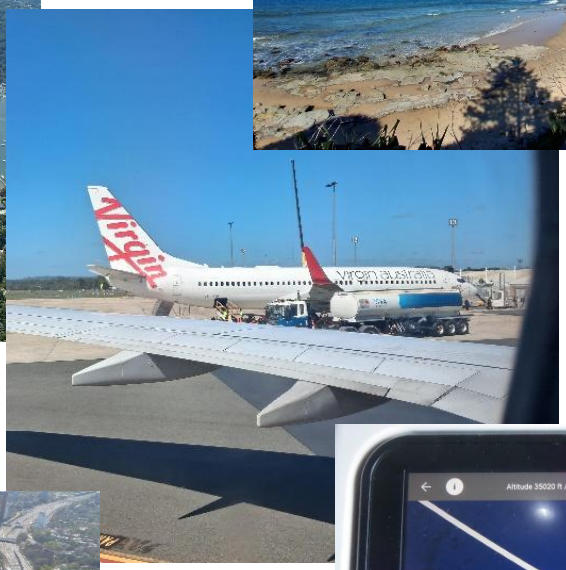
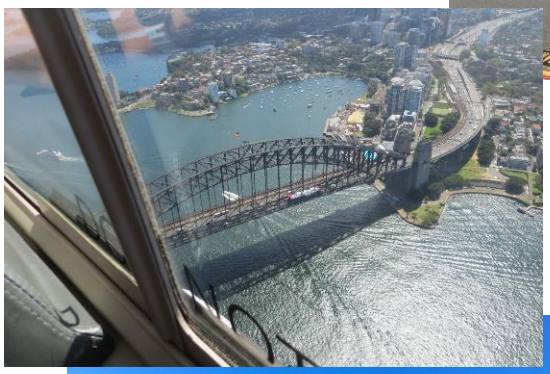
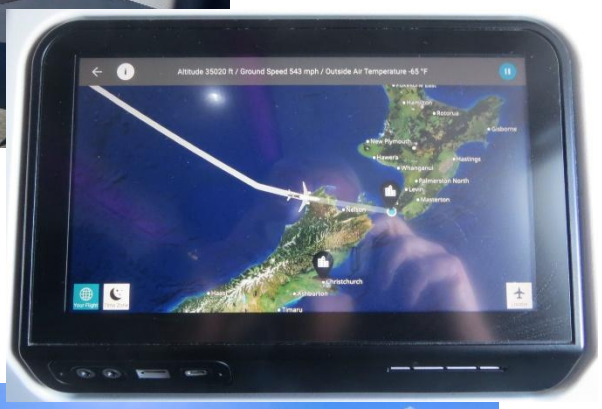
An aviation perspective of a 2026 visit to Australia and New Zealand







Michael Pierre de Villiers

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Title page: Top to bottom, left to right: Seaplane flight over Sydney, Mooloolaba beach walk, Virgin Australia B737-800FE VH-YIA at Maroochydore, helicopter tour over Sydney Harbour Bridge, Air New Zealand A320neo-271 over South Island coast and North Island Titahi Bay view stie toward Mana Island.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Pierre de Villiers was born in Durban, South Africa. He was trained to World Meteorological Organization class one meteorologist and multi-discipline weather forecaster in the South African Weather Service where he reached the rank of Director. He served on a weather ship in the South Atlantic. He served on World Meteorological Organization expert teams and was World Meteorological Organization rapporteur for the Africa region. He was also a commercial pilot and flying instructor. More recently he was a weather forecaster in the United Arab Emirates, then in England. Now retired.

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PhD MSc MDip (FRMetS CMet retired)
2026-06-03

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INTRODUCTION

This article is about a trip to Australia and New Zealand departing from England on the 12th March returning the 6th April 2026. While detailing the aviation aspect of airline trips, such as the aircraft and airports, experiences and observations on the ground and inflight have been included, as well as other non-aviation interlude activities believed to be of interest. Photographs are not limited to aircraft and airports and en route. Details of the flight, such as timings, seating and route that may be boring to some readers have been detailed at times. Less fastidious readers may want to skip these.

The author is grateful to FlightAware for information pertaining to airline flight departures and arrival times to and from airports as well as departure and arrival approaches to and from airports, including flight levels, particularly where the author could not record the data on board and data confirming the authors observations.

A few trips do not include photographs of the aircraft. These days one can go from entry to the terminal building, onto the aircraft, disembark the other end and exit the terminal building without seeing anything of, very little of, the aircraft.

The photographs are definitely not professional standard. A few of the photographs are of rather poor quality. This can be attributed to poor atmospheric conditions, or taken in great haste, use it or lose it. Cameras used were a Canon SX240 HS 12.1 mega pixels and a Samsung Galaxy A17 5G Android Smartphone. A backup Canon IXUS 82 IS 8.0 mega pixels, while available, was not used.

It is tedious having to repeatedly write the names of the major aircraft manufacturers (these days referred to as airframers). Therefore, after establishing the manufacturers name, they are referred to in abbreviated form along the with the model aircraft. For example, Boeing 727 becomes B727, Airbus A300 simply becomes A300. Unfortunately, the use of acronyms have proliferated. Unfortunate, because it means the reader has to remember each acronym when reading and it spoils the flow of comprehension if one does not remember its meaning, particularly if not used for some time. Therefore, an attempt is made to keep acronyms to a minimum especially if rarely referenced while at times refreshening the readers memory by abandoning the acronym by providing the full title, or meaning.

Time zones across the world can be confusing. Local time (B) is used in the respective countries. Universal Time Coordinated (UTC or Z) is globally by aviation. UTC has succeeded GMT Greenwich Mean Time. For the UK BST is also used. BST is British Summer Time. BST is 1 hour ahead of local time B which is the same as UTC. While in New Zealand the country was on daylight saving time that was 13 hours (UTC+12+1) ahead of UTC. When New Zealand changes to winter time this becomes UTC+12 hours. When the UK is on summer daylight saving and New Zealand on winter time the difference between UK and New Zealand becomes +11 hours UTC+12-1BST). Australia does not use daylight saving. It does have numerous different time zones across the country. The two time zones during this visit were Sunshine Coast City and Brisbane UTC+10 hours and Sydney UTC+11 hours. The UK changed to BST on the last Sunday in March. Time differences between the UK and Sunshine Coast City and

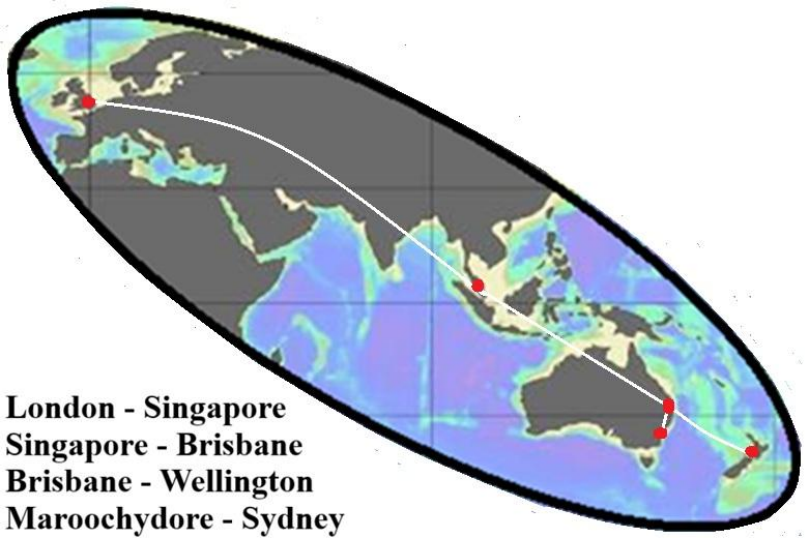
Brisbane became +9 hours and Sydney +10 hours. Singapore is UTS+8 hours. During UK BST it is +7 hours.

