

CIRRUS PILOT

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The Official Magazine of the Cirrus Owners & Pilots Association



Inside: Tips on preparing for an international flight
Is your mechanic a minimalist or a maximalist?
Registration open for Migration 12





CIRRUS OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

2830 North Rancho Drive, Suite B
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"Volatus et Salus" – Flight and Safety

Mission Statement: The Cirrus Owners and Pilots Association (COPA) is a not-for-profit membership organization established to educate, promote the safety of, and support the owners and pilots of certified aircraft manufactured by Cirrus Design Corporation, encourage ownership of these aircraft and provide social activities for its members. Additionally, COPA will promote goodwill towards the general aviation community.

ABOUT COPA: Founded in 2001, currently with over 4,000 members worldwide, COPA is a volunteer-run organization completely independent of Cirrus Aircraft Corporation.

MEMBERSHIP: Open to all interested individuals. Dues are \$65 per year, which includes a subscription to *Cirrus Pilot* magazine, access to the COPA members website and forums, and eligibility to attend other COPA events and activities (additional fees apply to some activities). Join now by registering at membership@cirruspilots.org.

MEMBER-ONLY BENEFITS & SERVICES

COPA ONLINE FORUMS: One of the most active online forums in general aviation, the COPA forums have hundreds of messages posted each day. It is the ideal place to absorb information or get any question answered.

COPApedia: This online encyclopedia of all things related to owning or operating a Cirrus aircraft is written and edited freely by COPA members. It has hundreds of useful articles to help members avoid re-inventing the wheel or learning about their aircraft the hard way.

MAGAZINE ARCHIVES: Past issues of *Cirrus Pilot* magazine can be downloaded from our website – a treasure-trove of information.

TECHNICAL LIAISON ACTIVITIES: Working behind-the-scenes with aircraft, engine, and avionics suppliers, COPA's Technical Liaisons regularly forward member issues to vendors and provide members with feedback on critical issues affecting Cirrus aircraft, both on the COPA online forums and in *Cirrus Pilot* magazine.

REGIONAL FLY-INS: Volunteer regional coordinators regularly announce one-day events where COPA members will gather to socialize and meet face-to-face. Often held at attractive locations with special talks, tours, and activities.

ANNUAL MIGRATION: Each year hundreds of Cirrus aircraft gather to celebrate their heritage. A weekend of excellent seminars, a vendor trade show, and family friendly socializing awaits. This is a hugely successful and popular event.

CIRRUS PILOT PROFICIENCY PROGRAM (CPPP): The most in-depth, two-day weekend training program available for Cirrus pilots. Scheduled throughout the year in both the United States, Europe and Australia. CPPP offers both ground-only or ground and flight sessions with seasoned certified Cirrus Standardized Instructor Pilots. Many members attend annually as part of their recurrent training.

CRITICAL DECISION MAKING (CDM) SEMINARS: The majority of accidents are the result of a failure in the pilot's decision making process. These free half-day seminars held throughout the United States and Europe explore real-world situations and help pilots develop effective techniques to become safer decision makers.

Calendar of Events

Migration 12 – Viva Las Vegas

October 9-12, 2014 Las Vegas, Nev.

Critical Decision Making (CDM) Seminars

July 19, 2014 Camarillo, Calif. (KCMA)

Cirrus Pilot Proficiency Programs (CPPP):

Aug. 15-17, 2014	Kansas City, Mo. (KMKC)
Sept. 12-14, 2014	Baden-Baden, Germany (EDSB)
Sept. 12-14, 2014	Oshkosh, Wis. (KOSH)
Oct. 31-Nov. 2, 2014	Houston, Texas (KCXO)
Nov. 14-16, 2014	Van Nuys, Calif. (KVNY)

Upcoming Regional Events

July 12, 2014

AOPA Regional Fly-In

Plymouth, Mass. (PYM) NE

This year for the first time, AOPA is hosting one-day regional fly-ins, which they guarantee will have something for everyone – aviation activities, exhibits, seminars and food. Admission is free for AOPA members.

July 12, 2014

Cookout in Cumberland

Cumberland, Wis. (KUBE) NC

Meet lots of folks including many North Central-COPA friends while eating Louie's Famous Brats and more for lunch hosted by COPA's own Jim Barker of Aviation Resources. Bring the whole family, as there will be games and activities for all.

