

Euroglide 2022 – Adventures of LT,

The edition after the pandemic, where Robert was in the car for the first time in 15 editions, where showers were limited (as they were before) and where take off was the challenge.

The first day of our 2500km gliding trip started positive. At earlier editions our take-off from the starting field usually was late around 15 o'clock, but this year we were airborne at 13 o'clock. Thanks to efficient towing and due to some participants that decided to start at their home field.

The task was Venlo to Enschede and as far as possible towards Szczecin in Poland. It was my day in the car, an easy task, just go to Hannover and wait at the highway crossing until the direction and possible landing field is more clear. We saw cumulus all over the place, so it must be good in the glider. The online tracking via de Glide&Seek website went smoothly and the LT was making good progress. Somehow the weather must have turned. Before even arriving at Hannover, the LT was low and a call was received: LT has landed, Hohenhausen airfield. Just north of Hannover, a simple task for the car team. With still some indication of cumulus in the air, the stranded gliders (5 in total) had some excuse of sudden rain. However, all is fine: the field was large, take off for next day was arranged, showers available and a nearby restaurant served schnitzel. The airfield bar was closed due to corona and our shopping policy turned out to be crappy, too few beers. But team E had visited the nearby supermarket and we convinced them to share.

The forecast for day 2 was blue skies, but at 10 o'clock cumulus appeared. Today I am in the plane, so I am quite happy with this incorrect weather forecast. Robert goes into the car, his first time ever since he participated Euroglide. Robin joined our team this year and he did some training to manage the Nimbus. The locals advised a northern path around the EDR zone and usually locals are right, so we execute on it. With cumulus in side we progress well until the lake area, where the sky is all too blue. In the far horizon we see cumulus, but that is very far away, even in a Nimbus3DT. We reduce our McCready and fly conservatively. Also Szczecin seems to be absent of clouds. The wind has turned to north, so we fear a seabreeze effect, which could get us stranded in Poland. The first credit is used and we turn south, following the river Oder and passing Berlin at the east. At 6 o'clock we start planning landing fields, Klix seems possible but our car crew starts sending text messages to take the western route. Robert is not yet used being in the car (?). But as he will be flying tomorrow, we decide to follow his suggestions. After many more texting (which works surprisingly well even at 1200m), and discussing 4 possible landing fields, we get instructed to go to Ostrow. However the thermals decide otherwise, we cannot reach it and we target Riesa instead. The texting mentions that another competitor is already there, so it must be okay.

Riesa gets flooded with gliders, at least 8. The locals show great hospitality, beer appears and they order pizza for all teams, which takes a dozen phone calls and the local pizza delivery drives 5 times up and down. Tomorrow's take off seems to be okay, a 100pK ultra-light tow plane for maximum 720kg and we are 700kg.

Day 3 brings some difficulties. The showers have glass doors and with so many and mixed pilots I skip. A ½ hour before take-off I learn there is another shower room, but there is not more time. The wind is unfavourable and the tow pilot does not want to tow our Nimbus, and we tend to agree when we see the Sting. They have a winch, but the old H2 has the appearance of a Tuck Tuck, so we are doubtful. Meanwhile 3 teams from Ostrow arrive by trailer, no take off options there. We decided wisely yesterday 😊

M12 decides for winch as well and they take off smoothly. We (Robert and I are flying) reach 275m above field, so no problem and off we go, direction HuttenHotzenwald for the rest of the day. The weather prediction is rain south of Nurnberg so it might not be too long a flight. After some very good

thermal and 2400m of height the weather degrades and we start planning the landing field. I passed for my RT licence since last edition just to be able to go smoothly around the Euroglide, so I call Rothenberg in RT English. After several no reply's I try in German and I succeeded. They have rain, we can land but we cannot leave. We divert to Niederstetten. At a nice German chat on the radio we learn they have no towing, but they advise Kitzingen. Kitzingen does not respond. When we fly overhead we see a truck driving up and down the airfield, that is not good. They finally respond: the tow plane is broken. Again we change plans, to Würzburg. We still have some slow thermals and another competitor, MCT, joins. They tell us Würzburg is no good so we need to go to Walldürn, which has towing. As the thermal degrades we have a meagre 100m above glide path to reach it. We decide to take a detour along some last cumulus but they do not favour us. The last 10km we need our turbo. We are 3<sup>rd</sup> on the circuit to land with already two on the small field. The grass side has a steep slope, so it is tricky parking next to the concrete runway. But the pilots already on the field quickly support us. There are plenty of restaurants, we go for Greek. There is a shower, but no water runs from it. The weather forecast is quite lousy.

