



# CARIBAVIA 2025 - 30 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE - ST BARTH COMMUTER

News / Airlines, Business aviation, Events / Festivals



**It takes me a long time to travel from Strasbourg to Caribavia. I have to admit that the "final mile" is really crucial to me. Perhaps because there is an overwhelming need to arrive at the objective after so many hours of travel. I've already had an excellent flight with St. Barth Commuter. I was fortunate to have them as my "last mile" carrier this time. A perfect takeoff, a 15-minute flight, and an amazing landing.**

Back in 1994 Bruno Magras and Michel Martinon established St.Barth Commuter with the intention of introducing a new airline to the island of Saint-Barthélemy in order to promote it. Over 500,000 passengers have been transported by St Barth Commuter since it began operations in 1995. Today, St Barth Commuter operates 6 aircraft CESSNA C208B - "Grand Caravan", manufactured between 2010 and 2022. Proven single-engine turboprop Cessna Caravan is powered by a renowned, dependable Pratt & Whitney engine with 675 horsepower. The caravan has flown more than 11 million hours since it was initially put into service in 1986, and it has earned a reputation as a superb performer on short strips and unprepared runways, even in stormy conditions.

Thanks to Caribavia, an aviation event like no other, I had the privilege of traveling to St Barth with

the outstanding pilots of St Barth Commuter. The company welcomed us for Girls in Aviation Day, a really unique experience. High school girls on the island had an amazing chance to learn about the aviation industry, see the maintenance facilities, ask any questions they might have, take a seat in the pilot's seat, and more. At the company office, I also had the pleasure of speaking with Bertrand Magras. I'm delighted to share with you the main points of our conversation:



**T.O** So, thanks to Caribavia, I finally made it to your office. It's a little bit different comparing to Zoom interview. It's good, here it's a very nice office.

**B.M.** Well, we're happy to have you here.

**T.O.** Thank you for bringing me to the island, because I was flying again with you. Yes. Still afraid, but that's my problem. Your pilots are genius. I think two more flights and now I'm gonna be good. Tell me what's new and how you're dealing with everything on the island. How much aircraft do you have when the next one is coming? Because as far as we can see, the traffic is here. Even in low season.

**B.M.** Indeed. Even after the pandemic and the various stage where there was some uncertainties with the economy, especially at the beginning of the season, things have been going well. We had a good sustained season. Activities as you mentioned, the activity even in the slow month are supposed to be May and June. We still have some tourists coming over. So it's been a good season. And yes indeed we are getting a new caravan. It will be. We'll have six caravan total in the fleet. That's our seventh one because we sold the older one. But yeah, we're getting at the end of this year a new Caravan.



Photo credit: genius @unbertov55

**T.O. Will you fly it from Wichita to St Barth ?**

**B.M.** Yes. I hope these are among the nice flights to do. So. Yes, we're really looking forward to it.

**T.O. Today you're hosting Girls in Aviation Day in your hangar. First impression ?**

**B.M.** I think it's a great idea and a wonderful event. I know it's been done before and I'm really happy that Caribavia implements it on each of them. Yes, it's really good. As we had this discussion with Lyudmila and she's very involved in that. And I think one of the most important things that at school they have to stop....how should I say that... Limiting. Girls should not feel limited by what they can do. There's this tendency where. Oh well, this is science. That's not for me. That's not true. Okay. They have to keep in their head that they can do whatever they want and they just have to pursue their dream. Even though in some countries we're not supposed to dream about aviation anymore.

**T.O.** Yes. This is the case in France because it's official and it's really sad because politicians are saying this.

**B.M.** It is very sad and it's just a short sighted view. It's just to make the buzz and make feel give your. The people that voted for you, that give them the impression that you're doing in their way. But that's not a long term vision. We need aviation, we need to do a better job at doing less emission maybe and I know the manufacturer are working toward it. But saying these kind of things to. To young students is just doesn't make sense.

