

Tecnam Twin's 47 day Tour of Australia

ON 22nd August Giovanni Nustrini and Mary Patterson departed Ardmore in ZK-TTW for a 47 day, 9000 mile tour of Australia. During the trip, they gave some 72 demonstrations of the aircraft to potential customers across a broad spectrum of the aviation industry. Giovanni says he was amazed at the extent of air operations in Australia; "It quickly became obvious that the demonstrations we undertook were just the tip of an iceberg. We could start another similar tour tomorrow and still not cover the opportunities that are available."

The trip

After a short hop from Ardmore to Auckland International, TTW departed for Norfolk Island at 1000hrs and leveled out at 9000 feet



in clear skies above a layer of CBs with a Norfolk ETA of 1430hrs. They arrived to calm conditions and with plenty of time to explore the island.

Day 2 consisted of a flight from Norfolk Island direct to Coolangatta in exactly 6 hours. By day 4, the aircraft was at Redcliffe for its 50 hour check. Back at work straight after that, days 6-9 involved a launch party, various demonstration flights around the Sunshine Coast area and an attendance at a local fly-in.

By day 10, the team were on the Gold Coast for more demonstrations and by day 13 it was time to head south to Port Macquarie and Bankstown. At Port Macquarie the weather closed in requiring an IFR flight plan for the trip to Bankstown. A vacant Avis rent-a-car booth doubled as a flight planning room prior to departure, after which TTW climbed through the soup to TOC at 6000 feet.

By the end of day 17, they had travelled and demonstrated from Bankstown to Wagga Wagga to Griffith, the first landing on red Australian soil. Then it was back to Wagga Wagga where thunderstorms and freezing levels below MSA called a halt to flying for the next couple of days. From there it was on to Bendigo and then Melbourne, now nearing the half way mark on day 21.

Adelaide appeared beneath TTW's wings on day 24 but it was day 27 at Nullarbor that provided some relief

from the now familiar daily routine of navigation, meetings, demonstration flights, accommodation, planning, then repeat. Fuel requirements dictated a stop here and with no avgas available, TTW navigated between road trains to refuel on Mogas at the local petrol station. This typified the value of careful flight planning across large distances and remote spaces. The entire

flight was in fact uneventful in this regard, due to ongoing planning of distances, endurances and alternates (although sometimes there were none). It was always important to call ahead and check that fuel would be available. Sometimes the answer was no, we've run out, and no, we don't know when we're getting some. Next question: "Have you got Mogas?" "Yes, you can have 50 litres" (perhaps necessitating carrying jerries for the trip, and perhaps even then finding the promised fuel is no longer available on arrival).

From Nullarbor it was on to Jandakot, Perth for more demonstrations and a kangaroo encounter. Then, now on day 36, to Kalgoorlie on the way across the centre of the country and a great deal of 'nothing'. This leg involved a night flight for TTW and the particular beauty of a desert sunset.

Day 38 saw a stop at Warburton (a red dusty strip with an avgas supply) on track to Ayers Rock. It was here that Giovanni and Mary met Steve, a Kiwi who has lived in this Aboriginal town (population 200 with nothing for 400 miles in any direction) and pumped avgas for the last 9 years. In fact during the trip they met a lot of Kiwi's, Giovanni saying that it seemed like half the CFI's at aero clubs and flying schools were from New Zealand.

In terms of scenery, a special part of the trip was the time spent at Ayers Rock – a magnificent place to arrive after flying over

such a blank canvas for so long. The thrill was matched a couple of days later (day 42 now) over-flying Lake Eyre which for the second year in a row and the first time in 40 years, contained water.

Then it was back to Redcliffe with a plan to refit the ferry tank for a return home. However a request from a customer in Griffith necessitated a return trip there first for another demonstration. The scale of the trip becomes apparent when considering that this quick 'there and back' diversion was the same distance (1300 miles) as the return flight from Redcliffe to New Zealand.

ZK-TTW didn't end up making the return trip across the Tasman, instead becoming the first of its type to be purchased in Australia.

Travelling with technology

47 days in the air highlighted just how useful it can be to include some of the new portable technologies in your cockpit.

