



Traveling the World in a Vision Jet

... the Journey Continues

by Amir and Tamra Hyster

Traveling the world for two years in the Vision Jet is progressing nicely despite the uncertain times of COVID.

The U.S. was the best place to fly but our time there had come to an end, or rather our visa, so we left the States from Boston, Massachusetts, (KLWM) and flew to Iqaluit in far northeast Canada. It was our starting point to complete an arctic crossing over Greenland, landing in Iceland, enjoying a few weeks on a tourist-free island, then on to Europe through the magnificent town of Bergen, Norway.

The Vision Jet again showed outstanding capability and comfort on a clear day as we crossed the largest ice mass in the Northern Hemisphere. Cruising over the rugged, yet pristine ice-filled fjords and glacial bays of Greenland and Kulusuk Island during the summer is truly beautiful.

“... we headed south in Greece to Rhodes and Cyprus until one-by-one they all closed due to COVID.”

Flying into Finland, the Jet drew the attention of the local media when we landed at the historic Malmi Airport in Helsinki. The airport, scheduled to be closed, gave our Vision Jet the honor to be on the

front line of the main exhibit for their last ever airshow, attracting over 150,000 visitors and capturing the attention of Finland and Sweden's TV and other media outlets.

We spent months enjoying Europe, the Jet had a spa treatment at the Cirrus Service Center in Groningen, Netherlands, and we continued on to Vienna, Austria, and Kefalonia, an island of Greece, hosted by our good friend Nigel in his majestic Villa Venturi. As the weather turned into winter, we headed south in Greece to Rhodes and Cyprus until one-by-one they all closed due to

COVID. We made a pact not to ever be in a lockdown situation, so we continued to use our plane and fly free through this wonderful world.

On to Egypt

We decided to head to Egypt which at the time was completely open with no COVID restrictions. Flying permits to enter were easy to obtain and a short flying distance from Cyprus (LCCLK). We flew to the resort city of Hurghada, Egypt (HEGN), just 580 nm following along the southern coastline of Cyprus heading southwest and climbing to FL310 in an airway that was completely vacant of other aircraft except some military operations in the area. The Turkish military had 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!”

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At point RASDA in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea we turned due south, lining up for the entry point to Egypt just overhead Alexandria, crossing the Egyptian coastline and following a path along the great Nile River. Overflying the Cairo VOR in low visibility due to haze only gave us a glimpse of the vast metropolis, a city of 10 million people. The entire length of the Nile River bleeds green with growth, abundant with fields of rice, cotton, and a large variety



The intense glow of the sunset over the Nile River in Luxor.



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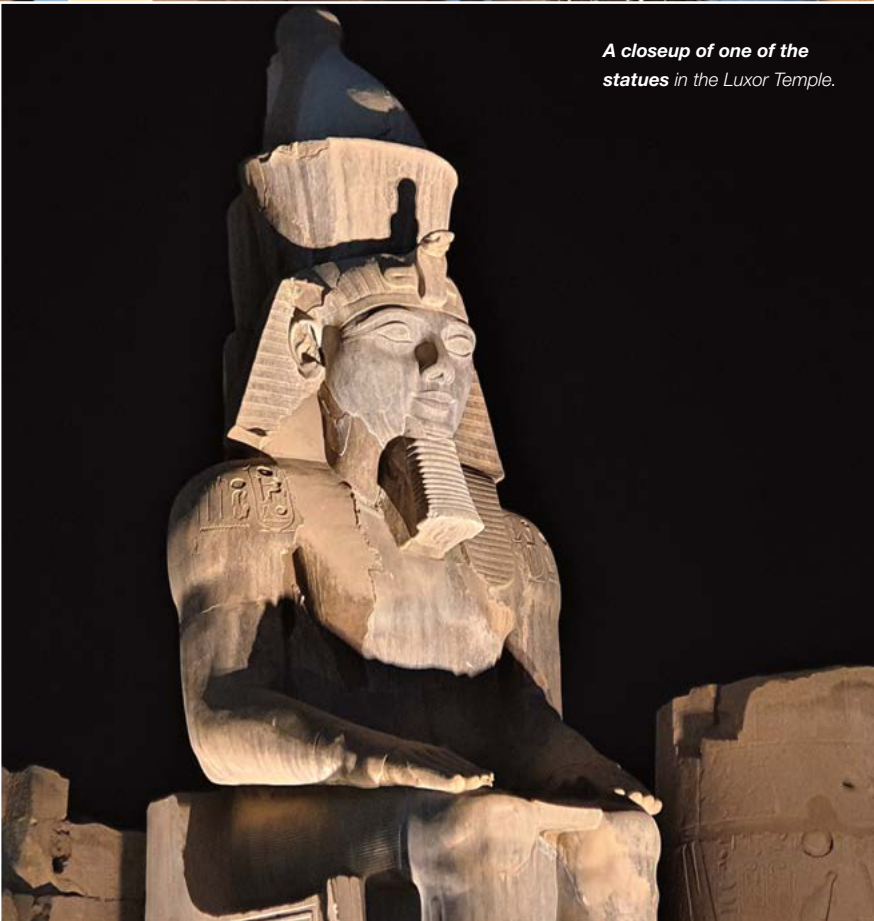
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A night view of the Luxor Temple Complex which contains four major temples.



A closeup of one of the statues in the Luxor Temple.



of agriculture. Egypt is working toward self-sufficiency and produces an abundance of food for its population of over 100 million.

