

The Swiss Globe Flyer

Along to the Silk Road



Philippe de Segovia fell into aviation at the age of 14, when he started flying gliders. He was able to combine his passion for aviation with his professional life, first as a journalist for aviation magazines such as Aviation & Pilote, of which he was editor-in-chief, then for 25 years as communications manager for SOCAT and then Daher aircraft, including of course the TBM. He is also secretary of the Heritage Avions Morane-Saulnier association.

Courtesy of **Paolo B.**

www.swissflyaero.com

Following the route connecting China to the West by air is an opportunity for a complete change of scenery as you discover little-known lands. Paolo and Anna Buzzi together with two friends were able to experience it aboard their TBM 960.



The "Silk Road": the name alone is enough to inspire dreams. It evokes merchant caravan riding camels crossing a wide variety of countries, steppes, deserts, and mountains, to bring the fabulous treasures of the Far East to the West. The true perfume of adventure. This is certainly what attracted Paolo Buzzi for his great journey of the year.

"The TBM is an aircraft that makes you want to travel," he admits. This is an observation he has made since falling in love with the TBM at the Friedrichshafen Air Show in 2017. Since then, he has logged an average of 200 flight hours per year, mainly during long trips around the world. In 2018, with his wife, Anna, he participated in the round-the-world trip organized by Air Journey, covering the 25,824 nautical miles of the journey in 108 flight hours on his then-TBM 930.

Upgrading to the TBM 960 in December 2022, he admits to having gained more flying experience and also being even more confident in his aircraft, which features systems such as EPECS, which electronically regulates the engine and propeller, preventing the risk of overheating during startup, and, of course, HomeSafe, the automatic emergency landing. He also planned together with his wife, on his own, travels to even more exotic destinations, such as Australia, South Pacific Island and New Zealand in 2023: a journey of 28,150 nautical miles in two months.



For him, taking the "Silk Road" was an opportunity to discover the great diversity of countries and cultures in this region, whose nations were a part of the former USSR, definitely restricted to foreigners during the cold war era which preserved it from the mass tourism circuits.

Four other crews, including two on TBM, joined this exceptional 6,884-nautical-mile adventure. Routing, formalities, stopover organization, and hotel reservations were handled by the air travel operator, Air Journey.

"With Air Journey, with whom we've already embarked on our round-the-world trip, we feel confident. No unpleasant surprises, everything is planned in advance," says Paolo Buzzi. A trip that was almost disrupted by a propeller blade problem a few days before departure. "Daher's customer support accomplished the feat of delivering the part and having it back in time for departure."

All stopover airports are open to international traffic, with air traffic control speaking perfect, understandable aviation English and large runways.

The only peculiarity discovered during the trip is that the GPS signal was jammed time to time.



Loss of GPS

Over the territory of the former USSR and Turkey, only equipment compatible with the Russian Glonass system, such as the portable Garmin Glo 2, is required in this area.

| Departure | Arrival | Duration | Fuel per h [usg/h] | Trip Distance [nm] | Fight Level FL Cruise | Speed TAS average Cruise [kts] |
|-----------|---------|----------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| LSZG | EDDM | 1,01 | 58,8 | 162 | 240 | 264 |
| EDDM | LTFE | 3,26 | 52,6 | 164 | 310 | 296 |
| LTFE | UGTB | 2,58 | 52,4 | 142 | 310 | 294 |
| UGTB | UDYZ | 0,44 | 63,9 | 143 | 200 | 272 |
| UDYZ | UTDD | 3,44 | 50 | 193 | 310 | 295 |
| UTDD | UAAA | 1,57 | 51,5 | 181 | 310 | 299 |
| UAAA | UTSS | 1,56 | 63,9 | 167 | 300 | 312 |
| UTSS | UTNU | 1,33 | 56,1 | 165 | 300 | 304 |
| UTNU | UBBB | 1,59 | 54,7 | 140 | 300 | 299 |
| UBBB | LTAU | 2,34 | 53,4 | 139 | 300 | 300 |
| LTAU | LWOH | 2,44 | 59,3 | 134 | 300 | 312 |
| LWOH | LIPO | 1,59 | 58,7 | 176 | 300 | 309 |

In mid-June, after a gathering of the aircraft in Munich, where the pilots and their passengers had the opportunity to meet, they headed for Turkey for a stopover in Bodrum on the southwest coast. A flight of nearly 3.5 hours through the Balkans.