Plan charts of runways, Instrument Landing System (ILS) categories and wind roses, of airports visited, are shown in appendix A with the city name and its Internation Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) code. Some cities have more than one airport. Here the ICAO code identifies the particular airport.

The ILS consists of two transmitters, the localiser and the glide path. Situated at the end of runways they provide a beam aligned with and away from the runway that provides the direction to be flown to the runway. The glide path provides an angled beam or slope (usually 3°) that must be followed down to runway touchdown position on the runway. An instrument on the instrument panel has a vertical and a horizontal indicator that form a perfect cross with exactly aligned on the approach. Deflection of the vertical indicator to left or right indicates deviation to the right or left of the centreline. Deflection of the horizontal indicator up or down indicates too low or too high on the glide path. These days the instrument is part of with the so called glass cockpit display and aircraft can be flown to a totally automated computer controlled landing.

An ILS CAT I approach and landing has a 200ft (61m) decision height/cloud base and 800m visibility, or 550m Runway Visual Range (RVR). Note, ft = feet and m = metres. Runway visual range is provided by electronic equipment that measures the visibility alongside the runway, usually at touchdown point. The minimum values for an ILS CAT II are cloud base 100ft (30m) visibility RVR 350m and ILS CAT III 0ft (0m) visibility RVR 200m. Much less in use are; ILS CAT IIIB 0ft 50m RVR and CAT IIIC 0ft RVR 0m. Autopilot is approved for CAT II and III. CAT IIIC is a full auto land with after landing roll, but rare due to ground manoeuvring problems in such poor visibility.

Sources of information. For those aircraft I photographed for which I could not fully identify the type and had its registration, Airfleets.net was essential. Another excellent source is Planespotters.net. Airport information, used in the text and the appendix A, was obtained by going to the relevant country's civil aviation authorities. For example: Airports in the UK at the National Air Traffic Services (NATS), Airservices Australia, AIP New Zealand and Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore. Wind roses used in appendix A were provided courtesy of the Iowa State University Iowa Environmental Mesonet (IEM).



AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND 2026

During December 2025 it was generally agreed that I should travel to New Zealand to visit my brother. The plan was to fly from Birmingham International Airport to Brisbane (Queensland, Australia) via Emirates then Wellington using Air New Zealand returning the same way. At the invitation of my niece in Kawana, Parrearra (Sunshine Coast, Queensland) about an hour drive north of Brisbane, this was extended to visiting there before travelling to Wellington and After returning to Brisbane.

After the suitable visas were obtained for Australia (eVisitor (subclass 651)) and New Zealand (NZeTA), booking was made and paid to fly Emirates via Dubai to Brisbane flying on the 12th March 2026 returning home on the 6th April 2026. Flying Air New Zealand on the 17th from Brisbane returning on the 23rd.

28th February 2026, enter the President of the United States of America Donald Trump and war with Iran. The scheduled Emirates EK039 A380 to Birmingham departed before the onslaught, then was grounded indefinitely at Birmingham, along with a B787 flight from Qatar. Dubai airport closed.

Now began a worrying time whether it would all be over by the time of my trip. It began to look like the trip would have to be cancelled or delayed. 4th March Emirates announced that reservations could be rebooked or cancelled with a full refund. Always reliable and obliging Emirates. My 1st choice airline always. I applied for a full refund (that included travel insurance) and rebooked my trip via Qantas on the same dates, however, now flying from London Heathrow via Singapore to Brisbane return, at double the original coast alleviated by the future refund from Emirates. Plus, new travel insurance.

In the interim, my nephew in Sydney invited me to visit. I therefore booked a return flight from Maroochydore Airport (close to where my niece lived) to Sydney on the 25th April returning on the 27th flying Virgin Australia. My first choice was the cheaper Jetstar, but their website would not accept my credit card. Their loss.

The schedule became:
12th March QF 2 A380 20:10 London Heathrow 13th 17:40 Singapore Changi
13th March QF54 A330 20:40 Singapore Changi to 14th 08:40 Brisbane

17th March NZ272 A320 8:10am Brisbane to 2:45pm Wellington
23rd March NZ271 A320 06:00am Wellington to 7:00am Brisbane

25th March VA0484 B737 09:30am Sunshine Coast (Maroochydore) to 12:05pm Sydney
27th March VA0495 B737 15:05pm Sydney to 15:40pm Sunshine Coast (Maroochydore)

5th April QF53 15:15 A330 Brisbane to 05th 21:35 Singapore Changi
5th April QF 1 23:20 A380 Singapore Changi to 6th 06:35 London Heathrow

Instead of 10 minutes drive to Birmingham Airport, unfortunately, it meant travelling by train to my least favourite airport, Heathrow. Too much can go wrong. Not trusting travelling to Heathrow getting me there on time on the day, it was decided that I would travel to London the day before and spend the night with my son. He had a regimental lunch on the day before, so I met him there before going to his home.

I prebooked my return train trip on the 6th from Heathrow to Birmingham International station. This became a mission in its self. The more direct Heathrow to Euston to Birmingham was not possible due to Euston being closed from the 3rd before the beginning of the Easter weekend to the 8th after the long weekend for maintenance. I had to buy a ticket for collection at Heathrow on my return on the Heathrow Express to Paddington, then Great Western to Reading, then CrossCountry to Birmingham, a 3 hours trip.

Come the day of the trip to London on the 11th, arrived at Euston and about to leave the station when there was an alarm and an announcement for everyone to leave the station. Fortunately, it was not before I arrived. The fun and games of train travel in England. An enjoyable lunch at the Honourable Artillery Company headquarters.

Waiting to board.

Pre-checked in online. Check in at terminal 3 was painless, except automated bag drop did not work. Had to go to the check in desk. Now to wait for the gate number. I believed it will be either gate 303, 305 or 340. The only 3 gates at the terminal big enough for an A380. Found the aircraft at gate 303. We departed late. A boarded self-loading cargo (passenger) became ill and had to be offloaded (disembarked). Gate departure 14 minutes after schedule, take-off 28 minutes after schedule from runway 27R and climbing turn to port (left). A good flight, A380-800 seat 84H, cruising FL330 later FL350. Lower than normally flown. Usually step climb to FL390. Got about 4 hours sleep. We still arrived at Singapore on time but had to hold for 3 holding patterns at FL130. Landed 25 minutes late, runway 02L, but a short taxi to gate D46.

