



## MEMORIAL HANS GUTMANN TOURIST RALLY FLIGHT GEORGIA 2016

### INTRODUCTION

For the 5<sup>th</sup> time in a row, a “MEMORIAL HANS GUTMANN TOURIST RALLY FLIGHT GEORGIA 2016” was organized in the adventurous spirit of late Austrian aviator Hans Gutmann. This year’s lustrum rally brought us to a very special and brand new general aviation destination, the beautiful country of Georgia in the European Caucasus

The preparation started back in 2015, when Luxembourg based private pilot Peter Sodermans established contact with the owners airfield of Natakhtari (UGSA) , north of the Georgian capital Tbilissi. An exploration team was put together with the organizer of the previous “MEMORIAL HANS GUTMANN TOURIST RALLY FLIGHT”, Jean Birgen (FAI-GAC long range rally organizer), as well as the Luxembourg based Russian private pilots Artem Kirillov and Mike Kornev.

During this 4 day exploration tour in 2015, these 4 pilots were able to check the various airfields and establish contacts with aviation authorities in Georgia. On top, they were well received in person by the young Georgian State Minister for EU and Atlantic integration, David Bakradze. The minister proved to be an aviation enthusiast and pledged his full support to the development of general aviation in his country. The bold plan to setup the lustrum edition of the “MEMORIAL HANS GUTMANN TOURIST RALLY FLIGHT GEORGIA 2016” to Georgia was born.



Figure 1: first meeting with Georgian State Minister David Bakradze in his Tbilisi office in 2015

Figure 2: meeting with the board of the Georgian civil aviation agency in August 2015

### OUR INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION TEAM

A multifunctional international organization team “The Magnificent seven” has been put together to prepare and coordinate the MEMORIAL HANS GUTMANN TOURIST RALLY FLIGHT GEORGIA 2016

1. Jean Birgen, President 2016 rally and FAI-GAC adviser
2. Peter Sodermans, Secretary General 2016 rally
3. Mike Kornev, flight planning and navigation
4. Artem Kirillov, project manager
5. Turgut Kulacoglu, advisory board member for Turkey relate affairs
6. Nikoloz Tsiklauri, advisory board member for Georgia related affairs
7. Amiran Ivanidze, advisory board member for tourism affairs in Georgia



Figure 3: with Artem Kirillov and Mike Kornev, we had two Luxembourg based Russian pilots in our organisation team

## POLITICAL DIMENSION



The former Minister of the Building, Transport and Economy of Luxembourg, Mister Robert Goebbels (also known due to the signature of the Schengen treaty) and current member of the European Parliament, gave the official start for the rally to Georgia with the luxembourg's "Red Lion" flag.

The rally shows the clear advantages that the Schengen agreements has brought to aviation. People sometimes take it for granted. Travelling outside of the “Schengen area” was like returning in time as we have been losing many hours with customs. The red tape we encountered outside of the Schengen area was quite disturbing. Schengen is an absolute benefit for European pilots.

## ROUTE OF THE MEMORIAL HANS GUTMANN TOURIST RALLY FLIGHT GEORGIA 2016



## ITENARY

### DAY 1 - AUGUST 5

Although the initiative of this rally was driven by Luxembourg, the official gathering point for all crews to join was the airfield of Jakabszállás in Hungary (LHJK) with its famous Aerohotel (with swimming pool and 2 runways : grass and concrete). A social event has been setup as welcome party, being an aviator's party with a live band playing gipsy music.



### DAY 2 – AUGUST 6

After an early morning take off due to an approaching thunderstorm, all pilots headed for Turkey after loosing some time due to customs formalities in southern Hungary. On trips like these, the clear advantage of the Schengen agreement becomes obvious. Some pilots made a fuel stop in Serbia (with AVGAS prices as low as 1€ per liter). Some others made a stop in Bulgaria. Due to the military coup attempt in July 2016 in Turkey, the airspace of Turkey was initially closed for all VFR traffic up to 20.000 ft. By the time we arrived, this limitation was restricted to the CTR's of Istanbul and Ankara...but it was only thanks to the efforts and network of our advisory board member Turgut Kulacoglu, fmr president of the Bosphorus aviation club, that all our planes got a special corridor of the Turkish Interior Minister validated which allowed us to fly a narrow route to the airfield of Bursa Yenişehir Airport Turkey (LTBR).

