

Hans Gutmann Memorial Rally 2017

Official report by organizers



Introduction

After the successful Memorial Hans Gutmann Tourist Rally flight to Georgia in 2016, the Organizing Committee has chosen Saint Petersburg as the destination for Rally 2017.

Luxembourg ELLX > Aarhus EKAH > Bodø ENBO > Helsinki EFHF > Saint Petersburg ULLI > Tallinn EETN > Saaremaa EEKE > Kaunas EYKA > Gdansk EPGD > Luxembourg ELLX

Aarhus (Denmark) was selected as official rally start point. Organizers also considered Minsk (Belarus) after Saint Petersburg but this idea was dropped due to inability of Minsk International Airport to accommodate our planes.



Organizers



Jean Birgen, FAI-GAC adviser

President

An experienced private pilot rally organizer since many decades.



Elena Loukovkina

Hospitality Manager

Finance professional in working life, frequent traveler and student pilot in the private one.



Artem Kirillov

Flight coordinator, project manager

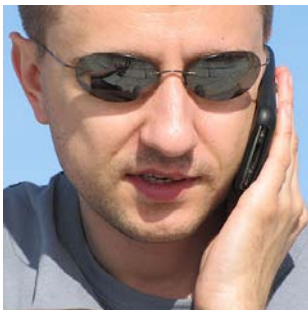
Happy to be a pilot and operate the most inspiring way of transportation.



Boris Tylevich

Advisory Board Member

General aviation fan with ATP license flying Gulfstream business jet on main job, ferrying piston Cessnas from USA to Russia as freelance, piloting helicopters, taildraggers and amphibians as a hobby.



Mikhail Kornev

Secretary General, Treasurer

Telecom entrepreneur with a passion for flying and adventure.



Evgeny Kabanov

Advisory Board Member

Private pilot, entrepreneur, AOPA-Russia board member and International Tourism Committee Chairman

Challenges: Russia



Pulkovo airport:

Big international airport, no facilities for GA (except business jets)

Significant fees (quoted over €500 per airplane for overflight permit, landing, handling etc)



Russian CAA (Rosaviatsiya)

Unclear procedures for cross-border VFR flight

Lack of willingness to cooperate with GA aircraft



SPIEF'17
ST. PETERSBURG
INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC
FORUM

Security measures (NOTAMS) due to public and private events

Football cup 2017

International Economic Forum (aka the Russian Davos)

The solution: friends

Organizing committee started preparations back in December 2016:

- engaged Luxembourg embassy in Russia, cited our successful flyout to Georgia in 2016, asked Mr. Ambassador for a cover letter to Pulkovo Airport and Russian visa support for participants
- contacted Russian AOPA, asked for help filing overflight permits and flight plans, Russian maps; provided them a PR opportunity
- asked CEO of S7 Airlines, Vladislav Filev, a keen GA supporter and a pilot, to provide support for services in Pulkovo

Results:

- flight permissions granted for all participants
- VFR route granted despite NOTAMs
- negotiated reasonable prices



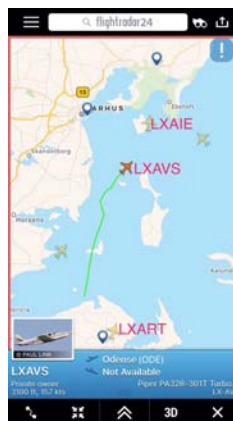
Denmark

Reunion at Aarhus

Although the initiative of this rally was driven by Luxembourg, the official gathering point for all crews to join was Aarhus, Denmark, the cultural capital of EU 2017.

Seven airplanes RV'd at Aarhus: LX-AIE, LX-AVS, LX-ART, LX-SRD, G-UILT, SP-AVI, D-EBOC

After a flight briefing team proceeded to restaurant for a welcome dinner.



Norway

Transition to Bergen and Bodo

Some of crews (LX-AVS) decided to skip a rather long trip to Bodo, staying at Bergen instead. They missed magnificent views of fjords! The rest refueled at Røros (ENRO), a quite nice airport with very friendly crew.

The weather started to become more severe. Crews safely reached Bodo and stayed overnight, enjoying a complete absence of night twilight.



Finland

Arrival to Helsinki

The weather at Bodo in the morning was quite bad - low ceiling, mist and rain. All crews departed successfully on IFR, except LX-AIE, which had to wait for a small opening and departed on SVFR clearance.

The leg to Helsinki, Malmi (EFHF) was quite long (over 500NM) but doable even in Cessna 172 without refueling. In fact, we've been able to reach Saint Petersburg!

One of our airplanes (SP-AVI) reached North Cap (KEDUV) and snapped some great pictures!



Departure from Finland

Departure to Saint Petersburg

The next morning team gathered at Helsinki-Malmi, ready to depart to Russia. It was the same airport from which Mattias Rust departed and landed on Red Square exactly 30 years ago.



Transition to Russia

It was not our plan to follow Matthias Rust adventure and our destination was Saint Petersburg, not Moscow, so we followed the rules:

- 1) 2000' or below for VFR, request clearance from Russian ATC ("Pulkovo Rayon") before entering RATLA
- 2) Report ETE to the next waypoints (probably due to lack of radar coverage)
- 3) Hold prior to entering ULLI CTR on visual orbiting point for landing sequence.
- 4) Follow specific runway and apron assignments

Radio reception was quite bad at low altitudes and Rayon controller was overloaded. LX-AIE relayed reports and clearances in Russian and above assigned flight level to improve the radio reception.

