

IBAR 2008 – a report by Graham Watson

On Thursday 5 June 2008, Richard Crosby and I took off from Gloucestershire Airport to participate in the Intrepid Aviators' 2008 event. The objective for this year was to fly to Ibiza and back in 10 days.

The route had been meticulously planned by Andrzej Zmyslowski and Richard Sands who had selected overnight stops with suitable accommodation nearby and lunchtime stops with alternates if the weather didn't behave. The first rendezvous was to be Rouen. From there the stops were to be Poitiers (lunch) Castelnaudary in France, then Reus, Castellon, Ibiza (2 nights), Barcelona (Sabadell) (2 nights) in Spain, Albi (lunch), Limoges, Angers (France) with the last night in Guernsey.



1. Intrepid Aviators at Castelnaudary

Our departure was delayed by the late return of GOMNI (the Cotswold Aero Club's reliable Piper Arrow) from a 50 hour check. The weather across the channel was set fair and we had an uneventful flight, including our first conversation with a very helpful Farnborough Radar. It was great meeting up with old friends and new acquaintances. In all 15 aircraft made the rendezvous in Rouen.

We had our worst moment the next morning. GOMNI had a terrible magneto drop at the power checks. Running lean would not cure it so sadly we returned to the apron as the others departed. The lady in the terminal told us to try the flying clubs who might be able to help. We were pleased to find two engineers, but their English was worse than our French. However, with a combination of sound and gesture we were able to explain our problem. Two hours later, with cleaned spark plugs and €50 lighter we were on our way. We landed at Poitiers after most of the others had left and weren't too happy to be told we had missed the A380 from Toulouse that had done a low fly-by. The reward that night was an excellent evening at



2. Fortified town near Castellon

Castelnaudary where the Aero Club Jean Doudiès put on a superb regional speciality, cassoulet, and plenty of red wine for us. Castelnaudary is the home of the French Foreign Legion, but none of us was tempted to sign up.



3. Final 25 Reus

The flight to Reus the next day showed us that the poor summer weather was not confined to England. Routing to the Mediterranean coast, the air was very bumpy and we did not see the tops of the Pyrenees as we crossed from France into Spanish airspace. The VFR route around

Barcelona was a challenge. The instruction from Gerona was to “monitor” Barcelona approach – they were very busy! By the time we got to Reus, the weather had improved significantly. Excellent facilities for the €9 landing fee. The same cannot be said for the refuellers, who decided to go to lunch just after they refuelled the aircraft before us!

Castellon was a delightful, small, Spanish airfield on the coast. On arrival, fortunately the pilot of the parachute drop plane was able to relay messages for us in English. The airport manager could not have been more helpful and came in especially for us the next day to arrange our flight plans – Castellon is normally Spanish speaking only.



4. Interesting approach to Castellon

Our departure to Ibiza was delayed due to rain. It had rained most of the previous night and we were fearful that Ibiza might not be possible. However, our



5. Tight left base, Ibiza



6. Departing Ibiza below 800ft

patience paid off (although 3 aircraft decided not to make the crossing) and we safely landed in Ibiza – mission accomplished! The clearance as we neared the island was to fly not above 1000 feet above the sea and to report November point. From there the route to the airport was “blocked” by hills up to 1300 feet! The airport manager at Castellon had advised us not to accept this routeing as it could be very turbulent. However, we are British so we accepted the challenge – it was turbulent-but we were thrilled to touch down in Ibiza.



The cloud base when we left Ibiza prevented us from crossing the “mountains”, so we flew at 800 feet around the west coast. We had opted for the shorter sea crossing back to the mainland routeing via Castellon. However, there was a military exercise at Reus so the Barcelona controllers routed us back

7. Final for Sabadell, Barcelona

out to sea before picking up the VFR route to Sabadell.

By now the weather was scorchio. The GA parking was full, so we had to park at the wrong side and getting to the right side necessitated a long wait and a taxi ride.

There was a convenient train into Barcelona and we all had a wonderful day sightseeing the next day – Barcelona has a lot to offer and the weather was fantastic.

We set off for Albi in good faith. However, by the time we crossed into France we realised all was not well. Aircraft ahead of us were reporting rain and low cloud covering high ground so we realised a diversion was probably in order. Following a low route, the Toulouse controller was very concerned about our height (although at the time we were 2000 feet AGL in good VMC, but our track around Carcassonne Class D was heading for high ground), and constantly advised us of the MSA. Eventually the lowering cloud base got the better of us and along with several others we diverted into Castelnaudary. Albi was not to be for us, but for aircraft an hour behind us the timing, in between the showers, the timing was perfect. The flying club had heard of our plight and opened up so that we could use their facilities and we spent the afternoon watching the rainfall radar on www.meteox.com.

Eventually we felt it was worth taking a chance and set off for Limoges. Although in sight of the ground at all times, we probably spent an hour in rain, some of it heavy (GOMNI got a wash) before breaking out into brilliant sunshine and infinite visibility. Limoges could not have been more helpful. Keen to attract more GA aircraft, the Airport Managing Director had waived all landing and parking fees – UK airports please take note!

The next morning, Richard and I met Sue Virr who instructs at the local flying club. Sue has been a member of the Cotswold Aero Club and did her CPL training in GOMNI. That afternoon at Guernsey, we met up with friends from previous rallies who had not been able to make it to Ibiza. The Guernsey Flying Club put on a splendid meal for us and provided transport to our hotel.



8. Sark



9. Fifteen Intrepid Aircraft on the grass, Angers

The next day we safely made it back to Gloucestershire.

For the technically minded, some statistics:

Distance covered	2077nm
hours flying	16:34h:m
longest leg	241nm, 1:58h:m, Ibiza to Sabadell
shortest leg	92nm, 0:46h:m, Reus to Castellon
average leg	172nm, 1:23h:m
average speed	124.8kt
fuel used	656l
most expensive fuel	€2.50/l, Ibiza
cheapest fuel	£1.01/l, Guernsey (with AOPA discount)
most expensive landing fee	€107.88, Ibiza (including mandatory handling)
cheapest landing fee	€0.00, Limoges

There were many highlights in a trip like this. Notable were the hospitality of airports and flying clubs along the way, particularly Castelnaudary, Castellon, Limoges and Guernsey. The air traffic controllers were all superb (apart from Rodez who didn't really want to talk to us), but the best had to be the female controller at Perpignan whose voice was magnifique (and very sexy). We are grateful to Andrzej and Richard for their route selection, but a trip like this still requires planning by us. Richard and I flew alternate legs, but the non-flying "pilot" took on duties to make the flying pilot's job a lot easier.

All aircraft safely returned to base. Would I recommend a trip such as this! Definitely!



10. Gaudi masterpiece, Barcelona



11. Gaudi's iguana



12. Hotel pool, Ibiza

The Intrepid Aviators are an informal group of pilots with a common interest in flying adventure. Formed after the Around Britain Air Rally in 2004, the Intrepid Aviators have flown round Ireland (2005), France (2006) and Germany (2007). You can see and read about some of these exploits on www.intrepidaviators.com.