Over here, we discovered the great Turkish hospitality as a welcome reception has been organized by the Istanbul aviation club. In the evening, we were invited by the Bosphorus aviation club to enjoy dinner by the on a sea terrace over the Black sea. Wonderful people !



Figure 4: warm welcome reception in Turkey (Bursa Yenişehir Airport Turkey LTBR)

Figure 5: evening dinner at seashore Bosphorus

## DAY 3 – AUGUST 7

With sunny Turkish skies, all our pilots were able to take off early in the morning and we flew to the University Engiz airport in the northern part of Turkey, where we received also a warm welcome. Avgas was provided to all planes over there

Whilst preparing this rally, we learned that finding AVGAS once you pass Istanbul is not obvious. We had to organize in advance to get AVGAS at all the airfields we visited

Flying from there over the black sea shores, our pilots approached hot and humid Batumi, Georgia by the end of the afternoon.

Our pilots have been prepaying for AVGAS, which was brought in barrels on the back of a car and served with a handpump from the Vanilla Sky team. The good teamwork with the Georgian Vanilla Sky management made it possible that we were delivered with quality AVGAS (imported from Holland) all along our route in Georgia



Figure 6: landing in subtropical Batumi in bad weather conditions



Figure 7: AVGAS delivered in barrels / handpump

## DAY 4- AUGUST 8

After being validated for an overland flight by the Georgian central dispatching unit, all our planes left subtropical Batumi in the morning and headed for our final destination, being the general aviation airfield of Natakthari (UGSA), north of Georgian's capital city Tbilisi. This airfield has a hotel and swimming pool at the same facilities. It proved to be a perfect stayover location. We had also lots of children with us on this rally, which strengthened the family atmosphere of the rally

The owner of the airfield, Amiran Manjavidze, organized a huge welcome party for the European aviators with dance, music and whilst tasting the excellent Georgian food and wines of his own vineyards. The Chairman of the faction Georgian Dream, Gia Volski, attended the event and was quite enthusiastic when we rolled the flag of the Schengen agreement.





Figure 8: Welcome party with dance and music organized by the airfield of Natakhtari

Figure 9: unfolding the Schengen flag in presence of Gia Volski

## DAYS 5-AUGUST 9

A formal welcome for the European aviators was setup on August 9, in presence of multiple TV and radio crews. Georgian State Minister for EU and Atlantic integration David Bakradze as well as Giorgi Chogovadze, head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration held warm speeches as Georgia feels itself as a part of the European house. A further speech was held by Guram Jalaghonia, head of the Civil Aviation Agency of Georgia, who's team helped a lot to facilitate flying in to Georgia was private pilots

We distributed the rare bottles of “Chateau de Schengen” wine we brought from Luxembourg. This was highly appreciated as Georgia is preparing to join the European Union



Figure 10: more than 100 people at the formal event that Georgian authorities organized with Vanilla Sky

Figure 11 : all the rally's pilots were honoured by State Minister Bakradze



**Figure 12: Press conference in Georgia with State Minister Bakradze, tourism board official's, multiple TV stations, civil aviation authorities, radio's and the owner of Vanilla Sky and Service air**

#### DAYS 4-5-6-7-8 AUGUST 8-12

Local touroperator Vanilla Sky setup a full tourist program spanning over four days for our 44 person group.

It included a visit of Georgia's capital Tbilisi, but also a visit of the Khazbegi castles.

It further included a flight high in the European Caucasus whilst a two day tour in Svaneti with overnight stay in Mestia.

And finally, the eastern part of Georgia (the Kakheti wine region) was visited as well.

The food we enjoyed has always been amazing !

A great farewell dinner was organized in the "Shadow of Metekhi", overseeing the valleys of Tbilisi.

We'll always remember the great cultural heritage and absolutely exceptional hospitality and friendship one finds everywhere in Georgia. This is unseen !

