

PACER DELIVERY

by Barry Bower, 31.3.04

My wife and I left the UK last November to make our home in Italy. Unfortunately, since then the weather has not been suitable for me to attempt to fly my aircraft to Italy. The good news now is that Piper Pacer G-BUDE is now safely locked in a hanger at Perugia Airport.

I had to visit the UK last Monday to attend the funeral of the wife of a dear friend. The journey to the UK ran like oiled clockwork. Each train, airline and train connection was either on time or early. On Tuesday morning I set off with friends from Andover to drive to Frinton-on-Sea. Due to three accidents on the A12 Colchester by pass, the journey took five hours and we arrived just as the service was finishing. Still, we had a good wake amongst her close friends.

The five-day forecast was for a weak ridge of high pressure across France, with an occluded front moving south over the UK. Consequently, the next morning I caught the train to Honiton and arrived at Branscombe airstrip at 1030 and departed for Shoreham at 1200. Although, there were large showers around, I managed to avoid them. The journey across the Channel to Calais was uneventful apart from the fact that the cloud base in the UK was about 2500ft and half way across the Channel dropped to 1400ft. A portent of things to come! After clearing at Calais, I finally night stopped at Amiens. The next day I set off towards Troyes, but had to divert back to St Quentin due to low cloud and fog. After spending three hours on the ground I finally set off to Troyes, then Chalon sur Soane. I had set myself a limit of 500ft minimum clearance above the ground and fortunately I did not have to go that low.



From Chalon I routed to Valence for fuel and then to Cannes for a night stop. The Mistral was blowing at 35-40 knots and the journey to Valence and finally Cannes

was very bumpy. The snow on the hills around Dijon and the blossom on the fruit trees made a stunning sight.



During the night at Cannes there was a tremendous thunderstorm, but the next morning the low stratus soon cleared and I set off along the coast to Genoa.



There was snow on the mountains, but the cloud base gradually rose to 3500ft. Again it was very bumpy and there was the usual nasty crosswind at Genoa A “Follow Me” vehicle guided me to the fuel pumps. Before I had even completed my shutdown checks and documentation, a car drove up with a man from the ministry of Civil Aviation wanting a full document check. Once he was satisfied he wished me “Bon Viaggio”. The “Follow Me” vehicle shuttled me to the met office and to file a flight plan. The final leg was via Pisa to Perugia airport, where the aircraft is now safely locked away in a hangar.

It is some twenty years since I last did a flight of over 1000 miles in a light aircraft. I feel as though I have at least 14 hours of jet lag. My eyes and brain hurt and my kidneys were screaming at me the next day, obviously due to dehydration. With the weather forecast of a slight ridge of high pressure for the three days, I consider that I was quite lucky. Today the weather has been nice and sunny, a light wind and much warmer than the past week. I am now looking forward to the coming of spring and some enjoyable flying.

The interesting points that I would make are that EVERY French and Italian airport has a Metéo office. Even the grass field at St. Quentin had one. It was mainly due to the help of the person there that I decided to attempt to continue the flight after my diversion. Also make sure that you have copies of all your documents - insurance cover, C of A, C of Reg, licence, medical, radio station licence and that your biennial check is up to date!

If anyone fancies sampling the delights of Italy, let me know. Perugia is central for Florence, Rome, Assisi, Gubbio, Orvieto, and many more fascinating places. The food is lovely and the wines – well Montepulciano is only 20km away and the Vino Nobili is something else!

Wishing you all light winds and gentle landings, Barry Bower.