

Brazil

Iguazu to USA





Map of South American trip

Buenos Aires, Argentina to Iguazu, Brazil

Airports: SADF TO SBF1 (Foz do Iguazu)

handler: self - Clovis

Fuel: world fuel

Date 16/3/2020

Distance: 564nm 2hr flight

Argentina are to announce tomorrow that all flights in and out will be suspended as well as all land borders will be closed, so this is our last opportunity to leave before the Country goes into full shut down due to the Chinese Virus also known as Covid-19 threat pandemic that is closing borders around the world. The cases here are below 50, the President was in a meeting all day and made public announcements of the measures they are imposing for the next two weeks. We were staying in the same neighbourhood as the President's residence and saw all the journalists waiting and watching outside the huge complex of Presidential walls. Last week the flights coming into the country were closed off, only allowing in Nationals returning home. Since then it has been only a little quieter than normal on the streets. Restaurants were the first to feel the desertion but as everyone starts to take personal responsibility and stay home the economic effects will filter on. A country of great social divide where the poor rely on the small income they receive performing jobs vital to community service will be the first to feel the impact as they are held back from travelling and their jobs, the children still need to be fed and the rent still paid but without the income it will soon become a very desperate situation as the President says it is now time to help each other not find ways to profiteer. It was interesting that he announced the closing of large retail and limit visits to large supermarket but allows small vendors and local supermarket to stay open thus giving the businesses opportunity to earn revenue, it is clear the government in a country which is already struggling economically is very aware and worried of the economic impact.

On in a brighter note; our journey will proceed as planned probably being held up somewhere but hoping for the best. We applied for a permit to Brazil some time ago and were granted a date of arrival which we needed to change and move forward.

Our clearance out of Argentina was very smooth, the officials all being very helpful and friendly, there is no departure procedure (SID) from SADF, we are given the Clearance in a complex list of vectors to follow after the departure, the Ground control taking a long time relaying all the vectors in an accent that is fast and unreadable and understandable, asking for the read back that they also don't understand our accent and ask for a repeat of instructions until the whole process is exhausting and frustrating: not a great way to start a flight! Then to make the whole process ridiculous, once departed, SADF - ATC request we follow just one simple heading then direct path to Iguazu Falls. The landscape is beautiful, over all the green agricultural fields and the many rivers flowing through the rich fertile land.

We are transferred by the the Argentinian ATC to Brazil control, our request from the Brazilian ATC to fly over the Iguazu Falls is immediately granted with the response a single word "absolutely! take as long as you want and report when finished". The Argentinian airway is silent without any traffic, we are the only aircraft in the vicinity so we enjoy rotating around the largest and most impressive of all the water falls in the world or that we have had the privilege to fly over. This now tops our falls flyovers and we have done the trifecta of the largest and most amazing waterfalls in the world - Victoria Falls-Africa, Niagra Falls-Canada/US and now the Iguazu Falls Brazil/Argentina with a width of 2,700 meters or 1.7 miles and average water flow of 62,000cu ft/s is the largest waterfall in the world, most of the Iguazu Falls are on the Argentinian side but the Brazilian side has the spectacular Devil's Throat which is the most monumental waterfall in the Iguazu cascades system.

We are vectored for an RNP approach and land in the Brazilian side of the falls and clear customs, immigration and call the Resort Belmond Del Cataratas, they can't believe we are calling to make a booking and not a cancellation. A great rate is negotiated and we get one of the very few rooms that overlooks the falls. This luxury iconic Hotel is 12km deep inside the national park and a few steps from the falls, we are told that

the park will also close to general public in the next few days this leaves the park and the falls solely to Hotel guests!

Normally the park is open to public between 9am to 5pm however hotel guests are welcome anytime. The park attracts four million tourists a year and due to the situation is now all ours to enjoy with less than 30 people in the hotel.

Although we seem to be in paradise it is very tempting to just try to stay here and sit out the current crisis however as the days pass it is becoming clear that soon the hotel may close down and although Brazil has not yet announced the closing of their borders the feel of the world news and the pressure being exerted on governments to tighten down is evident on our minds that our intentions to spend some time in Brazil is soon changing to a feel that we should move quickly to return to the US.