It was then 5 hours wait for my flight to Brisbane. A long horseshoe shape walk from the arrival gate to the departure gate C18. Found a recliner seat/bed to rest. Singapore does all departure security and passport checks at each departure gate. Another good flight, A330-200 seat 54J, but not much sleep. Left the gate 12 minutes early, take-off from runway 02L climbing to starboard (right), cruised at FL390. Landed 26 minutes early runway 19R on the morning of Saturday 14th. Long taxi to the international terminal. However, after landing there was about 20 minutes wait on the taxiway for our gate to be vacated due to our early arrival. So arrived at gate 85 on time.

After a few days recovery at my niece and her son's home, it was a very early start back to Brisbane airport for the flight to Wellington, New Zealand. Check-in and bag drop closing at 04:30. The airline only opening at 04:00. 30 minutes time limit. Unbelievable! Boarding was only at 07:10 and take-off at 08:10. There was a complication checking in online the day before. A phone call to Air New Zealand said it should be OK, but to check with Air New Zealand personnel when arriving at the airport. Consequently, not in the best frame of mind when arriving there about 15 minutes before 04:00 and seeing the crowd already waiting and not knowing what to do. When staff arrived, the person at a computer, was not interested in my queries and waved me to one of many machines. Two others standing behind a counter showed

no interest, happily talking to each other. I asked a couple nearby standing in the beginning of a queue what do I do please? They said check-in at one of the machines, then join the queue to do the bag drop. Imagine my dismay when I saw the length of the queue. However, it all went smoothly, the queue moved quickly and I was through to the security and border check with plenty of time to spare.

All very simple when one knows how. Needless to say, not impressed with the check-in staff. I said as much when the airline sent me an email after my return flight asking how was their service. It was in marked contrast with the rest of my time with the airline, which was very pleasant.

Waiting to board. A not good photograph.

Departure from Brisbane to Wellington at gate 74B, flight NZ272, in an Airbus A320neo-271N registration ZK-NHC, was 9 minutes early with take-off on runway 19L with a zig-zag climbing turn to port (left). Departure 5 minutes early, although landed at Wellington from the north on runway 16 and at gate 46 10 minutes early. The route passes not too distant south of Lord Howe Island. It is the crescent shaped remains of a volcano 400 nautical miles south-east of Brisbane. The hillier south of the island has two volcanic mountains. 23km to the south east is the distinctive Ball's Pyramid a conical rock rising almost sheer from the sea. My niece in Sunshine Coast, Queensland, was most fortunate to photograph it on one of her trips to New Zealand. I never saw it on the trip outbound nor inbound.

A rather bumpy flight with almost continuous light turbulence which caused the captain to announce a climb from our cruise at FL350 to FL370 in an attempt to clear the turbulence, albeit not successful, then back to FL350. Seated in my 22D aisle seat, I noticed a row of three empty seats nearby on the opposite side of the aisle. After take-off and the seat belt signs were off, I asked if I could move to this row and a window seat. I had a row to myself. Luxury. From my starboard seat with the sun behind me in the east, I was able to capture good aerial photographs.

Over the Tasman Sea with Cumulus fractus and humilis, mediocris in the distance.

Our approach to Wellington, on North Island, was over the northern tip of North Island passing close to Nelson then over Marlborough Sounds. The Marlborough Sounds consists of an intricate system of many spurs of land and islands punctuated many water inlets similar to fiords, created by combinations of land subsidence and rising sea level.

Nearing Marlborough Sounds in level flight with spoiler decrease lift over the wings allowing increased rate of descent. On the right passing over Marlborough Sounds. Cumulus fractus and humilis cloud.

Landing runway 16. Flaps extended and spoilers deployed to destroy lift.

This approach was further north than the only other time I came to Wellington airport in 2017. Partly because I arrived from Melbourne in 2017 now from further north from Brisbane. Also, because this time we positioned for an approach to the airport from the north over Evans Bay to runway 16, while in 2017 we landed from the south over the sea and Lyall Bay to runway 340. On this occasion the approach was from the west over land with a right turn to approach runway 16. On long final I noticed that the houses close by to the starboard side were much higher than us with clear details of the houses visible.

Spent nearly all of my time out and about with my brother during my stay at Porirua north of Wellington, at times in the company of my sister-in-law. Later with my nephew and his family at Waikanae further north and a brief visit to my niece and family also in Porirua. Mostly days out with my brother that included lunch, such as lunch at the Pimmerton Boating Club at Karehana Bay and The Fisherman's Table Restaurant at Centennial Highway, Paekakariki. My brother and I travelled in the Mercedes Benz A170 graciously lent to me to drive by my nephew.

On the 23rd it was very early rise at the nephew's house for him to drive me to Wellington airport. Usual procedure with Air New Zealand, check-in closes 90 minutes before departure, that is 04:30 for estimated 05:30 boarding at gate 48, seat 18D, departure from the gate at 06:00 flight NZ271. Same aircraft type A320neo.

Take-off was on time to the south on runway 16 then starboard (right) turn climb over the north of North Island to FL360. A predominantly smooth flight. Had the row to myself, so moved to the A window seat after take-off. Nearing Australia there were CB (Cumulonimbus) thunderstorm clouds to the distant west. Presumably oriented over the warm East Australia current. Nearing the coast we descended through towering CU (Cumulus Congestus) cloud.

CB (Cumulonimbus) thunderstorm clouds to the distant west. Nearing the coast descending through towering CU (TCU, Cumulus Congestus) cloud.

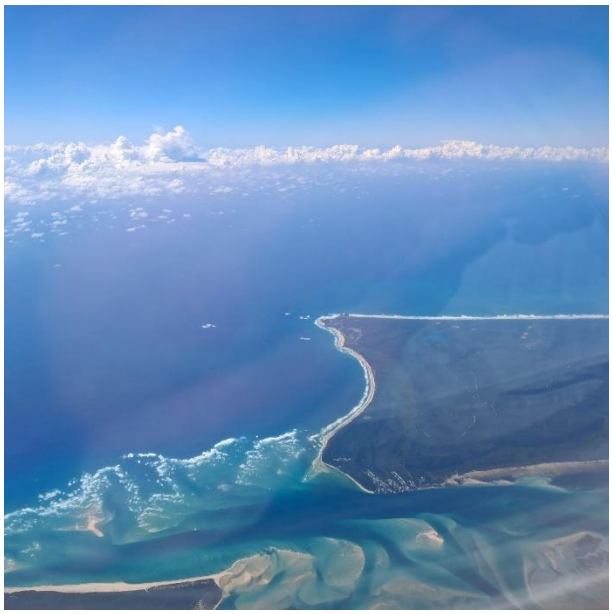
A port (left) turn to a direct long final to landing runway 19L with a short taxi to gate 73A arriving 23 minutes early at 06:37. Scheduled time 07:00.

Approach RWY 19L flap extension. Short final landing flap extended. Look like setting 2 (22°) later flap setting 3 (28°). Setting 4 (40°) would be full flap for short runways.

Border check and luggage collection was quick and out into the arrivals hall with the bus/train information desk in front of me. I was booked on the Con-X-ion bus shuttle to Kawana at 08:30. I enquired the way to the bus. The helpful lady enquired my bus booking. After looking at her computer, she said I am in time to make the 07:30 bus that would arrive in 10 minutes. She changed my booking and I was at the bus stop with time to spare. The bus was a 2013 Toyota Coaster Bus

with maximum 22 seats. The bus takes one to a depot. From there one transfers to a minibus that takes one to one's address. All very convenient. Result, I was at my niece's house an hour early.

