

2011 Holiday Trip

100th Anniversary of Flight in Puerto Rico

Starting the trip

After we completed a trip from Houston Texas to Puerto Rico in our airplane as part of our 2010 holiday vacation, we decided we would do it again in 2011. During the trip we became friends with Anthony Perea, another pilot based in Miami Florida who joined us in his airplane during the trip and also wanted to make the trip again. So in July, 2011 we started planning the trip back to Puerto Rico.

We had initially decided to start the trip on December 9th and return to Miami on December 18th but this quickly changed. While doing some research on the Internet I found that the first documented



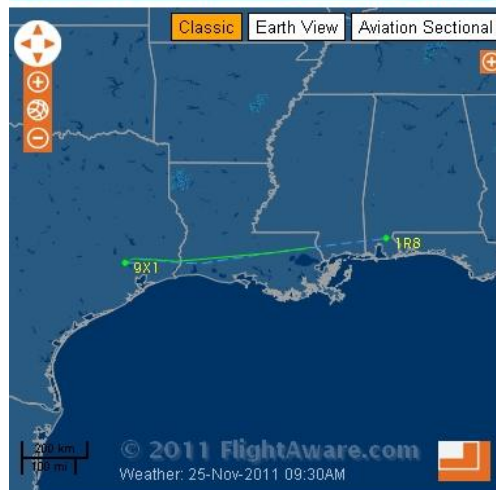
flight of an airplane in Puerto Rico occurred on December 1, 1911. This meant that December 1, 2011 would be the 100th anniversary of powered flight in Puerto Rico. Further research indicated that there was nothing planned to commemorate this important event. Once Anthony and I talked about this we decided to change the dates to coincide with this important date.

Anthony quickly started contacting people in Puerto Rico to have some kind of commemorative event during the time of our trip. The Puerto Rico Sport Aviation Federation

and the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico, School of Aeronautics both became very active with the idea of a commemorative event during the week we were going to be there. During the trip planning I also researched and compiled information about the beginnings of aviation in Puerto Rico. At Millie's insistence I made a presentation in both English and Spanish with the information I found

and posted it to our web page. With this in mind I decided to depart Houston just after Thanksgiving to be in Puerto Rico by December 1st, 2011. Millie did not have a lot of vacation time available so she would meet me at Jacksonville after I returned from Puerto Rico and we would visit our daughter Diana in Savannah, Georgia.

FlightAware > Live Flight Tracker > N819PR > 25-Nov-2011 > 9X1-1R8



Classic Earth View Aviation Sectional

N819PR
(registration) (photos)
HERNANDEZ GALIN
RAMEY PR

Alert Me

Aircraft	TRI-R KIS TR-4 Cruiser (piston-single) (KIS4/G - track or photos)									
Origin	North Houston Business (9X1 - track or info)									
Destination	Bay Minette Muni (1R8 - track or info)									
Other flights between these airports										
Route	DAS LCH (Decode)									
Date	Friday, November 25 2011									
Duration	3 hours									
Status	Landed over a week ago. (track log & graph) Google EARTH									
Distance	Direct: 391 nm Planned: 452 Flown: 397 nm									
<table><thead><tr><th></th><th>Scheduled</th><th>Actual/Estimated</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Departure</td><td>08:00 CST</td><td>07:41 CST</td></tr><tr><td>Arrival</td><td>10:52 CST</td><td>10:46 CST</td></tr></tbody></table>			Scheduled	Actual/Estimated	Departure	08:00 CST	07:41 CST	Arrival	10:52 CST	10:46 CST
	Scheduled	Actual/Estimated								
Departure	08:00 CST	07:41 CST								
Arrival	10:52 CST	10:46 CST								
Speed	130 kts									
Altitude	7,000 feet									

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Weather: 25-Nov-2011 09:30AM



On Friday, November 25 I departed Houston, TX (9X1) to Bay Minette, AL (1R8) at 07:45L. It was hard IFR (fog) so I got my IFR clearance on the telephone and headed out. I entered the clouds at about 1000' but once I got above 2500' it was CAVU. I continued IFR although I could have easily gone VFR on top. The clouds stayed thick below me until just past New Orleans where the weather was beautiful. The rest of the flight was uneventful. 3:05hrs later, I approached Bay Minette and did the GPS-8 with one quick trip around the hold to keep current. Fuel was \$4.35/gal so I put as much fuel as I could. I thought about putting fuel in the tires, but

couldn't figure out how to get it from the tires to the engine afterwards. I borrowed the courtesy car and got a quick lunch. Once again the "Girls of Bay Minette" did a great job getting me what was needed for an easy turn around.

After that, I departed VFR towards Zephyrhills, FL (KZPH) and picked up my IFR clearance in the air. Except for a stiff headwind all the way and a small divert for a few build ups around Ocala, it was another uneventful flight (that is a GOOD thing). At around 16:40L I arrived at Zephyrhills, FL after 2:54Hr of flying. I did the GPS-22 into Zehyrhills and landed with two ultralights and a Mooney holding for takeoff while two jump airplanes (Twin Otters) landed on runway 36. Just like always, the skies around Zephyrhills airport was full of sky divers and airplanes. You gotta keep your head outside the airplane around here. I am always amazed at the number of sky divers that are always here. So, 5:59Hr of flight time today. Now a nice dinner (I am STARVING) and time to rest for the night.



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100 km | 100 mi | © 2011 FlightAware.com | Weather: 25-Nov-2011 02:00PM

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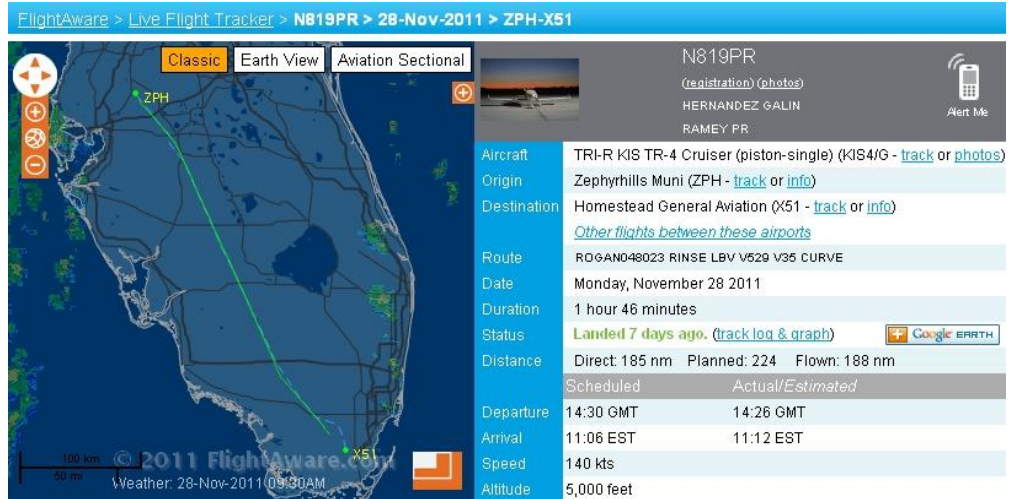
Alert Me

Aircraft	TRI-R KIS TR-4 Cruiser (piston-single) (KIS4/G - track or photos)	
Origin	Bay Minette Muni (1R8 - track or info)	
Destination	Zephyrhills Muni (ZPH - track or info)	
	Other flights between these airports	
Route	SZW CTY OCF	
Date	Friday, November 25 2011	
Duration	2 hours 54 minutes	
Status	Landed over a week ago. (track log & graph) Google EARTH	
Distance	Direct: 336 nm	Planned: 433 Flown: 363 nm
	<i>Scheduled</i>	<i>Actual/Estimated</i>
Departure	12:45 CST	12:38 CST
Arrival	21:57 GMT	21:32 GMT
Speed	130 kts	
Altitude	7,000 feet	

Arriving in to the Miami area

I flew from Zephyrhills (KZPH) to Homestead General (X51) on Nov 28th departing VFR around 09:30L with an IFR GPS direct flight plan on file. But once airborne they amended the route from KZPH - HALLR - LBV - V529 - WORPP - X51. Luckily it was VFR and "Otto pilot" was working well so I was able to reprogram the GPS with ease.

