It has been a while since the crew updated “Zeezwaluw Post” as well as visited the Netherlands. The invitation to the wedding of their godchild Tamara with her Rob became a very good chance to fly to Holland after such a long time.

July the 6th the crew flew with Ryan Air (with booked seats for extra comfort) from Las Palmas to Weeze (Germany) which is near Maasbracht in the southern part of Holland. At the home of our family we were brought up-to-date about all the arrangements for the wedding at the 16th. The wedding took place in the Gaia Zoo in Kerkrade, so no fancy dress code luckily to enjoy this special day. At the wedding day the crew went together with Alex & Floor (brother & best man and sister in-law) by car to the wedding location. To reach the place in time, the German navigator was put to work. Instead of going there straight away it took a D-tour and the company was 5 minutes late at the meeting point, but still in time to miss nothing of the great event.

When all were seated, the beautiful bride and groom entered with their 2 gorgeous daughters AnnA & SaraH. The wedding hall was build similar to the African safari observation huts and turned out to be a room with a splendid view. One of the walls was a floor to ceiling window overlooking the living area of the Cheetahs’. In front of that view the wedding ceremony took place.

A highlight during the ceremony was an "organized disturbance" by feeding the cheetahs. It was a great event much appreciated by the kids and of course also by all the grownups.

After the official part of the wedding, there was a lunch-break with coffee & tea at an outside location, near a little brook underneath trees.

After lunch until 4 o’clock in the afternoon, was reserved for the guests to visit this amazing Zoo.

In this Zoo you will not find the animals in small cages but companionable species at large areas in the woods.

The first thing to notice was that none of the animals showed any stressful behaviour and because of the large available areas, is the absence of the typical zoo smell.
Only the various birds were kept in cages but so huge that the walking paths (sluiced) went through them and the visitors were able to watch the birds from nearby (keeping an eye at big birds on branches above you). Very impressing was the pack of wolves that had their own way in dividing half a cow they received for dinner. No adorable doggies at all and of such an astonishing size, we preferably only meet in a Zoo.

After that was time to exchange experiences at the meeting place, while spoiled with wedding cake and drinks. This gathering place was near the habitat of 4 giraffes. After the wedding cake & a drink, the bride, groom and their children were allowed to feed these elegant animals. It was a great sight to see those large animals stripping very carefully the leaves off the offered branches. See movie.

At 6 the just married couple and kids left the party to get to their secret honeymoon place, where after the guests had a snack and left for their own homes. For the Zeezwaluw crew it was very, very special to be present at this day and enjoying the astonishing wedding arrangements!

A highlight, next to all the visits to many dear friends and family during in Holland, was a trip in a Cessna with pilot Rob, our brother in-law. He asked the crew if they would join him on a short flight off the airstrip of his flight club in Leopoldsfield (B).

The flight would bring them from Belgium to Maasbracht, circle a few rounds above his house and back again. The duration would be approximately an hour.

Of course the crew agreed to this opportunity at once.

Fortunately the weather was good enough to fly that specific day, although the wind was a bit strong.

After Rob accomplished his paperwork, the for one-day apprentice co-pilot Riens gave a hand in pulling the plane out of the hangar and fuelling up.

Thereafter it was time for the crew to board the little plane, men in the front chairs of course, Ineke at the backseat. All 3 were equipped with earphones to be able to communicate during the flight. It is a bit crammed inside the little cockpit with 3 tall people but no complaints were made or heard.
To record the whole event eternally, cameras were at the ready. Engine got fired and off the little plane went, wobbling over the uneven grass to the take-off line on even tarmac. After the tower gave the OK, Rob brought the plain smooth and very professional into the air. It is amazing what kind of details you are able to see at an altitude of 300m.

Little square fields divided by narrow waterways, tiny houses nowadays many with solar panels or swimming pools as well as the straight line of a highway lined with tall lamp-posts. As soon as we were near Maasbracht, we could feel the wind picking-up little by little and sometimes severe gusts made the plane jumpy.

But Rob is a good pilot and it was never scary.

Near the river Maas, we discovered old still fortified cities, along former river arms lined with marinas, lakes swept with gusts and hugh locks for commercial inner-waterway ships sailing up- or downriver to their destination.

Above Maasbracht we could identify Rob and Marianne’s house before we flew back to Belgium.

During the flight Rob made us aware of interesting navigational recognition points and shared flight information to compare it with sailing navigation. Riens made a little movie during the flight while Ineke kept herself busy making pictures with the new smart phone. An hour after take-off Rob landed the plane very smooth, like putting down a basket filled with eggs. The crew enjoyed this flight very much and knows now from own experience how good a pilot Rob is.