Despite some challenges on border transition and marginal weather, all participants landed at assigned slots at ULLI and the ground services were waiting us at dedicated apron. Minimal destruction has been made to the sculled Airline traffic. Controllers were nervous but friendly and co-operative.



Reception in Saint Petersburg

Arrival to Saint Petersburg

Seven crews landed at Pulkovo:

LX-AIE, LX-AVS, LX-ART, ES-FCC, G-UILT, SP-AVI, N221YY

LX-SRD and D-EBOC crews left their aircraft at Helsinki and traveled as passengers.

After landing crews were met by the representative of S7 Airlines (Mr. Andrey MARTYNNENKO) and proceeded to clear the customs & passport control.

At 4 pm a reception was set at the hotel, with press and Chef de Mission of the Embassy of Luxembourg in Russia, Mr. Gilles BAUER.



Saint Petersburg

Saint Petersburg tour program

Local tour operator Commodore Travel arranged a tourist program for two days for our entire group. It included a city sightseeing tour, bus trip to the Peterhof Palace and Pavlovsk, Palace, followed by an evening boat trip of Saint Petersburg rivers and canals.

Despite high season we've managed to accommodate the entire group in the same hotel.



Estonia - Tallinn

Departure from Saint Petersburg to Tallinn

The crew from Estonia departed a day earlier and run into several problems. Russian FPL Filing System is not integrated with EuroControl and therefore there were multiple human errors including the assigned and filed route. Pulkovo Tower was unable to find filed flight plan for Estonian crew and due to language constraints their actual departure was delayed for few hours. Weather, strong headwind and lack of refueling in ULLI forced Estonian crew to fly low altitude and constantly control their fuel burn to get to Tallinn safely.

Except for delay at the customs, for the rest of our group the departure was quite fast. The only significant problem was the weather (severe rain with 1000' ceiling). Immediately after Russian border (RANVA) the weather instantly got better. Crews landed at Tallinn and stayed there overnight.



Estonia - Saaremaa

Visiting Saaremaa

Saaremaa is the largest island in Estonia, with its own airport. It is quite a nice tranquil place. Our team stayed overnight at Kuressaare, the westernmost town in Estonia and the capital of Saare County.

Due to weather, instead of early morning departure LX-AIE crew choose to fly night VFR, steering clear of Kaliningrad Russian controlled airspace in Baltic Sea.



Lithuania

Visiting Kaunas

As in every country and every city, we had our flight in the morning. Upon arrival, the bus was waiting for the teams who went to enjoy the sightseeing in the city and its surroundings. We checked in in the hotel and after a brief rest had a nice dinner (with regional specialties) in the evening.

Before last flight leg to Gdansk, crews stopped in Kętrzyn, small city at the border Poland with Belarus, where Hitler built Wolfschanze, the WWII Eastern Front military headquarters. After visit of this monument (ruins of fortress), we continued our trip to Gdansk.



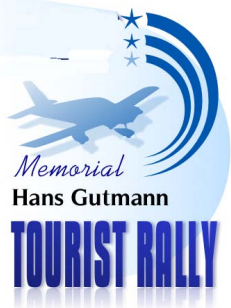
Poland

Meeting with Lech Walesa at Gdansk

Our president, Jean Birgen, arranged a meeting with Mr. Lech Walesa, the former President of Poland. Early morning we had a reception at his office in the European Solidarity Centre Museum.

After the reception pilots returned to Gdansk airport. Our rally was over. Some crews stayed at Gdansk for tourist program, and others departed home to Luxembourg.





Final comments

Participation

Initially we had 14 crews who signed up for the rally. However, due to various reasons (generally technical problems) some of crews cancelled their participation. After all, we had 9 airplanes with 23 pilots and passengers.

Distance traveled: ca. 3100NM, 30 hours on a Cessna 172SP

We had a diverse fleet this year, with types ranging from Cessna 172SP to Pilatus PC12.

Organizational support

Our main sponsor and partner was the Ministry of the Economy of Luxembourg (Let's Make It Happen!)

We received great support from the Embassy of Luxembourg in Moscow. Russian AOPA did a great job helping us with permissions and flight plans. S7 Airlines provided us support at Pulkovo.

Russia as a destination for general aviation

VFR cross-border flight are possible. We even managed to get permit for LX-AIE for the more complicated route (Saint Petersburg - Velikiy Novgorod - Pskov), but due to time constraint and touristic, not sportive nature of the rally, decided to skip.

With friends from Russia AOPA we can get even around some NOTAMS

However it's highly inadvisable to fly to Russia next year before July 15 due to elevated security measures associated with FIFA World Cup 2018.

Provisional plan for Hans Gutmann Rally 2018

Luxembourg - Jakabszállás Hungary - Chişinău Moldova - Odessa Ukraine - Constanta Romania - Varna Bulgaria - Nis Serbia - Zadar Croatia - Venice Italy - Luxembourg (ca. 2400 NM)



LET'S MAKE IT HAPPEN