Just after WORPP they cleared me to descend to 2000' and direct X51. As I got lower the controller started calling out a lot of VFR traffic. He was vectoring me right through the Dade-Collier training area and airplanes were all around. I decided to cancel IFR and finished the flight VFR landing around 11:15L. The rental car was waiting for me at Homestead Jet Center and after tying the airplane down I was off to Premier One Aviation at Tamiami airport (KTMB).



While there, Anthony Perea let me fly his Flight Design CTLS from KTMB to Fort Lauderdale (KFXE). This LSA flies very well, although the landing flare is different from what I am used to but no big deal. We took the route along South Beach at 500ft with a great view of Miami. I was flying from the right seat so I couldn't get any photos. Oh well, maybe next time. While at KFXE we went to Banyan aviation and I purchased the charts and maps I needed to fly down the Bahamas chain.



We flew back and landed at KTMB just after sunset. This gave me another chance to practice the different landing flare on the CTLS. After that I went to Anthony's house for dinner and we briefed the next leg of the trip.

While having dinner, I got a call from another pilot friend (Oswaldo Seda) to inform me that he would arrive into Miami on the 29th around 4:00pm and would be joining us on the trip. This was good news to us. The more the merrier. By the time we got everything done it was past 12:00 midnight. Time flies when you are having fun. Then off to sleep and rest for the night.

The next day I preloaded the airplane with the "trinkets and cargo" we would use during the different commemorative activities. My Customs sticker finally arrived which now gave me the option of stopping half way to Puerto Rico and rest instead of making the long flight in one shot. Now it's time

to rest and get ready to head out on Thursday for the legs 4 and 5. If all goes well, we expect to arrive into San Juan (TJIG) around 17:00L, just in time for the start of the commemorative activities.

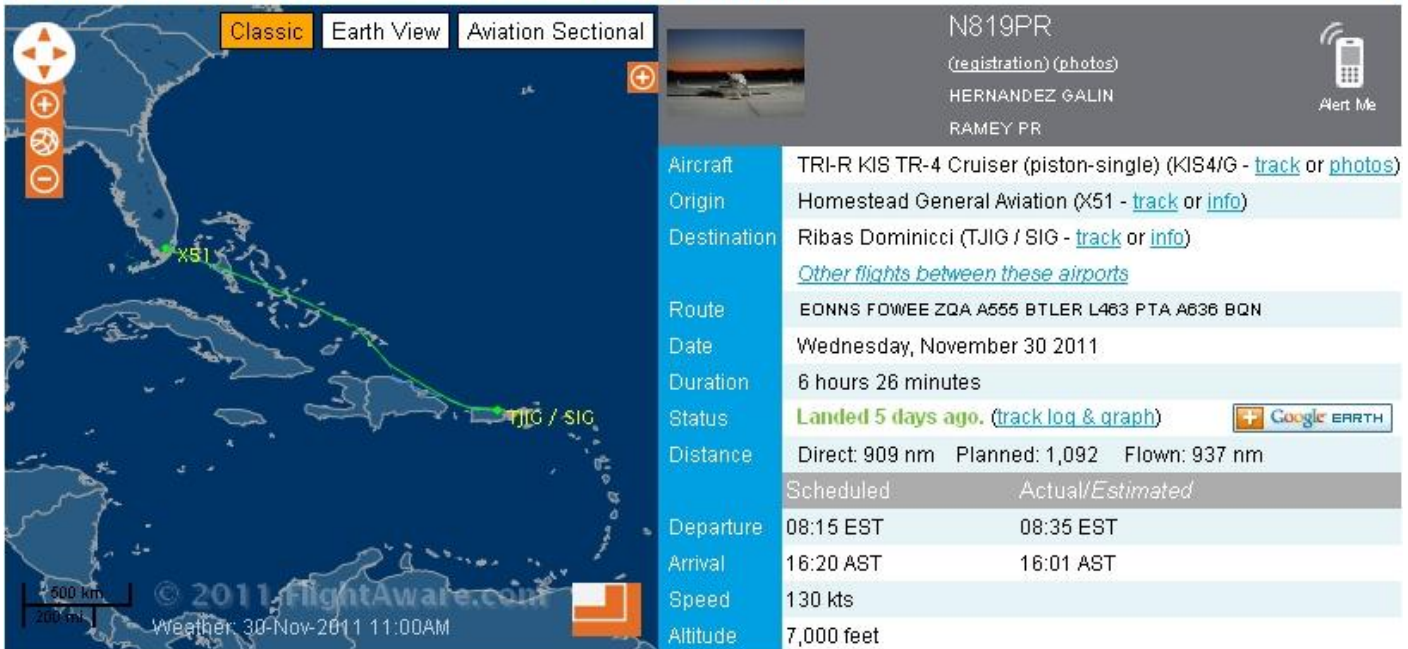
After picking up Oswaldo at the Miami airport, all three of us had an early dinner (Pollo Tropical) and started planning for the next day of flying at Anthony's apartment. While going over all the paperwork and documents we realized that Oswaldo had brought a passport card not his actual passport. Since the card is not valid for air travel we decided I would fly IFR direct and not have to clear US Customs upon arrival. Anthony doesn't have the range to do this so he would make two stops on the way. Anthony planned on a 06:00L departure with stops in Exhuma (MYEF) and Providenciales (MBPV) before arriving into Isla Grande (TJIG) around 16:30L. So we would arrive into TJIG at about the same time, I would depart at 08:00L. Even though we wanted to get to bed early, it was late before each one of us actually got to sleep that night.

Flying from Florida to Puerto Rico

It seemed that I had just gotten to sleep when it was 04:00L and the alarm went off. Anthony and Oswaldo were already up; we had packed everything already so it didn't take long to head out to the airport. Anthony went to Tamiami (KTMB) while Oswaldo and I headed to a McDonalds for breakfast. We made a stop at a Walgreens and picked up some Beef Jerky, some Trail Mix, a small box of granola bars, 2 bottles of water and 1 bottle of Diet Coke. These would be our snack(s) for the approximate 7hr it would take us. Once at Homestead General (X51) we loaded the airplane with our few bags, pulled it to the fuel pumps and added enough fuel for 9 hrs of flying. Around 06:45L I received a text message from Anthony letting me know he was airborne and on his way.

Once at Homestead Executive Jet Center I called Flight Service Station, got a standard weather brief and filed for an IFR flight departing at 08:15L. Knowing some international controllers don't like having

FlightAware > Live Flight Tracker > N819PR > 30-Nov-2011 > X51-TJIG



N819PR
(registration) (photos)
HERNANDEZ GALIN
RAMEY PR

Aircraft TRI-R KIS TR-4 Cruiser (piston-single) (KIS4/G - [track](#) or [photos](#))

Origin Homestead General Aviation (X51 - [track](#) or [info](#))

Destination Ribas Dominicci (TJIG / SIG - [track](#) or [info](#))
[Other flights between these airports](#)

Route EONNS FOWEE ZQA A555 BTLER L463 PTA A636 BQN

Date Wednesday, November 30 2011

Duration 6 hours 26 minutes

Status Landed 5 days ago. ([track log & graph](#)) [Google EARTH](#)

Distance Direct: 909 nm Planned: 1,092 Flown: 937 nm

	Scheduled	Actual/Estimated
Departure	08:15 EST	08:35 EST
Arrival	16:20 AST	16:01 AST

Speed 130 kts

Altitude 7,000 feet

you off an air route I filed X51-EONNS-FOWEE-ZQA-A555-BTLER-L463-PTA-A636-BQN-TJIG. I figured I can file this and once airborne ask for direct. About 08:10L we climbed in the airplane and taxied to runway 36 for takeoff. As we taxied to runway 36, we noticed the traffic pattern was full of

students practicing Touch-n-go's. It would take a little time to get airborne with that many of them in the pattern. We finally got a break and got airborne around 08:30L and headed south east in beautiful VFR weather.