Sunset at Iguazu

Iguazu to Cuiaba capital of Mato Grosso Brazil

Airports: SBFI to SBCY
handler: Abelha Air Services
Fuel: world fuel
Date 18/3/2020
Distance: 610nm 2.5 flight

We make an early start as the huge thunderstorms are closing in over the Iguazu Falls area and we need to move north through Brazil to stop in the southern part of the Amazon with an over-night stop for the weather to clear in our next destination, Manaus, which is in the North of the Amazon.

After paying over the top landing and parking fees we depart for two hours flight with a straight in ILS approach into Cuiaba runway 35.

We are parking at Abelha Air Taxi a fantastic FBO in what is an extremely expensive airport. The FBO charges are very good but aviation in Brazil is a complete rip-off for foreign General Aviation the locals are paying 10% of what we were charged for landing and parking fees. It pays to shop around and although you may find an FBO that is reasonably priced the airport will gouge the most fees it can or vice versa. We were greatly assisted by Bruno our friend in Brazil to arrange handlers in every stop in Brazil, due to the current world crisis and the language barrier.

Cuiaba, Brazil to Manaus-Amazonas!, Brazil

Airports: SBCY to SBEG

handler: Bruno's agent Lenilson Macier

Fuel: world fuel

Date 19/3/2020

Distance: 788nm

Wheels up by 7am the flight takes us over some of the 2.2 million square MILES of the Amazon heading north. The huge thunderstorms that we waited overnight to clear are all around us, most having dissipated down however the plane is still shuddering every now and then so the energy is still in the air all the way.

The Amazon is in full cloud cover but we get a lot of cloud break and you can see the rivers snaking through very thick green compact jungle it is an amazing endless rainforest.

On the way to Manaus past the point of no return we can see on the Garmin Connex weather that whilst the forecast TAF was for very good weather this will not be the case, a huge 100 mile radius thunderstorm has formed north east of Manaus and branching towards Manaus. All possible alternates are in much worse condition, we reduce speed to 40% power or 200kt and are told to expect RNAV runway 11, yet the wind is favouring runway 29, the only explanation we have is that lightning activity east of the airport. As we get closer we can see that the lightning has moved further north east and disappearing, we slow even further and suddenly receiving clearance to RNAV runway 29 via GELAG, not long ago this was an area covered with those lightning strikes and now it is with cloud tops at 29,000ft, we are weaving the clouds and trying to stay out of entering them for as long as we can but at 18,000 feet we are in full heavy rain with a bit of ice!, which the anti icing system clears with ease. The rain so powerful a deafening noise with moderate turbulence, we intercept GELAG and continuing to the landing, a bit challenging with the heavy rain, turbulence on decent and the cloud break only at 900ft AGL the worst of it being that the LNAV approach was not engaging, at descend to 4000 ft, we received two GP glide path needles that went up and down and didn't engaged, the plane

just kept going down ignoring the approach. This created an enormous work load; disengage auto pilot, manually ascend back to 4000 feet, re-enter approach engage and it still didn't want to play nice, all in full IMC turbulent heavy rain conditions. Eventually the approach engaged just before we broke the cloud base.

Manaus is the capital of the State of Amazonas Brazil, it is the gateway to the Amazon Rainforest, which is the largest tropical rainforest in the world and is as big as more than half of Europe has the largest biodiversity and huge number of water ways and rivers. Manaus is a good spot for tourists to take tours to see the pink dolphins, fish, hike and see this amazing part of the world and under better circumstances we would have stayed a few days however everything is cancelled and closed even though there are no cases of the virus here they are still taking precautions. We visit the Port to see the Rio Grand river which intersects with the Amazon river the activities here are crazy, trucks large and small all loading up the many cargo, ferry boats and barges that will travel to all the ports of the 4000 mile long Amazonian waterways, supplies of all goods, food, drink, appliances and construction.

