

Corsica trip write up (Jul 2nd ... Jul 14th 2021)

Corsica looked like the perfect holiday destination to reach with the family mini-airliner. We have never been there and it seemed it had all the things we like: outdoor, sun, mountains, sea, swimming and also superb camping - in terms of camping friendly weather and dog friendly camping grounds.



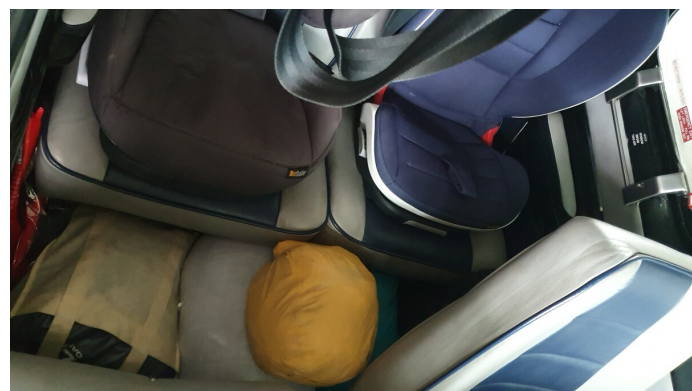
Corsica in little Felicja's view before the trip. Rocky mountains are towering in the background, behind tents on the beach.

Travelling by means of general aviation this time also made a lot of sense in itself. Of course, like always, we were depending on the weather, which could easily make us postpone or cancel the trip. However had it been raining cats and dogs at our destination, it would not be actually fun to go there anyway. But there were also other circumstances in favour of travelling by the Bonanza - except that it was fun for me. It was arguably the fastest way to get there, even counting total time spent travelling. We could easily take the dog along. And - compared to airlines - it provided a degree of flexibility that proved essential.

Initially we intended to go on the 30th of June. Had we booked travel in advance, we would have to cancel or re-schedule twice. At first, the Aeroklub general assembly that was to be held on 29th, was actually postponed by one day. I am on the management board and it would be a bit disrespectful if I would be absent. The second problem was that on 28th of June, Fela the youngest girl developed a high fever, reaching 40 degrees C. By 30th it was almost gone, but - again - had we booked travel for 1st, we would need to cancel, as we definitely preferred not to go anywhere without a full day of observation confirming a complete recovery.

And thus we decided to leave on July the 2nd. One day before we set off, when it already seemed Fela should be all OK, I drove to the airfield and installed the children's seats. I also brought most of the heavy stuff we wanted to take: sleeping bags, the tent, aircraft cover, trekking boots ... and the rubber boat! The plan was to fit it all under the children's feet. Despite the amount of equipment required for fun family camping, I did not anticipate any trouble with staying below the maximum takeoff weight limitation. However, as I am constantly reminded, the Bonanza is easily loaded too aft... which in turn may of course cause a lot of trouble. With this in mind, I devoted a lot of time to plan the loading. I carefully weighted all the items we planned to take, prepared a suitable Excel spreadsheet and tested a bunch of different configurations in the Bonanza Performance app, adding ample margins. I checked that

the sea temperature at this time of year was expected to be 22 C, so I also dropped the life raft, which saved us more than 8 kilograms. Although of course we did have a set of serviceable vests.



	A	B	C	D	E	F
		front left	front right	back left	back right	baggage
1						
2	total	88.8	81.0	51.0	58.0	24.8
3						
4						
5	bags from home				8.7	8.0
6						
7	Water & snacks		5.0			
8	mateusz	85.0				
9	mateusz boots			1.1		
10	ola's boots				0.9	
11	ola's travel bag		5.0			
12	ola		61.0			
13	kawa		10.0			
14	fela					24.6
15	mila			34.8		
16	cover				3.7	
17	raft					
18	tent			3.8		
19	boat					3
20	child seat			6.9		
21	child seat				6.8	

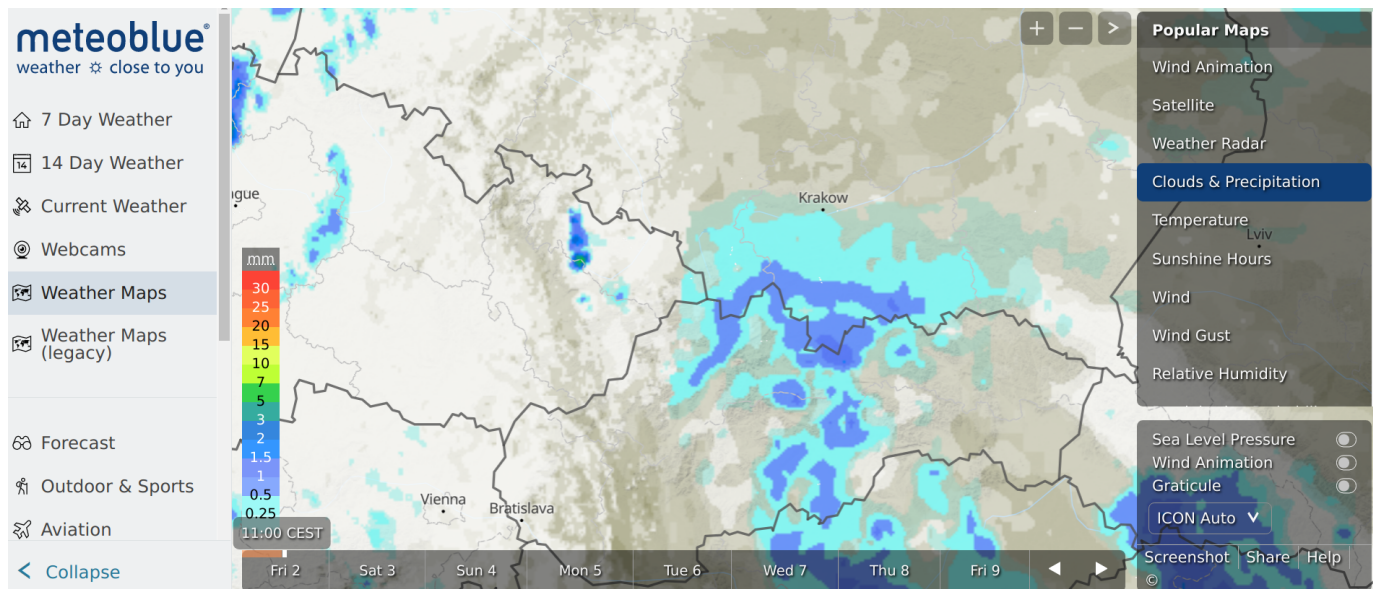
Regarding the routing, the plan was to fly over western Slovakia, cut a corner of Hungary and then across Slovenia to the vicinity of Venice. That was about half way, so a good place to take some rest and add fuel. I e-mailed and then phoned Caorle LIKE, a small airfield featuring a positive report on EuroGA Airports Database. I was reasoning a grass strip, as long as it is sufficiently long, will be easier to manage with the dog on board. From there we would proceed more or less directly to the northern tip of Corsica, of course passing first over Adriatic Sea, then above the Appenines, and then over Mediterranean Sea. The final destination was Propriano LFKO - again chosen because of very positive PIREPs - which I intended to reach flying across the Corsican mountains.

On the day of departure, we turned up at the airfield in the morning. The weather was suboptimal. Although it was all fine at the destination, south of Katowice some intermittent rain was forecasted in Czechia and Slovakia. It could get better later during the day, but then we could be facing afternoon thunderstorms over Italy. I filed EPKM N0150A060, DCT NETIR DCT REVMA DCT NIT DCT KUVEX DCT DIMLO DCT MS3 DCT TREBNJE DCT COL DCT PQSW1 DCT to LIKE0250, alternate LJPZ. We took off at 08:17 local ... only to tell Praha Radar half an hour later that we thank them for their kind service, but would prefer to return to Katowice for the time being. This round trip flight lasted 1 hour and 12 minutes. Showers and low cloud over the mountains where Polish, Slovakian and Czech borders meet were simply precluding any visual flying to the south.

