

## NEWSLETTER: *SKYAFRICA*

January 2006

HOWZIT from AFRICA

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It is fantastic to be back in Africa after spending 10 months in Europe. Tis a nice change from the cold and snow that I've been surrounded with for the past few weeks, although that, of course, also has its certain charm.

Christmas and the New Year in Africa were spent in the company of close family and friends all sitting around the pool, sporting bathing costumes with cold beers as accessories. It's a tough life I tell you!

Got lots of flying done as well. Flying gliders in Austria may keep my stick and rudder skills up, but poling a Cessna with a noisy Lycoming up its nose has its advantages, as at make staying in the air for a prolonged period of time somewhat a certainty.

Before diving into a little flying report we want to inform you of the next *SKYAFRICA* Bushpilots Course dates

### Bushpilots course starting dates

\* March 18<sup>th</sup>

\* April 15<sup>th</sup>

\* May 13<sup>th</sup>



### Flying African Skies

#### WINDHOEK TO JOBURG IN A C-172

The day after I arrived from Europe, Karl and I flew to Windhoek to ferry back our C172 ZS-OHK that one of our clients had left there. He had to leave for the States and kindly asked us to return it to Johannesburg for him. We were not complaining ☺



After the short hop from Windhoek Hosea Kutako International Airport (FYWH) to Windhoek Eros (FYWE), we spent the night at the prestigious Windhoek Country Club feasting on copious amounts of fresh seafood and the scrumptious deserts.

The next day we made our way from FYWE to Keetmanshoop (FYKT), flying high to avoid the Awasberge Mountains out of Windhoek and then following the railway line past

Rehoboth along the red sands of the Kalahari dunes. We diverted off our track to fly over the Hardap Dam, which springs out like an oasis in an otherwise dry and barren land. This dam provides water to the small town of Mariental lying close by.

After that we got a little hungry, but seeing as my Mama didn't raise no fool, we unpacked a couple of sandwiches which we had lovingly prepared during breakfast at the Windhoek Country club, unscrewed our water bottles and feasted like kings. We did so whilst always following the road and railway track which danced and entwined in front of us and led us directly to FYKT in a flying time of a comfortable 2.9 hours.



Hardap Dam

In Keetmanshoop I handled the refuelling whilst Karl dealt with landing fees and customs and soon we were on our merry way once more. In Keetmanshoop, the road splits into 3 main directions. One road going to Luederitz, the other to Cape Town and another onwards to Upington. Our route was going to lead us to the last of those three options.



We flew past the Groot Karasberge and along the dried up Nossop Delta. Soon we could make out the luscious green band of the Orange River ahead in the distance. Flying at flight level 75 and averaging 104 knots we reached Upington (FAUP) in 2.2 hours and managed a smooth landing on the longest commercial runway in the southern Hemisphere.

With the fall of the Portuguese regime in Angola, South African Airways lost its landing rights in Luanda and the restrictions on flying over African states were compounded by concern that the country would lose its landing rights in the Ivory Coast and Isle de Sol.



Uptington Runway

As a result, Upington Airport's runway was built to accommodate a Boeing 747 with a full load of passengers, cargo and fuel – allowing planes to take off for Europe without having to stop along the way. The airport's 4900m-long (3.03mile) runway was built in a record seven months in 1975 and it has also been approved by NASA to have the space shuttle land there if need be. Obviously, after knowing these facts, we were a little worried about whether or not our powerful Cessna 172 would be able to land on this tiny little runway, but somehow we managed just fine.

After announcing our arrival on South African soil, we tied down the aerie, hired an unassuming car, bought a stack of fresh grapes on the road side (Upington grows world class grapes!) and headed towards the Augrabie Falls. The Falls are situated in South Africa's Northern Cape Province, 125km west of the town of Upington.



Augrabie Falls

We checked into the Augrabie Falls National Park, which is one of the very cost friendly, as well as beautifully kept national parks in South Africa. During the rainy season, when the Orange River is raging, the waterfall is a magnificent sight to behold resembling that of the Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. When we got there it was not half as powerful as it is known to be, but no less breathtaking.

The next day we did our preflight, said farewell to the friendly folks at Upington, climbed back into OHK and headed out on a heading of 083 towards Kuruman. It was fantastic to see the scenery change so rapidly. As soon as we had passed the Langeberg Mountain Range, we saw the red Kalahari sands slowly disappear and the endless grasslands of the Karoo take its place.

We flew passed Olifantshoek, made sure to avoid Lohatla military area, flew over the old mining town of Sishen which still hauls out iron ore from the fruitful earth and then over Kuruman.

Kuruman is the main town in the Kalahari region and is known as the "Oasis of the Kalahari". The town was built on a permanent artesian water source. Gasegonyane (little water calabash), commonly known as 'Die Oog' (the eye), delivers 20 million liters of crystal clear water daily to its approximately 10 000 inhabitants.



Sishen Mine

We waved down to the people of Kuruman and altered our heading a little to 097 to fly passed Schweizer Reneke and onwards to the mining town of Klerksdorp. Once again, we flew at flight level 75, but it was a mission to keep our baby there. All along our route, we were accompanied by white puffy cumulus clouds and, more often than not, we would be flying with a nose low attitude and still managing a 1000' / minute climb. The thermals were unbelievable! Boy, good fun!! This is paradise for any glider pilot, and in fact, we heard a couple of them along the way and were happy to inform them that their chances of staying up in the air for a long while to come, was reality.

Once we had landed at Klerksdorp (FAKD) after a flying time of 3.4 hours we swiftly refueled and took to the skies once more – but this time it was low-level stuff all the way.

Flying time back to our home base of Brakpan (FABB) was only 1.4 hours and we know the area like the back of our hand. We flew along the winding Vaal River passing over farmhouses and granite quarries and taking in the beautiful sights before us.



All too soon, we had to climb back up to 6000', report overhead our airfield that we were joining for a left hand downwind onto runway 36 - full stop. Our little trip had come to an end. We landed, packed our aerie into the hangar and thanked her for bringing us back home safely. Another great trip flying through the African skies.

PS: Thanks Dad, I shall remember this for a long time to come. You make a damn fine Co-Pilot young man.

Safe flying in 2006 to all of you!

***ERIKA***