With the Red Sea and Suez Canal to our left, the landscape gave way to dry, red, mountainous desert and the subtropical jet stream gave us a bumpy ride. Parallel to the tip of the Sinai coastline we began 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 degrees out over the Red Sea to head back to line up on the ILS runway 34L into Hurghada.

We floated very low over 25 miles of the Red Sea shoreline crowded with hundreds of massive luxury resorts, amazing water parks and entertainment facilities.

The airport was empty as the tourist flights had 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; he also organized a doctor that tested us for COVID next to the Vision Jet.

In Hurghada we tried out a few resorts like the Steigenberger Pure Lifestyle very high-end hotel and the Le Maison Bleue, an opulent, extravagant hotel with 10 suites. There were many people there and it was the first time since pre-COVID that we had seen hotels and a city with that much activity.

Amir was feeling at home as he had been to Egypt many times and having grown up in the Middle East. He loves and understands the mentality and the social structure that enables us a smooth, friendly transition through the organized confusion.

We left the Jet parked at the Hurghada airport, rented a car and drove to Luxor – the pharaoh’s capital and 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. It was a three-hour drive through several checkpoints and we really didn’t know how we would be received. It helps in this part of the world to have some smarts about you, giving only 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 police that can pop up out of nowhere. Most times we were waved through checkpoints with a smile as it is very

“We ... rented a car and drove to Luxor – the pharaoh’s capital and one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world ... ”



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“Driving in Egypt is not for the faint hearted! There are no traffic rules, just a unified understanding that you must push your way through ...”

unusual for tourists (and even more so during COVID) to be driving around Egypt so they generally 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 isn't uncomfortable and 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, so by the time you reach the next checkpoint they are already expecting you. At some checkpoints the tourist police are already alerted, and they

give a royal escort with lights flaring and sirens blaring which parts the traffic for you to your next destination.

The highway goes through the red mountains and dry desert until reaching the basin of the Nile River where “real life” of Egypt begins. With that comes mass traffic – an interesting mix of cars, vans, trucks, touk touk, motorcycles, horse or donkey-pulled carts, donkey riders, and many people walking and weaving their way through all the chaos.

Driving in Egypt is not for the faint hearted! There are no traffic rules, just a unified understanding that you must push your way through 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 surprised them into submission. There is constant horn beeping, and people walking in your path don't stop so you must weave around

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“The heat, even in the winter months, is exhausting so to really enjoy the ancient wonders we spent five days ...”

them. There are no adherents to lanes, traffic lights or roundabout rules.

Driving here always takes a great amount of situational awareness and the most

important driving rule is “expect the unexpected.”

Amir loves driving like that and enjoyed it 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 spent five days staying

at the best hotel in Luxor – the Hilton Luxor Resort and Spa. It is the only hotel located on the Nile River and a short walk

to Karnak Temple, securely nestled in the heart of the busy city. From there, you can book cruises to coast up and down the Nile in a Felucca sailboat, tours to many sites, or sit and relax around the many pools.

We visited the two main temples: Luxor Temple Complex (1400BCE) which contains four magnificent temples and the Avenue of Sphinx, also known as Luxor Dromos, a 1.6-mile-long row of Sphinx lining a road to Karnak old city.

Karnak Temple (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 obelisks in the complex was transported from a location 100 miles away, it is 95 feet tall and weighs 328 tons.

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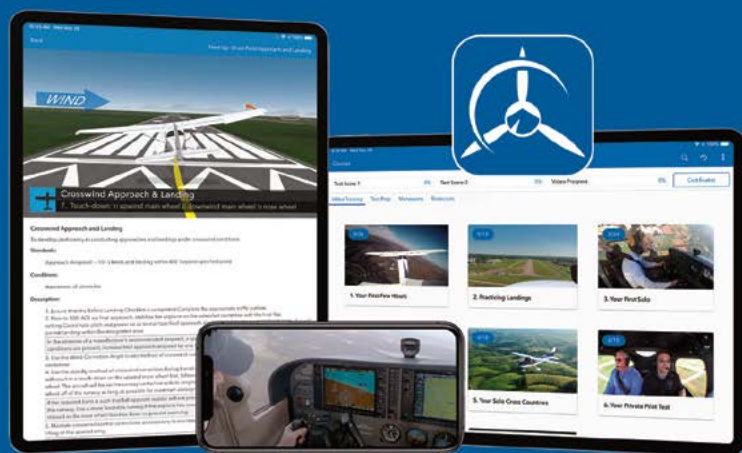
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« Amir by the Luxor Dromos, a 1.6-mile-long row of Sphinx lining a road to Karnak old city from Luxor.

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the west side of
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On the road back to Hurghada in the Qena district, is an unknown gem and must-see – the fascinating Dendera Hathor Temple. The inner temple dates back to 2030BC and continued being modified over 2,000 years, right through to around 30BC in the Roman period. We view it as the best temple in Egypt, as it is the most intact of any we saw, with the original patina of the wall carvings



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Tamra walking in the Valley of the Gates of the Kings, a network of tombs cut into the rock mountains, the most notable being King Tutankhamen.





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Local fishermen gathering their nets on the Nile River.



and the vibrant colors on the roof still in place, supported by magnificently decorated columns with their original carvings and a maze of underground tunnels.

Egypt history always mentions “Upper” and “Lower” Egypt before 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 thousand words,” and we are grateful, 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.

In the next issue, we travel to Cairo and share our experiences there. Although we have visited Egypt and its top sites several times, we always discover something new on each visit. On this trip, COVID and less tourists allowed us to see many new things. ☺

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