



# Our World Mission Part 3

by AMIR and TAMRA HYSTER

*Editor's Note: The following is Part 3 of Amir and Tamra Hyster's journey, as they travel the world on their way back home to Australia after purchasing their third Cirrus in the U.S. In Part 2, they flew their new-to-them SR22 to various stops in Canada, as well as Greenland and Iceland. Read below to share their experience as they venture on.*

## 5 August, 2014 – Reykjavik, Iceland to Wick, Scotland

We again wore our bright red Gumby survival suits for the three-plus-hour flight, and were becoming a bit more comfortable with them. We departed and requested to fly over the coast for safety and sightseeing; ATC approved everything we requested.

It needs to be mentioned that most pilots choose to fly this route via Keflavik because of the customs availability, however, it is more than an hour's drive to the city, compared to Reykjavik, which is in the middle of the city. Customs was happy to come to this airport and meet us upon landing.

At FL170, 45 minutes into the flight, we were skimming the cloud tops and entered a section that looked like altostratus and CBs. Instantly Amir saw ice crystals form on the windscreen, so he engaged FIKI and climbed 500 feet to clear the clouds. The anti-icing fluid dispersed the ice in a split second. It was a reminder to us that we must always remain vigilant and constantly check the wings.

We began a very slow descent into Scotland and were cleared direct to Wick; we were descending through clouds at -19 degrees Celsius with anti-ice engaged. I saw the TKS fluid start to line the wing, however within a few minutes, ice crystals started to form on the wing closest

to the cabin. I told Amir and he engaged the boost pump and made an immediate call to ATC notifying them we were picking up ice. We were above the sea descending at 1,000 feet per minute as I watched ice form across the entire wing, then it just slipped off, bit by bit, until there was just anti-ice running freely again. That was scary! Soon, the sight of the cliffs of Scotland appeared, the skies broke to a fine blue over the fields and Wick Airport came into view. We gave each other a high-five, as we had made it across the North Atlantic Ocean! As we exited the aircraft and tried to struggle out of our suits, there was a pilot near his aircraft parked next to us. He called out, "You survived!" It was very funny, and just how we felt.

Our spur of the moment accommodation in Wick was the amazing Ackergill Tower, a restored castle with traditional décor and furniture, and letters, invoices, books and journals dating back over 100 years still in the bookcases and bureaus. We dined in the great hall and slept in a room called Nuns, which is the old chapel.

We travelled to Edinburgh for the Comedy Festival and enjoyed the historical architecture. There had been a persistent series of cold fronts and the remnants of a Caribbean hurricane roaming around Scotland, England and the North Sea. This was where we needed to cross and enter into Holland. We relaxed in Scotland moving from the castle to a beach cottage on the Ackergill Tower Estate. We were aiming to be travelling through the Middle East by mid-September, so we were in no hurry to move on into Europe just yet. We had a house to cook our meals and the rain and storms beating against the warm cozy cottage situated on a private beachfront with a

*The Hyster's accommodations in Wick, Scotland was the Ackergill Tower, a restored castle with traditional décor and furniture.*



*Landing at Split, Croatia amongst much larger commercial airliners and jets.*



conservatory overlooking old stone walls and farm fields. This was our dream; to fly and stay for extended periods at a time in places that we enjoyed.

### **15 August, 2014 – Wick, Scotland to Groningen, Holland**

Departing Wick, we had set the GPS to follow the coastlines of Scotland and England turning to the very rough looking North Sea around Newcastle, and allowing us to intercept waypoint KOLAG which is the "official" entry into Europe.

At approach, we navigated direct to EEL to avoid a thunderstorm line, then on to Groningen for our first stop in Europe. We taxied to the Cirrus service center to allow our baby a day in the spa (50-hour inspection).

### **25 August, 2014 – Groningen, Holland to Split, Croatia**

We woke bright and early with anticipation to take off before the Groningen weather folded, as it had in the last several days, inhibiting our departure. The plane required service bulletin maintenance, a 20-plus hour job, and it was a pleasure to watch and talk to the experienced and professional engineers there.

