

# *Gliding* *International*

JANUARY 2010

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• AIRBAGS FOR SAILPLANES

• NEW WORLD DISTANCE RECORD

• HIDE-AWAY PROPELLERS FOR SAILPLANES

• PATAGONIA - GLIDER PILOT'S DREAM



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**Every Glider Pilot's Dream !**

# PATAGONIA

As I write this story in December 2009, Jean-Marie Clement is in Patagonia with his eighth annual expedition to this 'mecca' of soaring. There is no greater advocate for this wonderland for glider pilots than Jean-Marie and I find it indeed regrettable that I was unable to accept his invitation to be a member of the 2009-2010 expedition. Perhaps next year.

Jean-Marie is a Frenchman living in Italy, a soaring pilot with a book-full of French national records, an ex-competition pilot (European Champion 20 years ago) and a man with a life time of soaring experience. His expeditions are mainly organised for European pilots, although a number of Australians and New Zealanders have experienced the wonders of Patagonia.



## A 'Must Do' Before You Hang Up Your Helmet

I am enthralled with the above photo which must wet anyone's appetite towards giving this sparsely populated land a more than cursory study of the possibilities. The photo was taken from the ground at Bariloche by Diego Vallmitjana, who guarantees that it has not been retouched in anyway. The time, 21 hours, January 15, 2009.

Coincidentally, Jean Marie was in the air at that particular moment, (about left side of the photo) and at 8,000 metres (24,400 ft). That night he landed to the north at Chapelco, only to be able to admire this extraordinary phenomenon up to its northern end.

San Martin de Los Andes (Chapelco airport), located 117km north of Bariloche, has been a base for the German pilot, Klaus Ohlmann for many years. He holds the world free distance

record. The late Steve Fossett and New Zealander, Terry Delore, also set a number of world records flying from Bariloche.

The 2008/2009 expedition was the smallest yet organised,

mainly due to the world economic climate. Even though Jean-Marie has now had eight annual expeditions to Patagonia, he freely admits that 'officialdom does not make it any easier. Treatment by customs requires a 'kid gloves' approach. Likewise air traffic control. Air traffic management in Argentina was transferred from the airforce to civilian management on July 1, 2009.

Statistics show that the best wave flying season is from November 15 to December 15, with temperatures on the ground likely to reach 25°C

in the afternoon. This occurred on December 13 whilst exactly seven days later, it was only 3°C with a snow storm. A country of wide extremes, one needs a summer and winter

wardrobes to be sure.

But having said this, Jean-Marie relates that they have only rarely used the special electric heating flying suits they have had made in Europe.

The previous season Bariloche based pilots were permitted to fly to Flight Level 280 on demand, whilst those glider pilots who base themselves at Chos Mallal have a dispensation to fly as high as flight level 350 without constraint.

Radio communication with air traffic controllers is good. They operate out of Buenos Aires and are managing airspace from 200 km to the north to 400 km to the south, and over the whole width of Argentina. If you lose contact, local controllers are always ready to action a relay for you. Cell phone coverage is almost non existent.

Soaring conditions and the seasons are changing in Patagonia but not for the worse. According to the expedition's meteorologist, the likely reason is an increase in the surface water temperatures of the Atlantic between the 30th and the 40th south latitude.

Describing one flight, (December 15) Jean-Marie, related how at 7000 metres, his Zander indicated they had a ground speed of 230 km/h (a tail wind of 177 km/h). The turn homeward bound saw them hit a head wind on the nose of 150 km/h. It took 3.5 hours to cover the 230 km home. Not for the faint hearted.

The 2009/10 expedition has seen a group of soaring pilots from Scotland join the team and they describe the experience as "exhilarating beyond their dreams".

Maybe you should consider participating next year.

The expedition's flag ship is a particularly well equipped Nimbus4 DM. However, you can ship your own sailplane to Patagonia if you so desire, and yet be under the umbrella of talented and experienced leadership! And a trip to Patagonia does not necessarily require you to sell the family jewels. Jean-Marie will provide you with a no obligation accurate estimate of what it will cost. (See [www.topfly.aero](http://www.topfly.aero)).

**Myles Hynde**

**P**atagonia is a 3000 klm long playground for soaring pilots and is a geographic region containing the southern most portion of South America. Located in Argentina and Chile, it comprises the southernmost portion of the Andes mountains to the west and south, and plateaux and low plains to the east. The name Patagonia comes from the word patagón used by Magellan to describe the native people whom his expedition thought to be giants.

The largest area is under Argentinian rule, whilst a much smaller area to the extreme south is administered by Chile.

The population is less than two million.