July 25-27, 2014

Maine Dream Weekend

Tenants Harbor, Maine (KRKD) NE

Join the North East Region, along with hosts Jackie Pfannerstiel and Dan Richard for the whole weekend or Saturday to enjoy one of the top "down east" lobster shacks. Weekenders will stay at the newly renovated East Wind Inn at Tenants Harbor. This is the kind of picturesque spot usually reserved for those in the know. Jackie and Dan have planned all kinds of optional events and there will be a group dinner on Saturday evening at the inn.

Advanced registration is required and includes ground transportation throughout the weekend. The inn has 18 rooms, so book your room as soon as possible. Registration closes Monday, July 21st.

August 16-17, 2014 Canadian Dining Extravaganza

Toronto, Canada NE

The North East Region is considering a trip to Canada to experience great food and fun. Our Lt. Governor Rob Apens lives there and is an expert on the area. We will arrive Friday or Saturday and stay in a great hotel. Enjoy the area activities on Saturday and then have a fantastic dinner together on Saturday night. On Sunday you can navigate more of Toronto and fly out when you feel like it. When the event details are finalized we will create a RegOnline event registration.

August 16, 2014

AOPA Regional Fly-In

Spokane, Wash. (KSFF) NW

Catch AOPA as they host another regional fly-in where they guarantee there will be something for everyone – aviation activities, exhibits, seminars and food. Admission is free for AOPA members.



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2830 North Rancho Drive, Suite B
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www.cirruspilots.org

COPA PRESIDENT

Andy Niemyer

E-mail: president@cirruspilots.org

Phone: (218) 343-1037

EDITOR

Kim Blonigen

E-mail: editor@cirruspilots.org

ADVERTISING MANAGER

John Shoemaker

2779 Aero Park Drive

Traverse City, MI 49686

Phone: 1-800-773-7798

Fax: (231) 946-9588

E-mail: johns@villagepress.com

ADVERTISING EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Betsy Beaudoin

1-800-773-7798

E-mail: betsybeaudoin@villagepress.com

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Luana Dueweke

PUBLISHER

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Operation Costa Rica

Part 1

by John Gressett

Editor's Note: Five Cirrus COPA pilots and their passengers embarked on an adventure vacation from Key West, Fla. to Liberia, Costa Rica in February 2014. John Gressett from Rochester, Minn. writes about the experience.

When my wife and I first decided that we were interested in flying our 2005 SR22 from Minnesota to Costa Rica, it was a rather daunting prospect. Such an adventure certainly fit well on our bucket list, but then all sorts of questions bombarded me. What sorts of risks are involved in flying over water? What on earth do you do about getting in and out of the United States? How would I get weather once outside of the United States; would XM WX (weather) even work? How would I create an international flight plan? What about getting 100LL along the way and its cost? Would ANYONE speak English? Could I use a credit card or would I have to pay cash? Would U.S. dollars work or would it have to be local currency? Would I need to get Visas? Is there anything else special that you need to travel outside the United States? What about survival gear? As you can imagine, I was initially overwhelmed, but one by one, with the help of others, each of these questions was answered.

Where to Start? Deal with Homeland Security First

I was advised early on, that one of the first things that you should check off is applying for and getting a Customs decal sticker for your plane. This is a sticker for your airplane that you purchase annually, and is required to enter and exit the United States. The cost is reasonable – my bill was \$27.50. Don't worry, you do not need to spoil the paint design on your plane with the sticker; it is perfectly acceptable to put it on the door jamb (Figure 1). The Customs officials only need to be able to see the decal when the doors are open. Go to <https://dtops.cbp.dhs.gov/main/> for more info.

Next, let's talk passports. Everyone on board obviously needs one, and check to make sure the passports are NOT expired. A wise recommendation is to make sure your passport will not expire for a year during the time of your travel. A passport is good until the day it expires, but play it safe. Go to <http://goo.gl/AHXocZ> for more info.

