



A PC-12 Journey around

South AMERICA

By Kristy Bolingbroke

This year, I had the opportunity to fly around South America in a Pilatus PC-12NG. I've flown to a lot of fun locations over the years; however, this trip is one of the top in my books! I was participating as a Journey Director for Air Journey. As Journey Director, I'm responsible for leading the participants with both the aviation portion of the trip and

also director with our ground activities.

My three-week journey started in Uruguay then we flew to Argentina - Chile - Peru - Ecuador - Panama - Mexico. We saw penguins in Ushuaia, Argentina, the Patagonia Mountains in Chile, sand dunes in Atacama, Chile, Machu Picchu in Peru, and the Panama Canal in Panama! It was the trip of a lifetime.

Typically, AJ trips have a number of airplanes and participants. However, there was a last-minute cancellation with another PC-12 due to a participant's health issues. So, I ended up doing this trip with a husband and wife couple that became very good friends by the end of our three-week jaunt. Actually, most of the people we met would refer to them as my "mom and dad" ...so they are also known as South America Mom & Dad!

1. Punta Del Este, Uruguay – Estancia Vik Jose Ignacio –

Day one of the trip I arrived at Estancia Vik, the most amazing luxury hotel which is situated on 4,000 acres of rolling countryside. We had a delicious lunch at Bodega Garzon which is a wine and food destination for many travelers. We had a couple of days to relax in this amazing hotel and kept busy with a variety of activities, a favorite of mine being horseback riding. I couldn't have thought of a better place to try horseback riding for the first time!



2. Ushuaia, Argentina – aka the End of the World –

For all my pilot friends who claim they do not need to learn VOR skills ... you can stand corrected! In South America, radar coverage doesn't tend to be at the same level as in the United States. We proceeded to an initial approach fix on a VOR approach with a procedure turn. Luckily, we broke out of the clouds high enough to get a good look at the magnificent terrain. The highlight from Ushuaia was definitely seeing penguins!



3. Chile, Puerto Natales, Chiole & Atacama

Chile was breathtaking! It was very interesting to see how our three stops throughout Chile were so different in terms of terrain and environment. Our first stop, we kept busy with many beautiful hikes through the mountains of Patagonia, and I feel like I finally earned the right to actually sport my Patagonia gear. Second stop was Chiole, a unique hidden treasure of an island. We stayed at the amazing Tierra Chiole and kept busy with horseback riding, a boat day on the water with amazing meals and tours, and Mom & Dad relaxed with some couples massages as well.



4. Cuzco, Peru – Machu Picchu –

Machu Picchu was on my bucket list for quite some time, so I was elated to have the opportunity to finally see this magnificent wonder of the world. It was an all-day event to get to Machu Picchu with a car ride, train ride and then bus ride all the way up to the top. The long day of traveling was worth the experience; the beauty and uniqueness of this mysterious Incan citadel is indescribable. After a full day of traveling, we assumed a quiet and easy ride back on the train. However, our plans changed as the band tuned up to play some fun music, and the need to salsa dance with pisco sours in hand arrived!

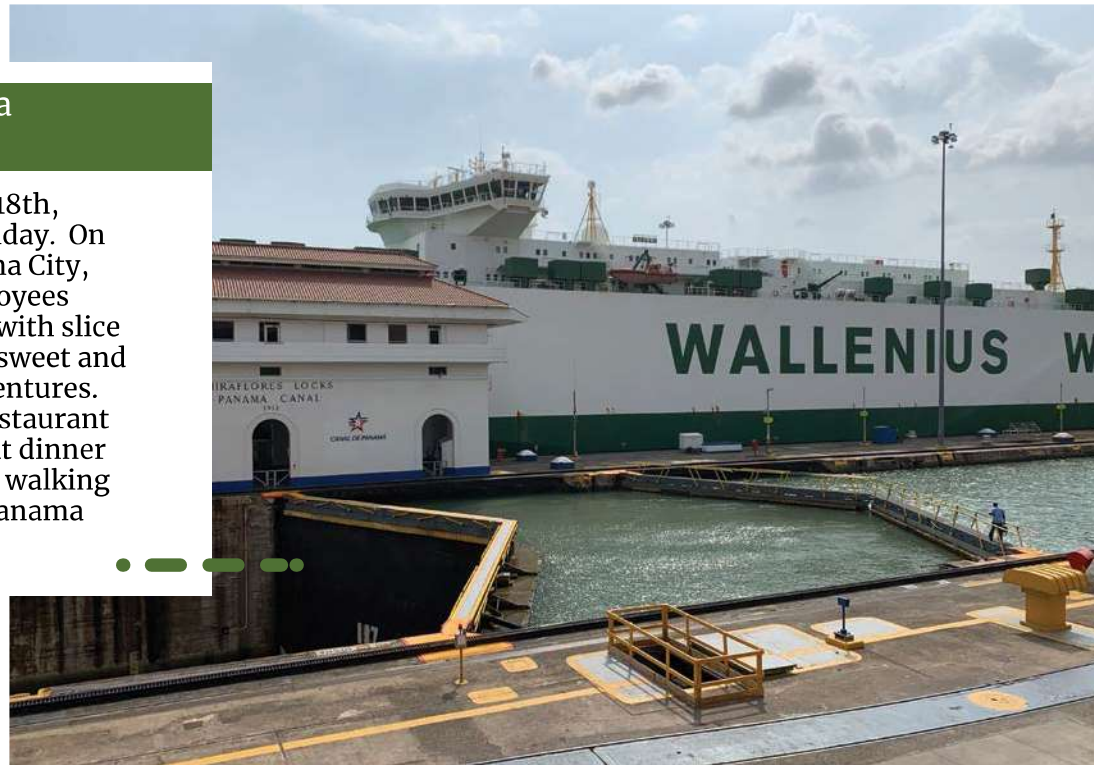


5. Guayaquil, Ecuador – Fuel Stop

Guayaquil was an easy fuel stop due to the accessibility of the airport. We had a slight delay due to the fact the fuel truck ran out of fuel. We had some more snacks as we waited most patiently, then we were off on our way.

6. Panama City, Panama – Panama Canal –

We had a long flight day on March 18th, which just happened to be my birthday. On our arrival at MAPEX FBO in Panama City, I was greeted with a bunch of employees singing Happy Birthday combined with slice of birthday cake and a rose! Super sweet and a great kickoff for our Panama adventures. We were able to find an amazing restaurant for the evenings, and we had a great dinner and fiesta! The next day featured a walking tour of Old Town and the famous Panama Canal.



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7. Cancun & Cozumel, Mexico – Couples' Retreat

We flew the last leg together to Mexico and cleared customs in Cozumel. It was a quick customs stop where we were greeted by military personnel with machine guns and some very serious dogs. Handlers were great, and it was an efficient clearing of customs and quick turn to head to Cancun. This was the end of the road for me as my third-wheeling came to an end; it was time for the couples to get some more solo time. I did get some pictures of the amazing food and drinks they were eating in Mexico while I arrived home to the stark reality of immersing myself back into real life!

I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to fly to such amazing locations while soaking in various cultures and adventures at every stop. Once again, I'm reminded of the capabilities of the Pilatus PC-12 and why it's gained an incredible reputation for its versatility, performance, and low operating costs in the turboprop market segment. **P**

