Bulletin on their own SF50! We offered the flight services and handling of our contact 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 us and the South African team. Whilst waiting for the South Africans we fly from Aswan back to Hurghada, to enjoy the Red Sea, for a few days then fly back to Cairo to meet with the mechanics in Cairo International airport (HECA). We have beautiful flying conditions with amazing visibility and clear air on the flight to Cairo, we crossed the Red Sea coast line suddenly loosing all our navigational GPS due to jamming, our reaction, well let's ask for vectors to the pyramids at the



The Nile view from The Old Cataract

Giza Plateau, again the super professional ATC guided us directly to the Giza Plateau, they are very happy to show their greatest treasure, the entire Plateau was clear and visible! from the Saqqara region to the Great Pyramid.



GPS jamming over Red Sea



Hurghada marina

While we are busy flying overhead the pyramids and Sphinx, ATC again clear all incoming flights to Cairo International Airport from ILS RWY 05L or RWY05C to ILS RWY 05R giving us space rotating around this wonder of the world. Flying above the pyramids was one of the highest aviation points in our memories. Magic.

Impressions of Egypt in a few words would be 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 at the Red Sea and top wind kite surfing clubs, excellent food and historical places to visit. A dream flying destination for SR22 and SF50 with great ATC, good aviation facilities, easy to get fuel and lots to see and enjoy.



Markets in Cairo



Doaa and Tamra in Ahmed's van-(happy tourist police official in the back)