To leave the United States and return, you will need to let Homeland Security know. There are lots of ways to do this, but all seem to use the Electronic Advance Passenger Information System (eAPIS). The eAPIS web site allows you



Figure 1: The Customs decal affixed to the door jamb.

to enter or upload passenger and crew manifests. Reports are also available through eAPIS for Customs and Border Protection approved individuals. There are a variety of apps for iPhone/iPads that help you do this. Many people have had bad experiences with eAPIS, but honestly, after taking the lengthy tutorial, I found the web application pretty straightforward. You are required to fill in a lot of information when you register, so give yourself some time to do this. You fill in the information ONCE and are able to avoid filling in all the information the next time you need it. Here is a tip: In my case, my wife was coming

with me. I had the option of making her a crew member or a passenger. As a crew member, I could easily select her information after entering it all once. As a passenger, it appeared that I had to enter her information into the system manually each time, so I made my wife a crew member! This made it quick and easy to select myself and my wife each time I submitted my eAPIS requests. Go to <https://eapis.cbp.dhs.gov/> for more info.

You need to do an eAPIS request EVERY time you exit or enter the United States. Through your eAPIS submission, you are telling Homeland Security when you are leaving and coming back. Bear in mind that you are not allowed to "over-fly" a Customs airport. For example, even though I would prefer to clear Customs in Naples, Fla., since the first airport I would fly over is Key West, Fla., I am required to clear it in Key West. When you create your eAPIS submission, the system will send you a confirmation with an eAPIS number. You will use this number in your international flight plan. In general, it is a GOOD idea to get your eAPIS submissions completed for your outbound and return trips at the same time. The eAPIS system makes this pretty easy. When you obtain your eAPIS number for departure, the system offers you the opportunity to use your departure as a template for your return. This saves time because MANY fields are already pre-filled in for you. I have been told that even though the eAPIS system asks you when (to the minute) you want to cross the border, all that is really important is what day you will cross. It is

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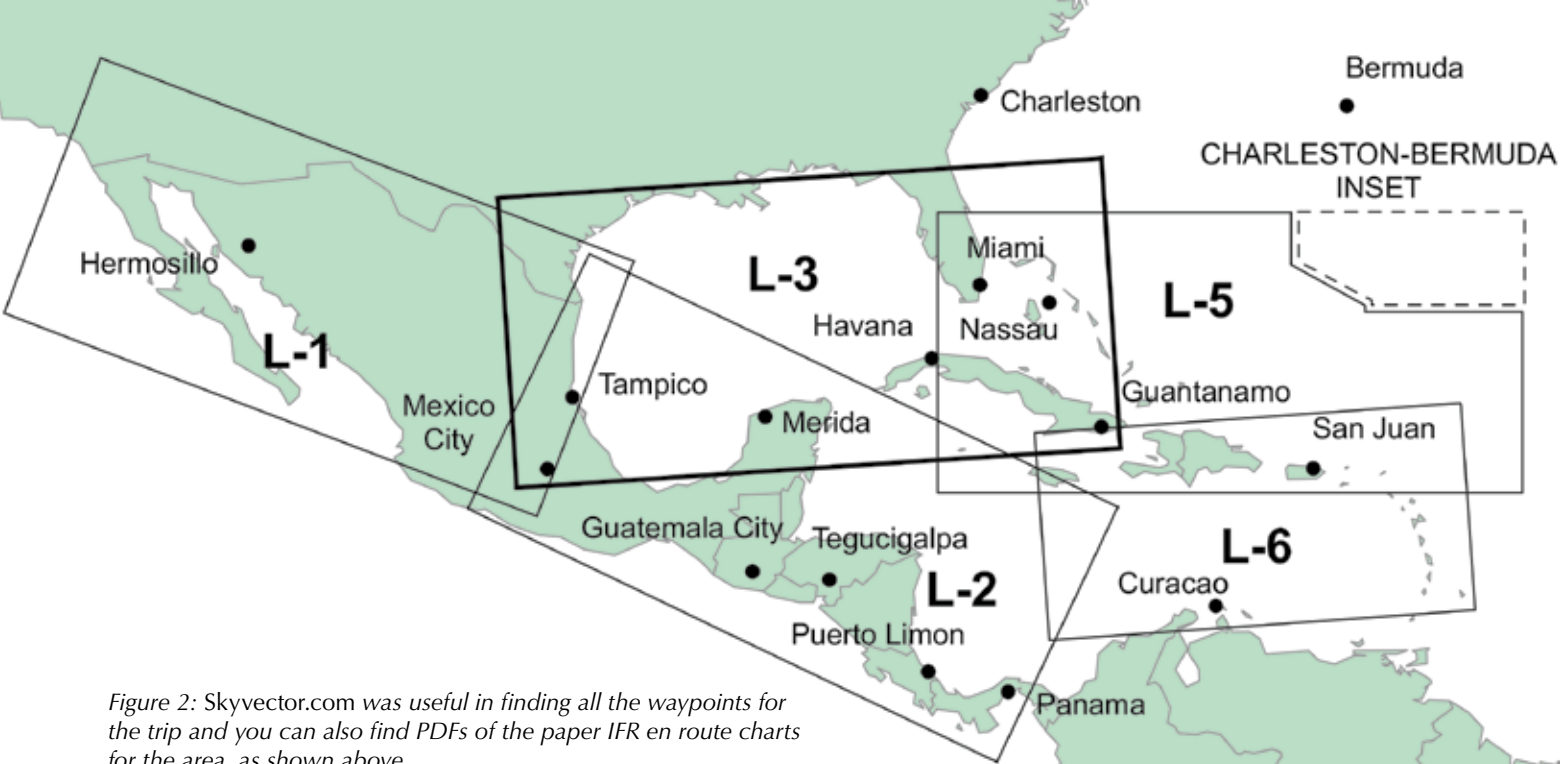


