



Fly **YOUR OWN** Airplane

AROUND THE WORLD

An Escorted Journey!
By Marvin Fradovnik

Planning a trip over the horizon has always been daunting. Up until several hundred years ago, you could pretty much plan on falling off the ends of the Earth or, at best, doing battle with monsters that make an Internal Revenue Service auditor seem like Tiny Tim. Fortunately for all of us, the world has gotten smaller, rounder and exceptionally easier to crisscross due to, in part, an organization called Air Journey.

“We announced the first opportunity for pilots to fly themselves, in their own airplanes, on an escorted trip around the world last year at Oshkosh,” says Air Journey President Thierry Pouille. “The interest was absolutely overwhelming!”

So, in May of this year, Pouille and a group of adventurous pilots and their airplanes will launch out of Quebec City, Canada, for a 70-day circumnavigation of the world and a prearranged five-star itinerary that would humble a sultan.

For 10 years now, Air Journey has been blazing a relatively new trail in aviation—allowing pilots to fly their own airplanes on escorted vacations. The company’s buffet of trips and destinations range from a few days to a few weeks, with new trips being added to temper Pouille’s admitted wanderlust. He and his customers have sampled all of Central and South America, the Caribbean and even crossed the pond via Greenland and Iceland

to visit Europe, and, of course, the Paris Air Show. Many would tell you that they would likely never have attempted these world-class, cross-country flights on their own, but having a knowledgeable escort to handle all of the details suddenly created a truly unique opportunity to blend personal aviation and travel.

At a time when the International Space Station completes a trip around the planet in just 90 minutes, Pouille's aspirations are closer to matching the 19th-century dreams of Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*. Pilots have lots of scheduled downtime to peel grapes poolside at the group's resort du jour. Or hike, scuba dive, fish, visit museums or sample the representative haute cuisine from each destination. These "air journeys" are crafted to be a blend of flying and fun.

For example, Air Journey's around-the-world trip hop scotches across Greenland and Iceland to land in Scotland. Two days later, the group logs an arrival in Paris and, three days after that, moves on to Gibraltar and Marrakech. And it keeps getting better, setting course for places like Sharm El Sheik, Calcutta, Phuket, Hong Kong, Beijing.... Each landing is a prelude to luxury accommodations, sightseeing, gourmet dining and many more memories. Coming back into the United States



Angel Falls, the tallest waterfall in the world (above), was actually discovered by a pilot more than 75 years ago. The water empties into a wild river and winds through the rain forests of Venezuela (below).



Air Journey pilots unfold new charts for new adventures, like this arrival into the Caribbean island of Anguilla.

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across Alaska, Air Journey's around-the-world adventure ends up in Oshkosh, Wis., at the beginning of AirVenture 2008.

What makes Air Journey's flying vacations so successful are not only the destinations, but also all the work going on behind the scenes. While the group is relaxing and enjoying each destination, Pouille is operating a veritable mobile command center along the way. Equipped with satellite phones, cell phones, Blackberries, laptops, printers and IP phone service, Pouille is not only in constant contact with his office back in Florida (and his wife and partner Sophie), but also with key players along the route. He is confirming that fuel is still abundantly available at the next stop or that the local "expeditor" whom Pouille has hired is standing by to make the next day's customs rigmarole a nonevent. Occasionally, an aircraft in the group will have a mechanical issue, and that, too, is Pouille's problem, not the owner's. Air Journey typically pulls from its worldwide database of proven aircraft maintenance personnel to oversee an immediate repair anywhere in the world. Often, Air Journey arranges for parts to be overnighted from the United States to the group's destination so that the aircraft owner's adventure continues uninterrupted. Now, that's service!



Air Journey's remarkable international abilities have become somewhat legendary to the pilots who travel with Pouille and his team. Recently, Air Journey obtained permission for a group of customers to land their aircraft on Galapagos Island, something that almost never happens at Ecuador's most famous national park. While the pilots left their airplanes to board a yacht to retrace the adventures of Charles Darwin 200 years earlier, Pouille was busy overseeing a special shipment of aviation fuel to the Galapagos so that his group could take off and fly the 600 miles back to South America without concern.