We wake with overcast but the clouds transform into cumulus, although with low base. Team LT decide to wait a bit, while others start early. As we have to pass Schwarzwald and perhaps even Schwabisch Alb, the star team is put into the plane: Robert with lots of experience and Robin with youthful eagerness, talent and current in latest knowledge. Frank and I have an easy task, the car can cut from the track and go directly towards Stuttgart. We have a long wait at the highway restaurant and we see fast progress on the tracking website. The sky is full of cumulus, and the landing field remains uncertain, as they can still go a long way. We decide for a trip towards a castle, which is in view of our not so idyllic spot. But parking lots for a car with 8 meters of trailer are quite limited on a touristic hill. When we finally succeed we see that the glider approaches Aalen, so we have to hurry. The castle is visited in Japanese style and off we go, back on the highway. They had been tricking us, as progress gets slow again and landing field options are widely spread. We need to park again. It is 6 o'clock and the parking lot is cramped with trucks. We sit on the sidewalk and watch the tracking. This is even less fancy than our earlier spot. Finally a decision: Regensburg. There is a highway in that direction so off we go, 1 hour to drive, ATE 8 o'clock.

Regensburg Oberhub is a motorfield. Several teams are here and a tow plane from nearby glider club has been arranged for Friday and Saturday (the weather for Friday is really doubtful). The air field café is closed, no showers but toilet will remain open till midnight. We rig the tents and go for a restaurant. Our first choice seems closed since long, our second choice is closing for the day. They advise a doubtful eating place marked by two golden arches. At least we have the food fast.

We wake at 6 o'clock by thunderstorm. LB2 is derigging. The storm is some 10 minutes away, by far not enough time to derig a Nimbus. In pyjamas we put on all the ropes we have to better tighten the plane. The rain falls half way during this action. Back in my tent I am surrounded by centimetres of water, but the tent remains dry.

The weather predicts a small window for gliding in the afternoon. We go for a lunch downtown with some other teams. At 4 o'clock it is clear that the window will not come, but new thunderstorms do. Some teams decided to derig and drive to the nearby gliding field. Tomorrow, they will send us the tow plane after they take off.

To keep our holiday feeling, and we go to Walhalla with LB2. This is a 150 year old copy of a Greek temple honouring remarkable Germans and has a great view over the Donau. We end the day at a Greek restaurant with several teams.

The weather is remarkably good, cumulus at 10 o'clock, the self-launchers take off at 11. I call the tow pilot and he confirms coming over after towing at his field. Few minutes later I get a call: the tow plane

is broken and likely not fast repaired. We start calling and we find another tow, which will also need to tow some eurogliders and will come immediately after. Three teams wait eagerly, watching cumuli and calculating that it might be enough to reach the finish at Venlo today. The tow does not come. We call. They wonder if we are willing to pay the expensive transfer between the fields. Yes, of course, please come fast. They call again: there is no way we can pay: they have an electronic website system and we are not in it. The treasurer has corona, no way to get it arranged today. We have cash ? No good, it needs to be electronic. We start calling again. And finally at 2 o'clock a tow arrives.

Today, I am in the glider again. We need to get as close as possible to Klatovy, as our credit is limited. We turn 83km out and we aim for Venlo. Lots of cumulus in front of us. Not all cumuli give us the thermals we expect. Progress is slow. We are low in the area of Wasserkupe and some other hilly areas are quite an obstacle. Our height above ground is not always very comfortable. We approach Sauerland where cumuli seem better, but we just cannot get the height to enter. We might land in Giessen, but when examining the empty field we get a small thermal. We can reach next fields, which might not look deserted. Garbensteiner Wiese has a glider in the landing field, so we decide to land there. We are welcomed. We can stay and take off next day. But no shower available. There is a very good Italian restaurant though.

The weather forecast is doubtful: rain in the west near Venlo, but some distance should be possible. We are 184km from Venlo, with some airspace in between it will be 200+ km to be managed. The 1300m winch strip brings the Nimbus at 450m into the air: we do not even have that at home 😊. They proceed at 1200m MSL, but AGL it is quite low.

I am in the car again. I have plenty of time, so I sit a long while in the sun at the gliding club. I try to avoid long parking between trucks at the highway. When I am driving near Cologne they text me they will land in Venlo, by turbo engine. It is not a finish, because we used all our credits, However, they managed to come quite close. Two competitors of our class already finished. The other teams landing in Venlo all used the turbo and all left without credit, just like us. Monday the weather will be bad, so we decide we end our adventure today. The glider is derigged. We and the other teams celebrate our adventure with beer and pizza on the Venlo terrace.

Mathilde van Lieshout, team LT, Venlo Eindhoven gliding club