

Trans Tasman Checklist

Flying a light aircraft to or from Australia is the sort of achievement for many aviators that either appeals a lot, or doesn't appeal at all. It is becoming far more common than it used to be however, with several crossings now happening each year. Lance Weller from Angel Flight NZ knew there would be a lot of organisation and logistics required when he was planning his own recent Tasman crossing and has contributed this article to help steer others with the same thoughts in the right direction. Readers should note that the information that is given applied to Lance's trip only and is neither intended to be exhaustive or current. Rather, it offers a taste of what is involved and several very useful tips and contact points for anyone considering a similar adventure.

WHILE I was setting up 'Angel Flight NZ' in November 2011 it became clear that if I was to fly Angel Flight missions myself then I would need my own aircraft, here in New Zealand. However, my Cirrus SR20 G3 was 1300 miles away in Brisbane, Australia. So I started to research how I could make this flight safely. Finding out everything I needed to wasn't easy, hence this article which may assist anyone with similar aspirations. The main issues were Safety Equipment, Weather, and Customs / Quarantine Requirements

Safety Equipment

I purchased a Winslow Island Flyer life-raft (weight 16kg) direct from Winslow in Florida USA for approx US\$4000 including airfreight to Brisbane. They are all built to order and therefore it was brand new. It is worth paying an extra US\$265 to have it vacuum packed so servicing is not required for 3 years.

As we need a minimum of 2 litres of water per person per day, we each had 6L of water on board and high energy muesli bars, on the assumption that if we were unlucky enough to have to ditch then we could be in the life-raft for 3 days. A good quality aviation life-jacket was worn at all times.

We had three GME EPIRBs with GPS location, two registered with Australian SAR and one with NZ SAR.

We took a 'Spot' GPS tracker. These are 95x65x25mm and weigh just 200 grams. I purchased it in Australia for A\$170 but they are also available from Aviation Safety Supplies here in NZ.

We attached it with Velcro 'buttons' on top of the instrument panel, so it has a clear view of the sky to receive GPS signals. By subscribing to their tracking service (at US\$185 per annum) the Spot Tracker sends a location signal every 10 minutes to family and friends, which is shown on Google Maps, so they could all follow our progress. It was very accurate to the extent

that it caused an anxious moment for our followers when they noticed us flying right past Lord Howe Island. They thought we had missed seeing Lord Howe Island due to cloud and in fact we did fly past Lord Howe, but it was so we could photograph Balls Pyramid, 12 miles to the South East. On landing we just pressed an OK button to send a pre-worded message saying "Landed safely at destination airfield" which means you do not have to rush around finding a telephone box to call and say you have arrived safely.

In our 'Grab Bag' we had a signal mirror (with aiming hole in the centre of the mirror), Rescue Streamer, 12m long x 150mm wide, and orange floats made by Rescue Streamer in Hawaii which can also be used on land. We also had a hand held Vertex Aviation radio, Garmin Aera 500 portable GPS, Laser Rescue Light (which sends a fan of light 1 mile wide visible at a distance of 20 miles at night and 3 miles by day, operates for 40 hours and is waterproof) from Greatland Laser in Alaska (US\$100). There were also thermal bags and thermal blankets, as the floor of the life raft would get very cold. To keep raft weight to a minimum I chose not to have an insulated raft floor. There were various other safety items carried as well.

We also carried an i-Pad which showed our position at all times on aviation charts.

Being able to obtain fuel enroute at Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands should not be taken for granted and you should telephone fuel suppliers to ensure they will have Avgas on your arrival there. Phone +61 2 6563 2066 for Lord Howe and Norfolk +67 232 4122.

To gain access to official Australian Aviation weather go to Airservices Australian Aviation with NAIPS (it is free) but takes 24 hours for confirmation of registration. Australia provides aviation forecasts for both Lord Howe Island and Norfolk Island.



The route: Brisbane - Lord Howe - Norfolk - Kerikeri



Balls Pyramid near Lord Howe Island is 1843' tall.



Arriving at Lord Howe Island.



Arriving at Norfolk Island.



Weather

This is the biggest single issue when planning flight. We watched a slow moving high from West of Perth as it travelled east and 10 days later was located over the Tasman Sea.

When you download the Lord Howe Island Aerodrome Chart from the Australian Airservices website you will see that "Severe turbulence in the approach to the runway can preclude a safe landing. The only safe course of action in such cases is to divert to Australia". (Neither we or most light aircraft have enough fuel to do this). Note that winds of 12 knots or more from 120° to 240° sector and 320° to 060° sector can cause this severe turbulence. I found it very useful to draw these sectors on the aerodrome chart to get a good understanding of which winds make a landing difficult. The Lord Howe Island runway is 886m with water at each end.

Download the Norfolk Chart as for Lord Howe Island. There are nice long runways there for 737 operations.

There is always a meteorological observer on duty at Norfolk whom you can telephone for the current situation (they will not provide a forecast but their radar has a range of 512 km). Phone: +67 232 2079. On the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website enter Lord Howe Island forecast and Norfolk Island forecast and they will provide a 5 day weather outlook which was very useful.

