

10 Months -100 Takeoffs (and 100 Landings) by Bill Minkoff, ATP, JetQuik, LLC.

I like to fly. My pulse quickens when I push the throttles up for takeoff in any airplane but especially in a jet. With over 100 takeoffs in the Phenom 100 during the past ten months, my heart has sped a bunch. Fortunately I subscribe to the theory that a muscle exercised will grow stronger. For me the loudest thumps begin in the State of Sao Paulo, Brazil. Particularly pulse raising are the first flights in a new Phenom 100 at the Embraer factory. There are few things as exciting as lifting off of runway 15 for an acceptance flight of a brand new Phenom.

Most mornings the ramp at Sao Jose dos Campos is alive with technicians hovering in and around various Embraer Jets ready for delivery. The morning sun bathes the ramp in splashes of color as jets bound for the Middle East, Far East, the America's and Europe are prepared for flight. Particularly colorful is the livery of Azure, the Brazilian answer to Jet Blue which today has a couple of EMB 195s ready for test. Inside Hangar 300 flight crews and test pilots meet to discuss and plan the day's activities. Last minute details involve weather checks of the coastal operations areas and a thorough briefing of the details in the acceptance flight checklist. Over the past year, Mark Stear and I have refined Embraer's checklist adding items important enough to include in what has become our own proprietary checklist.

Two days before arriving on the flight line Mark begins pouring over the aircraft logs, comparing the owner's list of installed equipment with the actual installations in the airplane. Other tasks include documenting engine installations and flight test parameters. Paint and finishes inside and out are also checked for compliance with Embraer's own specifications. Mark and I also add some "touches" that generally aren't specified with the airplane but enhance its cosmetic appearance and durability. Embraer diligently assigns a QA crew to "work on" any flaws we discover. As if by magic the "gripes" disappear overnight and the next morning the airplane is so much the better for the work. Much the same happens airborne where compasses are checked for agreement along with altimeters and dozens of flight parameters. Not every flaw shows itself on these flight tests, but it's a good feeling to fly an airplane with a perfectly clean log book. (It's the way it should be.)

Of the many fun reasons to pilot new Embraer Executive Jets, one of the best is St. Martin. Located in the Lesser Antilles island chain, the French/Dutch Island of St. Martin or St. Maarten is a convenient stop when ferrying aircraft out of South America. The clear blue Caribbean Sea is the perfect backdrop for this European tropical oasis.



Located on the more raucous, Dutch, side of the island; Princess Juliana International Airport is famous for its runway which begins just a few steps from the Caribbean. Tourists like to hold onto the airport fence when jumbo jets depart letting go at full throttle up for a brief flight of their own backwards into the surf. After all the Dutch brew Heineken and here it is half the price of your neighborhood package store. On the opposite, French side of the island, are restaurants and hideaways well known for French cuisine and quiet honeymoons. But here on the Dutch side casinos and lively night life are the norm.



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After a long day including three technical stops; the ground crew of Arrindell Aviation Services, www.arrindellaviation.net is a welcome sight. Henke is there to meet us with a very short ride in a gleaming white van over to the Sonesta Maho Beach Resort.



www.sonesta.com/MahoBeach/

At the Sonesta, we all enjoy a quick clean-up prior to falling into a chair at Cheri's Café just across the road. Cheri's is "island chintzy" but is just what we're looking for with smooth tropical drinks in a very casual island setting. The local band preys upon the tourists who take a willing part in the evenings shenanigans.



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If you are lucky enough to arrive before sunset, I recommend you watch the water, airplanes and the sunset from the Sunset Beach Bar. Just a short walk from the Sonesta Maho Beach Resort, the Sunset Beach Bar offers just the right elixir to rub off a full day of flying. www.sunsetbeachbar.com

More soon.