During our wait in Groningen, we drove through the Netherlands; visited Amsterdam, getting high from the whiff of air around the local cafes; traveled to The Hague; spent a few "ground-hog" type days visiting the visa office of India awaiting a special visa for a technical stop, which we needed on our travels. We were told it would take them another eight days to complete a possible visa, and they still had no positive answers after three days. We gave up, not prepared to keep waiting for indecision and incompetence. The Hague was a pleasure and a visit to the Louwman Museum with the best collection of vintage vehicles in the world is a man's lollipop shop, and a must stop. We visited our friend in Amersfoort, the most centrally located town in The Netherlands, traveled over the famous dyke and took a drive south to Germany for ice cream.

The skies were closing fast and we were eager not to lose our window of opportunity to leave. We had been constantly in bad weather since leaving Iceland, with rain every day, and we were getting a little dreary of the depressing northern European weather. The locals told us they had a nice summer for only four or five weeks!

Our course was entered into the GPS, reading like a novel with so many waypoints which were a part of the flight

plan via a new software app called Rocketroute that also gave the weather en route. The app was suggested to us by a pilot also getting his Cirrus serviced. The many waypoints are a mandatory routing through Europe and are a reflection of the over regulated nature there.

On approach to Frankfurt airspace, we were diverted through waypoint FFM, which is over the Frankfurt airport, and told we were being given a very special clearance to remain at FL130. Thanks Frankfurt; it was a very busy airspace.

South of Germany just past Munich and all the way to the Alps, we encountered icing that wasn't forecasted and started the dance of climbing, skirting around clouds, and descending, but it eventually cleared. ATC, known as Eurocontrol, was very accommodating. When they heard we were in ice, a new person immediately came on the radio and offered direction to get us out of it. We had the FIKI equipment working at normal rate and it easily cleared the ice. Above the Alps, we were unable to get lower because the mountain peaks were 1,000 feet below us. Assisted vectoring by ATC, who kept in contact with us every step while we were in ice, added to our safety levels.

Above Ljubljana, Slovenia and moving into Croatia, we had a fabulous view of the Adriatic Sea; the temperature was warming up to -4 degrees Celsius as we had entered the Mediterranean. The weather was clear and sunny, and we had a panoramic view of Split, Croatia as we rotated over the sea for a landing alongside commercial jets loading and unloading tourists from around the world to this haven of beautiful beaches. The fuel prices were again very high at US\$16 a gallon. It is evident that still the best place in the world to fly is the USA for fuel costs, service on the ground and in the air, airport availability, accommodations and variation of locations.

Upon a drive into town, we could see there was a mix of Greece, Italy and Europe there that was looking very tired and under economical strain. The buildings were derelict and heavy with graffiti, however, the streets were a buzz with tourists and the beaches were packed; at least the tourist trade was booming at this peak time of year.

### **29 August, 2014 – Split, Croatia to Santorini, Greece**

We departed late morning after a wait on the hot tarmac for over an hour. The filing of a flight plan at the airport briefing office was our only choice, so we couldn't plan



*One of the beautiful views of Santorini, Greece.*

the departure slot but only deal with what was available. The following day had over 120 planes coming into the airport and the usual amount is around 30 to 40, so we were glad we decided to move that day. The arrangements to fly to Greece took several phone calls, emails and much frustration. If the problem of no fuel wasn't bad enough, if there was fuel, there wasn't a place to park the plane. Parking needed to be prearranged and filing of a flight plan couldn't be met until there was parking availability at the destination. The only available avgas in Greece was in Rhodes, however we couldn't get parking there for a week, so we decided to fly to Santorini where there was no fuel, but we took the last GA parking spot. That meant we needed to fly very efficiently.

We arrived at Santorini and had a magnificent view of the volcanic caldera; a result of a huge volcanic eruption. We parked and were greeted by the Skyway Services team, skirted through immigration and then confronted with quite possibly the worst airport we had ever seen; the place was filthy and full of people. We were escorted to the office of Skyway, which was a storefront in the main terminal; they acted as an agent handling all international flights. What the airport lacked in basic hygiene and comfort, the staff at flight services made up tenfold; they were wonderful, helpful and accommodating. They found us a great place to stay and a car to rent in this overbooked, overpriced island. The boutique hotel we chose, or rather the only one with a room available for the four nights we would be staying, was back from the beachfront and secluded. It was a short walk into the small beachfront village of Kamari.