The grid point wind chart No. 81622 provides wind direction, wind speed in knots, temp in degrees Celsius at heights of 5000, 10,000 and 14,000 etc. in grids from Australia to NZ. This was very useful for checking if a headwind strength would cause a problem.

Customs and Quarantine Requirements

I believe we complied with all requirements and the following notes were as applicable as at January 2012, but I provide no guarantee and readers should make their own enquiries.

We departed from Archerfield (Brisbane) for Lord Howe Island. There were no Customs requirements at Archerfield as on landing again we would still officially be on Australian soil.

396nm from Archerfield we arrived at Lord Howe Island. This was a short stop and from where we would officially leave Australia so all Customs formalities must be complied with. They require 24 hours prior notice of arrival, including aircraft registration and type, full name, date of

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birth and passport number for each person on board. We emailed these details to: stanfenton@optus.com.au

Life is very relaxed on Lord Howe. We telephoned Stan on arrival who advised he would complete the paperwork on our departure the next morning. Passports were stamped and we were issued with a stamped General Declaration which has to then be given to Customs at Norfolk Island. An Inwards/Outwards crew report Form 3 and Aircraft Outward Manifest were completed. The landing fee was A\$30 and fuel \$2.51 per litre (which is brought to the Island in 40 gallon drums).

Another 484nm on from Lord Howe Island we arrived at Norfolk Island.

Both Customs/Quarantine and the Airport Manager require 24 hours prior notice of Aircraft type, Registration, full names, date of birth and passport numbers, arrival time, departure time and MTOW fuel required. Email info@airport.govt.nz and customs@admin.govt.nz. We made radio contact with Norfolk Unicom at 150 nm out.

On arrival you will be directed to taxi to fuel pumps. Stay in your aircraft and do not open the doors. Quarantine will pass a spray can to be used to spray the inside of your aircraft, wait 5 minutes and then it is off to Customs where you hand over the 'General Declaration' from Lord Howe Island, and receive a new 'General Declaration' which is to be given to NZ Customs. We were then

given permission to leave the next morning without any further Customs formalities required. As it was a Sunday, and apart from the landing fee of A\$41.58, there were fees for parking A\$15 for 1 day, there was an Airport Manager's 'Out of Hours fee' of A\$40 and Out of Hours refuel fee of A\$50. The cost of fuel was A\$3.44 per litre. The Norfolk Airport Manager's office was very helpful, allowing access to a computer for lodging our NZ Flight plan and obtaining NZ weather.

For landing in New Zealand, application (on form NZCS361) must be made at least 5 working days prior to arrival to gain approval to arrive at a Non-designated Customs Airport, which in our case was Kerikeri Airport, 481 nm from Norfolk Island. Email: ntc.trade.evaluators@customs.govt.nz

Once this approval is acquired you must then advise Customs (Email: opuamarine@customs.govt.nz) and Quarantine (Email: mqsopua@maf.govt.nz) at least 24 hours prior to arrival. In addition MAF should be telephoned on 09 402 5946 or Customs on 029 602 1669 just prior to departure from Norfolk, so they can drive 40 minutes or so from their Opuia office. They need this phone call to ensure they will be waiting for your arrival as their main task at Opuia is clearing international yachts into NZ.

On arrival at Kerikeri, stay in your aircraft with doors closed again (yes it does get hot) and wait until a spray can is handed in. All our luggage was inspected and a fee of NZ\$188.15 was paid to MAF.

Space does not permit advice on lodging flight plans for Australian and NZ sectors. You should know how to calculate critical point and understand how it differs from point of no return. It is a good idea to calculate these a few times using actual weather data in the comfort of your home rather than doing it for the first time when under stress in the cockpit.

As you will be fully loaded on departure and much lighter on landing a weight and balance for both take off and landing is essential.

Don't necessarily expect to be able to fly in straight lines either. I was surprised by the random nature of cloud we encountered from time to time which required detours to maintain cloud clearance.

If you are flying from NZ to Australia, all the same Customs and other requirements need to be met in reverse.

All in all, it was an interesting experience while reminding oneself regularly that the aircraft does not know it is over water. I can be contacted on 027 893 4587 or email: lance@angelflightnz.co.nz

Lance Weller



"Flying an Angel Flight NZ mission and helping someone while you fly may be among the most satisfying flying you will do"

Pilots Wanted

Angel Flight NZ needs 'Angels in Cockpits'

Angel Flight NZ is now well under way having flown 2,569 nm to and from Auckland. Our total team of Pilots, Earth Angels and Mission Coordinators is now 78 persons. With 36 Pilots mainly in the North Island and as we are starting to receive enquiries from other parts of North Island and South Island we would like Pilots from Napier, New Plymouth, Paraparaumu, Palmerston North and the South Island to consider registering with us. Pilots need to have 250 hours PIC, have current Pilot's Licence, BFR and Medical and be willing to donate 5 – 10 hours of their time and their aircraft per year.



Contact Lance Weller
Phone: 09 434 3271 or 027 893 4587
Email: lance@angelflightnz.co.nz

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