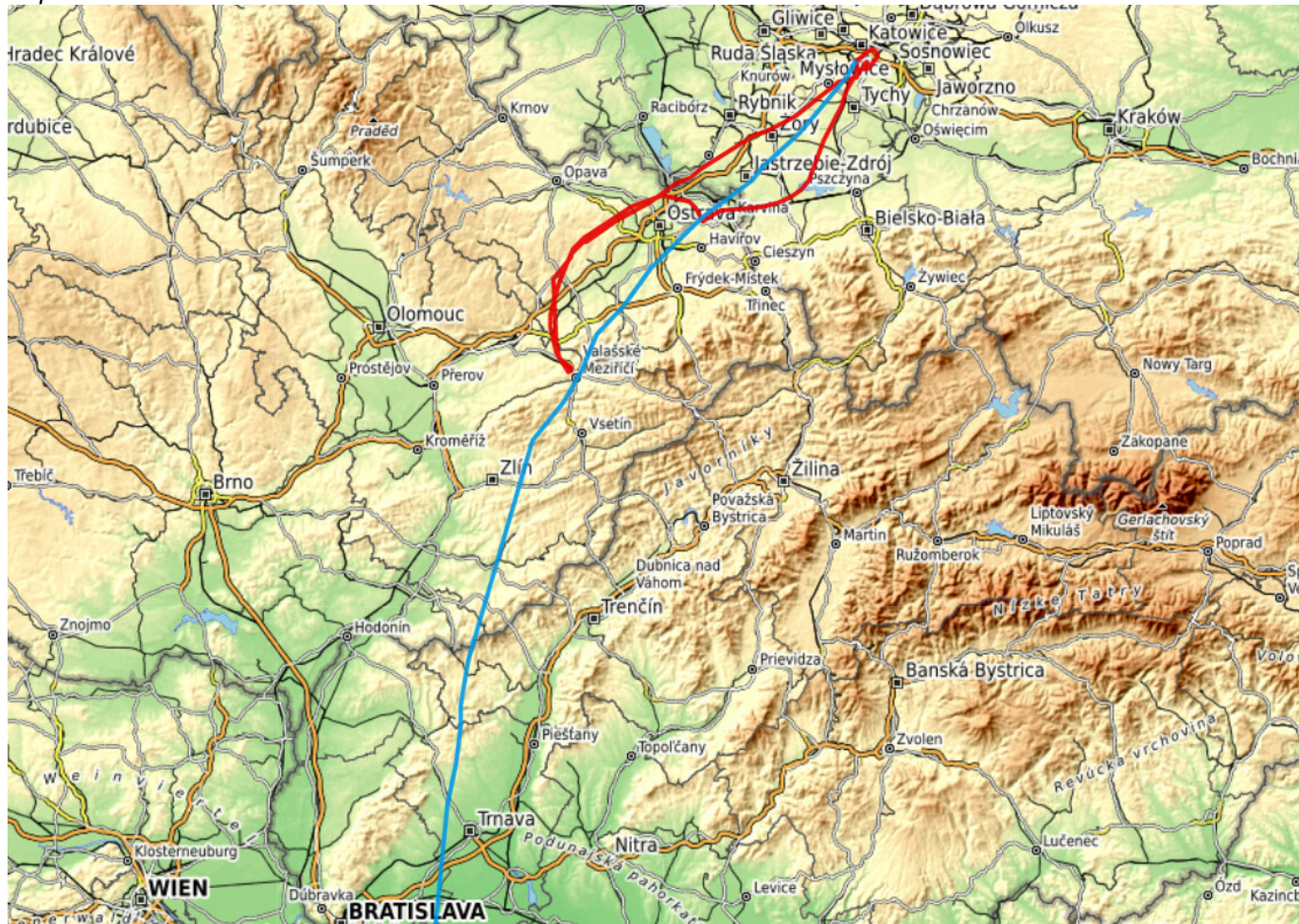


Of course my other half became slightly concerned, but - as will become even more evident further on - I am very lucky she is very tolerant and supportive. We topped the fuel tanks and half waited the weather out, half outsmarting it with a more westerly routing that brought us mostly over flatter ground - at least where the worst clouds were. The new plan I filed went like EPKM N0150A060 DCT TUSIN DCT ESETO

DCT Berva DCT Kuvex DCT Dimlo DCT MS3 DCT Trebnje DCT Col DCT PQSW1 DCT to LIKE0250. That went quite well, despite the fact we could not climb A060 for quite a long time, which made the ride initially a bit bumpy. Things improved a lot over Hungary. In the end, we landed in Italy under very hot and very blue skies, delayed some 3 hours with regard to the initial plan.



Improvements forecasted for 11:00 LT...



The round trip track (in red) - note initial heading directly towards the mountains. The improved routing (in blue) went to the west to avoid the highest ground.

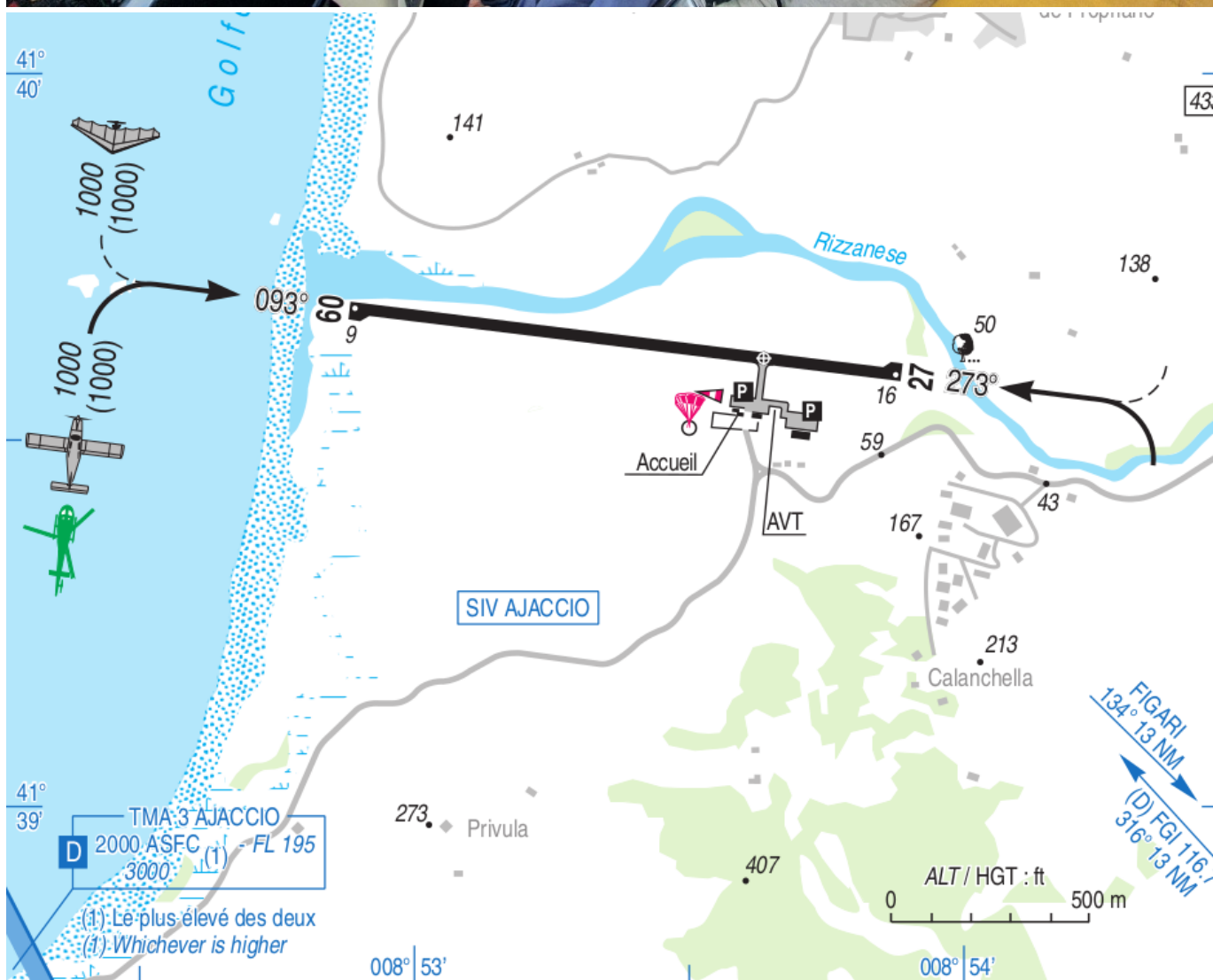
It took us around an hour to get sorted out. The next leg was N0150F085 DCT CHI DCT PESE1 DCT PES1 DCT RQNW1 DCT MIRSA DCT BTA DCT 4220N00914E DCT LFKO0200, alternate LFKF. Looking at the airspace structure, I was a bit afraid of flying through Italy, which I had only visited briefly before. And while it was better than I had thought - and while I got cleared all the way along exactly as I wished - I must admit it is a bit more challenging than, say, Czechia or Austria. The CTR frequencies are busy all the time. It seems the controllers do not really have an easy view of VFR route I am putting into my flight plan. But to be fair, the lady manning Pisa told me I can do whatever I want to avoid weather, as long as I tell her my indented routing in her sector. We made it over the high mountains well before the

thunderstorms came, but the CBs were already building up and due to my unjustified optimism, some unpleasant manouveres were required to stay clear of cloud.