The official part ended on August 12<sup>th</sup>. Some teams extended their stay in Georgia for another week and discovered the country with rented jeeps, some other crews flew to Antalya, where the local authorities offered free half board hotel stayover for several days. Some other crews flew home over the Black sea



Figure 13: the tourist program that was developed together with Vanilla Sky showed all the best that Georgia has to offer

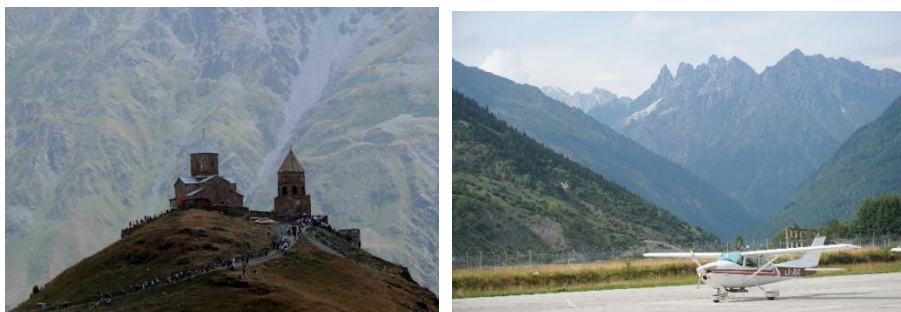


Figure 14: castles, towers and monasteries everywhere in Georgia

Figure 15: landing in Mestia high in the Caucasus



Figure 16: we had several children who joined us for the tourist program



Figure 17: vineyards with a Tuscany feeling





Figure 18 : forget a diet when you travel to Georgia, they have one of the best cuisines in the world



Figure 19: brand new and well developed tourist infrastructure

Figure 20: plenty of religious art in Georgia



Figure 21: we were teamed up with Vanilla Sky and Service air in Georgia

Figure 22: farewell dinner



## CREW OVERVIEW

We had 15 crews who signed up for the rally. We've used a website and blog ([www.georgia2016.eu](http://www.georgia2016.eu)) to interact with our pilots and followers. However, due to the political troubles in Turkey in the weeks prior to the departure of the rally, we noticed that 5 crews did not show up and 1 crew canceled due to technical problems. All by all, we had 9 crews who flew into Georgia. Some 10 persons flew to Georgia by regular airline. All together, we had a group of some 44 people.

## FINAL COMMENTS

### FAI-GAC

Although the MEMORIAL HANS GUTMANN TOURIST RALLY FLIGHT GEORGIA 2016 was an absolute success as such and well appreciated by the participants, it must be mentioned that the organization team has paid out of their own pockets all the expenses in preparation of this wonderful rally.

It is deplorable to see that FAI-GAC did not even send out our leaflet to all NAC's in advance of the rally.

Despite the lack of any FAI-GAC support, all 44 participants returned enthusiastic and safely home and a new general aviation destination has been discovered.

### TURKEY

Because of the military coup attempt in Turkey a couple of weeks prior to our departure, we were able to fly only the VFR routes which have been especially put in place for our rally members.

We received a waiver from the Turkish Ministry which allowed us to skip the sometimes hefty handling charges one may encounter in Georgia

We've interacted with Skydemon in the months in advance to the rally and they have now Turkey embedded in the VFR charts system, which proved to be very practical

### GEORGIA

Absence of VFR charts, whilst we had the obligation to fly in a corridor via Batumi to our final destination Natakhtari. All flights need to be submitted to a central dispatching unit days in advance. However, they have proven to be very flexible and by the time we left Georgia, giving them a call was sufficient. Georgians are doing their utmost best to welcome European pilots as they are integrating with Europe.

We've insisted to Skydemon to add Georgia as well in the VFR charts offering, but they have no plans in this regard unfortunately.

### SPORTIVE CHARACTER RALLY

Because of the route restrictions in Turkey and Georgia and narrow corridors which had to be flown, we decided to skip the sportive part of the "MEMORIAL HANS GUTMANN TOURIST RALLY FLIGHT GEORGIA 2016" and focus rather on the tourist part of the event.

### A NEW DESTINATION FOR GENERAL AVIATION

**One can clearly state that Turkey and Georgia are new general aviation destinations which we can recommend without any hesitation**