After takeoff I called Miami departure and we were cleared radar vectors to EONNS then as filed which was perfect. I set up a 500'/min climb to our requested altitude of 7000' and the GPS showed we were doing 110Kt ground speed in the climb which meant we had a slight tail wind. A few minutes later as we approached EONNS, we were handed off to Miami Center. When I checked in with Center, the controller asked if I wanted to go GPS direct to checkpoint INDEE on A555. Since INDEE is just before Providenciales and would cut out about 25min of flight time, I accepted. A quick reprogram of the G430 and "Otto" pilot made the turn direct to INDEE intersection. Now I could sit back, monitor the instruments and enjoy the flight.

The weather was beautiful with a few clouds here and there as we flew along. We flew in and out of cloud layers for about 1hr with some light rain once in a while. I turned on my Bluetooth MP3 player and listened to some good music. Oswaldo and I talked about different things as we were handed off from one controller to another. We tried calling Anthony on our pre briefed frequency (123.45) but he did not answer. Hopefully he was on the ground getting fuel at MYEF and would be on frequency soon.

Checking my ETA, I realized we had about a 4Kt tailwind, very unusual for an easterly heading in the Caribbean. I pulled up the winds aloft on my Garmin 496 and it showed the 6,000' winds at 120 degrees at 5kts. It also showed that at 9,000' the winds were 140 degrees at 15Kts. So I asked for 9,000ft to which the controller approved and we climbed up. When we got to 9,000' and settled down the GPS showed us doing 153Kt ground speed even though we were still doing 142KTAS. We now had an 11Kt tailwind which made our ETA at 16:01L, almost 30 minutes sooner. Good news for such a long flight.

After a while we heard Anthony check in and soon were talking with him. We told him about the winds at 9,000' so he climbed to 9,500. It is nice having other airplanes on the same route providing PIREPS. As we flew along, at one point the controller gave me a frequency and told me to contact Miami on that frequency in 50 minutes. I had to ask several times he meant 50 minutes to which he confirmed. He told me that at 9,000' we would lose radio contact for about that amount of time and he would be waiting for us on the new frequency as we got closer to INDEE. Anthony was ahead of us and told me had been given the same instructions. He could not talk with Miami from where he was and was waiting to get closer to call them. At least we could talk to each other and I still had radio communications with Miami. This meant we could radio relay information if needed. Sure enough after a while we lost Miami Center but could hear Anthony talking with them on the new frequency. During this time I got hungry so we ate some of the beef jerky, granola bars and some trail mix. We sipped small amounts of water during the flight to keep hydrated without running into "bladder" problems along the way.

After about 30 minutes Anthony landed in Providenciales so we lost communications with him. At about the 55 minute point we got communications with Miami center back as we approached INDEE.



We now had radio contact with Miami Center, but no XM satellite signal. This meant we would be without airborne weather information until the same area on our way back.

From INDEE we flew to BUTLR and "Otto" turned us onto L463 on our way to Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic. Soon we were overflying Providenciales but had not heard Anthony check in. This meant we would arrive into TJIG well before he did. I just hope he had not had a problem there and would be airborne soon. Just after Providenciales, Miami Center amended our flight to SEKAR intersection, PTA

then as filed. We arrived at SEKAR and were handed off to Santo Domingo Center just as Anthony was departing Providenciales. We were ahead of him and flying about 30kts faster. So much for arriving into TJIG at the same time.

Once Anthony had leveled off, we checked our ETA's into TJIG. His ETA was 17:15L while ours was 16:08L. Santo Domingo Center cleared us direct KOBET intersection which would cut out about another 10 minutes of flight time since we were now showing 158kt ground speed, a 16kt tailwind. Having a tailwind the entire trip is very rare on an easterly flight in the Caribbean. The weather had closed in and now we were in thick clouds in IMC conditions. The last satellite images had shown the clouds here were thick but with very little convective activity. With only very light turbulence and some rain we continued.



Once at KOBET we were handed off to Punta Cana Approach. This controller was busy handling a lot of airplanes. At one point he cleared me to do an approach into Punta Cana Airport, obviously confusing me with another airplane. I told him we were heading towards TJIG not Punta Cana and he apologized for the mistake. That just goes to show controllers are humans too. As we approached PIXAR intersection, Punta Cana approach told me to contact San Juan Center, provide an ETA to KATOK intersection and return to his frequency since his land line with San Juan was down.

Just before we arrived at KATOK we broke out into CAVU conditions and we were handed off to San Juan center.

The flight into TJIG was uneventful. We flew north of Desecheo Island and Aguadilla as we descended. I drank a little of the Diet Coke as we got within 30 minutes of landing. Just north of

Arecibo at 2,000' we were vectored to the north for a while since there was VFR traffic at our same altitude but opposite direction. When we reached Dorado, I was cleared to contact TJIG tower. The tower told us to report when at the Levittown water tank then to report the west shore of San Juan bay. After that we were cleared to land behind a Vieques Air Link Caravan on base to final.

We landed into TJIG at 16:02L after 6:30 minutes of flying, taxied to the Inter-American University ramp and shut down. Around 17:30L, Anthony arrived and after clearing Customs, he parked next to us on the ramp. After showing both airplanes off, we checked into the hotel and went to dinner at a local restaurant. We had to be at the airport at 06:00L the next morning so we went straight back to the hotel for the night. The flight to Puerto Rico was over.

The 100th anniversary of Powered flight in Puerto Rico

On December 1, 2011 we got up early, checked out of the hotel and took a taxi to the airport arriving just before 06:00L. The Inter-American University parked several of their airplanes next to ours making the area a static display of general aviation airplanes. We had a CTLS (Light Sport), my KIS Cruiser (Experimental), a Piper Archer (Basic GA), Piper Arrow (Complex GA) and a Piper Seminole (Multi Engine GA). I had put together a presentation about the beginning of powered flight in Puerto Rico and was pleasantly surprised to find the University had made it the centerpiece of their commemoration display. A reporter, Susan Soltero, from the live local Univision Television morning show did her show from the hangar and interviewed both Anthony and myself about the 100th Anniversary of flight and our flight down. She even gave part of her broadcast while sitting inside the CTLS.



My airplane had reached the 50hr oil change point so after the TV broadcast was over; they let me do the oil change inside the Inter American University Hangar. It took me a lot longer than usual to

change the oil since I had to stop every few minutes to talk to students and people that came by as part of the commemoration. I was even able to change out some of the SCAT aircraft tubing with new tubing. The 1hr oil change took me almost 4hrs, but it was worth it clearing up misconceptions about experimental airplanes. After I finished, the 4 Inter American A&P's that were working in the hangar came over to look at the airplane. I asked them to look the engine compartment over to see if they found anything questionable. All 4 of them told me it was the 1st time they had been able to really look over an experimental airplane and



commented that it looked to be in excellent condition. They told me it completely changed their opinion about experimental airplanes and now understand why they are becoming so popular.

Anthony and Oswaldo had put all our baggage in my airplane and departed to the Mayaguez airport (TJMZ) our base for the rest of our time in Puerto Rico while I finished the maintenance. I then took 45 gallons of fuel at \$6.19/gal (OUCH!) and headed out to TJMZ.