Figure 2: Skyvector.com was useful in finding all the waypoints for the trip and you can also find PDFs of the paper IFR en route charts for the area, as shown above.

critical that you call U.S. Customs on the day you return. The Customs officials use your call as the way to know when to be at the airport. It is frequently difficult to call from your departing foreign airport, but if you do not, you will run the risk of having to sit in your plane after landing in the United States until Customs shows up. This could be

a very long and hot wait with no bathroom breaks, since you are not allowed to leave your plane until instructed by a Customs official.

Flight Planning ... International Edition

Okay, I admit it, the Customs stuff is kind of boring, but flight planning is lots of fun. There are many ways to complete flight planning, but for the last few years my go-to product has been Foreflight. It was the first place I went to see how to get to Costa Rica. After getting some routing suggestions from the trip organizers, I found Foreflight wanting ... it simply does not work very well south of Belize. All waypoints are shown on the chart, but are simply not recognized by Foreflight, so I needed to find another product.

One very helpful and complete web product for big picture planning is *skyvector.com*. It had ALL the waypoints, including those in dispute between Nicaragua and Honduras! You can also find PDFs of the paper IFR en route charts for the area (Figure 2). Go to <http://goo.gl/Ve16De> for more information. Interestingly, the Jeppesen charts and the U.S. Government charts do not always agree with one another.

In the end, the trip organizers recommended that I use the *FltPlan.com* product. Honestly FltPlan.com is a little clunky compared to Foreflight, but it gets the job done and is VERY complete. It has all the waypoints I needed and very comprehensive wind forecasts, plus very useable flight planning tools. It is also free! Most importantly, it allows you to submit an ICAO-approved international flight plan with amazing ease. When you register with FltPlan.com, it asks you a lot of questions about your plane equipment and survival gear. The questions are straightforward, but pay close attention to all the hints they give you. When you are finished, it produces a beautiful and correct ICAO flight plan. When you look at it, it looks peculiar due to the many abbreviations used (Figure 3), but I had no problems during my flights.

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ICAO Format Flight Plan			
SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION ID OF ADDRESSEE(S) AND/OR ORIGINATOR			
3 MESSAGE TYPE	7 AIRCRAFT IDENTIFICATION	8 FLIGHT RULES	TYPE OF FLIGHT
<= (FPL)	- CIRRUS	- I (IFR)	- G (Gen Av.)
9 NUMBER	TYPE OF AIRCRAFT	WAKE TURBULENCE CAT.	10 EQUIPMENT
- 1 (aircraft)	SR22	/ L (Light)	SBGRZC
13 DEPARTURE AERODROME			
- KEYW	TIME	1210Z	
15 CRUISING SPEED			
- N0165	LEVEL	A100	
ROUTE (below)			
FIS GT65 CZM B764 BZE			
16 DESTINATION AERODROME			
- MZBZ	TOTAL EST	ALTN AERODROME	2ND ALTN AERODROME
	HR MIN		
	0340		
18 OTHER INFORMATION			
- PSN/B2C2D2 NAV/RNV/D1E2A1 SBAS RMK/EAPIS 4837960			
OPRIABC FLYING CLUB			
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION (NOT TO BE TRANSMITTED IN FPL MESSAGES)			
19 ENDURANCE	PERSONS ON BOARD	EMERGENCY RADIO	
HR MIN		UHF VHF ELT	
-E/ 0500	P/ 2	RJ / P P	
SURVIVAL EQUIPMENT			
POLAR DESERT MARITIME JUNGLE		JACKETS	
/ / / / /		/ / / / /	
DINGHIES			
NUMBER	CAPACITY	COVER	COLOR
D/ 1	4	Y	Y
AIRCRAFT COLOR AND MARKINGS			
A/ WHITE/ BK			
REMARKS			
N/			
PILOT-IN-COMMAND			
C/ JOHN COOL			
FILED BY		ACCEPTED BY	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Save PDF Format			

