

Believe You Can Fly in St. Croix
Bohlke International Airways Scenic Aerial Tour
By Tim Cotroneo



A sense of anticipation wells in your chest as Pilot Fiona Horne curls the Lamborghini-like canopy over your head. With your seatbelt fastened, and headset adjusted, you make a mental point to avoid the co-pilot joystick that is positioned between your legs. You take a deep breath and realize you're just seconds from takeoff in a Diamond DA40 airplane, the Bohlke International Airways signature aircraft for hoisting St. Croix vacationers high into the clouds.

The blonde pilot, a former Australian rock star, asks if you and your wife are ready to view St. Croix like you've never seen it before. You nod back at your wife seated behind Horne, and answer "yes" into the microphone located just an inch from your lips.

Horne scans the instrument panel in front of her before audibly reading through a safety checklist and contacting the air traffic control tower. You hear "bravo, bravo" several times in the midst of the pilot-speak exchange between Horne and the people clearing her airplane to taxi down a 1,000-foot runway.

The Caribbean at 1500-feet



The Scenic Aerial Tour is an exhilarating way to experience the 28-mile long island of St. Croix. With cruising speeds up to 170 mph, this tranquil window on the world will have you feeling like Christopher Columbus, Amelia Earhart, and St. Croix's Bananaquit bird all rolled into one. Like these thrill-seeking ambassadors before you, a journey from inside a four-seater airplane at 1000-feet will imprint a St. Croix memory that's hard not to share.

You're comforted knowing that Bohlke International Airways is an award-winning air charter operator based on St. Croix since 1959. In addition to the St. Croix aerial tour, Bohlke also offers a scenic tour departing neighboring St. Thomas, taking in St. John and the British Virgin Islands.

Over the course of 60 awe-inspiring minutes, Horne escorts her guests on a color-splashed tour above St. Croix and neighboring Buck Island. During this magic carpet ride, Horne shares details about St. Croix's geography, history, and even tells pirate-tales from days gone by.

A Birds-Eye View of St. Croix



The first leg of a passenger's aerial experience is simply indulging in the realization that a single pane of plexiglass is the only thing separating your sightline from the rainbow of colors below. If you wish to get in touch with your inner bird even further, there is a lunchbox-sized window you may flip open to breathe in the freshest of Caribbean air. During this whole *getting acquainted to the great outdoors* rush, Horne's voice is comforting, informative, and exudes the best in St. Croix details.

Once airborne, Horne points out shipwrecks peeking out from the Caribbean Sea, a Contessa's castle positioned smack dab in the middle of the island, and a sundial that has a bit of extraterrestrial overtones. Photo buffs will revel at the multi-layered shades of turquoise oozing from the ocean surface. Aviation aficionados will thrill to the Diamond DA40's smooth ride and control panel that is literally right at your fingertips. If that's not enough, Horne may share a story of her previous life as the lead singer for Def FX, Australia's number-one electro-rock band.

In addition to viewing St. Croix's entire coast-line, Horne veers over to Buck Island, St. Croix's uninhabited neighbor. Buck Island's west end is home to one of the world's most beautiful beaches and an extensive coral reef. From your lofty perch, you hope photographs do justice to the emerald, turquoise, and midnight-blue water colors surrounding this 175-acre oasis.

Encore, Encore



Your bucket list adventure seems to go by in the blink of an eye. Horne lands the Diamond aircraft like a pianist floating her fingers over the ivories. When the trusty flying machine comes to a rest, Horne turns to address her beaming guests. Like a rock star who knows what's coming when asking first-row fans if they'd like an encore, a smiling Horne inquires if her passengers enjoyed their Scenic Aerial Tour. In his best pilot-speak Horne's first time co-pilot grins back and says, "I'll Roger that."

Tim Cotroneo is a freelance writer specializing in Caribbean travel, business, and golf.

<http://www.bohlke.com/scenic-aerial-tours>