Two days later, Wednesday the 25th, I was taken by my niece to nearby Sunshine Coast airport, locally more commonly known as Maroochydore (or Marcoola according to Virgin Australia airline), to fly to Sydney, returning on the 27th. I was invited to visit my nephew in Sydney, who very kindly paid for my 2 night's accommodation while there.



Climbing. Passing Moreton Island and abeam Brisbane airport.

Approaching runway34L passing Quibray and the Cronulla Sand Dunes.

Departure was from gate 5, flight VA484, in a Virgin Australia B737-800FE, registration VH-YQM, boarding 09:00, departure 09:30, window seat 27A from runway 13. The scheduled trip time is 1 hour 35 minutes. Take-off was 7 minutes after scheduled from runway 13. The airport has a single runway. When take-off is from runway 13, aircraft have to taxi almost halt the runway then back-track to a turning basin at the end.

Cruise is believed to have been at FL380. A smooth flight. Clear blue sky with varying height of Cumulus cloud over the sea, Cumulus humilis en route. That is, clearly defined edges and noticeable vertical development. Often called fair weather cloud.

Descent was over Sydney central downwind to the east of Sydney airport with a starboard base turn and an approach from the south-east to final approach over Botany Bay landing on runway 34L. Arrival at gate 32 at Sydney was 16 minutes after schedule.

Being a domestic flight with hand luggage it was a case of straight through and out of the arrivals building with a fair walk to the drop off/pick up parking area where it had been arranged that I meet my nephew. We both arrived at the same time. No sooner in the car than he asked me if I was OK with a helicopter ride. He had booked me on a flight over Sydney at his expense. Obviously yes please.

It was a short drive to the heliport offset from the end of runway 25. The helicopter an Aero Logistics Bell 4 blade turboshaft developed from the Long Ranger B407, registration B407 VH-EXV. Birdseye view of the airport and central Sydney. The flight passed the eastern end of runway 25 skirting the eastern side of the airport northward, passing the impressive three-storey sandstone 19th century Gothic architecture main building of St Andrew's College, to the Anzac Bridge at White Bay then the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House area of Sydney. Then

north-eastward to the coast at Balmoral Beach and HMAS Penguin navy base before heading south along the coast past Bondi Beach back to the airport,

Four blade Bell Long Ranger B407, VH- EXV. Passing the end of runway 25. The control tower is in the right distance. The two parallel runways in the far distance jutting out to sea.

Sydney airport. Domestic terminal, the international in the distance. Right, 1876 St Andrew's College main building.

An interesting panorama above. In the left front corner, Clark Island, beyond an anchored offshore supply vessel (OSV) Australian Defence Vessel (ADV) Reliant. The small black mark in the water beyond the ship is Pinchgut Island and Fort Denison. Beyond it, on the spur of

land, with greenery at its end, is HMAS Kuttabul with ski-jump ramp HMAS Adelaide (L01) visible at the wharf. The white shape protruding into the inlet beyond the wharf is the Woolloomooloo Finger Wharf with its large shed and the Ovolo Hotel (mentioned later). Further beyond are central Sydney skyscrapers, to the right is the Sydny Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. At the end of the inlet behind the Opera House is the Circular Quay, the large ferry terminal with 5 piers that is Sydney's main ferry hub.

A thoroughly enjoyed and unexpected 20 minutes experience. Unbelievably kind and generous of my nephew. My second flight ever in a helicopter. The first was many, many years ago in Durban in a Westland Wessex to an oil tanker (and landing) while travelling past Durban. Too big to enter port and a waste of time. Supplies were flown to the ships.

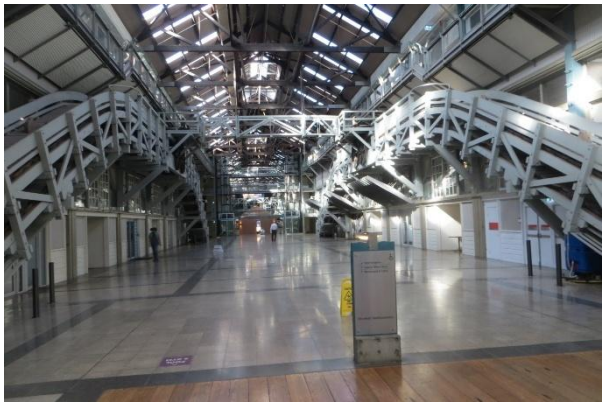
Bondi Beach.

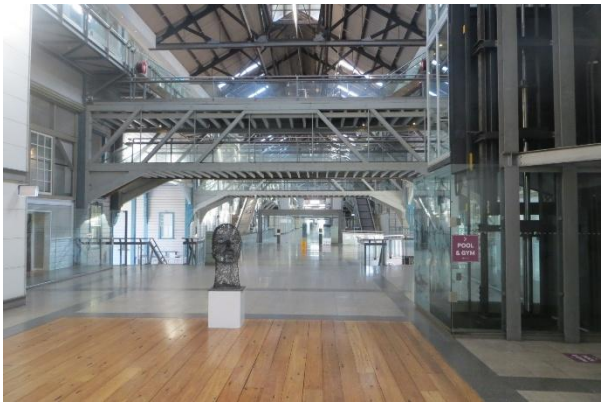
Then some sightseeing by car and walking, including now seeing Bondi Beach from ground level where I was taken to the footbridge where the terrible terrorist attack occurred on the 14th December 2025 with the death of 15 people and 39 injured.

Then checked in at the hotel before going to dinner with nephew and his partner at the Holy Duck Chinese restaurant, 2 Kensington Street, a short walk from where they live. An extraordinarily memorable day.

The Ovolo Hotel end of the sheds.

The Ovolo Hotel that I was booked in, is part of very long twin storied sheds pitched gable roofs connected by a central pitched roof. Extensive skylights have been added to the roofs to create a light and airy interior. The structure stretches the length of the Woolloomooloo Finger Wharf that is 410m long by 64m wide. The wharf is the longest timber-piled wharf in the world built between 1910 and 1913. The building has been





Inside the structure, about halfway, looking toward the hotel end with the remains of the goods conveyor and the other way toward the wharf end.

Visiting warships at the adjacent HMAS Kuttabul wharf. One is about to depart with tugs in attendance. Photographed at 08:00.

converted into 300 apartments, a hotel and small business offices with numerous bars and restaurants along the marina side of the building. It also contains rare industrial equipment, including the remains of electrically-operated goods conveyors. The warehouse was a major wool export terminal and embarkation place for wartime troops and post-war migrants disembarking place.

At the time numerous visiting warships were double berthed at the adjacent HMAS Kuttabul naval base. They were there for the 125 years of Australian Navy celebrations.