Figure 3: A sample of an ICAO flight plan created on FltPlan.com.

Approach Plates and Electronic Databases – International Edition

Although a U.S. government agency appears to produce updated approach plates for international locations, you have to be a government agency to get these charts. I found many examples of these plates on the internet, but none were current. If you want to get up-to-date approach plates, you need to buy them from Jeppesen.

There are many electronic databases that I needed to verify in our 2005 SR22 GTS to be sure they provided the coverage for our international flight. The first was the every-28-day NAV updates for the MFD. This one is easy because the subscription already covered the Americas, both north and south. Next are the GPS/COMM units that also require every-28-day updates for IFR en route and approach operations. I needed to go from “Full U.S.” to the “Americas” subscription, just a quick call to Jeppesen with

credit card in hand. For some GTS Cirrus aircraft, there is another terrain database by Honeywell for the KGP 560 General Aviation Enhanced Ground Proximity Warning System (GA-EGPWS) that drives the terrain awareness and warning system (TAWS) display. We updated our plane’s TAWS database a year ago and reasoned that airports and terrain probably had not changed much, so we decided not to update it for \$285. On the way to Costa Rica, it was nice to use the TAWS to recheck how high the terrain was, especially near the many volcanoes in the area. For more information on it, go to <https://wingmanservices.bendixking.com>.

One other item that really helped me gain confidence was the Garmin simulators (Figure 4). There are many out there, e.g., 430, 650 and others. I used one of the iPad simulators to “fly” all the way to Costa Rica and did the instrument approaches multiple times. I, like many, can easily get confused on what buttons to push when, so practicing from my easy chair allowed me to be confused on the ground. When the time came to make my approach into Belize and Liberia, it went very well. Since the weather was very VMC, I didn’t need to do the approaches, but I elected to for bragging rights. How often do you get to say, “I did an ILS or an RNAV approach into Belize or Costa Rica?”

Handlers and More about Flight Plans and U.S. Customs

One major concern I had was accessibility for fuel. Fellow COPA member Myron Garfinkle, our Sherpa for the trip, was invaluable. Myron had taken this exact trip many times and recommended a great routing sequence. Furthermore, he knew handlers at the airports where we needed gas. The handlers are not cheap, but I reasoned that to avoid having to do all the paperwork involved (e.g., flight plans, Customs and everything else) it was worth it. When you begin to work with the handlers, you soon learn that they request a lot of things. Specifically, they ask for a copy of: passports for all on-board, pilot medical certificate, pilot license, insurance letter proving coverage for Costa Rica, airplane registration and the airplane’s airworthiness certificate. In addition, you are technically supposed to have a radio license for the plane and the pilot/operator. You should have both to fly outside the United States, although none of the handlers asked for a copy.

One other item you need to send to the handlers is your proposed international flight plan. The handler in Belize sent me a blank form to fill out that looked similar to the ICAO-approved flight plan from FltPlan.com. I sent a PDF of the FltPlan.com-produced flight plans to both of my handlers and it was immediately accepted. Score another point for FltPlan.com! The handlers in both Belize and Costa Rica file your flight plan for you on the day you fly. The only place I needed to file an international flight plan was for my first leg from Key West to Belize, which again FltPlan.com did perfectly in the ICAO-approved format. Remember that you need to include the eAPIS numbers in your flight plan when leaving the United States and when you return. Before I left, I called the local Customs office in Key West (my port of entry back into the U.S.). They



Figure 4: A screen shot of a Garmin GTN 650 simulator, which can be helpful to use before your trip.

verified I was calling the correct number to alert Customs on the day I would be returning, and also gave me a few tips to clear Customs after landing: stay in your plane until instructed to get out, call the Customs office once you are in the designated Customs area so they know you are waiting for them, ask the tower where the Customs area is and they will guide you there.