Very hot fuel stop near Venice

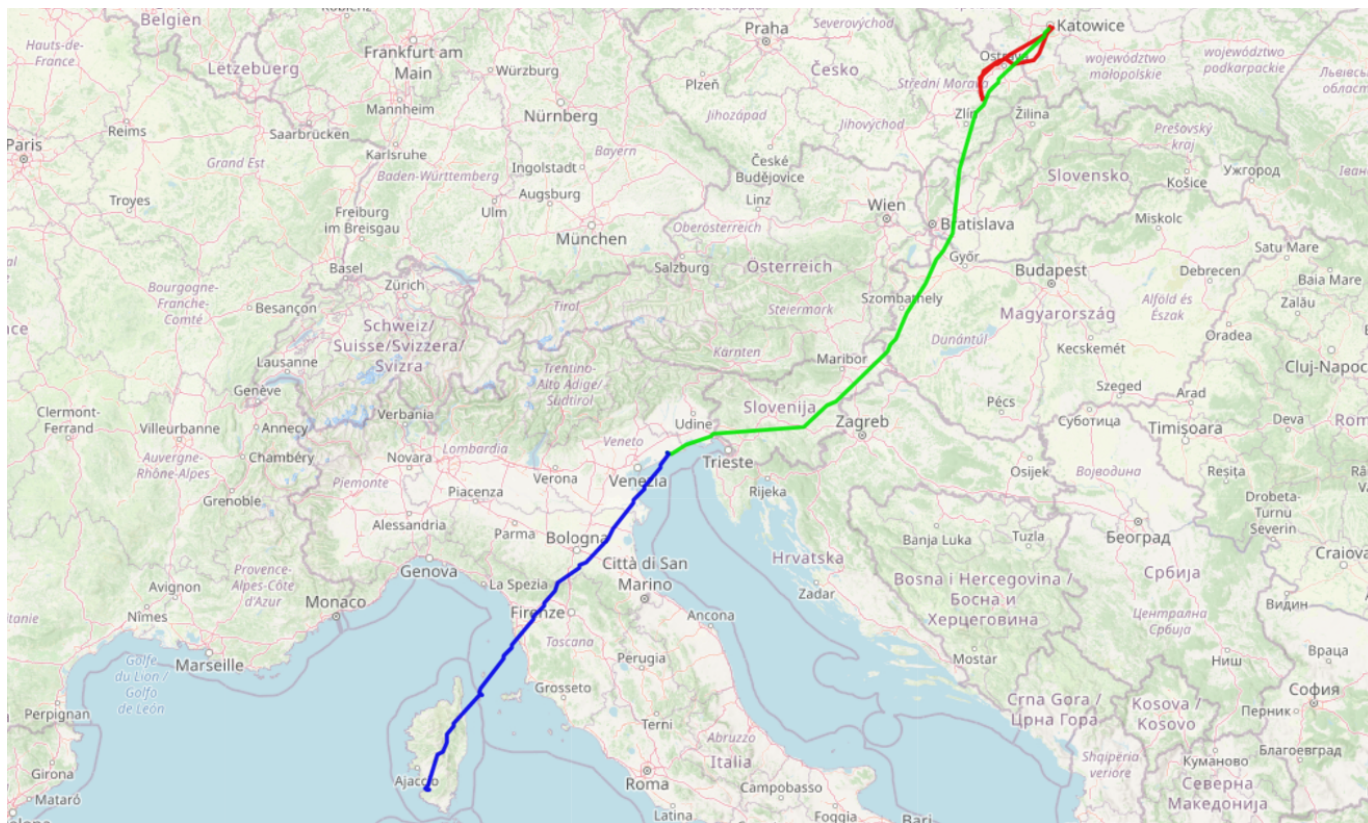
The Mediterranean sea provided us with some relief. We got a very nice view of Elba and set to fly across Corsica. In retrospect I think I should have followed advice not to overfly the Corsican peaks on a sunny June afternoon. True, the views out of the window were splendid, but again, not surprisingly, we encountered some holes in the air. All very mild experience by pilot's standards - and the children actually did not notice - but my Ola is quite sensitive and at 140 KTAS it would cost us maybe additional 10 - 12 minutes to circle the island along the north and west coast. Generally on this trip I learned an important lesson: time in air is maybe a half of all the time spent moving the family from A to B by light aircraft. And if you already devote a whole day to travelling, what difference it makes to add even an extra hour of flying - if only that one hour makes the flight more comfortable? And of course it is always one extra hour of fun for me!



No wonder VFR at night is prohibited at LFKO. Sharp turns are needed to position oneself for an approach from the land - which is I presume rather usual when arriving on a sunny afternoon, sea breeze statistically adding to the usual westerly tendency. Anyway, we landed without issues at 17:17 local ... which left me with at most one hour to pick up our rental car from the town. The Europcar agency was closing at 18:30 and fetching the car on the next day was out of question. After all the next day was Saturday and we were formally in a very southern part of France.



I knew the usual trick to get to the town is to swim across the river, however it looked like I simply did not have time for that. I was ready to call a taxi ... but again, would it arrive in time on Friday afternoon? Fortunately one kind Jean-Georges, a parachuting enthusiast, offered to drive me to the town quickly.



Overview of the route flown

I fetched the car, drove to the airfield and picked up the family. Our cargo barely fitted into the vehicle. After securing the Bonanza, we rushed to the supermarket - closing 20:00 - and finally reached a nice camping on the northern shores of the Propriano bay. Before even we set our tent, the children rushed for the beach for an evening dip. The girls love water... and at home we do not have any significant bodies of water within a considerable radius! The dog was unwinding chewing and biting random pieces of wood.



Now, we do not actually need much time to feel like we are on holidays. Initially we planned to stay on Corsica for full four days and then head home on Wednesday. These four days went by almost exactly as we had imagined. On Saturday we drove to Col Bavella, aiming to see the mountains from the ground. It turned out that driving on the windy Corsican roads was no better experience - in terms of motion sickness - than flying a light aeroplane overhead these very same roads. Anyway, quite a lot of people on the parking lot, which is presumably because the famous GR50 trail passes through Col Bavella. We took a path heading towards Bocca di u Truvone, sort of bypassing the main hiking route, but still met many tourists. It is nice bringing a dog is not a problem at all in the Corsican nature reserves. However a few passers-by looked at the dog and warned us that very steep terrain awaits ahead. Well, they should have known Kawa the dog does UIAA grade I - II climbs without any belaying, of course as long as there is no overhang!



On Sunday we drove towards the Figari airport to try some mild canyoning. Again we have no river canyons at home within, I think, 300 km radius. Now this diversion proved to be the ultimate fun for the whole family, dog included. In the mountains whatever hiking route we follow, it is usually either too boring for the adults or too challenging for the children. In a suitable canyon, it turns out, the adults can do fun jumps and long swims, while at the same time the children have fun simply swimming near the shore and may readily bypass the obstacles they (or the adults) find too difficult. Funny thing the dog actually swims very well, but has very low self-confidence in this regard. Sometimes it takes a few minutes to convince her to get wet and join us. But of course we never throw her into the water when she is not ready for that.



On the way back - at least sort of - we visited Bonifacio for some sightseeing. Devoting a whole day to sightseeing is not exactly our way, but scheduled as a rest after an active day, walking around the old town and its fortifications felt like a very balanced afternoon activity. We had icecream and an early dinner, at least early for Corsican standards. By the way, we ate almost all our dinners at restaurants - and the food was quite good... but we were surprised to conclude it fell a bit short of the mainland French standards we had encountered on earlier travels!