The following morning nephew and partner took me to Rose Bay ferry wharf to spend the day on the ferries. When we arrived, a seaplane suddenly passed nearby and low to land on the water. I noticed seaplanes moored at a nearby jetty which I identified as a Cessna Caravan and two de Havilland Canada DHC-2 Beavers. I asked to go closer so that I could get photographs. Rose Bay was the bay where, from the 9th August 1938, Short S23 C Class Empire flying boat flights took place between Sydney and London, becoming Australia's first international airport for flying boats, complete with a terminal building and slipways for boats.

Cessna Caravan C208 VH-SXF (10 seats) and de Havilland Canada DHC-2 Beaver mk2 VH-CXS (6 seats).

de Havilland Canada DHC-2 Beaver mk2 VH-NXF (6 seats).

While taking photographs, nephew and partner disappeared into the Sydney Seaplanes office. When I later went inside, I was told by an excited partner that nephew had bought us a seaplane flight in the Cessna.

A charter flight was leaving soon to take two passengers inland to what I thought was a lake about 30km north of Sydney. Included was some sightseeing of Sydney (Again! Great!). The destination was the Berowra Waters Inn on Berowra Creek. In total a 55 minutes trip.

One approaches a hill from the south on the east, skirts to the north around it to the creek on the east, follows it to the south curving left then right all the while descending the straight ahead to land on the water toward the hotel. Taxi to the jetty. Passengers offloaded within minutes then a short taxi to take-off. Take-off is the reverse toward the hill then follow the creek while climbing and south back to Sydney.

Flaring to land on Berowra Creek at 75kts, approximately 2-3° nose up, 20ft, heading 215°M, descending 350ft/min and right climbing 110kts, approximately 6°nose up, 1100ft, 035°M, ascending 500ft/min.

For the return take-off, trip back and landing, I sat next to the pilot. It felt like the old days when I was an instructor sitting in the right seat next to a student. The urge was to have my hands and feet near to the controls in case I had to take over control. Happy days. A continuous steep 350ft level turn to short final approach to land on the water back at Rose Bay. Definitely not what I taught students. This approach can be seen and read in detail in the appendix B. Take-off and landing on water! An incredible experience from start to finish. Eternally grateful to my nephew.

Sydney Ferries catamaran MV Victor Chang (Emerald Class) approaching the Rose Bay jetty and on the ferry passing the anchored offshore supply vessel (Australian Defence Vessel (ADV) Reliant with the Magistic (sic) Cruises catamaran passing between.

Shortly after 1pm we were on a ferry from Rose Bay to the Circular Quay next to the Sydney Opera House. While on the ferry from Rose Bay we passed the anchored offshore supply vessel (Australian Defence Vessel (ADV) Reliant and a small island. Pinchgut Island and Fort Denison with its Martello Tower, originally bare rock, was fortified in the 1950s. Now a museum and tourist attraction it previously served as place of punishment for convicts with minimal rations, hence pinch ones gut and the islands name. The Bureau of Meteorology operates an automatic weather station on the island with half hourly observations on its website. Shortly before reaching Circular Quay, we passed HMAS Kuttabul naval base next to it the bow of HMAS Adelaide (L01) was visible at the wharf. HMAS Adelaide is a Landing

Helicopter Dock (LHD) warship. The bow has a distinctive ski-jump ramp, although used for fixed-wing flight operations.

Pinchgut Island and Fort Denison with its Martello Tower. Photograph right, ski-jump bow of HMAS Adelaide is visible. In the right distance is the Woolloomooloo Finger Wharf building.

Passing the Sydney Opera House on the way to Circular Quay seen in the left of the photograph with the skyscrapers. The photograph was taken while at the Opera House.

At Circular Quay we boarded another ferry passed under the Sydney Harbour Bridge heading inland past Cockatoo Island, an ex-prison island, now a favourite camping and glampsite island costing $150 per night. Tents for rent could be seen along the coast. We continued on upriver to Abbotsford Ferry Wharf where we had a late, about 3pm, lunch at the Sydney Rowing Club. Then on the ferry back to Circular Quay to visit the Opera House and a refreshing drink at a quayside bar before riding a ferry back to Rose Bay and an early evening late desert at a place near where nephew lived then taken back to the hotel. Another extraordinary memorable day.

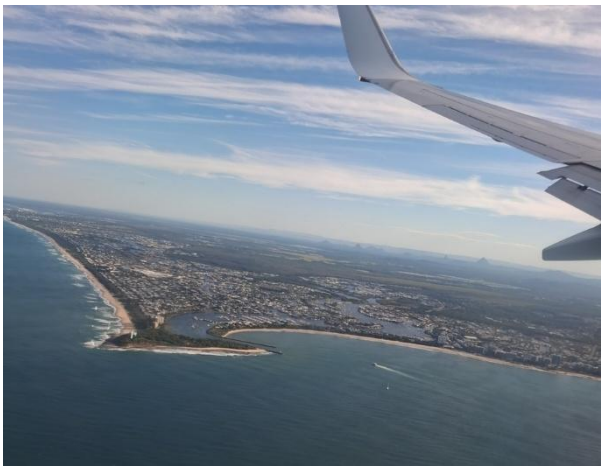
Sydney airport air traffic control.

The next day nephew and I had brunch at a small Chinese restaurant then he took me to the Sydney airport control tower and up to the top to watch the controllers at work with a bird's eye view of aircraft arriving, departing and ground movements. It was a day of

strong wind. I was therefore fortunate to watch them change traffic from the two parallel runways to the single 90 degrees cross runway. A system that reduced airport capacity and aircraft delays. I was to fly back to Sunshine Coast (Maroochydore) airport that afternoon. My flight take-off was 42 minutes late.

Back at the airport, check-in at terminal 2 was easy having already done so from the hotel the evening before and with no check in luggage and quickly through security for Virgin Australia flight VA495 seat 26A departure from gate 36 15:05 to Sunshine Coast arrival 15:40pm. Local time is 1 hour behind Sydney. Flight time was 1 hour 38 minutes. Aircraft for the flight was B737-800FE registration VH-VUT. There was a hiccup. My boarding pass was on my smart phone. I logged in to the airport Wi-Fi and presented my boarding pass at the gate and was allowed through. Upon boarding the aircraft, I could not access my boarding pass to show to the cabin steward. I had lost the Wi-Fi connection and I had no saved copy on my phone. Being relatively new to smart phones I was unaware of the situation. At this stage I also did not know how to screen save the document. Eventually the steward called the check-in desk at the gate and received confirmation of my right to be on board.

As already mentioned, take-off from runway 25 was delayed 42 minutes, then a starboard turn to north to Sunshine Coast passing abeam of Mooloolaba on the approach to the airport. Sitting on the left side of the aircraft photographs were into the setting sun resulting in appealing light effects during cruise at FL370. A good flight. Arrival at gate 6 was 46 minutes late at 16:26 was straight in to runway 31 then back track and taxi to the terminal.



En route to Maroochydore and a hasty photograph passing Mooloolaba beach and harbour entrance on the approach to Maroochydore.

Window shopping Brush-turkey.

Then followed enjoyable days relaxing with my niece and her son at beaches such as at Mooloolaba, Maroochydore and local walks. When at work or at school by bus to Kawana and Mooloolaba beaches and further afield to Kings beach at Caloundra. Most enjoyable.

An amusing sight while at the Mooloolaba Esplanade shops was seeing a Brush-turkey window shopping at a jewellery store.

