

PP-ZAD To Europe and the USA (part 2)

Andre Debert (Brazil) - Plans had changed and I was not able to participate in the June and July aeronautical events taking place throughout Europe. I decided to spend more time with family and visit relatives.

On July 14, commemorated as the French national holiday, we planned a long weekend to visit my sister in the small German city, Kehl, just across the Rhine from Strasbourg.

I filed IFR for Strasbourg as I was not familiar with my native country's restricted or prohibited airspace. I was told the military only respected the airways and airport neighborhood and that they usually flew at the height of a cow. Filing IFR would guarantee a piece of airspace for only me on the three hour flight in a Brigadier's sky. (bright blue)

Flying IFR in France is as easy as flying in Brazil and the States. The only difference was controllers were surprised to hear near perfect French from a PAPA-PAPA (Brazilian registry) aircraft. They vectored us from VOR to VOR until reaching Strasbourg.

Then next two days were spent visiting family and celebrating the holiday. Time passed quickly and soon we were off for Holland to visit another sister and nieces. Europe seems so small to Brazilians accustomed to great expanses of land. In less than two hours we overflew two countries, Luxembourg and Belgium, and landed at Lelystadt 40 miles from Amsterdam. The nice summer morning gave scattered cumulus and no winds or turbulence. It was a beautiful day to revisit Amsterdam.

The following day I returned IMC to Lille, France, 15 miles from my birth place. I visited my 84 year old mother and was reprimanded with "You at, will never end to frighten me, how come you dare to come from Brazil in this crazy machine just to kiss your mother, you mad! - - - - -"

Two days later I departed for Valence near Lyon to visit a cousin. South of Paris we came out of the clouds and began enjoying the scenery and admiring all the historic cities. The snow covered Alps and shiny Mount Blanc appeared in less than 2:40.

I wanted to find and overfly a medieval castle that was very special to me. It was a special college for special kids. I had been interned there for three years of my youth. It was handled by a father, also very special, who knew how to deal with rebels. He knew how to captivate youngsters and give them a motive to live and make men of them.

I had little information to find the castle: a little village that wasn't on any aeronautical chart and a city close by. I drew a radial from a VOR and flew it a predetermined distance buzzing all the castles I could find. There were a lot of them. The sixth, however, was the right one. I began to buzz closer and in tighter circles to photograph it. My daughter, in the back seat, said I should stop the aerobatics if I wanted to maintain a clean airplane. I stopped immediately and we proceeded to Le Castellet.

I did a 50 hour inspection on ZAD to prepare for the very long journeys we were about to initiate. The oil and filters were changed, prop bolts torqued, fuel tanks reinstalled and plugs looked at that were always clean thanks to Klaus' ignition.

I departed to Moulins to participate in the famous RSA get together, kind of an European "Mini-Oshkosh". North of Lyon weather deteriorated due to a cold front and I had to cancel IFR and proceed VFR and low accompanying the intense traffic inbound to the event.

Despite the rain and cold weather, close to 700 airplanes from all over Europe made it. Four Orions (similar to but smaller than the Cirrus) were always surrounded. Some Long-EZs and lots of Cozys showed that canards were always popular.

I was called to the podium to receive the longest distance award and the medal of "Saint Exupery", my idol. The crowd applauded enthusiastically for a long time. It was the reward for all my efforts and was extremely gratifying to receive this recognition and have the honor of representing my adopted country in my native one. An other airplane was also awarded for long range. My friend, Peter Huff, in his White Lightning crossed the Atlantic in 6 hours. (See *Kitplanes Jan 96*)

The following day I departed directly for Herning in Denmark. Weather was good and I could see clearly from 12,000' through the broken cumulus. The view of Amsterdam with its numerous channels and rivers was magnificent! In short order the north of Germany and long extension of water showed we were approaching Denmark. After 5 hours of enjoyable flight we landed in Herning with a typical 30 kt cross wind.

The following day I moved ZAD 35 miles away to Billund with a 10,100' runway. Herning's 2900' would not safely handle my over weight takeoff. I was lucky enough to find the best FBO in Europe and had access to complete mapping of the North Atlantic, accurate weather information and flight planning. ZAD was taken care of and I was treated with the same care as the fancy executive jets present there also. I was impressed!

I returned to Herning by bus in time to be a part of a flight rally official opening ceremony offered by the city's mayor. I went to bed early because the next day's north Atlantic crossing would be quite tiring and the crossing would demand all my attention.

On July 25 at 6:11, after careful and complete check of the airplane, we departed Billund for Reykjavik in Iceland. I was really filled with emotion and anxious after hearing so much about making the crossing in a little single engine airplane. All my senses were extremely alert and tense. We quickly reached FL 120 as the temperature was low and I had not completely filled the tanks since