Remembering the heat was hitting us very hard in the mountains, I suggested why don't we do one of these Coastal Walks on Monday. Lots of scrambling, which is what the children love, but no overall elevation gain. Which, in turn, I reasoned, should be easier on the little ones. Encouraged by a trail description I found online, we drove to Tizzano and headed west along the coast. The plan was to follow the coastline up to one famous Silver Beach, seemingly accessible only via a long trek or a 4WD vehicle. Overall, I think it was a good idea, but it had two major flaws. First of all, the azure sea occupying most of the horizon constantly tempted the children. We should have started with a quick dip in the sea right after parking in the village; that would have boosted the morale, cutting short constant inquiries on how far would we be walking until we can finally swim. The second thing was the walk was simply too long and I should have figured out the walking times are, as usual, given assuming relatively fit adults... Anyway, despite not even making the third of the distance to Silver Beach, we had a good day, concluding in enjoying the sea near Tizzano and then delicious ice cream in the old town of Sartene.



The last full day was to be devoted to even more serious canyoning in the Upper Fiumicelli river. The morale fell a bit when I lost my way in thorny bushes, but eventually there was a lot of swimming, jumps and boulder scrambling. Even though everyone felt a bit cold, we jointly decided we wanted to return to the car via the river rather than just walking back through the woods - which is how we came to also walk down a section of the more popular, Lower Fiumicelli canyon.



The day ended in an agreeable dinner at San Gavino-di-Carbini and on Wednesday morning we were ready to head home. Flying-wise, the weather was absolutely perfect. Blue skies all over the Europe. I promised no turbulence and no issues at all. Obviously starting this journey home involved some logistics: first I brought all the people and luggage to the airfield, then drove back to the town to clean the car and return it to the rental agency. And then naturally I had to return to the airport - this time by means of walking through the town and swimming the river that at Propriano LFKO happens to be a very convenient substitute for an airport fence.

Propriano - Blue Skies!

TAF LFKF 070800Z 0709/0809 23010KT **CAVOK**
 BECMG 0720/0722 04005KT
 BECMG 0808/0809 24012KT=

Central Italy - Blue Skies!

TAF LIRZ 070500Z 0706/0806 VRB05KT **CAVOK**
 BECMG 0709/0711 22010KT
 BECMG 0716/0718 VRB05KT=

Western Slovenia - Blue Skies!

TAF LJPZ 070500Z 0706/0715 12005KT **CAVOK**
 BECMG 0710/0712 20010KT=

Central Slovenia - Blue Skies!

TAF LJLJ 070500Z 0706/0806 30002KT **CAVOK**
 BECMG 0710/0712 23010KT
 BECMG 0717/0718 VRB02KT=

Southern Slovakia - Blue Skies!

TAF LZIB 071100Z 0712/0812 29006KT **CAVOK**
 BECMG 0716/0718 01006KT
 TEMPO 0722/0807 VRB02KT
 BECMG 0807/0809 14010KT=

Ostrava - Blue Skies! Thunderstorms in the evening, but we would be already home.

TAF LKMT 070500Z 0706/0812 24006KT **CAVOK**
 PROB30 TEMPO 0717/0812 01015KT 5000 TSRA SCT030CB

Katowice - No issues!

TAF EPKT 071130Z 0712/0812 23008KT **CAVOK**
 PROB40 TEMPO 0712/0721 **SCT045CB**
 BECMG 0716/0719 30010KT



Ola had meticulously packed all the bags into the Bonanza and when I arrived, the family was relaxing under the wings, ready for boarding as soon as I call the preflight finished. And then, to my horror, I noticed the right main wheel was completely flat.



After the initial shock passed, I started running frantically around the airfield, looking for help. Christophe, a very helpful pilot from northern France camping under wing of his Mooney parked next to us, told me he had all the tools and experience - and kindly offered to help me change the tube. He assured me it is actually very easy and would take us 15 minutes, as long as I had a spare.

Of course I did not have one. And actually - except one Austrian gentleman in his ultralight - none of the 15 pilots I asked during the next five days carried a spare tube. Needless to say, the ultralight tube was too small. As my French is very limited, Christophe talked with the airfield manager and sourced a proper aeroplane jack. We would just check the tube size, order a replacement online and then fly home tomorrow. No big deal. Even better - another Austrian gentleman, a very colorful character, turned up and attested he actually holds valid FAA A&P/IA papers and is ready to sign off a bicycle shop repair. Which would let us fly even today.



The tube was badly damaged at the valve stem. Greg later told me this kind of damage is usually caused by insufficient pressure in the tube. The tube then sits too loose in the tire and the valve stem is chafing against its opening in the wheel assembly. Anyway, a bicycle shop repair was out of question. So I ordered two replacement 7.00-6" tubes at aero3d.fr, one of the very few shops in the EU that actually indicated it had these in stock. Christophe said he had been actually buying at that store before and had good experiences.

So much for the aeroplane. But let us go back to my beloved Ola, the two little girls and our dog. Although we enjoy camping very much, I thought in this time of crisis, we needed to be absolutely comfortable. I am not sure how I actually found the French conversational skills to organize another rental car and dog-friendly accomodation acting on short notice and during high season in Corsica. Probably something to do with switching into survival mode.

On Thursday morning the order status changed to "Processing". This clearly indicated folks at aero3d.fr did not post the tube on Wednesday afternoon - well, why would they. Reasoning the tube would arrive

no sooner than on Friday, I thought it was best to keep the family busy and go repeat the easy canyon. However I was worried if the shop actually had the tubes in stock. I wrote them an e-mail and then tried calling them every hour or two throughout the day. No answer at all! That made me even more worried.

I called Greg for advice. He told me to just use a 6.00-6" tube, which is much more common. Surely someone at the airfield must have one. I hanged around the airfield almost all Friday and it was not the case. One Italian-Corsican found an old 6.00-6" in his hangar, but it was quite cracked. Funny thing is when I went to pee round the hangar corner, I found an abandoned 6.00-6" tire lying in grass, complete with inner tube (although without a valve core). Greg said if these look like they could survive the takeoff, just install one of them and worst case it goes flat during my landing in Katowice. He assured me this rarely kills. But I did not have the balls to install a second hand tube that was discarded who knows why and then lying in the sun who knows for how long... Also the Bonanza would barely make it to EPKM in one jump.



Another idea was to source a similar all-terrain vehicle tube. Unbelieveably, a Polish emigree, friend of a Greg's friend, ran a big ATV repair shop in Bastia, at the other side of the island. I did not quite believe it, but on Friday afternoon Greg told me these guys are already looking for a similar tube. Perhaps we were getting somewhere.

On the same Friday I received a reply from aero3d.fr. They would be sending the tires in the afternoon. Another e-mail came in - sorry - they would be sending the tubes. Well, at least that. Chronopost - the fastest delivery method I selected, as advised by Christophe - could theoretically deliver them on Saturday, but did the shop staff tick the box? In the evening a tracking number came in. Expected delivery: Monday.

Well, what about the quads? The Aeroklub's manager talked to his son Pawel, who speaks perfect French, and forwarded me his phone number. On Saturday morning the young chap called a big quad store near Ajaccio that I found myself online. Also, at noon Greg got me the quad emigree guy phone number. Indeed this man already knew my story well and was already acting the whole morning! However while I could buy such quad tube readily in Katowice, it actually happens that almost all of ATVs in Corsica have gone tubeless. Long story short, he kept trying, but it seemed there is simply not a single tube like that on Corsica. Pawel called back and told me the shop in Ajaccio reached the same conclusion. They could, of course, order one from mainland. Lead time: one week...

In terms of other options: it would cost merely around EUR 500 to fly the whole family to Krakow by Air France on Sunday. Then I would just come back on my own to deal with the problem myself, proper tube in my hand. However Kawa the dog is too large to travel in the cabin. The connection featured an 8 hour stopover in Paris CDG. So she would have to be sedated and posted in the hold twice. We like her too much.

One Citroen Berlingo was available for sale for EUR 6000. Surely it would be possible to sell it in Poland and get that money back. Anyway that escape route probably involved negotiating a deal in French and some 17 hours of driving plus rests. Not including a ferry crossing. Still, it was an option to consider if nothing else worked.