The Isla Grand departure is breathtaking. At 500' after liftoff you make a climbing left turn over the Condado beach area that is lined with expensive hotels until over the beach. Then you continue the climb (west bound in this case) just off shore Old San Juan passing El Morro castle off your left wing at 1,000ft. It is a spectacular view of the 500+ yr old city with unbelievable visibility of the area in typical beautiful weather. The San Juan Class "C" airspace starts at 1,200' and extends to just before Dorado, so you stay at 1,000' for a good while. I then climbed to 2,500' enjoying the flight to Mayaguez landing about 1hr after Anthony and Oswaldo had. While at the Mayaguez airport Anthony and I were interviewed by a local radio station about the 100th anniversary, the flight from Florida to Puerto Rico and many questions about general aviation. Even though we were told the interview would be about 15 minutes, it lasted for over 45 minutes and would have continued except that the radio show ran out of time. We told the interviewer about the December 3rd commemoration activities and the December 10th Sport Aviation fly-in at Humacao airport to which she said she would continue the interview on the 10th.

All three of us picked up our rental cars at the airport and headed our separate ways for the night. I had reservations at a small local hotel in Aguadilla (La Cima) and checked in about 21:00L. It had been another long, but fun day.

Flying around Puerto Rico – Part 1

On December 2nd Anthony and I took a quick flight from Mayaguez to Arecibo (TJAB) to meet up with Ariel Acevedo, a mutual friend. Ariel is an LSA/Ultra-light CFI who is working hard to revive the Arecibo airport. We landed just after 12:00 noon and he met us there with several of his students, a few GA pilots and some people from the local community. The CTLS was a big hit with everyone wanting to know more about it. While Anthony talked about the CTLS and general aviation I went to meet the airport manager Ramon "Pito" Vargas. As soon as we were introduced he said, "I know you. We grew up and went to High school together." What a coincidence. It had been more than 30yrs since we had last seen each other. So we caught up on "old times" and he gave me a tour of the airport and talked to me about his efforts to bring the airport back to life. It is becoming a very nice airport, well maintained with several important upgrades to include a new taxiway. Ariel had talked to him about my airplane, not knowing we grew up together, so I promised to visit Arecibo again before we left so "Pito" could see it.

After having a nice dinner there, Anthony and I departed to TJMZ. On our way to TJMZ we overflew the Arecibo Observatory which has the largest radio-telescope in the world. As I flew around it



Anthony took some great aerial photos of the telescope. The telescope is 1,000ft in diameter and we joked that if needed, we could land inside. It would be difficult for me but “no problem” in the CTLS.

The next day, December 3, 2011 all 3 of us met at Mayaguez to spend the day at Isla Grande airport and participate in the 100th Anniversary of Powered Flight in Puerto Rico event. Anthony was going to provide “demo” flights of the CTLS so he had one of his instructor pilots join us. Since I had 2 extra seats in my airplane, Anthony’s

sister and husband also joined us. The flight to Isla Grand was uneventful and we landed just after 09:30L. The airplanes were part of the static display except that the CTLS was parked a little away to ease the “demo” flight activities.

Anthony set up his banners and exhibition while I walked around a “museum” the Inter American University had set up for the day. While looking at the memorabilia the Aeronautical Dean of Faculty for the University, Jorge Calaf, asked me if I would be the keynote speaker for the event. He wanted me to speak about the beginning of powered flight in Puerto Rico based on the presentation I had put together. This kind of caught me by surprise but I agreed. They set up my laptop in their small conference room and the small room quickly filled up with people. The presentation is only about 30 minutes long and went well. After the presentation, Dean Calaf asked me to cut the “ceremonial ribbon” officially opening the day’s activities.



This was something I never expected and was so honored to do it. I think Dean Calaf waited for the last minute to ask me so I couldn’t back out from doing it.

After that a lot of attendees came up to me to talk about aviation history in Puerto Rico. Some of the persons there had been flying for over 50yrs and had so much information to provide. I proposed to them to collect all these stories and memorabilia and start a “Museum of Puerto Rican Aviation” name it after Felix Rigau Carrera (the father of Puerto Rican aviation) before they are lost forever. Dean

Calaf committed the University to spearhead this effort with a lot of people volunteering to help. I hope this becomes a reality real soon.



We were also asked by EAA Young Eagles Explorer Post 6901 to attend their meeting the next day so all their members could see our airplanes which we quickly agreed to. The rest of the day was spent milling around and “hangar flying” with everyone there until about 16:00L when the activities ended. Around 17:00L, the four of us climbed into the airplane and we returned to Mayaguez.

Flying around Puerto Rico – Part 2

The next day, December 4, 2011, Oswaldo and I arrived to Mayaguez airport around 08:00L for the flight to Isla Grande. Anthony had already left since he was taking the instructor to San Juan International for his commercial flight back to Miami. After another uneventful flight, we landed into TJIG around 09:30L and waited at the Million Air FBO for the EAA Explorers to arrive. They arrived

around 10:00L and quickly set up. A group of them were to be flying while the other group took ground school. Then they would switch activities with the flying group doing ground school while the ground group flew. The Explorers were so enthusiastic about aviation and asked so many questions about the airplanes. The one issue they were most interested in was my iPad with Foreflight so we talked about how I use it for aviation. We especially covered emergency action checklist since they needed ground training on this issue for their qualifications. While we talked a good friend of mine, Jaime Pesquera, arrived for



lunch. Since he is a retired United Airlines Captain, he talked to them about emergency action checklists and their importance in aviation. They really appreciated us taking time to talk to them about it and gave me one of their Post 6901 patch for my flight jacket.

After the Explorer meeting, Jaime and I went to lunch at “El Hamburger” while Oswaldo and Anthony walked around Old San Juan. Around 15:00L we arrived back to the airport and got ready to head back. Anthony headed straight back to Mayaguez while Oswaldo and I decided to fly around the Island. I requested an eastbound departure from TJIG with the low level off shore transition through San Juan International airspace at 500ft. We took off, leveled off at 500ft and slowly flew along the coast while Oswaldo took pictures and videos. With the temperature at 75 degrees and little cloud cover, the view was spectacular. After exiting San Juan airspace we continued sightseeing along the

coast. We flew over the Fajardo lighthouse, the El Conquistador hotel, the old Roosevelt Roads Naval Air Station, the Palmas del Mar resort, the Humacao airport, Coffin Island and many other sights getting a view of Puerto Rico few persons have seen. It took just under 3hrs to complete the flight and we landed into TJMZ just before sunset. There were several others at the airport watching a local pilot doing a test flight on an ultra-light. After we secured the airplane, we talked with the pilots and everyone looked at the other airplanes there before we left well after sunset. The next day was “rest” day, which I spent it doing laundry and visiting with family members. I also took the day to catch up on writing about the trip after so much had happened.



On Tuesday we returned to Isla Grande in the CTLS so Anthony could meet with executives from the University. I took advantage of this and was able to get some “stick time” on several of their flight simulators. They have a large number of simulators and are working on getting a 3 axis full motion flight simulator. If they get one, maybe sometime in the future I can get some time in it. On the flight back we decided to practice different landings in the CTLS. Anthony and I did landings with every flap setting on the CTLs both in Aguadilla (TJBQ) and Mayaguez. We did this while large aircraft were sequenced in to land on the runway. At one point we had a Martinair Cargo DC-10 land in front of us while a Cessna 182 landed behind us. This time we landed in TJMZ just after sunset. The next day we were flying to St. Kitts and Nevis so after dinner, I went straight to the hotel.

Flying to the Caribbean Island of Nevis

Anthony and I met at the Mayaguez airport around 07:00L for the flight to Nevis. He was already filling the tanks with 15 gallons of MoGas when I arrived, which would be enough to fly us there and almost get us back. Anthony had filed the outbound and inbound EAPIS report as well as advance

notice of arrival back to TJBQ for later that afternoon. After a quick check of the weather, severe VFR, we put our life vests on, climbed in and took off. Anthony would take photos and talk on the radio while I flew from the right seat. He checked in with San Juan Center for flight follow and activated our VFR flight plan to Nevis with San Juan FSS.

