

Controllers' South American flying adventure

Trip update #2

(Editor's Note: In the last issue of NAV CANADA News, Vancouver Controllers Hans Sturm and Lawrence McLeod, and their friend Peter Kaushakis, were stuck in Ecuador, wondering if they would ever get their clearance to fly into Peru. Here, we include the next instalment of Sturm's trip updates, which takes them through Peru and Chile, to the tip of South America.)

Jan. 31: Guayaquil, Ecuador

At noon today, we finally received permission to land at Trujillo, Peru, but not to proceed further until the performance data for the C210 was received and analyzed. The reason given was that Nazca, which was on our route, had only a 3,300-ft landing strip and was 1,800 ft above sea level. (Worth noting that they regularly run a C172 with four people on tours out of Nazca and they had no problem with us landing at Arequipa at 8,400 above sea level.)

Back to the airport to get the airplane data and fax it off to our friend Ana. Rather than wait in Trujillo for Ana to make up her mind, we decided to spend one more night in Guayaquil and get an early start. We flight planned and paid our fees, so as to get an early start without delay.

Feb. 1: Trujillo and Pisco, Peru

Departed Guayaquil IFR for Trujillo at 11,000 ft, landing three hours later. After getting fuel and paying our fees we found out our

sible. I was more than happy to pass out a NAV CANADA hat and tee shirt to these guys: absolutely wonderful folks.

At 3:00 p.m. we finally received permission to proceed, which gave us just enough time to get to Pisco, as apparently fuel is not available at Nazca.

Ten minutes after departure we received a call from the Tower that they had found a GPS item in the airport office that belonged to us. Peter had forgotten his GPS phone. After paying our second landing fee, and with phone in hand, we were off to Pisco IFR, arriving after dark at a military airport with no facilities for private aircraft.

Along came Martin, the airport fireman, to our rescue. He found us a parking spot and took us to town in a cab. We got the best hotel in town for US\$30 per night for three including breakfast.

After taking Martin out to dinner we found a Scotia Bank that spit out money, thank god. Hard to believe in such a poor town that you could find a Scotia Bank.

Feb. 2: Nazca, Arequipa, Peru

Out of Pisco at 10 a.m., after



Flying over the Nazca lines

having some difficulty finding a way to get in to the airport.

Next stop Nazca. Ninety minutes later we were in the Tower for a brief tour. The staff arranged a ride to the other side of the airport and booked a flying tour of the Nazca lines for us. We flew the

Nazca lines in a C172 at 30c. It was very bumpy, with steep turns. No wonder most people get sick. Interestingly, there were at least 20 Cessnas parked at Nazca.

Next, we were off to Arequipa VFR, at minimum of altitude 15,500 ft., landing an hour and twenty minutes later at 8,400 ft.



Nazca Tower



Controllers in Nazca, Peru

above sea level. After a quick Tower tour, we were off to the Lan Chile office to book tickets to Cuzco and Machu Picchu. Round trip airfare to Cuzco was \$176 each and the Machu Picchu tour, including two nights, hotel transfers, train ride, entry into Machu Picchu with guide, was \$225. Dinner that night was overlooking the town centre, for a total of \$35, including drinks.



Approach Controller in Cuzco.

Feb. 3: Cuzco, Peru

Up at 5:45 a.m. to catch the 7:59 a.m. flight to Cuzco, landing in Juliaca on the way at over 12,000 ft. above sea level. By 10 a.m. we were in Cuzco and on our way to the hotel. It didn't take us long to feel the altitude but after two cups of coca tea, things started to improve. Faxed and e-mailed Chile again

The people in Peru and Ecuador have been extremely friendly and helpful especially at the airports.



Lawrence, Peter and Hans in Cuzco, Peru

regarding our permission. A quick nap, a walk around town and dinner, then off to bed by 9 p.m.

Shopping in Peru is very inexpensive, but unfortunately with little room in the plane, we could only buy only a few items. So far all the people in Peru and Ecuador have been extremely friendly and helpful especially at the airports. Can't say the same for the government officials. They do nothing but hurt tourism and the aviation industry. We learned that Ken Borek Air flies around Peru to avoid all the problems.

Feb. 4: Cuzco and Machu Picchu, Peru

Up at 4:45, breakfast at the hotel and off to the train to Machu Picchu, a trip of three and a half hours, each way. Machu Picchu was very impressive and we had a great visit, but *muy caliente*. We would have loved a beer, but because of the altitude we stuck to coca tea. Machu Picchu was an all day affair, returning to Cuzco at 8 p.m. The only complaint we had about



Machu Picchu

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permit to proceed had not yet arrived.

The flight plan office was extremely helpful, they must have phoned Lima on our behalf at least six times and they also faxed in our request again. They mentioned that dealing with Lima is almost impos-

Cuzco was the street handlers. There are always at least two on you and the terrible smell of exhaust fumes is everywhere. Still waiting for our Chile clearance.

Feb. 5: Cuzco to Arequipa, Peru

Off to the Cuzco airport, a quick Tower tour (23 movements a day) and we caught our flight back to Arequipa. On arrival we discovered our Chile permission still had not arrived. We are hoping that it will be there in the morning or we will depart without it.

Feb. 6: Arica and La Serena, Chile

At the airport at 9 a.m., and after a 90 minute headwind on the ground, we departed for Arica, Chile, with permission in hand. We were given a SIGMET about a volcano that was active about 20 miles southeast of the airport. We wanted to get some pictures, but couldn't spot it because of clouds.