In the meantime, my French skills again surprised me. Somehow we managed to extend both our reservation at the apartment and the French-speaking-only car rental facility. We sorted out our life in Poland. Initially planning to return on Wednesday evening, I thought I had ample reserves of time before I was critically needed at work on Monday. Alas, I had to do a lot of explaining - and surprise people calling them during the weekend, so they would not be even more surprised by my absence on Monday morning... Although Ola works as a teacher and technically was enjoying summer holidays anyway, she also had her commitments and was in no better situation.



To divert our minds from our troubles, on Saturday afternoon we set to continue the lower Fiumicelli canyon from the point where we last finished. That was fun enough, but it is a bit difficult to fully enjoy yourself when you are stranded on Elba ... sorry, Corsica. After quite a lot of swimming, the dog looked exhausted, so we thought it made sense to leave her at the apartment while we went out for our late dinner. When she was younger, she used to scratch the door at home when left alone - but it was already not an issue for quite a lot of time. Anyway, not this time. Kawa was enough desperate to get out and go looking for us in the downtown, that she ate a decorative door rim and damaged the door edge. That issue alone cost us 1200 EUR plus a one hour long, funny conversation, involving our French-speaking friend Furek acting as consecutive interpreter over the phone while he was driving his family around in Poland. Theoretically our travel insurance covers property damage, even due to gross negligence. But we wonder if they agree with the landlord's carpenter valuation of the door.



On Sunday we slept long and went to test the rubber boat on the river bordering the airfield. Lots of new arrivals at the field. Still, no one brought a spare tube for his weekend in Corsica. But the French post was still claiming they are delivering my tube on Monday, between 8:00 and 13:00. Christophe had already flown home a few days ago. I called Greg to undergo a correspondence course on aircraft wheel assembly.



- Do you have a torque wrench?

- Are you kidding?

- Well, in that case ... just remember to torque the wheel gently. That's aluminium alloy after all. The brakes - that's another story, use more force, but of course not too much. And the axle nut! This one just until you feel resistance and then unscrew by half turn. Or you will ruin the bearing.

On Monday we packed up and moved all our stuff to the airfield. I bought all the required tools at a local home improvement store, including also a foot actuated air pump very similar to the one I have at home; it just cost two times more. Anyway, the tube was supposed to arrive any moment, so I wanted to be prepared to change it as soon as possible. Only this time I would not return the car until the postman came, so that we had options in case he would not.

The postman indeed arrived and delivered a parcel to the parachuting establishment at the airfield. Our tube he had not. Around 15:00 I got an e-mail from the delivery company. Their system apologised in a lot of words. And informed me that due to some unspecified event, my delivery was postponed by 24 hours.



Finally, salvation came in the personage of one Jean-Philippe, a young flight instructor based in Figari. He was the sixteenth pilot that I nagged.

- Excuse me. It did not escape my attention that you seem to be flying a Cessna that uses 6.00-6 tubes on the main wheels. Sorry if that question ruins your plan of the day, but do you think you could consider checking if you brought a spare tube with you?

- I am sorry, what??

- I've got a flat tire on that Bonanza and I am trying to source a replacement tube since Wednesday! The dog is barking and the children are crying ...

- Since Wednesday? But that looks like a very trivial problem, pal?

- How come? There is not a single spare aircraft tube on this island! And it takes ages for anything to arrive here from the mainland...

- Let me just call my mech friend in Figari.

Then he ordered a coffee at the restaurant, drank it at once and told me he shall fly to Figari and bring me the tube in a different aeroplane and with a different student of his - in like 45 minutes. Shut his door, started the engine and left me staring wide, barely able to say "thanks".



J-P our savior

In fact it took 53 minutes before J-P's other plane appeared on short final. Apparently the delay was due to an airliner landing in Figari that forced J-P into an unexpected hold. Instead of another student, he brought his mech friend, who handed me a brand new Continental aircraft tube and assured it will be perfectly fine for the Bonanza wheel. The gentlemen told us we don't owe them any money for the fuel; just order them the same tube when we return home and wind down... and remember them in case they get stuck one day in the muddy taxiways of Katowice airfield. Anyway, the sun is almost setting and they are in a hurry, so off they go!



At this point we still were not able to fully appreciate the amount of sheer luck we encountered. As it turned out later, the parcel from aero3d.fr never arrived in Corsica and was returned to the shop... Anyway, with Ola's help I changed the tube. The jack was sloppy and we had to play a game of Towers of Hanoi to install the wheel on the axle. The gear pin had to be re-used, which surely must be illegal. But these are minor issues that are not even worth mentioning to the profane. It was too late to fly away anywhere, so we returned the car and - after swimming across the river again - set our tent at the airfield grass, just next to the wing. At dusk I started the engine and taxied for fuel. The new tube survived, which I took for a good omen.



The weather for Tuesday was not bad, but suboptimal... Although the forecasts were all fine for Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, Czechia and Poland, the problem was again at the beginning of our journey. Throughout our stay on Corsica we enjoyed full sun and blue skies every single day. Tuesday was the first day when the weather was supposed to deteriorate. I filed for N0150F075 DCT AJO DCT OKBON DCT RATAP DCT GIRAG DCT RPS2 DCT OSMOX DCT PES1 DCT CHI DCT ROTAR DCT LJPZ/0220, alternate LIKE - but I knew most probably we would have to scud run around the southern coast of Corsica - and who

knows, maybe even across the Mediterranean. Anyway, as long as we could reasonably expect VMC, at this point I was ready to fly at any legal altitude above the sea - if that only gets us closer to home.

Corsica south of us - So-so. Improving later on, but we could not wait because of thunderstorms over App
TAF LFKF 130200Z 1303/1403 27012KT 9999 **BKN020 BKN040**
BECMG 1305/1308 27015G25KT CAVOK

... the METAR was much less optimistic though!

METAR LFKJ 130500Z AUTO VRB02KT 9999 **BKN009 BKN020 BKN032** 25/21 Q1007 TEMPO SHRA BKN023 SCT050TCU

Central Italy - Just few clouds over the Appenines. Watch out for afternoon thunderstorms.

TAF LIRZ 130500Z 1306/1406 VRB04KT 9999 FEW030
BECMG 1306/1308 22015KT
TEMPO 1312/1318 TSRA
BECMG 1316/1318 VRB05KT=

Eastern Slovenia - Nice, but expect turbulence later during the day.

TAF LJPZ 130500Z 1306/1315 12005KT CAVOK
BECMG 1309/1311 18012KT
PROB30 TEMPO 1313/1315 17015G25KT=

Central Slovenia - Looks good

TAF LJLJ 130500Z 1306/1406 24005KT 9999 FEW070
TEMPO 1320/1406 VRB15KT 5000 TSRA SCT050CB BKN060

Crossing east to the Alps via Austria - watch out for turbulence ...

TAF LOWG 130515Z 1306/1406 VRB04KT 9999 FEW060
TX32/1314Z TN19/1404Z
TEMPO 1309/1318 18012KT
TEMPO 1318/1406 FEW060CB BKN070
PROB40 TEMPO 1320/1406 35010KT 4000 TSRA SHRA

TAF LOWW 130515Z 1306/1412 14012KT CAVOK
TX36/1314Z TN21/1404Z
TEMPO 1309/1316 17020G30KT

Czechia - Should work by the time we get there...