Just a few small clouds were in our path at 7,500ft until we got to the east part of Puerto Rico. There we had to pick our way around some clouds until just past St. Croix where the clouds dissipated. We could hear all the air traffic in the area as we flew in



a direct line from St. Croix to Saba Island. Since we were headed eastbound, we had a stiff 15Kt headwind as we flew along. Once near Saba, Anthony took some pictures and we turned right towards GABAR intersection. There we were handed off to Bradshaw Tower (St. Kitts) and started our descent into Nevis. After crossing the runway centerline, we were handed off to Nevis Tower and were quickly cleared to land. Anthony decided he wanted to do the landing and I completely forgot to take a video of it.

Once on the ground we taxied and parked next to the tower. While there, Anthony placed a sticker of St. Kitts/Nevis on the airplane's tail to show another country he has flown to. We were met by a very friendly airport worker who asked if we had the required paperwork with us. We didn't have any prepared but went in to the terminal to complete it. After having our passports stamped, proof we were there, we went to the tower and closed our flight plan. Anthony asked if they would pass the information to San Juan FSS to which they said yes. So, with this in mind we got a taxi to take us in to Charlestown.



We were early for the lunch meeting Anthony had scheduled so we walked around Charlestown taking pictures and buying some "required" souvenirs. At about 12:00L we took another taxi to "Sunshine's Bar & Restaurant" on the beach. There we had a nice relaxing lunch with one of his friends while enjoying the warm weather. This time went by entirely too fast and soon we had to get back.

We were back at the airport by 14:00L and Anthony got the airplane ready. He added another 10galons of fuel just to be safe and we paid our bills. The government fees were reasonable (\$30.00) but the gas (\$7.50/Gal) was a bit high. At least we didn't have to buy too much fuel there. A quick file of an International flight plan and we were off.



As we climbed to 8,500ft we were handed off to Bradshaw Tower, then to San Juan center as we got close to GABAR intersection. While we approached GABAR, an American Airlines flight took off from Bradshaw and quickly overtook us. They held him at 6,000ft until we both had crossed GABAR then he was cleared to 36,000ft, just a little higher than us. From GABAR we turned left back towards St. Croix with a 8Kt tailwind. When we got over St. Croix I took some pictures and video of the island. From there we headed direct to TJBQ and landed just past 16:00L. Clearing US

Customs there was a breeze. We completed the required paperwork while they looked the airplane and its contents over. It only took us about 45 minutes to clear Customs and be on our way back to Mayaguez. We landed just after sunset, tied down the airplane and this flight was over. But when Anthony called to close our flight plan the FSS controller told us we had never closed our VFR flight plan to Nevis. He told us they had to call the Nevis Tower to make sure we had landed safely since they were about to launch search and rescue. Anthony told him that the tower assured us they would close it but apparently did not. Well next time we will close directly with FSS to make sure things don't fall through the cracks.

Final flights in Puerto Rico

The next few days were spent doing short local flights to different airports and just being tourists in Puerto Rico. By now we started to look at the weather forecasts for our planned departure on



Sunday. A weak front was moving through Texas and was forecast to be in the Caribbean on Sunday. We needed to keep an eye on it since it could affect our plans. In the mean time we got ready for the Saturday activities at Humacao (X64) airport with the Puerto Rico Sport Aviation Federation.

When I woke up on Saturday December 10th the weather was horrible. It was raining very hard and NOAA had issued a flash flood warning for Puerto Rico. It seemed that we would have to cancel the trip to Humacao. We decided to go to the airport anyways and hope the weather would clear up. By about 10:00L

the weather had cleared up nicely and the three of us (Anthony, Oswaldo and I) decided to take off. There were lots of clouds over the south part of the island so we stayed at 1,500ft over the ocean which kept us clear of clouds and mountains. It only takes about 20 minutes to fly there so we both arrived at about the same time. Anthony made a low approach over the airport while Oswaldo and I



came in behind him, landed first and waited for him to land. A few minutes after he landed we taxied to the activity area and shut down. The Inter American University had two airplanes there in addition to a Cirrus, a Yak, several ultra lights and a gyro copter. It wasn't full but enough people had already arrived to make the day interesting.

We spent time looking at the other airplanes, showing our airplanes off and hangar flying but with one eye on the weather. Since we were planning to head out to Florida the next day we did not want to get stuck there due to weather. So after about 2hrs we decided to head back to Mayaguez. Anthony and Oswaldo took off in the CTLS direct to Mayaguez while I took off towards Aguadilla to fuel up.

The winds were about 20Kts from the east so I was doing about 150Kt ground speed as I flew along. When I made the base to final turn at TJBQ my ground speed dropped. When I finally got to the runway I was showing 35Kt ground speed as I touched down. Needless to say it was a very smooth landing on the 11,000ft runway. A stop at Western Aviation Service Company (WASCO) and I took 51 gallons of AvGas at \$4.99/gal. WASCO has the cheapest fuel in the Caribbean and it is all full service. Besides, they do a good job in making you feel welcome while there. There was a lot of low clouds in the area so I took a CHARLIE intersection departure (4,500ft available), made a right turn out and departed to Mayaguez. Another smooth landing (winds were from the east at 18Kts) and I was back at TJMZ. This would be the last landing in Puerto Rico on this trip so I did as much as I could to get the airplane ready for the flight to Inagua Island in the Bahamas. Now it was time to have dinner, get to the hotel, file my EAPIS, file my advanced notice of arrival into KTMB and get ready for the long return flight.

Back to Florida via Inagua, Bahamas

04:00L comes real early, especially when you are excited about the long distance international flight that lies ahead of you. I had prepared just about everything for the trip and had loaded the airplane as much as I could the day before so I paid the hotel bill and headed out to the airport. It was so early on a Sunday that I knew there would not be a lot of breakfast options for me. Luckily McDonalds is open 24hr/day near the Mayaguez airport and I had breakfast there. While there I called Flight Service and got a good weather briefing for the flight from Mayaguez, Puerto Rico (TJMZ) to Inagua, Bahamas (MYIG).



The weather was forecast to be VFR around Puerto Rico and for most of the route with some marginal VFR around Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic (MDPP) and the MYIG area. I would be going IFR with plenty of fuel but Anthony had to go VFR and would be a little tight on fuel so this was a bit concerning. I filed an international IFR flight plan from TJMZ – KATOK – A636 – ZIN – MYIG at 6,000ft. It would take me 3hrs en-route and I had 10hrs of fuel onboard with Providenciales (MBPV) as my alternate.

After finishing the briefing and breakfast I arrived at the Mayaguez airport just as the sun rose. I found Anthony already there

fueling up his airplane. As he finished I loaded my final pieces of luggage in the airplane and we discussed flight options. Once again I had some Granola Bars, Trail mix, a bottle of water and a bottle of Diet Coke for the flight. We decided that I would arrive into MYIG about 30 minutes before he would so I could provide a good weather report. That way if he had to divert towards MBPV, he could do so without wasting time or fuel. Since I am about 25Kts faster, we decided that Anthony would depart at 06:30L and I would take off at 07:30L. Once again we would communicate with each other on 123.45 as our "company" frequency.

As we were finishing our flight briefing and pre-flight checks a cousin of mine, who I had not seen in years, showed up bringing some local candies for us to take on the flight. He loves aviation and if everything goes well hopes to get his pilot license soon. We thanked him several times for such a nice gesture and guaranteed him we would be back to visit. Anthony's sister and brother in law also showed up to say good bye so we took some final photographs in Puerto Rico. At about 06:30L, Anthony took off towards MYIG in his CTLS while I stayed back and chatted with our family members. I wanted to get airborne quickly but had to wait to comply with our plan so that hour felt like a long time. But it eventually arrived and I took off VFR just after 07:30L.