La Serena Controllers.

Our departure from Arequipa at 8,400 ft. above sea level at gross weight was no problem at all. We climbed to 13,500 minimum VFR altitude, landing in Arica, Chile, one hour later. Arica airport is in the middle of desert that stretches 400 miles to the south, but it is also near the ocean and very popular with tourists looking for hot weather.

We were greeted by a whole crowd of people in Arica: the international police, customs, immigration, and the local police, who were nice enough to bring along their dogs. The dogs seemed very interested in our airplane, sniffing everything. This was the first time that anyone looked inside.

All entry formalities went smoothly and after paying a small fee we toured the Tower. The people in Arica couldn't do enough for us. This, we found out later, was

to be the norm in Chile. After fueling up and paying our fee (\$38 for the airspace fee for three months) we departed for La Serena, 4.5 hours down the coast. Desert-like with a very scenic coast line.

When we cleared the control zone the Tower advised that the staff at La Serena were expecting us and were arranging our accommodation. This was a nice touch.

On landing, we were greeted by the control staff on the apron. The staff advised that every working Controller was aware of our arrival as soon as we had landed at Arica, and an ACC Controller from Puerto Montt had a message for us to join him at his home.

Here's his very gracious message:

*Dear colleagues,
I am Juan A. Canales, ATC at the Oceanic Area Control Centre of Chile. I knew tonight about your trip and immediately I wanted to contact to you. I wish to invite you all to overnight at my home in Puerto Varas, when you land in Puerto Montt. We are sure you will enjoy this stay better than any other in Puerto Montt, because we are near by the lake, facing the volcanoes.*

Please, let me know if you are accepting this invitation (free of charge of course) and when are you planning to stay in Puerto Montt. We would like you to feel at home. I have visited your country a couple of times, visiting my brothers, and I always met colleagues at the airport (Halifax, Toronto, Montreal) and Moncton ACC. They were very kind with me and I want to be a nice cicerone.

Well, I hope you can read this mail before arriving to Puerto Montt. Enjoy your stay in Chile

*Regards,
Juan A. Canales Leyton*

Now we discovered that we may have a major problem with the airplane. Oil appeared to be leaking from underneath. We would have it looked at in the morning. If we are to be grounded, La Serena was the place to be: great weather, and a beachside resort. We were picked up at 10 p.m. by one of the Controllers for dinner and he had a little surprise for us. When we arrived at the restaurant, the entire

Control staff from La Serena was waiting for us. We enjoyed a wonderful sea food dinner with fine Chilean wine.

Feb. 7: Concepción, Chile

At the airport at 9:30 a.m., our Chilean contact Raul from Concepción had already learned of



Concepción, Chile

our misfortune and arranged for mechanics to be waiting for us. They did a leak-down on the cylinder and we were relieved to find out all was okay with them. It was discovered that the oil separator was the culprit. In no time the Chilean mechanics had manufactured a gasket and we were on our way.

Because of the delay, we were not able to land in Santiago before proceeding to Concepción. Flying at 9,500, three hours later we landed at Concepción, where we were met by our Chilean contact Raul and friends plus two Controllers. Raul had booked accommodation for us and it was agreed that we would meet for dinner at 9:30 p.m. Again, fine Chilean wine and a superb meal with Raul and a couple of Controllers.

Feb. 8: Concepción, Chile

The day started with an oil change and applying for permission for Argentina. Once that was done I had a look at the long term weather forecast for southern Chile, Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and Torres del Paine. The long term outlook was winds of 80-100 km for Punta Arenas and Puerto Natales.

We decided to depart for Puerto Montt in the morning and make some decisions then. When I had completed my weather briefing, I was asked by one of the Controllers to meet with the airport manager, as he was very interested in our trip. It turns out he was in

Kamloops two years ago to visit his friend who was part of the airport staff. Small world.

I was then presented with a commemorative plate and a book on the history of aviation in Chile. It just didn't seem sufficient to present him with NAV CANADA tee-shirt. I was then asked to have the airplane brought down to the Tower and have a photo taken, to be published in their National Controller newsletter. These Chilean people just seem to get better. That night we took Raul and his wife out to dinner in thanks for all his help.

Feb. 9: Puerto Montt, Balmaceda and Puerto Natales, Chile

Raul and his wife got us off to a good start by having us over for breakfast and driving us out to the airport. Flight planned for Puerto Montt and said our goodbyes. Once again we were not asked to pay for parking or landing fees. Capt. Pedro donated *muchos pesos* to the flying club to show our appreciation. Airborne at 9 a.m.

Enroute to Puerto Montt, we flew over some of the most beautiful scenery we have ever seen: rolling hills, rivers, lakes, towering volcanoes and picturesque farms. We were on the ground in Puerto Montt after just over two hours of flying. After a quick check, the weather showed good visibility and winds less than 30 kts on the ground at Balmaceda, Puerto Natales and Punta Arenas, so we decided to push on.

Wind is always a factor south of Puerto Montt. After fuel, flight planning, and a promise to return to Puerto Montt to visit the Tower and ACC on the return leg we were airborne for our next fuel stop at Balmaceda, 276 miles south.

On the way to Balmaceda, we started out over the ocean and then over mountains about 50 miles south. This area looked exactly like Alaska, with mountains, ocean, glaciers, blue, white and green. We could easily splice our footage of Alaska in here and you would not be able to tell the difference. The Andes on this leg are barely 13,000 feet in Chile and much lower in Argentina.