TAF LKTB 130500Z 1306/1412 10008KT CAVOK
TEMPO 1308/1321 14018KT
PROB30 TEMPO 1321/1402 9999 SHRA SCT050TCU

TAF LKMT 130500Z 1306/1412 VRB02KT 0500 FG BKN001
BECMG 1306/1308 CAVOK

Katowice - Fair enough

TAF EPKT 131130Z 1312/1412 16007KT 9999 SCT040
PROB30 TEMPO 1312/1316 SCT030TCU

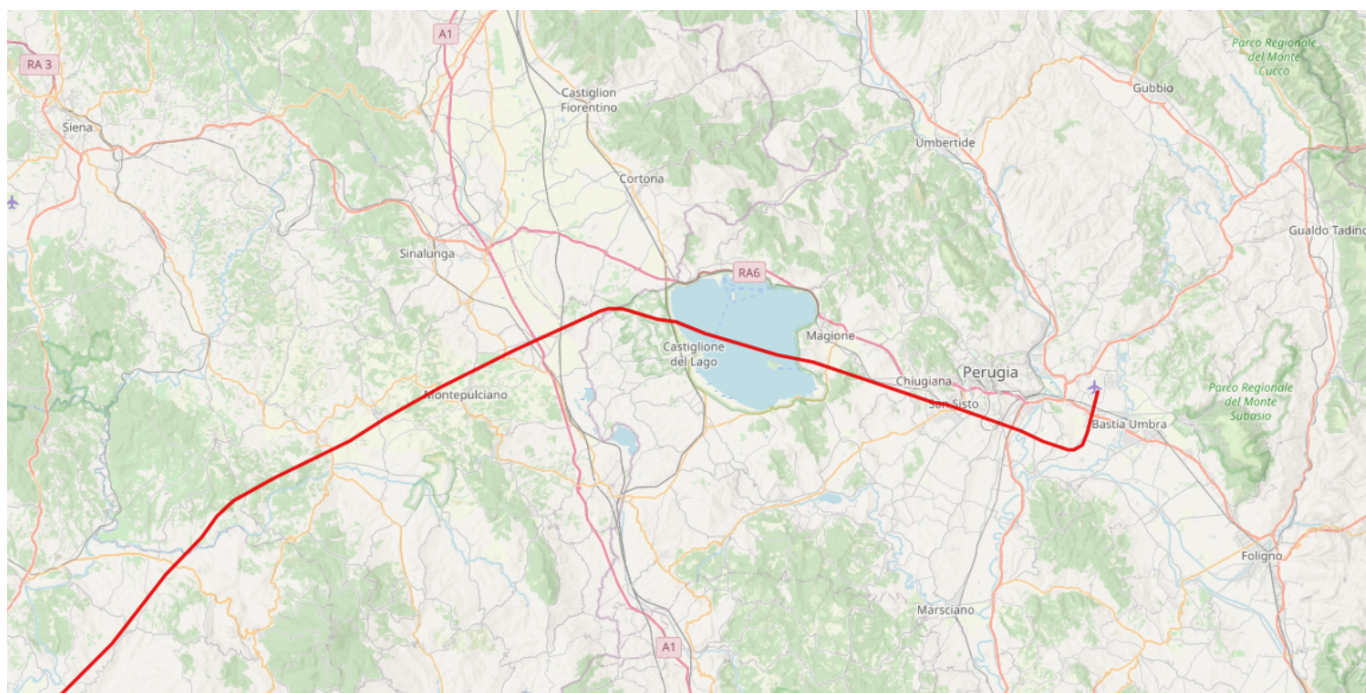


We woke up to the sight of low clouds and departed 07:26 local, not able to climb higher than 1000' due cloud. It was supposed to be better south of us, so we asked Figari Approach to let us fly south and then east along Corsica's coast line. When we finally got to the other side of the island, things kind of improved. Although I could climb 3000' staying VMC, the air was hazy and clouds blended with the sea at the horizon, requiring me to constantly look out of the side window to keep reference. In short words, a slightly demanding flight. After a few minutes into the sea, the cloud layer immediately above us disappeared and I climbed 7500' ... which could only be maintained for not more than two quarters, because closer to Italy, suddenly a broken layer of cloud appeared in front of us. Were there blue skies above us, I would perhaps cross the Appenines over the top - but there was haze and uncertainty and I did not want to take any new risks. This reasoning prompted an expedited, 1000 fpm orbiting descent

back to 3000'. As I mentioned, Ola is sensitive to motion sickness, but we had actually done these quick descents before and it just had made her a bit uncomfortable. The kids, as always, could not care less.

Not this time. Some one hour and fifteen minutes into the flight my significant other told me she had lost sensation in her toes. I suggested maybe try some exercises in the seat. We had done a 3.5 hour leg during the spring Sweden trip, but well, these things happen. However, soon I got an update: no improvement and loss of sensation in the fingers as well. Actually, now it looked like she could not move her fingers at all. And would it be perhaps possible, without ruining our plan, to land at a closer airfield...?

When Ola started babbling (although still quite reasonably) because her tongue stiffened as well, I decided I had enough - and told Roma Info I reckon I have a medical urgency on board. And from this point the Italian ATC went to all lengths to help me and maintain my confidence. For me as a pilot, it was, in a way, moving. I was promptly handed to Perugia Approach and progressively briefed on runways available, prevailing weather, most probable taxi routing and apron setup. Lots of questions were asked about the patient and the symptoms, but care was taken not to saturate me with inquiries and information. I was cleared to position on final something like 10 minutes inbound of the airport.



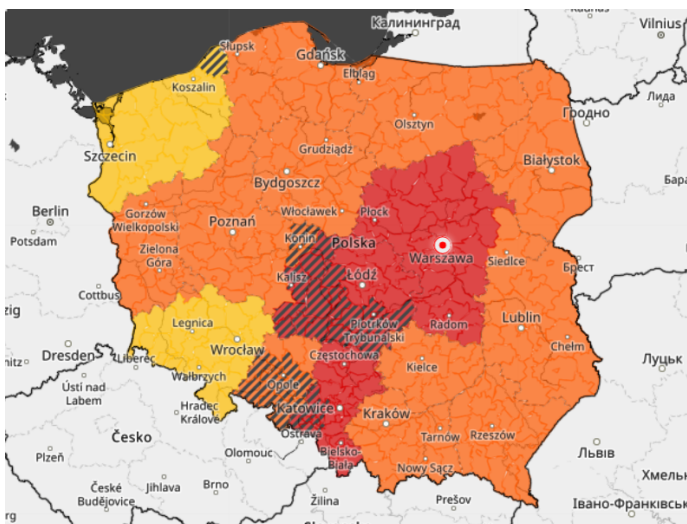
And thus we landed at Perugia LIRZ on Tuesday 09:12 local. The dog barking and the children somewhat at a loss, an ambulance received Ola at the apron. At first the medical staff dismissed the whole incident as a panic attack, but upon learning of Ola's previous neurological symptoms that had never resulted in any coherent diagnosis, they decided to take her to a hospital for detailed examination. That left me in the middle of Italy with two little girls and a dog under my custody, a ruined plan of the day and no slightest information for further planning. I was left wondering if I should file a flight plan to Katowice for 16:00 LT - or rather book a hotel for a week...

The heat was difficult to bear and the airport authorities had apparently made sure it is not very convenient for people to hang around the airport and pass the coronavirus. I found a playground half an hour walk away, so we took the dog for a walk, trying to keep her at the road side. Understandably, the roads leading to airports rarely feature a sidewalk. I read aloud two chapters of Lem's book on Pirx the Pilot. Anyway, it is not that easy to fully enjoy yourself when mum is at the hospital and it is not really clear why. We inspected a small restaurant/motel five minutes walking from the airport. It looked very promising and had a swimming pool! Unfortunately, they were fully booked.



In the end, Ola was discharged around 18:00 and advised to consult her neurologist as soon as she returns home. Obviously it was too late to fly home, so via booking.com I found a room at another small hotel close to the airport. I had the presence of mind to provide Ola with documents and a mobile phone, but I forgot to give her any money... The taxi stand near the hospital was empty. She was exhausted, if not for other reasons, simply from hunger. So I had to leave the children - and the dog - alone in the hotel, together with my laptop logged into Netflix Kids - return to the airfield to access airside and get all our "overnight" stuff from the Bonanza - and then take a taxi to the city centre to fetch Ola... This time no ATC to guide me, but at least there is Google Maps.

The weather for Wednesday was slightly worse than suboptimal. It looked like it should be safe to cross to the east coast of Italy, although better at low level and adjusting the routing accordingly. Then, after some peace and perhaps blue skies over the sea, real trouble would set in: thunderstorms possible over Slovenia and then all the way to Poland, Katowice International TAF telling us they could be occurring in the afternoon - which is when we would arrive.



Adverse weather warnings.

Departure - Looks good.

TAF LIRZ 140500Z 1406/1506 23013KT **9999 SCT030**
BECMG 1417/1419 VRB05KT

Eastern Slovenia - just high TCUs in the afternoon

TAF LJPM 140500Z 1406/1415 15005KT **9999 FEW060**
BECMG 1407/1410 20010KT
PROB30 TEMPO **1411/1415 FEW050TCU**

Central Slovenia - better make it before rain comes, but still agreeable.