A quick call to San Juan center and my IFR flight plan was activated. San Juan center asked me what my service ceiling was to which I answered it is 21,000ft but I sure didn't want to go that high. The controller advised me that I needed to be at a minimum of 10,000ft or Santo Domingo center would not accept me IFR into their airspace at KATOK intersection. I remembered that last year I had the same situation and since I had plenty of time for the climb I accepted 10,000ft as my new altitude.

Just after this conversation ended, Anthony called me on 123.45 since he heard me on the frequency. He was already with Santo Domingo center VFR at 6,500ft slightly east of my position and was cruising along with about a 5Kt headwind. We chatted on the radio until I got to 10,000ft. At that altitude I had a 4Kt tailwind so he decided to climb and take advantage of the winds aloft. When he

got to 10,500ft he didn't have any head or tailwind so he continued on at that altitude. Just before KATOK, I checked in with Santo Domingo and headed towards MYIG on A636. Just like the weather briefer had told me, I was in and out of clouds all along the route at my altitude

FlightAware > Live Flight Tracker > N819PR > 11-Dec-2011 > TJMZ-MYIG

N819PR											
(registration) (photo)											
HERNANDEZ GALIN											
RAMEY PR											
Aircraft	TRI-R KIS TR-4 Cruiser (piston-single) (KIS4/G - track or photo)										
Origin	Eugenio Maria De Hostos (TJMZ / MAZ - track or info)										
Destination	Inagua (Matthew Town) (MYIG / IGA - track or info)										
Other flights between these airports											
Route	KATOK A636 ZIN										
Date	Sunday, December 11 2011										
Duration	2 hours 58 minutes										
Status	Landed 3 weeks ago. (track log & graph) Google earth										
Distance	Direct: 404 nm Flow: 407 nm										
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Scheduled</th> <th>Actual/Estimated</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Departure</td> <td>12:30 GMT / 11:40 GMT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Arrival</td> <td>15:18 GMT / 14:38 GMT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Speed</td> <td>140 kts</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Altitude</td> <td>6,000 feet</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Scheduled	Actual/Estimated	Departure	12:30 GMT / 11:40 GMT	Arrival	15:18 GMT / 14:38 GMT	Speed	140 kts	Altitude	6,000 feet
Scheduled	Actual/Estimated										
Departure	12:30 GMT / 11:40 GMT										
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Speed	140 kts										
Altitude	6,000 feet										

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Weather: 11-Dec-2011 01:00PM

At least part of this flight occurs outside of FlightAware's primary service area. [Learn more about FlightAware's coverage and service areas here.](#)

but with no convective activity. I picked up a little turbulence once in a while but nothing of any concern. After about 1:30 minutes of flying I passed Puerto Plata just off shore while Anthony passed it just over land. I had caught up with him and was pulling away towards MYIG with about 30Kts more groundspeed.

At checkpoint RETAK, Santo Domingo handed me off to Port-A-Prince center. Just like last year, I could not make radio contact with Port-A-Prince center so an American Airlines aircraft relayed the information. Port-A-Prince asked for an ETA to checkpoint ALBEE and told me to contact Miami center when I got there. Anthony heard this on the radio so he was prepared to do the same when it was his turn to contact Port-A-Prince center. At ALBEE intersection I called Miami center and was cleared direct MYIG. When I was about 50 miles out I was given a pilots discretion descent to 3000ft and headed down.



I flew in and out of scattered cloud layers as I descended to 3,000ft. At about 20 miles from MYIG the clouds had all but cleared up and it was beautiful VFR weather from that point on. I radioed this information to Anthony and told him he would have no problem arriving VFR into Inagua. So after just under 3hrs of flight I entered a left downwind and landed at Inagua, Bahamas. Anthony had just started his descent and was about 30 minutes behind.

I was the only airplane on the airport so as I shut the airplane down I was greeted by the Bahamian Customs and Immigration officers. I didn't need any fuel so I went into their office and they gave me the required paperwork to fill out. As I finished the paperwork Anthony arrived into the traffic pattern, landed and walked in to the office. We were now the only two airplanes at the airport and with the 1hr change in local time it was just after 09:30L on a sunny Sunday morning.

From MYIG to KTMB

With all the paperwork completed Anthony requested fuel, walked to the airplane and waited. The fuel truck showed up after about 10 minutes but did not start fueling Anthony's airplane. Anthony walked back to me and told me that he was being charged a \$40.00 overtime fee because it was now past 10:00am on a Sunday. This was not what he had been told the day before when he called ahead. Anthony told the fueller he was assured there were no fees and that they were open from 06:00L to 16:00L. Although the fuel was \$7.50/gal he only needed 16 total gallons so the total cost would be \$160.00. Anthony decided he would rather fly to Providenciales, 20 minutes away, and fuel there instead of paying the additional fee. When he said this, the fueller told him since he had not been informed of the \$40.00 fee he would waive it to which Anthony agreed and the fueling started. When the left wing was full Anthony was told it had taken 21 gallons of fuel. This is impossible since the wing only holds 16 gallons and he still had about 5 gallons in it when he landed. It turns out the fueller had forgot to re-set the counter from the previous airplane he had fueled before he started fueling Anthony's airplane which accounted for the difference. With the discrepancy corrected, the fueling was quickly completed.



Now we were about 1 1/2hr ahead of our overall schedule. Not wanting to have problems with US Customs at Tamiami, we called and provided them a 15:30L arrival into KTMB. It is nice that there is a free telephone at Inagua that has several of the US Customs offices in Florida on speed dial. We made sure we got the initials of the Customs Officer that took our information just in case. After this we filed international flight plans, Anthony filed VFR while I filed IFR. I filed MYIG - ZIN – A315 – ALBEE - JUNUR – FOWEE – KTMB at 10,000ft. Anthony took off about 10:45L while I waited at Inagua eating some of the granola bars and trail mix. Around 11:30L I took off VFR, activated my IFR flight plan and headed towards Tamiami, Florida.



Once with Miami center, Anthony and I were back up on 123.45 talking to each other. Once again I had a 5 kt tail wind and my ETA to Tamiami was now 16:30L. This meant I would arrive 1hr before US Customs was expecting me so I throttled back until the GPS was showing an ETA of 15:00L. I figured that a 1/2hr early arrival would not be a big deal for them and I would even use less fuel on this leg of the trip. Anthony and I talked on the frequency, passed information to each other on the weather conditions and what kind of winds we were experiencing as we flew along. Once I got to ALBEE intersection, I was cleared direct JUNUR with the FOWEE FIVE arrival into Tamiami. A quick

programming of the GPS and “Otto” pilot turned me towards JUNUR. With this shortcut my ETA was 14:30L again, a full hour before Customs was expecting me. I didn’t want to throttle back any more so I resigned myself to arrive when I arrived. After just under 3:00hrs of flight, I was handed off to Miami approach and started a visual approach into Tamiami. The weather was VFR so I had the airport in sight early and was handed off to Tamiami tower. The tower cleared me to land on runway 9L and after 3:30 minutes of flying I was back in the USA.

I taxied over to US Customs and shut down in front of their office taking my time to walk in. When I did they commented that I was early but it was obviously not a big deal. The officers provided the paperwork and asked me to bring all the baggage into the office for inspection. Now my airplane was the “cargo” bird for the trip so I had all my luggage and some of Anthony’s stuff too. When I was on my third trip with a full baggage cart, the officer told me I didn’t have to bring the rest of the baggage in since he could inspect the airplane with what was left in it. Anthony arrived after about 30 minutes

later and he was also asked to bring in all his baggage to clear customs. It took us about 1 1/2hr between clearing customs, putting all the baggage back into the airplane and taxiing to the Premier One Aviation office ramp area.

