

HARBOUR ADVENTURES IN SUNNY SOUTH

Harbour adventures in sunny south

Who ever want to treat him- or herself with a special flight-experience should try a flight from Malta's main harbour with a floating airplane of Harbour Air Malta. This company operates a De Havilland Canada DHC-3T Turbo Otter from the capital Valetta. Directly adjacent to the terminal of cruising ships there is a mini airport, between large ships. The Turbo Otter with its large wing that provides much lift is one of the most suitable airplanes for this job.

Versatility in flying

The plane can be rent for fun-flights but also chartered for freight transport or perhaps photo flights. Moreover a line service is maintained with the northern situated island Gozo, so the daily activities can run up to eight flights a day, depending on the reservations. Operating airplanes from the water in a commercial way is still in premature stage in Europe and that makes it really a kind of special. The Turbo Otter was taken over from 'Big Brother' Harbour Air Canada which owns and has in service several examples of the same type, but still Harbour Air Malta is an independent company which started developing it's services in June 2007. Airmen are, however, involved from Canada because a sea-plane rating is scarce, and it is unfeasible to train people yourself in such a small company. The company ogles to a connection with Sicily with the same type of sea-plane, this is still in the application phase, but very suitable to this is the terminal immigration facility for the cruising ships.

Safety first

The South African Captain Barry Lightening has the function of flight operations manager and 'got it all in his fingertips' which he should have because the company is quite self-supporting. He was responsible for writing various operation procedures, and also the emergency program for the own safety management system in which has been described the safety rules for start, landing and route. In case of emergency a speedboat is available on the terminal with life-saving vests, flares, fire extinguishing sera's, first aid supplies etc. if under any circumstances a precaution landing should be necessary at sea. Not that the sea-plane uses a radius over more than 16 nautical miles (Gozo) anyway. With an own tank car fuel is brought in from the international airport Luqa, and stored in two small tanks on the wharf.

Ready to go

At First Port Control had to find out were to put this special harbour occupant, but now they are used to the plane which is held – looking at it's manoeuvrability – to give precedence to all shipping in Malta harbour. Luqa tower gives clearing for a departure and stays in contact during flights. Lifting off from the water is different, the

sea-plane 'jumps' itself into the air after a short bumpy ride over the water surface. Such a special take-off is combined with the pleasure of a fantastic view over the harbour activities, large ships and the bastions of Valetta. Professionalism first, and not only for the pilots but also for all other Maltese employees, often reflected by visibly enjoying passengers and not very seldom also confirmed later on with testimonials !

Kees Otten & Wim Das

DHC-3T Turbo Otter

Length:	13.78m.
Height:	3.76m.
Wingspan:	17.44m.
Wingsurface:	34.84 vierkante meter
Maximum weight start:	3625 kg
Weight empty:	2130 kg
Max load:	1495 kilogram
Max. operational ceiling:	3000 m.
Engine:	Pratt & Whitney PT6A-134 Turbine
Propeller:	Hartzell
Capacity:	750 pk
Fuel:	JET-A
Fuel tank:	200-260 gallons
Passengers:	14 or 9 with luggage
Maximum speed:	160 miles / hour
Climbing speed:	370 meter per minuut
Starting traject:	275m.
Landingrun:	120 m.