Once again Amir pulls out all his ingenuity and starts to call every Island/ FBO and governing body he can to see if he can get us through the Caribbean Islands and as close to the US Florida coast line as can be. After a few hours of knock backs and "No Sir, the Island is closed to all flights", he gets a yes! from Trinidad (fuel stop only) and also St Kitts.

We clear Brazil customs and immigration in Manaus, this will be our last flight out of Brazil and out of South America onto the Caribbean in our mad dash to the great US. With the distinct feeling that every time we fly out of an airport the curtain (aka Country border) is closing on our tail.

Manaus, Brazil to Puerto Spain, Trinidad

Airports: SBEG to TTPP

Handler: TTPP - Signature Flight services

Fuel: World fuel

Date 20/3/2020

Distance: 867nm

TTPP Trinidad is a fuel stop only, due to the Chinese Virus Trinidad is "closed" all airports; no landings or departures. The handler, Signature granted a technical stop we are not permitted to leave the aircraft not even for a bathroom stop!

We fly directly north over the entire Amazon Rainforest area, we didn't see any fire damage and no logging clearance as recently reported on world news that the Amazon is disappearing. We fly for miles and miles and can only see dense rainforests, rivers, lakes and reservoirs. When flying towards Boa Vista in northern Brazil we get clearance to fly direct to way-point GEMOL, the crossing point from Brazil into Guyana, leaving the Amazonas Control and transferred to Georgetown ATC clear of Venezuela. The landscape over Guyana is much the same as the Amazon thick dark green rainforest. Over Georgetown we are cleared direct to the coast then a sharp left turn to Trinidad which sits just off the coast of Venezuela. ATC is astonished to find out that we have a permit to stop in Trinidad.

On the ILS runway 10 approach in moderate turbulence, we receive a front wheel landing gear failure warning, this is the 3rd time this has happened after the deployment of the wheels; first we see the three green lights and then on and off red messages, we ask the tower to check all gear is down and they confirm yes, so probably just a faulty sensor. We land without any issues if you don't count the maddeningly repetitive woman voice of the avionics shouting "WARNING GEAR LANDING FAILURE" (also try taking off whilst she is yelling at you) the red alert stops during taxi to park, just a sensor. The handlers and flight services are waiting for us to complete Passport Control and General

Declaration documents, they lodge flight plan for us and arrange the fuel. We are back in the air within an hour, great turn around with excellent fuel price and service by Signature Flight Support Trinidad.

Port Spain, Trinidad to St. Kitts/Nevis

Airports: TTPP to TKPK

Handler: TTPP-Signature flight services

Handler: TKPK - Kayanjet flight services

Fuel: world fuel

Date 20/3/2020

Distance: 409nm

One night stop over, note to anyone flying to this Island, perhaps fly to the next island ;)