FlightAware > Live Flight Tracker > N819PR > 11-Dec-2011 > MYIG-KTMB

N819PR	
Aircraft	TRI-R KIS TR-4 Cruiser (piston-single) (K3S4U - track or photos)
Origin	Inagua (Matthew Town) (MYIG / IGA - track or info)
Destination	Kendall-Tamiami Executive (KTMB - track or info)
Route	ZIN320010 ACMEE JUNUR FOWEE5
Date	Sunday, December 11 2011
Duration	3 hours 28 minutes
Status	Landed 3 weeks ago. (track log & graph)
Distance	Direct: 467 nm Flown: 475 nm
Departure	16:30 GMT
Arrival	20:11 GMT
Speed	130 kts
Altitude	8,000 feet

At least part of this flight occurs outside of FlightAware's primary service area. [Learn more about FlightAware's coverage and service areas here.](#)

Once at the ramp I secured the airplane and got my baggage out while Anthony taxied to his hangar. He returned just as I was finishing so we loaded my luggage into his car and went for dinner. We took our time at dinner then went to his apartment after a long day of travel. By about 21:00L I was in bed since I wanted to be in Jacksonville, Florida the next day. We were both tired but happy having completed a trip to Puerto Rico in our airplanes a second time.

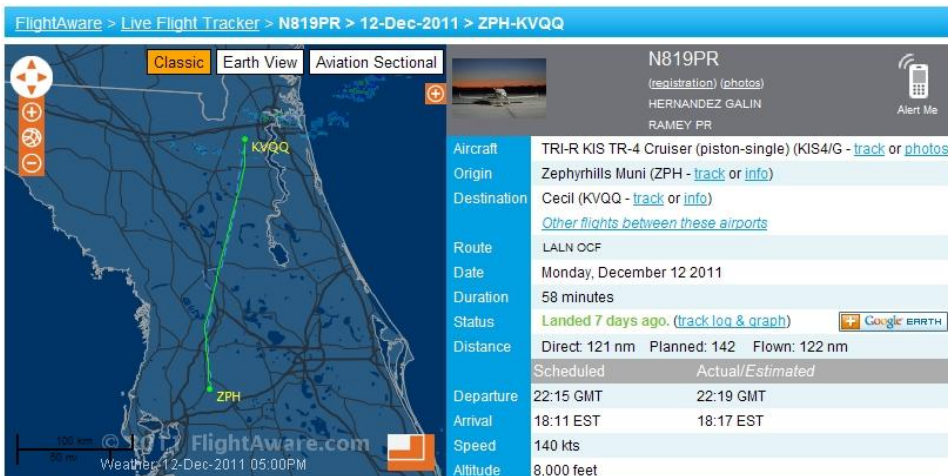
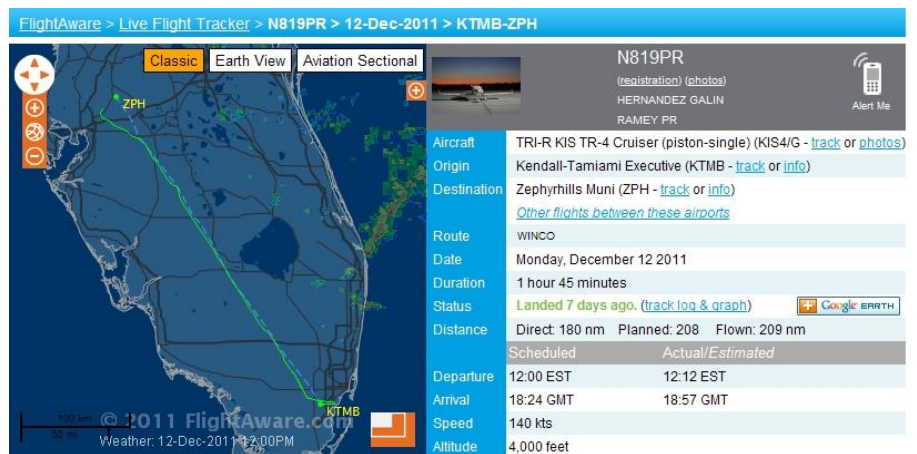
Heading North

I woke up early on the 12th ready to start heading back home. My wife Millie was flying commercial into Jacksonville, Florida where I would meet up with her and spend the night with my Uncle at his house. With this plan in mind I got to the airport about 09:00L and loaded the airplane. A cold front had passed through the northern part of Florida so the general area was IFR with low ceilings and light rain. Zephyrhills was showing light IFR and forecast to be marginal VFR after 14:00L so I decided to wait a little before departing. Since I still had over 3hrs of fuel left, and the flight would be under 2hrs, I didn't fuel up at Tamiami. I filed IFR GPS direct to KZPH at 4,000ft. About 12:00L I said goodbye to Anthony, thanked him for all his help, got in the airplane and taxied out.

The departure was in nice VFR weather, but since I had to transit all of Miami's class "B" airspace, the controller kept me at 2,000ft until I was well over the Everglades headed north on the WINCO departure. When cleared to climb I realized that 4,000ft would put me inside the clouds for probably the entire trip. I asked for 8,000ft and the controller stepped me up over a period of about 45 minutes.

At that altitude I was VFR on top with a broken layer at about 6,000ft. Once near KZPH I did the GPS approach into runway 4 and landed just after 14:00L.

At KZPH I took just over 75 gallons of fuel which meant I still had 17 gallons left from when I fueled up in Puerto Rico. I was getting some pretty good gas mileage from the Lycoming engine. The weather at Cecil Field (KVQQ) was still IFR with ceilings at 500ft and light rain. It was forecast to be 1000ft broken with visibility 6 miles and light mist after 18:00L so I decided to wait and have lunch there. Again I filed GPS direct for the 1hr flight. Then I had lunch (Domino's Pizza) with a local flight



instructor who was just hanging out at the FBO. At around 17:30L it was already starting to get dark as I got in the airplane and took off towards Jacksonville, Florida.

Passing through 2,000ft I entered the clouds as I climbed to 8,000ft for the flight. The controller gave me an updated routing which I entered into the GPS while "Otto" pilot flew. By the time I leveled

out I was night time and I was still in the clouds. As I approached Cecil Field, the weather was 800 broken with 6 miles visibility and light rain. This was only 340ft above the minimums so I knew it would be a challenge. The good thing is that runway 36R at KVQQ is over 12,500ft long so I would have plenty of time to land. The ILS was out of service so I requested the GPS-36R approach. After about 45minutes, I was cleared for the GPS-36R approach into KVQQ. I descended and was handed off to the tower for landing.

I finally broke out of the clouds at about 750ft with the long well lit runway ever so slightly to my left. I mistakenly landed where I was supposed to on the runway because now I had a super long taxi to the FBO. At one point I asked the tower how much further I had to the exit to which he chuckled and said, "Oh, about another 4,500ft. Do you want to take off and fly there?" Since I was the only aircraft there I just continued on. At about 19:00L I parked in front of the FBO and shut the airplane down. By the time I got the airplane secured and the baggage out, Mille arrived with my Uncle. We loaded the luggage into his car and headed out for dinner and some rest.



Spending Time in Georgia

The next day we were back at the airplane about 11:00L and got her ready for the flight to St. Simons Island, Georgia (KSSI). While there I gpt a visit from Jaime Pesquera Jr. He was waiting for the weather to clear up so he could do his 1st solo flight. It was too bad I couldn't be there to celebrate this with him. The weather at Cecil Field was not real bad with broken clouds at 1,000ft and light mist. KSSI was reporting 900 broken but visibility over 10 miles. The

weather at St. Simons was forecast to clear up after 12:00L so at about 11:45L we took off IFR direct to KSSI. The flight would only be short so we wound up cruising at 4,00ft. By the time we got to KSSI the weather over the airport was clear but we could see the thick clouds about 10 miles off shore. I

requested the GPS-4 but cancelled early and landed in beautiful VFR weather just after 12:30L. We secured the airplane, got our rental car and headed out to Savannah Georgia to visit our Daughter. We would stay with her until Monday the 19th when we would head back home to Houston, Texas.