TAF LJLJ 141100Z 1412/1512 12005KT **9999 FEW050**
TEMPO 1412/1421 FEW040TCU
PROB30 TEMPO 1412/1418 24010KT **SHRA SCT035TCU**

East of Alps via Austria - not goot. Investigate updates later on...

TAF LOWG 140515Z 1406/1506 VRB05KT **9999 FEW060**
TX26/1414Z TN13/1503Z
PROB30 TEMPO 1406/1407 3000 TSRA FEW010 FEW045CB BKN050
TEMPO 1410/1418 20010KT=

TAF LOWW 140515Z 1406/1512 33012KT CAVOK
TX27/1414Z TN16/1503Z
TEMPO **1406/1413 24015G25KT SHRA FEW045CB BKN050**

PROB30 TEMPO 1406/1413 VRB15G25KT TSRA FEW045CB BKN050
BECMG 1407/1410 16010KT

Czechia - brace for afternoon thunderstorms, make sure they do not come earlier...

TAF LKTB 140500Z 1406/1512 30008KT 9999 BKN040
TEMPO 1406/1412 30015KT 3000 TSRA BKN025 SCT040CB
BECMG 1412/1415 08006KT
BECMG 1416/1418 9999 BKN025
TEMPO 1418/1512 6000 SHRA BKN014 BKN020TCU=

TAF LKMT 140500Z 1406/1512 24004KT CAVOK
TEMPO 1406/1411 9999 BKN035
TEMPO 1410/1415 27015KT
BECMG 1415/1417 06008KT BKN045
TEMPO 1417/1503 2500 TSRA BKN020CB
TEMPO 1503/1509 BKN017

Katowice - Perhaps doable, but perhaps quite some weather!

TAF EPKT 140530Z 1406/1506 10004KT CAVOK
PROB40 TEMPO 1413/1415 TS SCT050CB
TEMPO 1415/1506 VRB15G30KT **4000 TSRA BKN040CB**
PROB40 TEMPO 1415/1424 VRB20G40KT **1500 +TSRAGR** BKN013 BKN025CB
PROB40 TEMPO 1500/1506 SHRA BKN013 BKN025CB

The GA handling staff at Perugia kindly waived all our handling fees and we only had to pay for landing and parking. Much appreciated, especially that I later found out they can be prohibitively expensive. I told the family to forget Katowice today and that we might possibly be able to get to Brno in Czechia, from where somebody could perhaps pick us up by car. For the time being, we would try to get to Maribor in Slovenia - which should also not be taken for granted. I filed N0150A055 DCT RIM DCT LABIN DCT BUGEV DCT DIVACA DCT LAZE DCT TREBNJE DCT CELJE DCT MS1 LJMB/0145, alternate LJMS - and resolved firmly to evaluate the weather situation while passing LJPZ. And divert there if necessary. In any case, no expedited descents.

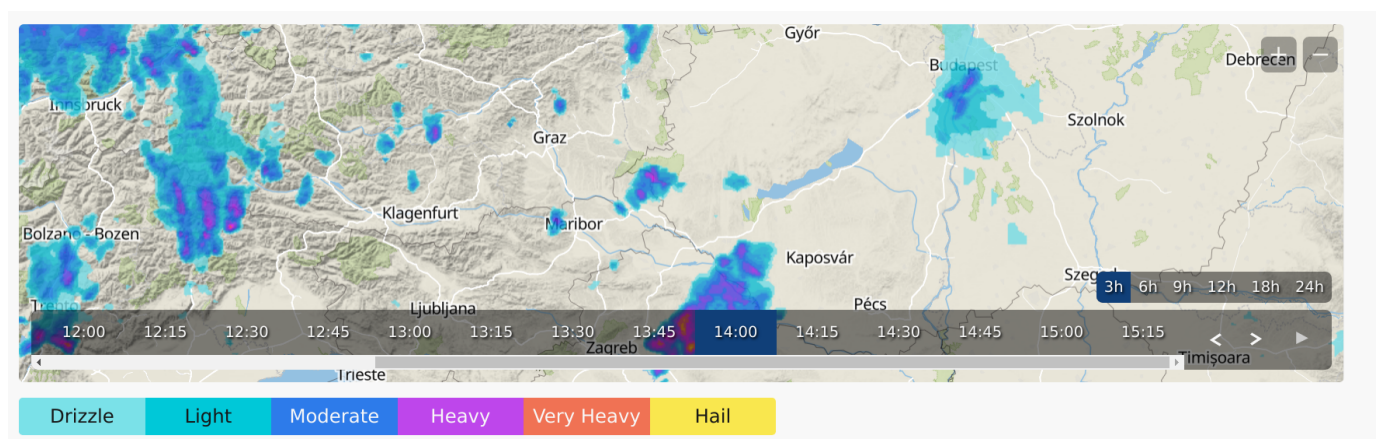
All the way to Maribor it was a bit hazy. Upon passing Portorož, the Slovenian ATC advised there were reports of embedded CBs, but no active thunderstorms yet. I have flown the Slovenian recommended VFR East-West routes already a couple of times. I knew my landing options on the way. I was well clear of the terrain and well clear of cloud all the time. Still, this was probably the most nervous flight of my life. I was constantly stressing what could go wrong next. Certainly not a good state of mind to be flying in.



Resting at the feet of Maribor Tower

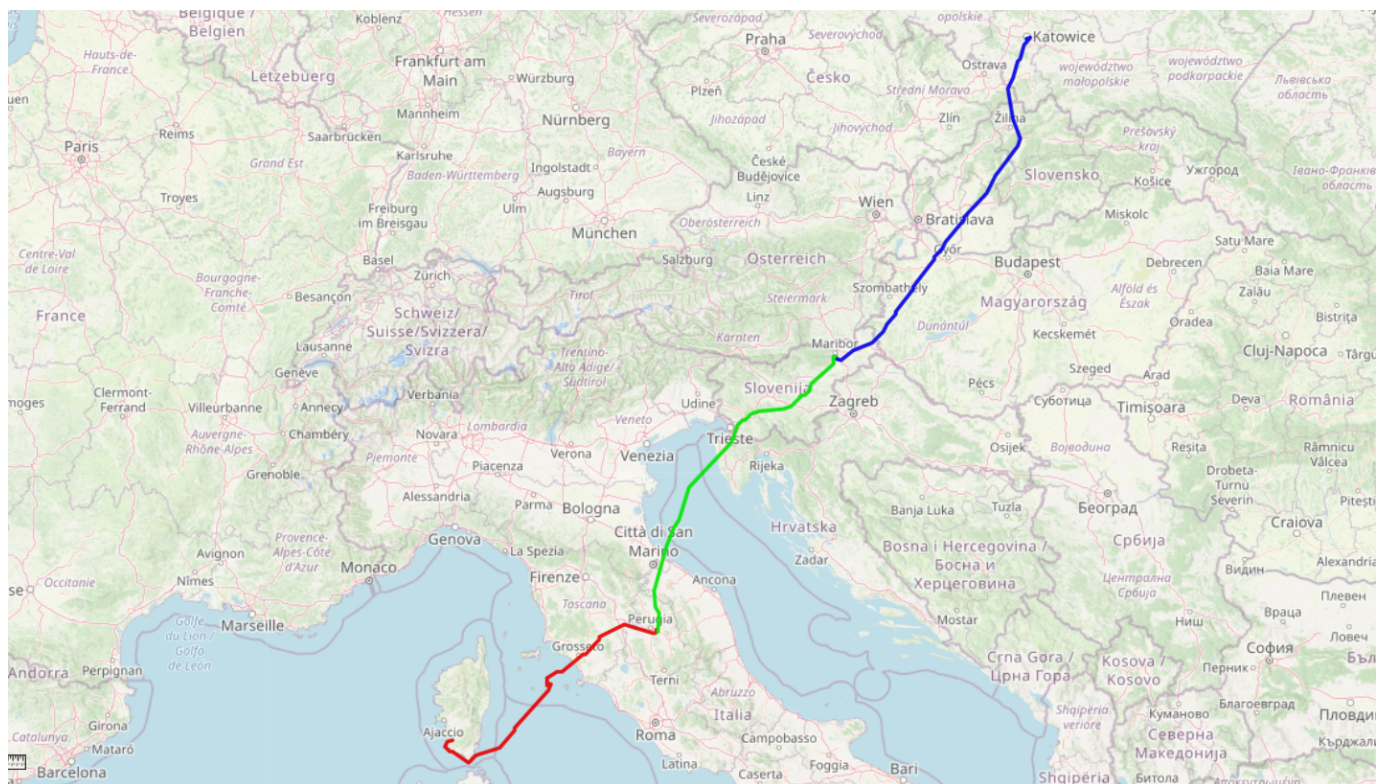
We had refuelled in Maribor during our autumn Croatia trip, so landing there brought some slight sense of familiarity and comfort. I remembered the airport surroundings quite well. No issues with our arrival. The apron staff was very nice to us, but this time the dog could not enter the terminal building. However we were left free to roam airside and use the plastic chairs near the tower, where a small briefing room