After visiting the Turkish seaside resort, Halicarnassus in Greek times, it was time to depart for Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. The flight was smooth, following the Black Sea to enter the Georgian plain, bordered to the north by the Greater Caucasus, a natural border with Russia, whose peaks are the highest in Europe (Mount Elbrus, is 5,642 m high). To the south, the Lesser Caucasus mountain range separates Armenia. Arrival is at Shota Rustaveli Airport (UGTB), at 1,624 ft, named after the most famous Georgian poet. It is a thousand-year-old city, with a rich historical heritage, including its Orthodox churches, monuments, and gastronomy, including its wine, one of the world's oldest.

"We discovered a very welcoming, pro-European country. Navigation is standard, clearances are in feet, unlike in Russia, and we are constantly under radar."

After Georgia, a short flight south to Zvartnots (UDYZ), the airport serving Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. The only flatland area in the heart of the Lesser Caucasus, it offers a view of Mount Ararat, located in Turkey, but a major symbol for Armenian Christians, as it is said to be the landing site of Noah's Ark.

The next day, we depart for a very long flight - 3 hours and 44 minutes – to the mysterious Tajikistan, the land of the Tajiks of Persian culture. A journey that takes us over the Caspian Sea, along Afghanistan, and past the high mountains of the Pamir Range. Most of the country is over 9,800 feet above sea level. Landing at Dushanbe Airport (UTDD), the capital's airport, the gateway to the land of the Arabian Nights. The journey then continues towards Kazakhstan, arriving in Almaty (UAAA), less than a two-hour flight away. A vast country bordering China, predominantly Muslim but practicing a tolerant Islam where the burkha is banned.



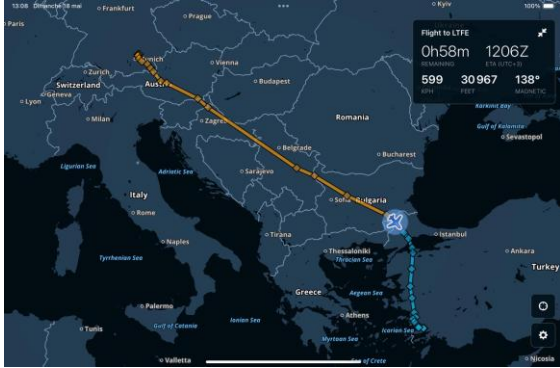
The return trip to the West takes them via Samarkand, the capital of Uzbekistan, our pilot's favorite stopover, with its sumptuous monuments, such as Gour Emir, the mausoleum of the Mongol emperor Tamerlane. The next stop, Urgench (UTNU), still in Uzbekistan, allows them to discover the citadel of Khiva at the gateway to the desert.

The journey then takes them to Baku, Azerbaijan, the oil city on the shores of the Caspian Sea, and their last Asian stopover in Cappadocia, in central Turkey, famous for its cave dwellings and hot air balloon excursions.

The 7,000 nautical miles journey was accomplished in 28 hours and 58 minutes of flight, with an average of 56 gallons were consumed per flying hour. This trip was aided by very mild weather conditions and very low Jet A prices along the route—an average of 50 cents per liter. "I would never have dared to make such trips with my previous piston planes," admits Paolo Buzzi, who is already preparing his next adventure with his TBM 960.



Impressions of the Journey



Turkey

LEG: **EDDM - LTFE**

Bodrum



Cappadocia



Cappadocia



Cappadocia





Georgia

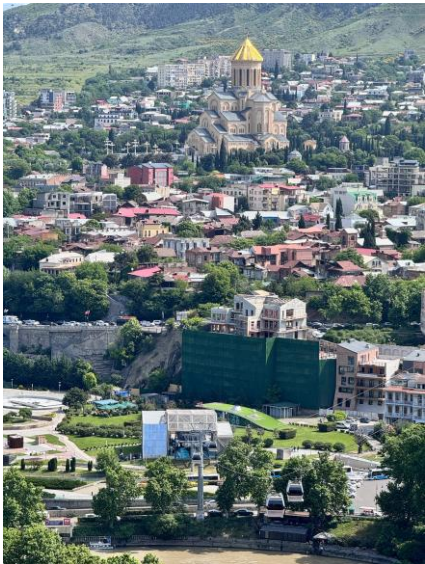
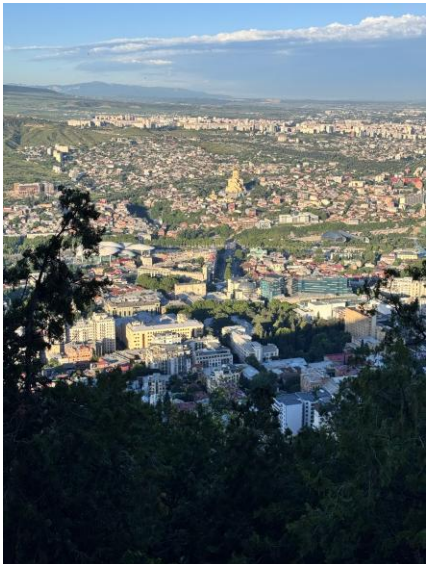
LEG: **LTFE - UGTB**