St Kitts to Nassau Bahamas

Airports: TKPK to MYNN

Handler: TKPK- Kayanjet flight services

Handler: MYNN-Nassau Aviation

Fuel: world fuel

Date 21/3/2020

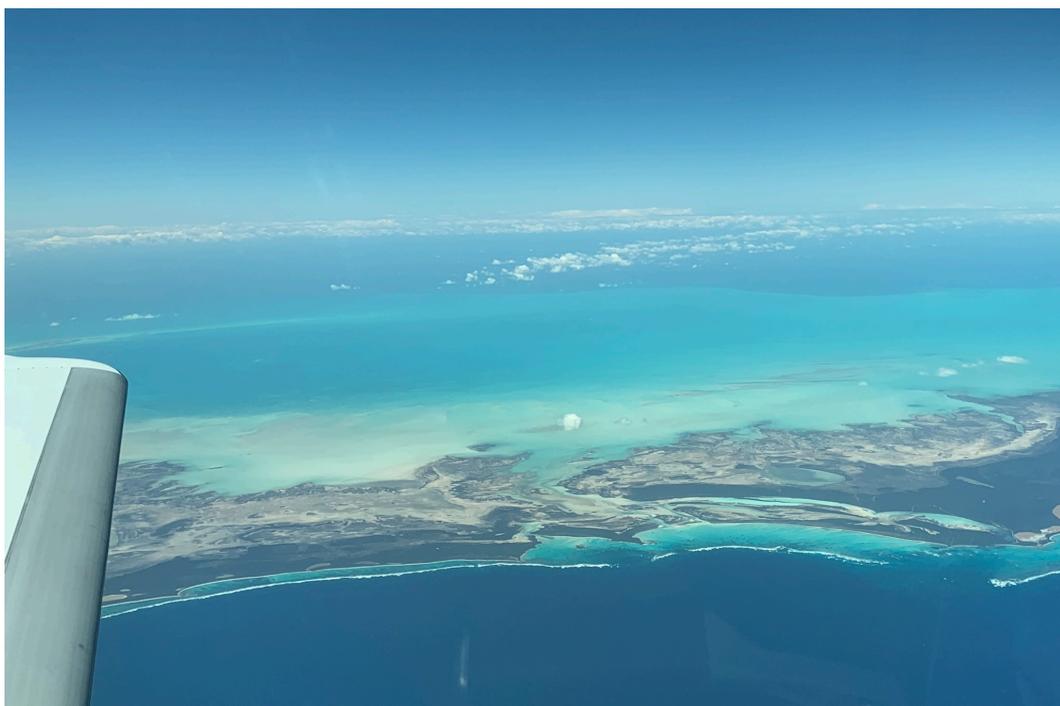
Distance: 952nm -4hrs

This flight is actually our longest flight in all the South American trip, the weather is fairly good just a bit of rainy cloud on take off and a need to dodge a few cloud formations that would make the ride a little bumpy.

The airways are busy again today, with many American Airlines making special evacuation flights and all reporting choppy conditions at flight levels 18 to 24,000ft, we are climbing to 30,000 and checking on Connex for wind conditions at all levels as the present head wind of 65kt and crosswind 25kt variations is changing our flight conditions considerably, giving us a fuel on destination of only 42 gallons which is unacceptable. We throttle back to slow down through the strong head winds, the Connex Weather indicating winds should decrease after an hour and a half of flight to 12kt head and 10kt cross, changing our fuel on destination to 82gal very doable and comfortable.

Once past the Caribbean Sea we enter the beautiful Islands scattering through the Atlantic Ocean where the water surrounding the islands are the most azure blue and paradise on Earth. We land a visual approach with over 90 gallons of fuel in Nassau and taxi to Jet aviation (Jet Nassau) who lay down a red carpet, something we have not seen since being in the US and we instantly feel like we are back to civilisation. Flying through the South American countries has been very difficult and a constant work to negotiate handlers, permits to enter Countries, clear airports, parking, fuel, etc. The contacts of our many new friends that have assisted have frankly made the whole trip possible.

We stay at the Hyatt which is a resort that has around 2300 rooms, normally this is their peak season and would be full but has only 45 rooms occupied, leaving the hotel in partial shut down, the casino is completely shut down and it is a weird sight to see such a huge resort empty - several pools with just a few people enjoying - the beach is empty. Great for us and the few guests that we get to know but with the continued crisis unfolding we once again make the decision that it would be better to be in the US. Our next problem arises - we have no visa to enter the US with our own aircraft (Australia and US have a visa waiver program ESTA; 90 day tourist stay when arriving on a commercial vehicle, this doesn't apply to private planes and has no provision for a private owner/pilot) certainly an unusual situation. Our appointments to apply for a B2 visa were cancelled last week by the US consulate. Amir gets on the phone to CBP (US Customs and Border Protection) explaining our situation. After many calls and slowly being sent up the chain to the most Senior Officer who advises to commence the APIS to enter to Fort Lauderdale Executive. We expedite immediately and are in the air within an hour, the flight of 162nm takes only 50 minutes. Fort Lauderdale CBP are waiting for us and commence the paperwork for a B2 visa. The complex process took a little under 4 hours, completed by the professional and helpful CBP officers. We are extremely grateful for their kindness showing how the US when in a crisis pull together and become the most amazing generous people.



Blue waters of the Grand Bahama