was also accessible, next to a coffee machine and toilets. Ola asked if it is really wise to continue our journey through eastern Austria and then Czechia, as I originally planned - and wouldn't it actually be safer to fly over the Hungarian lowlands. Remembering the lesson I had learned almost two weeks before, I had to admit that looked like a good idea - especially since the updated Slovakian TAFs now predicted a siesta in thunderstorm activity in the east! I consulted the current radar images and thought if we cleverly time our takeoff, we might be able to get to Zilina without any hassle. And that's half an hour flying from Katowice, so why don't we actually file LZZI as an alternate and try our luck. And thus we ended up with N0150A035 DCT DIMLO DCT KUVEX DCT NIT DCT NIDOK DCT VADEX DCT REVMA DCT NETIR DCT EPKM/0150, alternates LZZI LZPP - and took off around 16:30 LT.

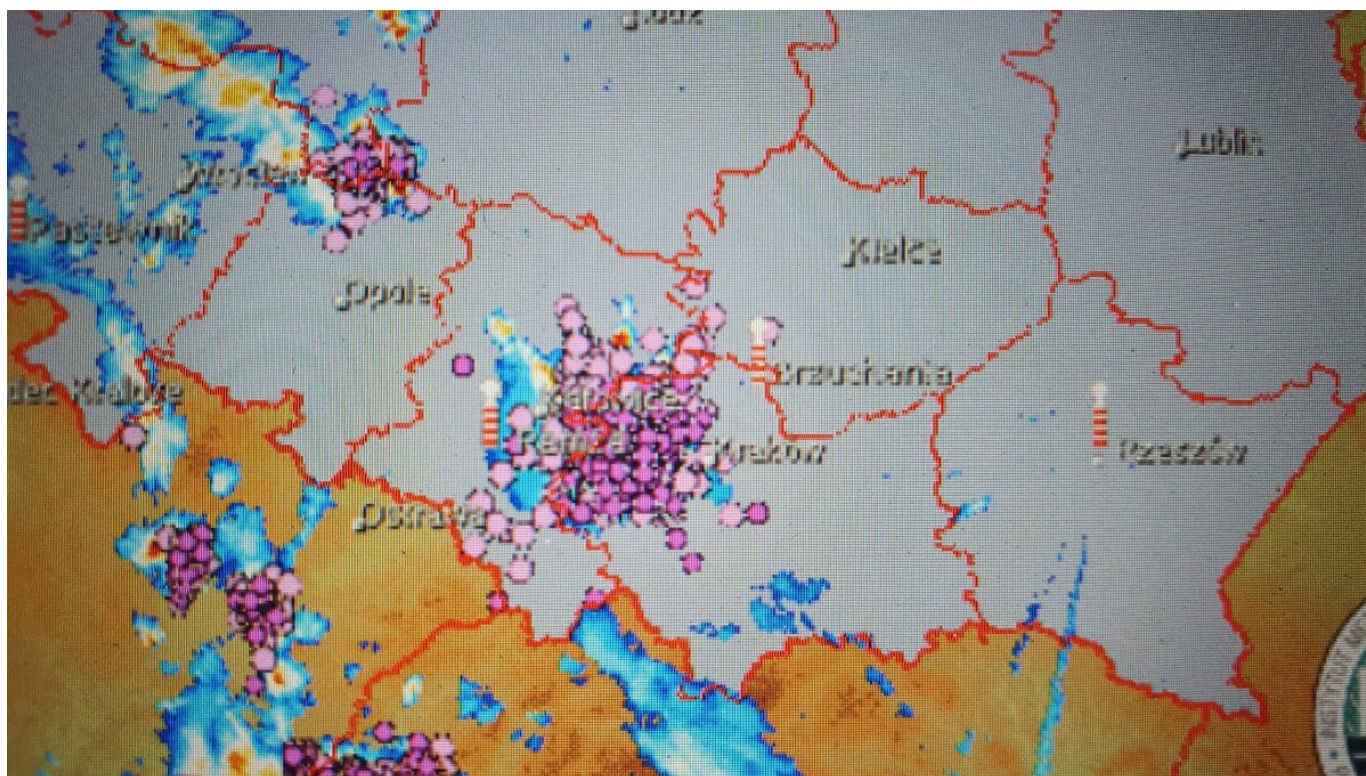


How do we fit in between gaps?

Long story short, until Zilina the last leg was uneventful. Hazy, but solid VMC - the only stress coming from constant wondering whether the white stuff touching the horizon ahead is a low cloud or just haze over flat ground. Near Zilina we saw that a thunderstorm is brewing over the Beskidy mountains, just south of Katowice. However I received ATIS from Katowice that claimed CAVOK! With a clear escape route to LKMT Ostrava to the west I decided we would try to circle the mountains - actually as planned - and see what happens. And the only thing that happened is that soon we landed on EPKM RWY23 without encountering any stressful weather. It took me some 10 minutes to retrieve our car from the parking lot and move it close to the plane, to facilitate unloading the cargo. And then the first thunder sounded...



Actual return tracks.



That's one hour after our landing!

Back in Poland Ola spend two weeks in another hospital. The in-flight issue was PROB90 a tetany attack; tetany being a sign rather than a disease and requiring further diagnosis. On the face of it, usually it is a result of improper balance of microelements in your body. But this imbalance can very rarely be traced to simple causes, like eating too little lettuce. Anyway the tetany test administered at the Polish hospital yielded quite spectacular results - they almost called in their medicine students to show them a fine example of a patient exhibiting intense tetany in all limbs, although the test was supposed to induce it just in one arm.

To sum up: the plan was to leave home for 6 days, and in the end it took us 13. Plus a lot of stress - which was really not due to the flat tube itself, but rather due to uncertainty of if/when we can actually fix the problem. Do they really have the tube we need? Have they posted it? When will it arrive? Will I be able to replace it myself? The car rental cannot be extended any further - because the car we are driving is booked. So how do we get around the town if we need to wait another day...? And so on. Perhaps I should have posted the family via Air France straight away, without the dog. But still, it constantly looked like a solution is around the corner and it is difficult to manage life in a foreign country with a dog you cannot leave alone (for fear it will destroy something valuable!). Not to mention she was rather a stowaway in the rental cars we have been using... and turning up at a rental shop with a dog and claiming the animal is actually not going along does not sound plausible.

```
EPKM ... EPKM 06:17Z ... 07:29Z 01:12
EPKM ... LIKE 09:00Z ... 12:00Z 03:01
LIKE ... LFK0 12:58Z ... 15:17Z 02:19
LFK0 ... LIRZ 05:26Z ... 07:12Z 01:46
LIRZ ... LJMB 07:57Z ... 10:00Z 02:03
LJMB ... EPKM 12:13Z ... 14:19Z 02:06
```

Total: 6 landings, time in air 12:27

Top ups (counting from 2nd leg): LIKE 120l, LFK0 140l, LIRZ 105l, LJMB 105l.
Oil added at LFK0: 0,7 l

Average consumption: TBD after re-fuelling at EPKM.

Of course a short break in flying will now serve us well. But the only comment I heard was about taking spare tubes. *That's so unlike you! You always take a spare tube for your one hour cycle in the woods! Had I known this bloody tire has a **tube**, I would have talked you into buying a spare a long time ago!* Yes, there were moments of despair - especially when Kawa ate the door and we were facing a potentially unpleasant conversation in a language we almost do not understand. But I never heard that flying the Bonanza to Corsica was overall a bad idea. Which is an attitude I know well I should appreciate!