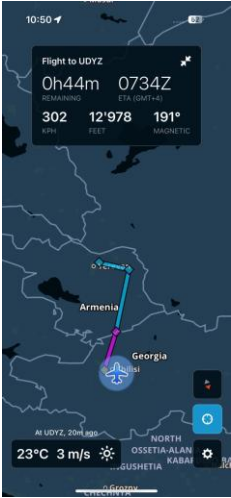
Tbilisi



Tbilisi

Tbilisi





Armenia

LEG: UGTB - UDYZ

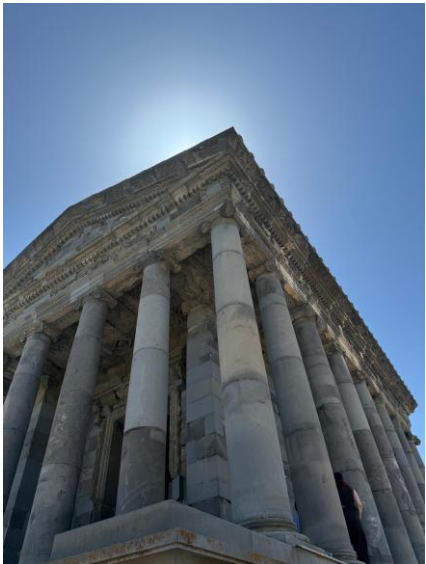
Bread Making



Garni Temple

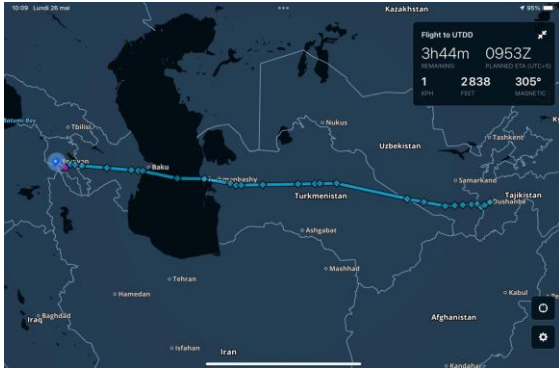


Landscape, Armenia





Tajikistan



LEG: UDYZ - UTDD

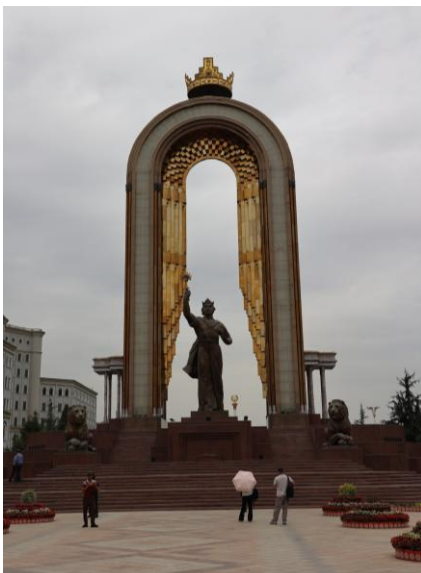
Kokhi Navruz Palace

Dushanbe



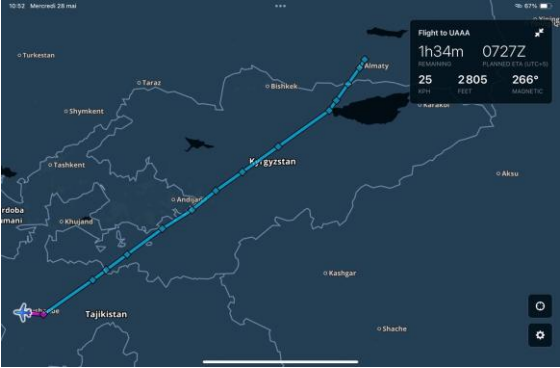
Dushanbe

Local Dress





Kazakhstan



LEG: **UTDD - UAAA**

Oblasty d'Almaty

City Centre, Almaty