Jetstar A321neo LR VH-OFU and Singapore Airlines A350-900 registration unknown.

Air Niugini B767-383ER P2-PXW and Qantas A330-200 VH-EBC delivered 2003 with Solomon Airlines H4-SIB taxing, also seen in the photograph on the left.

Sunday the 6th April it was time to travel home. Niece drove me to Brisbane airport to get there nearly 3 hours before departure. Checked in online the day before. Bag drop security and border check smooth and easy. Received printed boarding passes for the two flights when doing the bag drop (plus luggage receipt) so there was not going to be a problem when boarding the aircraft. My niece had packed a lunch for me so I sat at the deserted far end of the terminal and ate lunch while watching aircraft take-off and where the aircraft for my flight aircraft Qantas A330-200 VH-ECB was being prepared (at 12:44) and watched it towed to the departure gate.

Back at gate 81 for boarding at 14:30, departure 15:15 QF 53 A330-200 VH-EBC (seen above) to Singapore Changi arriving 21:35, seat 51J, I watched the pilots and cabin crew arrive and pass through the check-in gate to the aircraft. I was amazed and disconcerted to see the size of the one steward. Surely this cannot be. During the flight I noticed that to navigate the aisle this person had to a half turn when passing the seat uprights and when pulling a trolley did not simply walk backwards but shuffled side on. Uman rites (human rights) aside, surely this does not meet safety standard in an emergency. Obese passengers are enough of a problem, never mind cabin crew.

Push back was on time, only 8 minutes past schedule. However, time was lost during taxi. This was from the far south-eastern international terminal next to the end of runway 01R all the way To the far north-western part of the airport to runway 19R. First northward then westward then northward again. Departure was 16 minutes late.

After take-off and initial straight ahead climb there was a turn to starboard with some course changes then on to Singapore. Cruise was FL380 then about halfway FL400. A good flight. Landing was 24 minutes early at 21:11 on runway 02L with taxi to terminal 3 gate C26. Then there was the long walk back to the same gate, D46 terminal 3, when and where I arrived from Heathrow, in a U shape through the concourse.

Waiting to board Qantas QF 1 A380-800 at Singapore Changi. A Scoot Airlines B787 Dreamliner in the background.

A just over 2 hours wait for the departure at 23:20 on Qantas QF 1, 23:20 A380-800, boarding at 22:35, seat 82H, arrival Heathrow 06:35BST. All seated on board and aircraft secured the captain announced there will be a delayed push back due to traffic congestion passing over Afghanistan and timing of our passage. Gate departure was 25 minutes late, take-off on runway 02C 31 minutes late.

Cruise was at FL360 then, from what I can estimate from the flight profile a climb to FL280 and toward the end FL400. A good flight, although once again, not much sleep. About 6 hours total for both flights. I noticed that on all four flights, Qantas is not at all fussy about closing window blinds then they want the self-loading cargo to sleep, especially when daylight outside. In fact, they do not comment at all. My experience is that other airlines are very strict. On one occasion I was woken by a steward bumping me and waking me in my aisle seat when reaching across me with a stick to close a blind where two other passengers were asleep with it open. I have always thought it silly. When in a window seat I always like to look outside, day or night. There is always something of interest.

Approach to land at Heathrow never appears to be straight in. We had a single 360° hold at FL200 to the north-east of London then an S shape descent to a long approach from over London to runway 27R landing 4 minutes early. Then walk for ages with travelators to clear border control, painless. Luggage collection surprisingly not long waiting. Then passing through customs. Farcical. About 6 customs officials standing around showing little interest while passengers streamed by some with two trollies laden high with luggage all heading for the green nothing to declare exit.

A longish walkway sloped underground to a station foyer collect my pre-paid ticket and where there were two attendants to assist with collecting/buying tickets from machines and advising which train to catch and when. The moment I looked a bit bewildered one volunteered to assist me. After a short wait I was on the Heathrow Express non-stop to Paddington then a short walk via turnstiles to an adjacent platform and aboard a Great Western Railway train to Reading that departed within 10 minutes. So far well ahead of schedule.

It changed at Reading where I had to wait for the CrossCountry train as per original schedule. With the addition of passengers at Reading the train was packed. I had a large and heavy case with nowhere to put it until the conductor told me there was a luggage area in carriage D. No easy feat getting it there from one carriage to the next. Safely stowed there was nowhere to sit. I had to stand until we arrived at Oxford where one was able to grab an unreserved seat when passengers disembarked and others boarded. It was fun trying to get my luggage off (and others) at Birmingham International, so called because it is the station for the airport. Passengers were jammed in the carriage entrance/exit. They had to disembark to allow myself and others heading for the airport to get our luggage off. Home from the station was a doddle.

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APPENDIX A

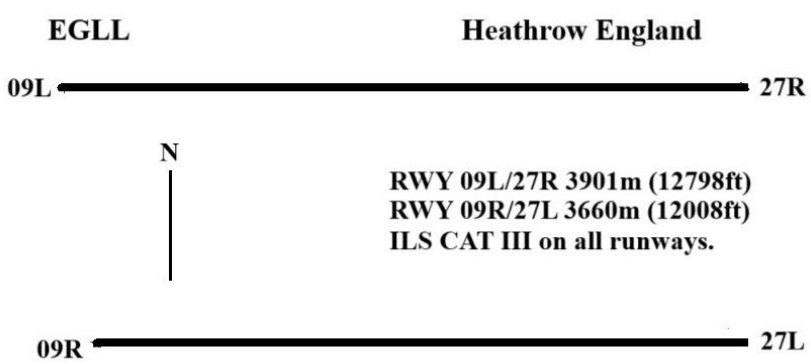
The destination airports are arranged chronologically according to first arrival.

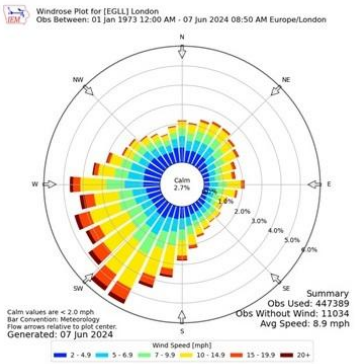
The north indicator, on the maps, is true north. Runways are numbered according to magnetic north. A runway marked 36 for 360° magnetic direction is not necessarily aligned with true north. Aircraft are flown according to magnetic directions. For example, magnetic variation 21°W means magnetic runways 05/23 are, to the nearest 10°, 03° and 21° true north. Magnetic variation west is added to the true direction, variation east is subtracted. Magnetic variation slowly changes with time. Therefore, over decades, runway numbers can change by about 1°.

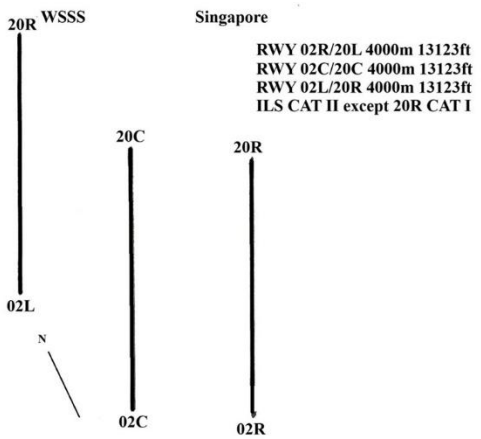
Individual charts are not intended to be to the same scale. However, where there are two or more runways, the runways are correct according to scale and position in relation to each other on the particular chart, but not necessarily width. Some runways are not as wide as others at a particular airport. Narrower, usually shorter, runways restrict the size of aircraft that can land and take off from them. The charts are presented in alphabetical order according to the ICAO code.

