

2009 Governor General's Cup Cross Canada story

A resume of this great adventure written by Catherine, Mark (blog) & contributing participants (comments)

Photos: Mark Helseth & Gilles Cuerrier

The challenge:

Crossing Canada (Provinces and Territories) in 17 days to celebrate the centennial of aviation.



PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

Participants

The International Rally reputation is without question reaching pilots around the world. We have enjoyed the presence of pilots from as far as South Africa and this year participants from Australia, France, Switzerland, Netherlands, UK, joined the Canadian and US group of pilots. It takes guts to come from a very distant country to fly in totally unfamiliar conditions, obeying to different navigation rules, weather conditions, landscape, timeframes, etc...

Pilots registering to the Governor General's Cup are well aware that it is not a tour. It is a FLYING rewarding and fulfilling experience, a highly respected challenge for which pilots, partners and hosts have been preparing for months. Instrument rated pilots will keep on flying if IFR conditions occur. VFR (visual flight rule) pilots are aware that in IFR flying conditions they must remain on the ground until conditions improve to able them to reach the group.

Every pilot knows that when it comes to facing difficult flying conditions the pilot in command is the only one to decide for his/her crew taking into consideration his/her experience, aircraft capacity and level of confidence in his/her ability to handle each situation. This is the reason, in this rally, pilots will file an individual flight plan every "flying day".

Organizing Committee responsibilities

The role of the Air Boss and the organizing committee is to insure that planes depart and land in an orderly manner, that they obey to Transport Canada and NAV Canada rules and special requirements provided to the committee ahead of time: ie. Approach and landing procedures in Montreal Trudeau, Mirabel, Mont Joli, etc... Pilots are made aware of fuel supply situation as indicated on the itinerary. Fuel is secured for all as per previous arrangements. Travelling in the North is a challenge for any pilot. Coming unprepared is out of the question. On top of weather, terrain and forest fires along the way, Avgaz 100LL is THE major issue and in occasions has to be ordered ahead of time. It is sometimes a financial risk for the organizing committee having no other option than buying barrels to secure supply months ahead. Even with such measures, alternatives have to be considered as "scheduled" shipments "could" be delayed.....



*Picture: Chris Harmon Lake pilot, Ont.
Finding ways to bypass bad weather in Watson Lake, YK*

Working as a team, with the group of pilots, using everyone's expertise and having on board instrument rated and experienced pilots volunteering scouts for the sake of making the route safe for the slowest planes is the only way to insure safety for the slowest and less experienced pilots. Mike, Australian Safari leader, onboard a Piper Arrow, David & Steve directors of the legendary Michigan Air Tour, onboard a Piper Seneca, Tony from Ontario onboard a Piper Comanche & Don from NJ onboard a Mooney, were this year's scouts, leading the way for the planes giving continuous updates on the weather ahead. However, no matter the rating or the experience when storms were ahead pilots were grounded and that happened in Watson Lake, Yukon.



undergoing IFR training

white having fun

This year, the quality of the teams and the team spirit was beyond our expectations. The Australian teams went along as a normal usual everyday Flying journey!!! didn't blink, didn't complain, were incredibly supportive to the others including the Canadians !!



Pilot responsibilities

The International Air Rally committee, this year arranged for four instructors to come onboard. One instructor from BC, Mireille Goyer, was introduced to a team from Manitoba to provide IFR instruction to PPL certified pilot sponsored by BITUMINEX. Three volunteer instructors from Minnesota, 2 of them instructors for Western Airline pilots were very keen to come onboard. This initiative was a great asset for many of the non IFR pilots and especially to the young pilots introduced to

aviation. and others pursuing IFR ratings.. It was also for PPL pilots a measure of security.

Cross Canada Air Rally IFR instructor issue :

Mike Wilson, Australian Air Safari leader commented about Mireille Goyer's IFR instructor behaviour. This subject is addressed as Mireille Goyer's frustration was reflected through outrageous comments posted on a blog story. Not being able to respond to any of her comments directly on "HER BLOG", here is what Mike had to say : [Mireille Goyer](#) (52.3 Ko)

I learned a lot from the Australian Safari leaders: Jenny and Mike; fortunately all but one team understood that the Governor General's Cup is actually an event and not a tour. Crossing Canada is not what pilots normally do in 17 days ! Participants were aware of the challenge. Pilots were pleasantly surprised by the quality of the receptions and the interest the local population was demonstrating in most destinations, lining up long hours behind fences to see "the pilots" At last general aviation got its share of "positive attention". Locals appreciated even more the presence of pilots originating from overseas visiting their region and meeting the locals.



MAP: Mark added the refuelling points to the map (blue dots) and mileages to give some idea of the distances between refuelling. This map shows that the routing was based on the availability of airports and refuelling point along the way. Some options included refuelling at outfitters lodges where fuel lodging and food had been secured if needed: Kasba lodge, Northern Manitoba was one of them.

STORY BEGINS.... JUL 28 09-St Andrews, Manitoba

Today is the day prior to the 2009 International Air Rally launch which will take place in Russell Manitoba tomorrow the 29th of August..

About half the group is in St. Andrews. The group included the pilots from Australia (3 teams), France and Switzerland and passengers from the Netherlands had taken possession of their aircraft in Winnipeg or arrived on commercial flights.

Mark and George, organizing Committee members had arrived to meet the pilots. Both from Minnesota, they were fortunate not to encounter the bad weather barrier across Ontario. The rest of the organizing committee had to detour via Michigan to reach St-Andrews on the 29th in the morning and get the teams together to depart for Russel Manitoba.

Unfortunately, 4 teams from Quebec and Ontario did not make it that day. The team of Martin and Deborah arrived late afternoon in Russel, the team of Norman and Tanya reached us in Wetaskiwin the next day. One team turned back and the persistent teams of Patsy McGrath and Guy Houde from Quebec would join us in Pickle Lake after 8 days of cautious perseverance.

**Governor General's Cup:
Read the full story [HERE](#) !**

[MEET THE TEAMS](#) !!!!

Download the  [Team List](#)

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