## **2 September, 2014 – Santorini to Rhodes, Greece**

It was a short flight to Rhodes – the only place to get fuel on the islands – and we needed to make it on time to our allotted parking spot, one of only two available for GA. The only way to file a flight plan was in the tower, where we found the nicest air traffic controllers in Europe. It is

mandatory to file the plan one hour prior to departure, however we were told that when we were ready we should send a message and it will be approved, and that was exactly what happened. We were given a Standard Instrument Departure (SID) out of 34R directly toward Rhodes and a direct climb to flight level – the first time in over 10,000 km of our trip since leaving Canada. The flight was very smooth, but the haze impacted the visibility of the amazing views of the Greek Islands.

We found an incredible villa to rent in Rhodes on the east side of the island near Lindos. We had a beachfront backyard with a private pool in a fully equipped house, for a bargain price. We could cook, relax, swim in the pool or the ocean, have breakfast or dinner on the beach under our own trees, and pick fresh figs for dessert from the property. It was truly a haven in the 30-40 degree Celsius heat.

Parking for the plane is two Euro per day, compared with 66 Euro in Cyprus. We still had a couple of weeks to wait for favorable weather conditions to cross the hottest parts of the Earth, so we decided to wait it out in Rhodes and enjoy our accommodations while also exploring more of the island that has so much history.

## **12 September, 2014 – Rhodes, Greece to Larnaka, Cyprus**

The flight plan was filed with Eurocontrol via RocketRoute, shortening the time in the airport as we didn't have to visit the tower and the Met office. We were given a hard time in security as they didn't like that I had onboard refreshments in my backpack. Previously, the FBO staff had interjected to let them know we were a private flight and not restricted to carry our lunch, drinks and cutlery to eat, but this time the airport staff didn't know what to do. We eventually told them to take our cutlery, as we didn't want to miss our time slot.

We took off without delay and were cleared direct to Larnaka; visibility was extremely poor. We were flying over the sea along the coast of Turkey in a strong crosswind and very hot conditions. Again we were met by wonderful flight services staff and fueled up at \$18 per gallon. We rented a car and off we went to discover a new place in the big world.

## **18 September, 2014 – Larnaka, Cyprus to Tel Aviv, Israel and Amman, Jordan**

Up to this point of the trip, we had organized all the flights, fuel and clearances. From this flight and after, we required an agent to arrange all the clearances and handlers on the ground for fuel, immigration and customs.

In order to save three to four hours of flight over the sea to Egypt and Amman, Jordan, we decided to fly over Israel. When we asked about help in getting the permits, our rep laughed and explained that he had never managed to get approval to pass over Israel for around the world flights, and it would take weeks to get one as it entails extensive security checks. Tel Aviv controls all flights 1,000 miles around Israel. Just say the word "never" to Amir and he always finds a way to make it happen! At 10:00 p.m. the ➤

night before our departure, we called a friend in Israel who arranged for an Israeli pilot with a clearance; more importantly he would be in Larnaka within the next 10 hours! That was great, but the plane itself and the copilot also needed clearance, so we were back to the required three-week waiting period. That still did not stop Amir and after four hours of constant phone calls to and from Israel convincing the authorities and the Secret Service, we received the green light and embarked on one of the most interesting legs of the trip.

We departed Larnaka, on the southwest coast of Cyprus, with very hot, strong gusting winds up to 35 knots over the Mediterranean Sea with a direct path to Tel Aviv. It was official – we had left Europe!

Larnaka ATC instructed us to contact Tel Aviv within five minutes from wheels up, but the air was so hot and bumpy that we forgot. Immediately Larnaka ATC demanded us to contact Tel Aviv. When contacting them, the Israeli copilot was to provide a secret personal code, to let them know he was okay and not hijacked.



*Flying over the coastline of Israel.*

When our copilot relayed the code, Tel Aviv didn't accept the code, and asked for it again and again. It immediately escalated to higher level of controllers. Amir realized there was a problem and repeated the code. We were feeling that a couple of F16s were already on the way toward us. After some very nerve-wracking minutes, Tel Aviv responded with "Cleared to enter into Israel airspace." We all breathed a sigh of relief. We later discovered that the copilot's headset was in the passenger socket, hence the reason Tel Aviv didn't "accept" our code; they just couldn't hear us, a small mistake that could lead to serious consequences in a very security conscious area of the world.



