

Passing the dune fields at Koppie Alleen we received clearance to head inland and route directly to our destination at Nachtwacht airfield, and looking down was fairly intimidating as the tops of the dunes were shredded into a thick mist of flying sand by the howling winds. We crawled along while airspeeds remained at 80mph but our groundspeed was now only 28mph. Passing abeam Overberg Airforce Base the tower advised us of wind speeds now gusting to 39 knots and our little flying machines battled along gamely. Thankful of our decision to top up the tanks I watched the fuel level dropping rapidly as we made seemingly little progress. Eventually we arrived overhead Nachtwacht and landed safely, squeezing four of the gyros into a tiny hangar and bedding the other gyro down as best we could. All around us the wind howled and thrashed the bushes into a frenzy. We arranged a lift into Arniston and enjoyed a fine red wine around the fire at the Arniston Hotel, snug in our shelter as the cold front arrived and the rain came bucketing down.



Gyro's crammed into the tiny hangar like a tin of canned sardines



Departing Nachtwacht Airfield

The next morning found us back at the airfield with the remnants of the cold front present in the form of overcast skies, fresh winds and patches of rainfall here and there. Taking off towards Caledon we had to route around several downpours and then climbed up the pass overhead Bot River and followed the N2 highway through Grabouw to Sir Lowry's Pass. Luckily the wind died completely and our last big mountain crossing was completely uneventful.



We had to route around several localized downpours

Dropping down to 1500ft at Somerset West to stay clear of the TMA we passed Stellenbosch Airfield and the Bottleray Hills before arriving back at Morningstar 6 days, 20 hours of flight time and 2080km after we started.



Caledon town centre seen as we passed overhead

rain. Temperatures ranged from 15 degrees at the coast to 3 degrees near Lesotho, no joke in an open cockpit! Departing from and returning to sea level at the coast was in huge contrast to crossing over big mountains at 8000ft, with few landing options and ears strained to catch every beat of the engine! Old friendships were renewed, new friendships forged, and a real sense of community prevailed. There were a few mechanical issues along the way, lessons were learned and at times tempers were strained but most of all some serious fun was had!



Safely home back at Morningstar Airfield

We landed at 12 different airfields, many for the first time, experienced a variety of topography, from the wheat fields of the Breede River valley to the arid grasslands of the Karoo, from the mountains of Graaff-Reinet to the still smouldering forests of Knysna, from the lakes of Sedgefield and Wilderness to the shores of Arniston, and flew over some of the most incredible and diverse scenery imaginable. Some days saw perfectly calm sunny weather, others featured hectic winds and still others were overcast with light



The last mountain crossing as we pass overhead Sir Lowry's Pass before dropping into Somerset West

Our amazing little aircraft took everything we threw at them and delivered us safely home again!

Somehow it seems very strange not to be strapping into the cockpit again this morning...