FlightAware > Live Flight Tracker > N819PR > 13-Dec-2011 > KVQQ-KSSI

N819PR							
(registration) (photos)							
HERNANDEZ GALIN							
RAMEY PR							
Aircraft	TRI-R KIS TR-4 Cruiser (piston-single) (KIS4/G - track or photos)						
Origin	Cecil (KVQQ - track or info)						
Destination	Malcolm Mc Kinnon (KSSI - track or info)						
	Other flights between these airports						
Route	n/a						
Date	Tuesday, December 13 2011						
Duration	35 minutes						
Status	Landed 6 days ago. (track log & graph)						
Distance	Direct: 61 nm Planned: 71 Flown: 62 nm						
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Scheduled</th> <th>Actual/Estimated</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Departure</td> <td>12:00 EST 11:51 EST</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Arrival</td> <td>12:30 EST 12:26 EST</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Scheduled	Actual/Estimated	Departure	12:00 EST 11:51 EST	Arrival	12:30 EST 12:26 EST
Scheduled	Actual/Estimated						
Departure	12:00 EST 11:51 EST						
Arrival	12:30 EST 12:26 EST						
Speed	140 kts						
Altitude	5,000 feet						

While there Jose Ortiz and his wife Christine flew their airplane to the St Simons Island airport. Jose is also from Puerto Rico and they wanted to join us in their airplane during our trip but could not get off work during our timeframe. So they decided to do the trip on their own and we met for lunch.

During lunch we talked about what he could expect and what we had done during our trip. I told him that during a trip like this not everything goes according to plan. The most important thing was to be flexible and resourceful to overcome any situation that comes up. Most of all, take advantage of the situations that come up, turn them into fun un-planned things that they will remember forever because during this trip they are travelers not tourists.



Homeward Bound

As Monday December 19th approached I kept an eye on the weather between Savannah Georgia and Houston Texas. We wanted to stay a few extra days but we had to be back in Houston by Friday, December 23rd. A cold front was approaching Houston from the west bringing with it some bad weather so if we stayed we could get stuck for several days until the front passed through. On Sunday, December 18th I checked and the Houston forecast for December 19th was for marginal VFR with the weather becoming hard IFR after 18:00L. With this information we decided to depart early on the 19th to arrive into Houston before 15:00L.

FlightAware > Live Flight Tracker > N819PR > 19-Dec-2011 > KSSI-1R8

Aircraft	TRI-R KIS TR-4 Cruiser (piston-single) (KIS4/G - track or photos)	
Origin	Malcolm Mc Kinnon (KSSI - track or info)	
Destination	Bay Minette Muni (1R8 - track or info)	
Route	n/a	
Date	Monday, December 19 2011	
Duration	2 hours 26 minutes	
Status	Landed yesterday. (track log & graph)	
Distance	Direct: 332 nm	Planned: 382
	Flown: 339 nm	
	Scheduled	Actual/Estimated
Departure	09:00 EST	09:12 EST
Arrival	10:34 CST	10:38 CST
Speed	140 kts	
Altitude	6,000 feet	

We got up real early on Monday the 19th and headed from Savannah, Georgia to St. Simons Island for the final two legs of the trip. It didn't take long to load the airplane and file my IFR flight plan. Once again I filed GPS direct from St. Simons Island (KSSI) to Bay Minette Alabama (1R8). Although I could make the flight without stopping, I

wanted to take advantage that fuel at Bay Minette (1R8) was \$4.35/gal and I wanted to fuel up there. With everything looking well, we taxied out and were airborne in beautiful VFR conditions around 09:00L.

Once with Jacksonville Center we were cleared as filed to Bay Minette at 6,000ft. We settled in for a smooth flight until we received an amended routing from ATC. One of the Military Operating Areas

was going hot and ATC routed me around it. As we flew along I checked the weather at Houston and the forecast had not changed. The front was a little stronger than before but was still forecast to arrive around 18:00L. With a slight headwind, our ground speed was lower than I had anticipated so we would arrive into 1R8 later than I had planned. With this in mind and that we had water and snacks for the flight, we decided to do a quick turn and depart as soon as we fueled up without having lunch there. The actual flight was uneventful and at about 10:15L I was cleared for the visual approach in to Bay Minette landing just after 10:30L.

The Final Leg

When we pulled up to the self service fuel pumps one of the line “girls” came up to us and said the self service pumps were not working but they would provide full service for the same price of self service. This is one of the reasons I always try to stop at Bay Minette if I am in the general area. They go out of their way to provide excellent service no matter what size airplane you arrive in. As the line “girl” fueled the airplane, I filed the final IFR flight plan GPS direct 1R8 – 9X1 at 6,000ft.

We were airborne just before 11:30L and checked in with Mobile approach. Soon after checking in we were cleared direct 9X1 as filed. As we flew on, we could see the high level clouds that precede an approaching front. Constant checking of XM weather showed the front had passed San Antonio, Texas and was already close to Houston. Even with the slight headwind we should arrive just before the front. The weather had already gone from VFR to marginal VFR at Houston Intercontinental (KIAH) which is just 10 miles south of 9X1. Our airport does not have an instrument approach so I started considering alternate options. I decided that if I could not get into 9X1, I would divert into David Wayne Hooks (KDWH) which is close by, has several instrument approaches and a nice long runway.

When we got to the Texas - Louisiana border we were in and out of clouds and we could see it was getting worse. The weather did not show any convective activity until well past Houston but low clouds everywhere else. After a while we were in solid IMC

conditions but no turbulence of any kind. Of course as soon as this happened Houston Center amended my clearance direct DAS – V306 – GOMER which required me to enter several intersections in to the G430W. The good thing was that “Otto” pilot was doing the flying so I could hunt down the intersections needed to fly V306 on my iPad with Foreflight and program them into the G430W. As we approached DAS, the approach controller cleared us direct 9X1 with a pilot discretion descent to 3,000ft. Oh well, I got good practice using the iPad and programming the G430W while in actual IMC conditions.

I set up a slow descent which brought my ground speed up a little while still in the clouds. At one point the controller asked about the airplane designator (KIS4) since he had never seen it. Nobody else was on the frequency so we talked about the airplane and its performance. He himself has a Mooney and was impressed with the speed I was showing. He has also flown his Mooney to 9X1 several times and we decided that the next time he flew there we would have coffee together.

Just before we entered Houston Class "B" airspace we were handed off to Houston approach. By now the weather at KIAH was 2,000ft broken with visibility 6 miles. We were still flying directly towards 9X1 at 3,000ft but since there are 2,000ft towers in the area the controller could only let us down to 2,300ft. Even at 2,300ft we were still in the clouds so he turned us north and set us up to approach 9X1 from the north east. In this area the clouds were a little higher and I soon started to see the ground. A few minutes later the clouds were above us and we could see KIAH in the distant.

There was a little mist falling but soon I could see 9X1 just ahead of us so I called the airport in sight, cancelled IFR and entered the left downwind for runway 17. Winds at KIAH were from 140 at 19Kts gusting to 22 and not much different as I turned to final. With this strong headwind my ground speed was around 50kts as we touched down just after 14:30L. We put the airplane into the hangar, didn't unload the airplane and headed straight out for a late lunch. We took our time at lunch and watched the weather slowly worsen. By 19:00L thunderstorms with heavy rains had arrived but we were safely resting at home.

So after 24 days of traveling and just over 39hrs of flying, the trips was over. I wonder where our next flying adventure will take us.