*Parked by another Cirrus at Tel Aviv airport.*

Tel Aviv was an extremely busy airspace; a small country with huge aviation demands – fighter jets, commercial and GA flights, helicopters and drones all competing for the same small space. We enjoyed the most professional ATC services we ever had on the way and inside Israel. We landed at Sde Dov Airport (LLSD) right in the middle of Tel Aviv, thanked and said goodbye to the Israeli pilot, obtained a clearance and continued to Amman all in less than an hour.

Departing Tel Aviv, we flew above Jericho, which at 10,000 years old, is the oldest city in the world; and then north of Jerusalem and the Dead Sea towards Amman through the aviation waypoint called SALAM. It is the same waypoint that the first peaceful flight took place between Israel and Jordan. This historic flight took place 23 May, 1995, and was called Operation Peace Flight sponsored by King Hussein of Jordan and Ezer Weizman, the Israeli president (both pilots) and led by Barry Schiff and a group of Israeli and Jordanian pilots. As we passed into Jordan, we felt that we too were making a bit of history. The landscape





changed so dramatically that we could almost draw a line on the border. Israel was green and full of trees and the desert of Jordan was bare of any vegetation, but still majestic to see. The end of the Jordan River is the commencement of the Dead Sea, which at elevation of -1,300 feet is the lowest point on earth. There was no sign of any water, the river had depleted and the Dead Sea was shrinking.

The city of Amman came into view; it was a large, vastly spread city. We landed at an airport that is over 2,500 feet above sea level and taxied to flight services, who flagged us to parking, and the pantomime started – we were now in the Middle East and needed to be mindful of their customs and mannerisms. The driver of the only refuel truck on the airport told us "Only Cash!" as he rejected every one of our credit cards. We settled and paid for the fuel through the FBO who added 15% commission to the already inflated fuel price. We arranged for a rental car and on the way to the hotel were fully immersed in the traffic of Amman. To put it lightly, basic traffic rules don't apply; there are no designated lanes and the only rule



*The view of Amman, Jordan while landing.*



is push or be pushed out! Also, honk the horn a lot; it's international language for "I'm coming through!" We kept trying to get a Wi-Fi connection to access our GPS, by occasionally stopping in the middle of intersections and along the side of the road. Each time we were waved on by the local traffic or parking police. No one understood English, but it was hilarious how it didn't matter that we were trolling along in the car; everyone just went around us and the police gave a little knock on our window and waved their hand.

A UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) tent in Jordan.

The next day, we drove to an ancient city called Jerash – a Roman Provincial town that dates back between 800BC and 130AD Byzantine Period and has been excavated and restored. The three-kilometer area consisted of important temples and churches, theatres and colonnade streets of the AD era. We started the drive back to Amman and saw a small tent with Syrian refugees camped along the road, so we turned around and headed back towards the Syrian border. We drove as far as Ar Ramtha and the road stopped at a huge security fence, a buffer zone seven kilometers before the border. There were some of the refugee camps – one million people in a small space sealed from the outside world. The village of Ar Ramtha was very interesting; it was full of new developments and huge palace-like houses, intricately detailed architecture, large stone work walls and gates around each house. Unfortunately, they all appeared to be unfinished as if everything had stopped. It may be the war in Syria that is the cause, or just a cash-flow shortage as in Europe. In Amman, we drove through areas of refugees from Syria and Iraq, many bringing fundamentalist religious practices that we had never seen before in Jordan. It was clear that the culture of Jordan was changing. We had visited Jordan many times in the past, we love the country and its people, but this was the first time we felt very uncomfortable once we were out of the modernized parts of Amman.  $\oplus$

*Editor's Note: Watch for more of Amir and Tamra's world mission adventures in future issues of Cirrus Pilot.*

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Amir and Tamra Hyster are semi-retired "SKiers" (Spending the Kids Inheritance) who live in Sydney, Australia; they have three grown children. Amir has a PPL with IFR ratings on single engine; he learned to fly 13 years ago with his daughter, Jessica, which started as a hobby and grew into a passion. He currently owns and flies an SR22T and has a position for the Cirrus Jet. The Hysters have flown around Australia several times, and in Europe, the Caribbean and United States.