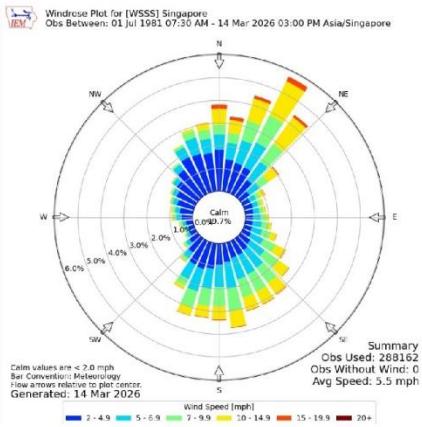
Runway plans and ILS categories for the airports are correct to the best of the author's knowledge. Having said that, there may be some discrepancies. This is relevant for Monreal CYUL airport for which there is low confidence regarding the runway ILS categories. The information was impossible to find and confirm at the Canada Transport Aviation website.

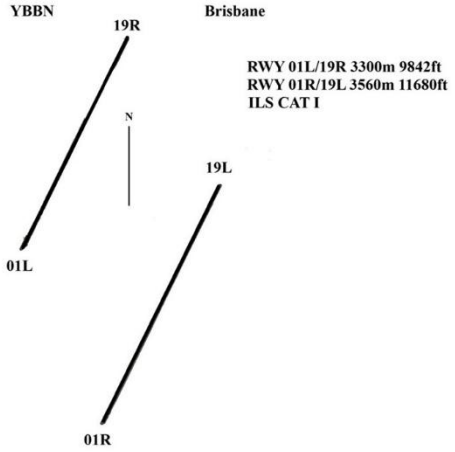
The most important choice of runway direction is the prevailing wind direction. Aircraft landing into the wind have a lower ground speed and shorter roll on the ground. Take off is also shorter into the wind. Strength is also a factor. If the incidence of strong winds is often not aligned to the prevailing direction consideration must be given to the construction of a second runway aligned with the strong wind direction, or reconsider the original runway direction. Wind roses have been provided to illustrate the relevance of the wind velocity at an airport. These are provided in the public domain courtesy of the Iowa State University Iowa Environmental Mesonet (IEM). IEM warns that the archive does contain errors. In general, data from the airports is of good quality and representative of the local surrounding area. Wind direction is relative to true north, speed is in miles per hour (mph).

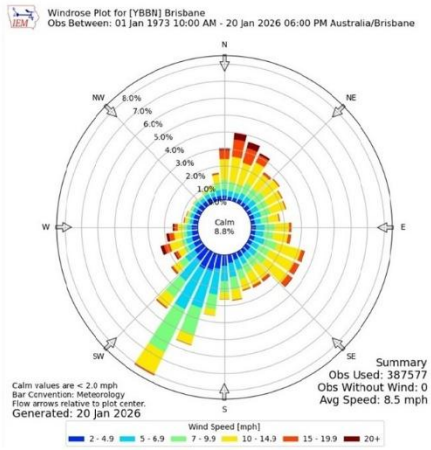


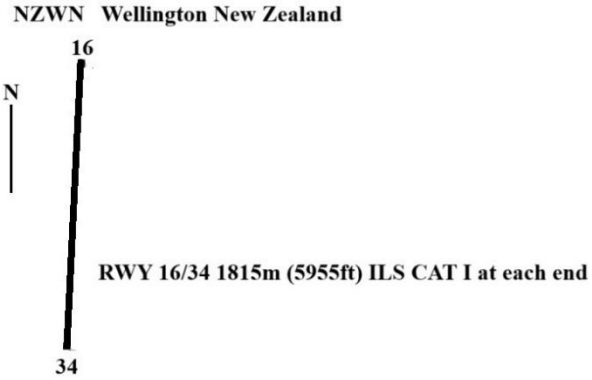


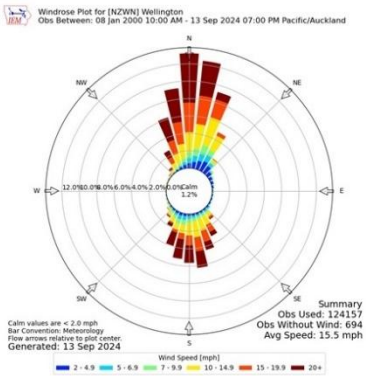

20R WSSS
Singapore
RWY 02R/20L 4000m 13123ft
RWY 02C/20C 4000m 13123ft
RWY 02L/20R 4000m 13123ft
ILS CAT II except 20R CAT I
20C
20R
02L
N
02C
02R

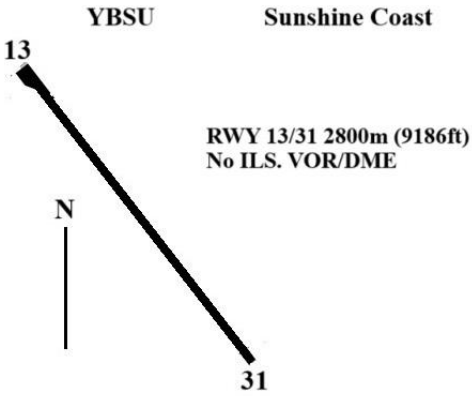

Windrose Plot for [WSSS] Singapore
Obs Between: 01 Jul 1981 07:30 AM - 14 Mar 2026 03:00 PM Asia/Singapore
Calm
Summary
Obs Used: 288162
Obs Without Wind: 0
Avg Speed: 5.5 mph
Calm values are < 2.0 mph
Bar Convention: Meteorology
Flow arrows relative to plot center.
Generated: 14 Mar 2026
Wind Speed [mph]
2 - 4.9
5 - 6.9
7 - 9.9
10 - 14.9
15 - 19.9
20+

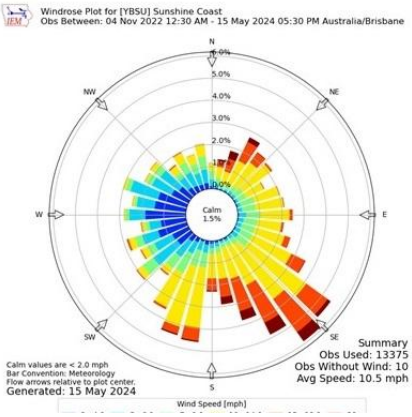

YBBN
Brisbane
19R
RWY 01L/19R 3300m 9842ft
RWY 01R/19L 3560m 11680ft
ILS CAT I
N
19L
01L
01R