And, of course, if you're going to be in South America, you don't want to miss Machu Picchu. Pouille had a group of customers in two

Pilots arrive from all continents to fly an "Air Journey"

EADS/Socata TBMs who wanted to land at nearby Cusco, Peru, on a runway that sits at MSL 11,500 feet in the Andes. The Peruvians require pilots to have an official performance chart that shows runway requirements for elevations up to 12,000 feet. The TBM's Pilot Operating Handbook, like most aircraft manuals, stopped far short of that. What to do? Pouille contacted EADS/Socata and got them to calculate all-new performance info, and the group came and went without incident.

As you might imagine, Air Journey draws a disparate collection of customers and aircraft from all over the world. Pilots arrive from all continents to fly an "Air Journey." Most trips are flyable in almost

After years in the travel business, Thierry Pouille decided to combine his knowledge of the travel and flying into a new company called Air Journey. Since that time, his enthusiasm for adventure has allowed pilots to take their airplanes with them on vacations all over the planet, including a 70+ day round the world flight in summer 2008.



AN ESCORTED JOURNEY

Sea lions in the Galapagos.

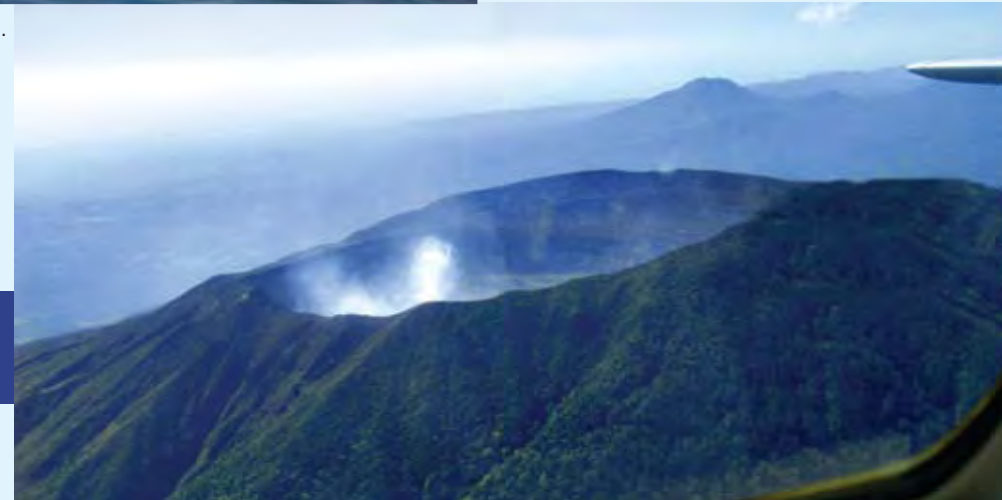


Flying off the coast of Panama.



Final approach in the Caribbean.

Active volcano in Central America.




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AN ESCORTED JOURNEY

any airplane. Long flight legs over water require sensible emergency equipment, but the aircraft are not otherwise different than the aircraft you would see tied down at any airport in the country. Past trips have included everything from a Cessna 150 to personal jets.

Because of the lack of 100LL in many places, Air Journey's trip around the world requires customers to fly aircraft that operate on jet fuel, either turboprop or turbofan. At press time, there are still a few spots available for pilots who want a taste of this once-in-a-lifetime adventure.

"What's as much fun as the journey itself is the fact that the people who go make lifelong friends along the way," smiles Pouille. "Guests come back from these trips and stay in touch, and often, they find another trip to go on together. I wish I started doing this earlier!" 

For more on these unique aviation adventures, log on to airjourney.com or call 888.554.3774.

Thierry Pouille stands on the wing of his Baron before departing on another Air Journey.