**T.O. Yesterday, during last day of Caribavia, we were discussing the general luck of all the high skilled workers everywhere. It's not only about pilots, it's about mechanics. It's about people working at the airport. Air traffic controllers are badly missing. In your opinion, what should we do? How do you motivate? Example -- you're getting a new plane. For now you**

**have enough of mechanics, you have pilots dreaming to work here.**

**B.M.** Well, it's something we've been struggling. I mean we stayed for a while being without enough maintenance technician and it's hard to find as you mentioned. And if you look on specialized website for aviation job you will see some companies looking for 10, 20 technicians qualified Airbus 340. So, there is a shortage in aviation maintenance technician. There's no doubt about that. We do what we can at our level. For instance, and I was very happy to introduce to the group the two of our apprentices that are from StBarth, doing their back pro in aviation maintenance. And one of them is finishing this curriculum this month and he will pursue in France the Mention Complémentaire, as I say, to obtain yes, maintenance technician B1 license. And we push toward that. And at the overall level of the industry, I don't know. The truth is that there's been a shift also in the mentality post pandemic. And if you talk to any manager in any industry they will say so there's been a shift, this needs to be addressed and people need to realize that now, these jobs are important. They. Can be fun, they are very fulfilling and we need to have more people going in this industry.

**T.O.** **In the my birth country there is an initiative and they are doing that for the last 20 years. It calls shadow day. It actually gives the opportunity to follow someone in real daily work. It has been a great point to give the opportunity to dream about a créer in aviation. Maybe this is one of solution. But again, we need to work together companies with regulators and with local government and officials.**

**B.M.** Absolutely, I fully agree. And as far as my personal story, that played a major role because when I was a kid, when I was not at school, I would come to the airport and yes, when you're part of a company that you know that you're doing something that is meaningful, that changed basically the life, it just motivates you. And that's a big part of why I was so drawn toward aviation. I want to continue this way. And schools are doing that. I mean right now also we are. There are some at the end of the year they have also a week of stage where they actually. That's the whole purpose. They go in a company and they discover what's the daily life, what exactly you do. And I think it's a great idea.

**T.O.** **Perfect. Before you getting your new plane, what are your plans and how you will develop the company?**

**B.M.** Well, you know, it's always a tricky question how to develop because there's always a sense that by developing you need to be growing more and more and more.

**T.O.** **It's not possible here at StBarth, you don't have more space.**

**B.M.** Exactly. You came to the conclusion before me. Now, the fact is that we want to continue to do well what we do and that is to be an air service provider for StBarth in different areas. Is it an air charter, private charter, scheduled flight and so forth. So, that sixth airplane will also help us to increase route on certain destinations and be more flexible having more regularly five airplane flying, four or five instead of three or four. And we're also very excited by the fact that Air Caraïbes is coming back to St. Maartin. So, at least three times a week we will continue. Well, we've had that partnership with them since 2012, it's been 13 years now. But they stopped for a while the St. Maartin route. But they're reopening it and we're very excited about that.

**T.O.** **I can tell you that on a flight from St. Maartin to St Barth there were American tourists who obviously are flying with you pretty much since a long time. And it's impressive when people without knowing who I am and why I'm coming, they're telling : « You know, this company, we've learned about first time we were there and it was genius. » I mean, for me it's kind of precious. You get feedback from people without asking. They're feeling happy and safe. And guys told me « Our holidays start with them » Not touching down St. Maartin,**

**but when they get on your plane. I think it's wonderful because you're making people happy. It is. It's actually the best compliment that you could do. And we're always.**

**B.M.** It is. It's actually the best compliment that you could do. I'm always very happy. I've had instances also where I could hear people talking good about the company without knowing who I was. And it's the best feeling ever, really, because we strive to do that, to give them a good experience, which is not always easy in the Caribbean. In air transportation, we know it's complicated. The small sting can put a mess in your planning and everything in the Caribbean, it's even more complicated. So, yes, when we can do 20, 30, 40 flights during a day that leave on time and we can bring the people safely in St Bart with their luggage and we give them a good experience, whether it's from the greeting from our crew in St.Martin from the pilot. And as you said, they feel happy, they feel they had a good time. That's the best.

**T.O.** I am very much looking forward to get photos from your flight from Wichita to St Barth.

**B.M.** Absolutely. I'll send you pictures for the delivery sequence and the flight.

**T.O.** Perfect. Thank you very much.

**B.M.** Thank you. Was a pleasure !



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