

748 into AFRICA



In November 1969 Skyways Coach-Air Hawker Siddeley 748 pilot **BRIAN TURPIN** was seconded to the manufacturer to share flying duties of the company demonstrator during a sales expedition to Africa. He relates how the rugged and dependable turboprop excelled on its tour of some of the big continent's most remote airstrips

AT THE END of October 1968 British independent airline Skyways Coach-Air was awarded a contract to provide an aircraft and crew on long-term lease to the Ford Motor Company, to assist in providing regular air travel for its employees between the various manufacturing sites of the company in Europe. The Ford Air Transportation Department (aka Fordair) was formed at Stansted in 1967 and began regular air services in August of that year using a single 18-seat Grumman Gulfstream I. It soon became apparent that much more capacity was required and that, in addition to acquiring a second Gulfstream, the company would have to lease a suitable aircraft from an airline. Skyways was contracted to provide one 48-seat Hawker Siddeley 748, the aircraft to be operated out of Stansted from Monday to Friday. An experimental service was to be provided for two weeks during November 1968, the results of which would determine whether the contract would be signed for an extended period.

As a result, I found myself on the evening of November 4, 1968, positioning 748 G-ARMX to Stansted with Capt George Pewtress, to be ready for the first service on the afternoon of the 5th. It proved to be the first of many such positioning flights and for me an association with Fordair which was to last for

RIGHT One of the more remote airfields visited by 748 demonstrator G-AVRR during the 1969 sales tour of Africa was Yagoua in far northern Cameroon. The 5,340ft (1,630m) north-east/south-west grass runway was largely dust and scrub during the author's comparatively few visits to the airfield.

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS VIA AUTHOR

INSET LEFT The author in the right-hand seat of a 748 while working for Skyways Coach-Air, as covered in Further Out on a Lympe, an article based on his recollections of flying the type for the company, published in TAH19.

BELOW With the Outeniqua Mountains rising majestically in the background, 748 Series 2A c/n 1635 — by this time wearing South African civil registration ZS-IGI in order to satisfy local legal requirements — awaits its next flight at George, on South Africa's Western Cape, in December 1969.