Giovanni and Mary ran a blog on the Tecnam website throughout the trip, including a live spidertrack from the unit they took with them (www.spidertracks.co.nz). It proved to be more useful than they had anticipated. TTW was always on a flight plan and the Australian Air Traffic Controllers became quite familiar with the aircraft. When contact was lost at one point (much of the inside of Australia is not covered by radar, or more importantly, VHF radio) the Controllers googled ZK-TTW to discover they were on spidertracks with the track live on the internet. Concerns about their whereabouts were quickly calmed.

Spidertracks proved useful again when TTW departed Ayers Rock, at the same time as four business jets on track to Hawaii. ATC was kept very busy trying to keep track of the jets on departure with only verbal position reporting and sightings. TTW became the one solid reference as its position was again being displayed on the spidertrack the Controllers were watching.

Another item of very useful technology turned out to be an i-Pad. Even with the full Garmin IFR cockpit in the Tecnam, Giovanni and Mary found the i-Pad to be a perfect flying companion. Small, light and portable, via the internet all VFR

and IFR plates are at ones fingertips, as is weather information from weather sites with radar, to aviation METAR and TAF reports. Hotels could be booked and cars arranged to be ready on landing, not to mention the options for in-flight passenger entertainment including skype with friends while on the move.

Contrast this to an ag pilot they met flying (5 hours out from Perth) to a contract in Western Australia with no map, GPS, or radio frequencies, but he did have a piece of paper with some hand written directions to follow.

A very broad customer base

Tecnam's new Twin stands so alone in the marketplace that Giovanni says it is the potential customers who are approaching him and suggesting uses for the aircraft. The factory has been quick to help out with such opportunities and is already investigating the addition of multiple cabin anchor points for a light cargo configuration with stripped interior.

The potential for training schools to offer cost effective multi engine IFR instruction, especially coupled with a Redbird simulator is obvious and much interest has been expressed in this regard.

It became apparent even on the demo tour how useful it can be to operate a certified aircraft on Mogas in the outback. Also suited to outback life is the fixed gear option, offering reduced maintenance and a 25kg weight saving. One of the mineral research companies to make enquiries operates a fleet of Cessna 210's and calculated they could save A\$160k per annum in fuel using Tecnam Twins. A surprising amount of mineral survey flying is actually undertaken using single engined aircraft operating at perhaps 100 feet above the desert, or water - with no options if the engine stops. It likely won't be long before Tecnam Twins fitted with stingers are a regular sight on these missions.

More information

For more information on the Tecnam Twin, this trip, or the logistics of flying to and around Australia, contact Giovanni Nustrini on 021 832 626 or email: gnustrini@tecnam.co.nz

Captions to Photo Album: **1** The track flown. **2&3** Goodbye NZ. **4** Beautiful Norfolk Island. **5** Welcome to Australia. North bound coastal abeam Surfer's Paradise to Redcliffe. **6** Tracking the Sunshine Coast. **7** Heading to Gold Coast airport. **8** Day 13. IFR climbing in the soup on track Bankstown from Port Macquarie. **9** Planning IFR from Port Macquarie to Bankstown (in a vacant Avis Rent-a-car booth). **10** Airborne out of Bankstown enroute to Wagga Wagga. **11** Downwind in the circuit for YSCB Canberra. Parliament in photo. **12** Just arrived at Griffith on red Australian soil. **13** Wagga Wagga means "Lot's of crows" and Gumly Gumly means "Lot's of frogs"! **14** Melbourne and coastline by night sky. **15** Demonstration flying over Melbourne City. **16** Arriving Adelaide. **17** Taxiing between the road trains at Nullarbor for fuel. **18** Mary pumping Mogas at Nullarbor from the local petrol station. **19** Meeting kangaroos in Perth. **20** Desert Sunset from 6000 feet. **21** At Warburton for a fuel stop en route to Ayers Rock. **22** The magic of Ayers Rock. **23** The second magnificent site in as many days – Lake Eyre, very rarely seen with water. **24** William Creek on the return journey to Redcliffe.

