

Australian Air-Ferry

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January 2010 Newsletter

Awesome Foursome

If you'd have asked me last year whether we could cross four aircraft together, I would have said it was impossible. The equipment and organisation required is massive, not to mention the trained professionals required to do the job properly.

Due to our training program and thousands of dollars invested in equipment we recently met the challenge, Australian Air Ferry crossed four aircraft simultaneously.

We don't like to create huge tasks for ourselves, it simply became necessary in order to stay ahead of the continuous flow of aircraft arriving at our airport in California.

The foursome refuel and plan the next leg from Hawaii



The squadron leader was a Cessna Caravan, brand new from the factory, the three aircraft to join her on her maiden voyage across the Pacific was a Mooney, a TB20 and an SR20 Cirrus. Yes this was a huge mix of speeds and performance, also adding to the challenge.

The day before our departure the winds favour a departure from Santa Barbara, rather than from our airport, but the runway does not have sufficient length for the Caravan.



Capitol Aviation Finance www.capitol.com.au +61 2 9555 8234

A detailed plan was hatched to get everyone near the middle at approx the same time.

First to get airborne from Santa Barbara was our SR20 Cirrus (brand new); it cruises at approx 135 knots.

This lonely soul wonders off into the blue sky stretching for eternity towards Hawaii, shortly after he loses sight of the coast line, a TB20 gets airborne, approx 25 mins between them.

By now oceanic control were starting to think they were having a bad day, "Trinidad VH-PAL can you climb and maintain 7,000ft due to preceding traffic." "That's affirmative San Fran, but it'll take some time, we'll need to step climb to 7,000ft," "do that," came the reply.

Meanwhile number three was now airborne from Santa Barbara, another 15 mins behind the Trinidad, the M20T (turbo charged) Mooney was able to cruise at 170 knots, so it was the last of the trio to depart Santa Barbara.



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Oceanic came back with a request immediately, "Mooney VH-YRJ, you will need to climb and maintain 8,000ft due to preceding traffic," affirmative San Fran, but we'll take some time to reach it."

Almost at the same time as the Mooney gets airborne the Caravan starts its take-off roll in Hollister California, the runways 10,000ft long and the Caravan is in no hurry to get airborne.

The Caravan is a beautiful aircraft to fly, once airborne it sits very stable, it's a great platform, very roomy and it simply goes where it is pointed, a great way to cross the Pacific, on this perfect day.

This Caravan is equipped with the Garmin 1000 cockpit and the autopilot, transponder etc are all integrated, so you're simply looking at three big screens evenly spaced across the cockpit wall.

As I sit there marvelling at the technology, Oceanic call on the HF radio, it seems your track intercepts preceding traffic so you'll have to climb and maintain 9,000ft.

"No worries we can do it," and once we're all settled in the cruise we establish comms, yes everyone is looking good and excited about our record breaking attempt.



[It used to be peaceful out here](#)

Four hours out and the first aircraft (our Mooney) reports at Dialo, ten minutes later the Caravan calls overhead Dialo, ten minutes behind that the Trinidad call Dialo and ten mins after the Cirrus crosses, all with the precision of a well rehearsed military operation.

The lead up to this intersection meant that everyone had passed the Cirrus, (except the Caravan, which was diverging), the Mooney had passed the Trinidad, who was searching desperately for the visual contact as it went over the top, I know it all starts to get confusing.

From the half way point the Mooney and the Caravan adopted the same speed, and they travelled in a loose formation towards Hawaii.

The Trinidad continued to pull away from the Cirrus, but not building an incredibly large margin.

The Mooney landed first, and by now it was dark, the Caravan had taken 11.5 hours to do the crossing and everyone else had been out over the water longer.

The Mooney and Caravan had landed very close to one another, we walked into the airport and processed the paperwork for our hire car. And then returned to the arrival gate to await our Trinidad, only 60 mins later, not far behind was the Cirrus.

After a day like this we're all eager to get to the restaurant and discuss our day, it was just before 9:00pm when we checked into the accommodation and most restaurants were closing.

We managed to find something that was open and started to discuss the logistics involved in doing five.

The following day the Caravan was delayed two hours with paperwork issues and so it did not catch the Mooney or anyone else as we made our way down to Christmas Island.

Our departure out of Christmas Island was very different, everyone waited for the slower ones to leave and then the Mooney and the Caravan got airborne, eager to mow them down.

As we approached the Trinidad he was complaining about our rate of closure, so we slowed down to travel with him for a while, great photo opportunity anyway.

Nine and a half hours flight time and we arrive in Fiji. It is a little more complex to transit, they have several customs and immigration processes that are time consuming, but to avoid the chaos in Samoa we'll need to endure this process for a while longer.

AVIATION INSURANCE



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We're watching anxiously as American Samoa recovers from the recent Tsunami, they have Avgas but the accommodation is being utilised for those who have been displaced, so AAF is doing its part, we simply need to avoid landing there until they have their infrastructure returned to normal.

Ferry Tales

Recently I went Kayaking in Hawaii, you can paddle out from the shore line to a memorial that has been erected in the area where Captain Cook was killed many years ago. It is a fitting tribute, a picturesque area with great snorkelling and diving opportunities to view the coral in the immediate area.

After spending a few hours in this picturesque area, I started to paddle back, as I approached the coast line in this 10ft Kayak, the tsunami warning sounded and continued to sound until I arrived at the shore. I paddled at a furious pace and glanced over my shoulder periodically expecting to see a monstrous wave, but found out after climbing out of the canoe, that the warning is activated once a month for test purposes. These audible warning towers are located every few miles around the coast line. Several days later my blood pressure returned to normal again!

Hot Feet

For anyone about to start flying a Caravan, **be very careful** not to open the right hand door and climb down the stairs while the engine is running.

I can remember my Caravan instructor raving on about an EGT probe in the Caravan, “why the hell would you need, and where is the Exhaust Gas Temperature probe on this turbine,” I wondered. What he was referring to was my leg, and trust me you’ll only climb out the right door when the engine is running once, much to the amusement of any onlookers.

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