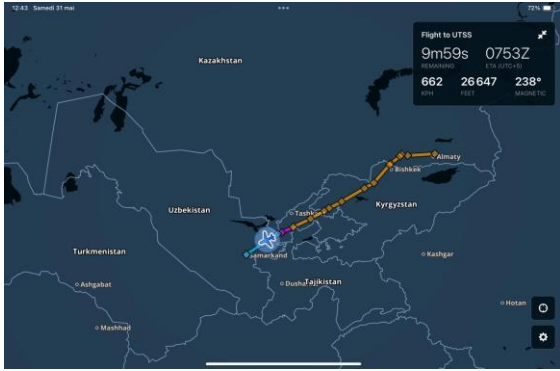


Lake Kaindy

Almaty

Almaty





Uzbekistan

LEG: **UAAA - UTSS**

Boukhara



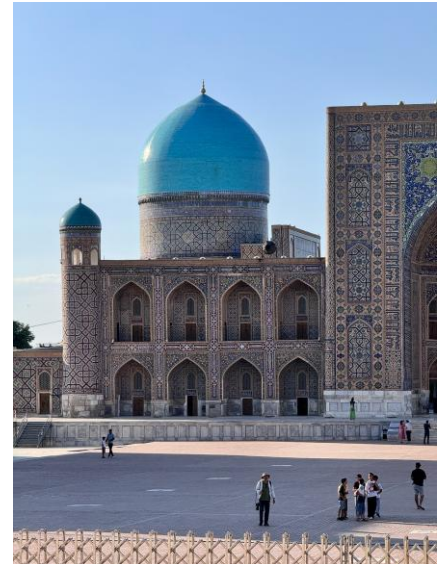
Khiva

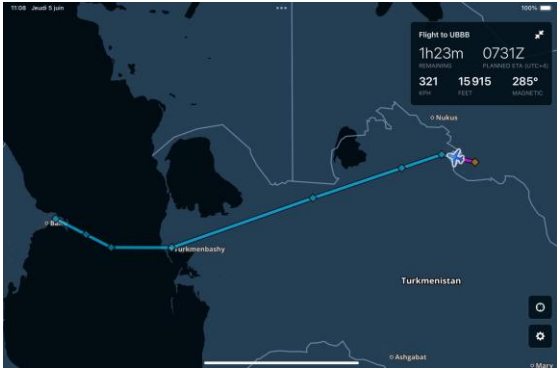


Khiva

Samarkand

Samarkand

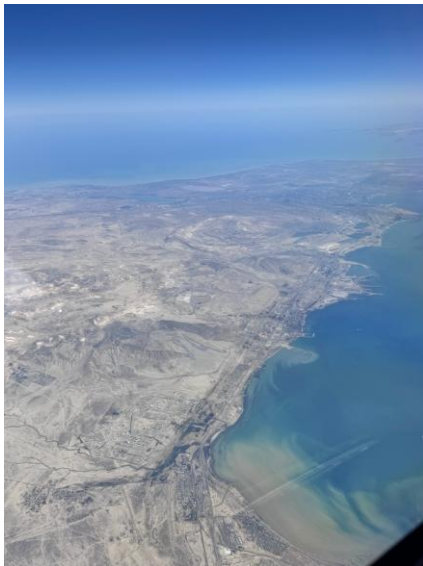




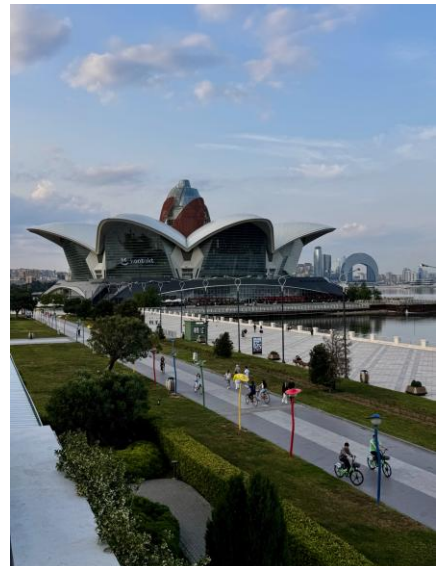
Azerbaijan

LEG: **UTNU - UBBB**

Azerbaijan



Baku





Special Thanks to Anna and Paolo
to share their TBM experience
and their passion for travel