Getting Yourself and Your Plane Ready

When anyone thinks of an adventure over water, you worry about the engine stopping and becoming an instant glider pilot. Naturally, you are comforted by the fact that most engines will just keep running until it's out of fuel, but still, any wise pilot always needs to have a "Plan B" at the ready. First, you are required to have life vests for everyone in the plane when over water. This is a minimum. Realistically, even in a Cirrus, you should have a life raft as well. There are lots of FBOs that rent rafts and life jackets. I was able to borrow a couple of really nice life jackets and ended up renting a 39-pound six-person life raft that inflates when pulling a handle. Personal locator beacons should also be on your must-have list. A personal locator is NOT mandatory, but if you are sitting in the middle of an ocean, it is VERY comforting to know that you only need to push one SOS button to get emergency help sent right to your location. I borrowed a DeLorme inReach device from a friend. Beyond the standard SOS button, it has the capability of sending in-flight messages from anywhere.

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The tail of the Cirrus author John Gressett flew (front), amongst the flock of other Cirrus aircraft that took the adventure flight to Costa Rica.

My plan was to send A-OK messages from the plane when I was over water. Again this is a pretty inexpensive safety measure. You can find more information at <http://www.inreachdelorme.com/>.

You should have your plane looked over mechanically well before you take off over open water. We decided to do an annual. Also, as many have lectured about in this magazine, if you do any major maintenance ... be sure to get some hours on the plane to reduce the risk of maintenance-induced-failure (MIF). We use Savvy and they gave us some great guidance. For instance, with oil, the best advice is to bring a lot with you. You never know if your foreign destinations will have the same kind (or brand) you need.

Remember also to take care of yourself and your passengers. Bring water and food for the flight; raisins and unsalted nuts are my favorites. For water, remember that you may be on a raft for a while, so bring a lot, as well as sunscreen and hats.


I have never been a proponent of using oxygen in flight, it just always seemed like another complication to me. Through the miracle of modern technology, it has become incredibly simple and inexpensive to measure your pulse rate and oxygen saturation levels in real time. This had been my main concern – how I could be sure the oxygen was actually getting to me and was effective. With this very simple device you can be absolutely confident. Make sure to get educated on setting-up/using the oxygen and do a test flight to build confidence. Another good reason to have oxygen is that it gives you the option to fly higher, if needed. Usually the argument is to go high for winds or better engine performance. I agree, but for me, going high gives me a safety factor of time to diagnose a sick engine and/or to be high enough to glide to land for a dry feet CAPS landing. I am now a convert to using oxygen while PIC, but I have to confess, I still do not like those tubes up my nose.

Other Considerations

If you are like me, you are always going to worry about something you missed. For example, right after takeoff, you will hear a seemingly “new” sound coming from the engine as you fly over the ocean and away from the safety of land below you. This fear is healthy, but in the end, my advice is to trust your instruments, planning, and have layers of backup plans. For my trip, I took Foreflight along on an iPad for backup. I brought a portable transceiver. I made plans to have everything fully charged before takeoff with brand new batteries. I “flew” the route I planned to take using an iPad simulator from Garmin. I did dozens of “what ifs” including selecting emergency airports at random and finding frequencies in the Garmin 650 database to check for weather. I made paper copies of approach plates and flight plans. As I went through this long process, I eventually became more and more confident. I went from “I have no idea how to do this” to “I think I now know what to do” to “let’s get on with it already.”

As the days ticked down to launch time, I was ready and anxious to go ... what an ADVENTURE this was going to be!

Acknowledgements: Myron Garfinkle and John Ylinen from COPA’s North East region organized this trip. Both were great mentors in making this adventure trip a reality. Without the help of them both, I would have never had the courage to embark on an international trip. Thank you!

Next up: Operation Costa Rica (Part 2) – the Flight Down and Back 

About the Author: John Gressett lives in Rochester, Minn., and has always wanted to fly. He joined a local flying club and has been flying 172s, 182s and Archers for over 25 years. In 2012, the club purchased a 2005 SR22 G2 GTS which everyone immediately loved. John is instrument rated and would like to work on a commercial rating. He is married to Beth and they have two children, Monica (20) and David (15). Both John and Beth enjoy adventure vacations.