Windrose Plot for [YBBN] Brisbane
Obs Between: 01 Jan 1973 10:00 AM - 20 Jan 2026 06:00 PM Australia/Brisbane
Calm
8.8%
Summary
Obs Used: 387577
Obs Without Wind: 0
Avg Speed: 8.5 mph
Calm values are < 2.0 mph
Bar Convention: Meteorology
Flow arrows relative to plot center.
Generated: 20 Jan 2026
Wind Speed [mph]
2 - 4.9
5 - 6.9
7 - 9.9
10 - 14.9
15 - 19.9
20+

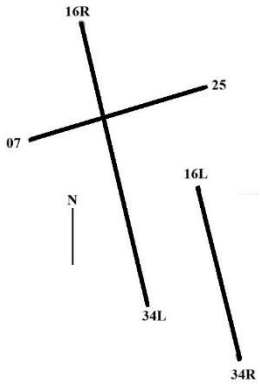

NZWN Wellington New Zealand
16
N
RWY 16/34 1815m (5955ft) ILS CAT I at each end
34


Windrose Plot for [NZWN] Wellington
Obs Between: 08 Jan 2000 10:00 AM - 13 Sep 2024 07:00 PM Pacific/Auckland
Calm
1.2%
Summary
Obs Used: 124157
Obs Without Wind: 694
Avg Speed: 15.5 mph
Calm values are < 2.0 mph
Bar Convention: Meteorology
Flow arrows relative to plot center.
Generated: 13 Sep 2024
Wind Speed [mph]
2 - 4.9
5 - 6.9
7 - 9.9
10 - 14.9
15 - 19.9
20+

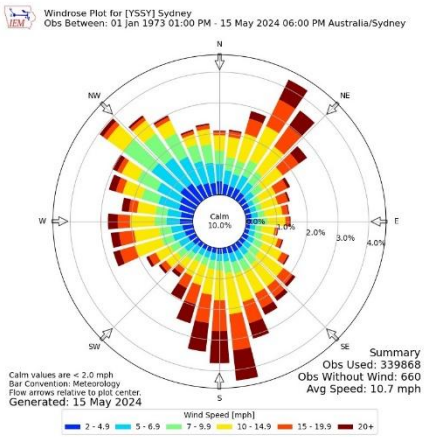

YBSU
Sunshine Coast
13
RWY 13/31 2800m (9186ft)
No ILS. VOR/DME
N
31


Windrose Plot for [YBSU] Sunshine Coast
Obs Between: 04 Nov 2022 12:30 AM - 15 May 2024 05:30 PM Australia/Brisbane
Calm
1.5%
Summary
Obs Used: 13375
Obs Without Wind: 10
Avg Speed: 10.5 mph
Calm values are < 2.0 mph
Bar Convention: Meteorology
Flow arrows relative to plot center.
Generated: 15 May 2024
Wind Speed [mph]

YSSY **Sydney**



RWY 16L/34R 2438m (7999ft)
ILS CAT II at each end
RWY 16R/34L 3962m (12999ft)
ILS CAT II ILS at each end
RWY 07/25 2530m (8300ft)
ILS CAT I ILS at each end.



APPENDIX B

The sequence of photographs detailing the approach, landing and taxi of Cessna Caravan C208 VH-SXF at Rose Bay on the 26th March 2026 spanning 4 minutes.

The instrument panel shows top left to right: air speed in knots, attitude, altimeter. Bottom left to right: turn (bank) and slip, compass (heading), vertical speed feet per minute.

Turning. Standard rate 1 turn is 3°/second or 360 degrees in 2 minutes. Rate 2 turn 6°/second or 360 degrees in 1 minute. Fast and large aircraft, such as commercial aircraft, tend to use a half-standard-rate 360° turn in 4 minutes or 1.5°/second.

Compass headings are magnetic. Magnetic (M) variation at Sydney is 13°E. East variation subtract from true (T) heading to obtain magnetic. West variation add. Example, east variation 180°T -5 = 175°M, west variation 180°T +5 = 185°M. The headings indicated below are magnetic. To obtain true, the process is reversed. 168M +13 = 181°T, 174M +13 = 187°T, 150M +13 = 163°T and 005M +13 = 018°T

Approximate track flown and landing can be seen on the last page.

1. Approaching Rose Bay heading south. Camera time 12:20. The seaplane base and jetty is on the left close to the blur of a propellor. A left turn to base leg will be from right to left close to the shore with a sharp low level left turn to land on open water from obliquely right to left in front of the jetty and terminal then taxi back to the jetty.

1. Approaching Rose Bay.

2. Downwind.

2. Downwind. Camera time 12:20. Airspeed 95kts. 5° nose down (below horizon) wings close to level. 500ft altitude. Wings close to level ball slightly of centre (not significant) slight skidding needs a touch of left rudder. Heading 168°M. Descending 500ft/minute.

3. About to turn base leg. Camera time 12:21. Airspeed 85kts. Close to horizon about 1° nose down. Wings indicate left turn. 350ft altitude. Wings indicate a rate 1 turn to left, ball slightly out to right (not significant), needs slight right rudder. Heading 174°M, no significant heading change from the previous photograph. Descending 300ft/minute. Readings indicate that an almost level (slow descent) turn to the left has just begun.

3. About to turn base leg.

4. Base leg.

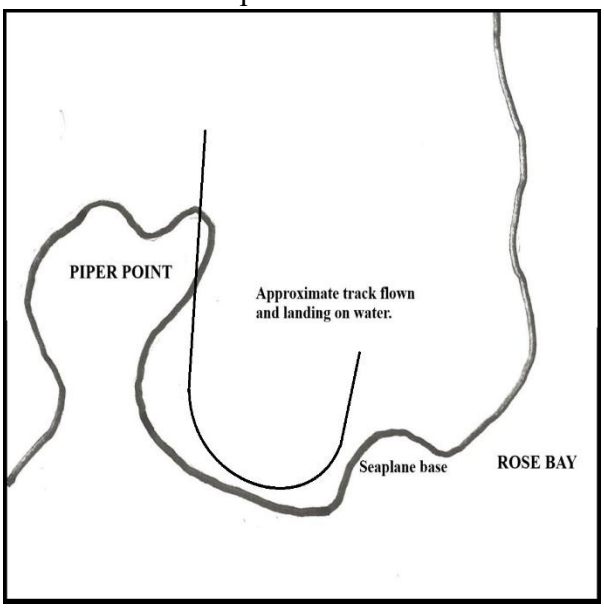
4. Base leg. Camera time 12:21. Airspeed 83kts. Nose very close to horizon. Wings indicate left turn greater than rate 1. 350ft altitude. Wings indicate turn halfway between rate 1 and rate 2. About 4.5°/second or 360 degrees in 1.5 minutes, ball slightly out to left (not significant), needs slight left rudder. Heading 150°M. Descending just over 100ft/minute. Almost level turn but increased bank. A continuous almost level left turn on base leg to final approach to the north.

5. The continuous left turn

6. Close to landing.

5. The continuous left turn as shown by the instruments in the previous photograph. Camera time 12:21.The ferry jetty can be seen with the seaplane base jetty beyond.

6. Close to landing. Camera time 12:21. Flaring for touchdown. Airspeed 65kts. 10° nose up (above horizon) wings level. 25ft altitude. Wings level ball centred. Heading 005°M. Descending 800ft/minute.

7. Taxi to jetty. Camera time 12:24.

Aircraft track. Map not to scale.