



5. More Polynesia 2017



by Johan Kjellander 2017

After four months enjoying Scandinavian summer we were now back in Tahiti to continue our voyage. Had it not been for the upcoming cyclone season, we would probably have followed the usual route west to Tonga, Fiji and so on along what is often called the *milk route*. To avoid the risk of hitting a cyclone we had to find another way.

Cyclone season in Polynesia is said to begin in November and end by April. The area affected is from the Marquesas in the east all the way to Australia in the west, roughly south of the equator and north of New Zealand. Many boats leave Polynesia and go south to New Zealand during this time to avoid storms but I looked for other options and slowly realized that going north is also possible but less known and less common.

I have a new copy of "The Pacific Crossing Guide" (see note 1 below) and I also have Jimmy Cornells classical "World Cruising Routes" (note 2). Both have valuable information but what other crews write on their blogs is also interesting. Noonsite (note 3) is one place to look but the Soggy Paws Compendiums (note 4) are more up to date, written by cruisers and downloadable as PDF-files if you want to read them off line. Reading carefully about weather patterns, places to stop and checking the distances on our Navionics charts I finally found a way that seemed possible.

What I came up with was a route that would take us directly north from Tahiti, first to Bora Bora and then to Penrhyn in the Cook Islands and then west to Tarawa in Kiribati and finally further west into Micronesia. This way we would avoid the Polynesian cyclone season and instead follow the predominant winds into the islands of Micronesia, which seemed more and more interesting the more I looked in to it.

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Note 1: The Pacific Crossing Guide, 2:nd edition by Pocock and Hogbin, ISBN:978-0-7136-6182-8

Note 2: World CruisingRoutes by Jimmy Cornell, ISBN:0-7136-4070-7

Note 3: <http://www.nonnsite.com>

Note 4: <http://www.svsoggypaws.com>

Tahiti



It was nice to see that Bird of Passage was in good shape when we returned from Aland. She had been there in the marina in Papeete for four months and of course she needed some cleaning outside but that was all. Inside she was clean and dry and the antifouling seems to have kept the bottom free from too much growth.

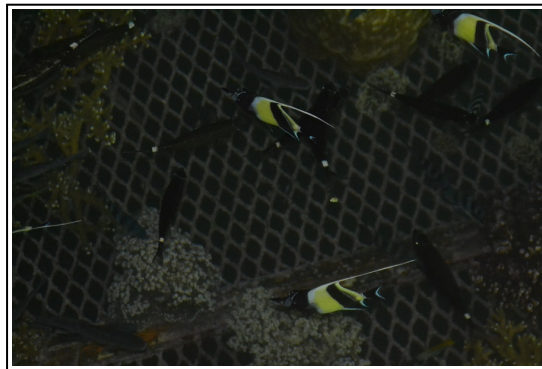
We now started the preparations for the coming months. Papeete is a fairly big place and you can get things that are impossible to find on the smaller islands. We filled our food supplies and propane gas tanks and I bought two new solar panels and a new battery for the windlass.



Many people here go out at night for dinner. Not far from the marina we found a place where chinese mobile restaurants came every evening and served cheap food. Lots of polynesian families came there to eat and so did we, not only once.



Polynesian boys seem to love their bicycles. Some of them are real acrobats and take the opportunity to show off in front of people watching.

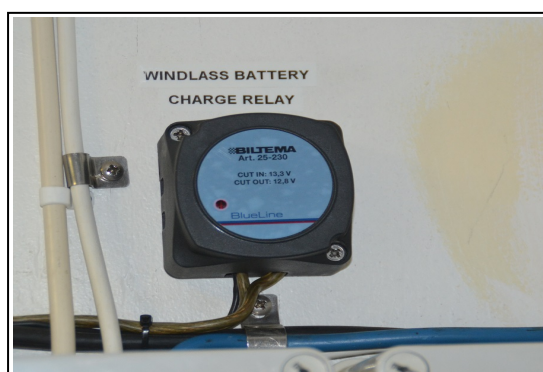


An unused part of the marina has been converted to a sea aquarium. A lot of fish is kept there and many people stop to watch as they walk by. Nice to see that the water in the harbour is so clean.



After a few days in Papeete we decided to move the boat to a more quiet anchorage and finish the last preparations there. During the summer in Aland we had e-mail contact with Bengt and Käthe that we met 2011 in Dover, UK. They had spent the last two years with their boat in New Zealand but were now in Tahiti again. Maybe we could meet.

Bengt and Käthe had found a nice little marina in Port Phaeton near Taravao, a village 35 NM south of Papeete and were going to spend the cyclone season there. Just outside the marina there was also a good anchorage so we went there, dropped our anchor and stayed for almost two weeks.



During this time I mounted two new solar panels. We now have 7 panels mounted with a total power of 550 Watts. I also mounted the new battery for the windlass. The old battery did not get enough charging and that probably shortened its lifetime. To avoid the same problem again I mounted a voltage controlled relay between the windlass battery and the main house batteries. The relay closes when the voltage in the house batteries reaches 13.3 volts and opens when the voltage drops below 12.8. This way the windlass battery is automatically charged whenever there is power enough available. Simple and not expensive.



Since we left Europe two years ago, Tove has many times asked for a remote control to operate the windlass. This would make it easier and safer to control the windlass from the fore deck. Summer in Aland was the time to build one. A water tight box, two water proof push buttons from Elfa and 7 meters of cable cost me about 35€. Commercial remote controls are much more expensive.



I also had a more urgent problem to attend to. During our trip from Papeete to Taravao the seal for the starboard propeller shaft started leaking. I seems that the two parts of the seal had stuck together due to corrosion and lack of movement during 4 months in Papeete marina. When I put the gear in forward to leave the marina, the rotating part of the seal mounted on the shaft did not rotate, instead it broke in two pieces.



Finding a new seal of the same brand (Manecraft) was not possible but after some telephone calls from the mechanic in the marina to a shop in Papeete we found a seal that had the right dimensions (30, 2-1/4) made by another

company (PSS). Two days later I rented a car and all four of us (Tove, Bengt, Käthe and me) went to Papeete. We picked up the new sealing (400€) and had coffe and icecream in the centre of the city.



On our way back to Taravao we stopped to have a look at Grotte de Mara'a. Not very spectacular but a nice place with wonderful forest and a small cave full of water.



Phaeton Bay was a busy place. A lot of diving tours from a company in the marina, dinghy sailing for the youngest...



...and traditional canoe paddeling for the older, male and female. If you look closely on this picture you can see that all six paddelers are right in the middle of shifting the paddle from one side to the other. This was done on command every five to ten paddle strikes.



One day we saw two small sea planes coming out from the marina and take off into the air. After an hour or so they came back and returned to the marina.



Under water construction work was under way. Nice to have a machine like this then. Would suit me perfect to have one at home.



Unfortunately many good anchorages also have their wrecks. Boats that have been left, that nobody cares for. Slowly but steadily nature reclaims what belongs to it.



There are two places where you can land your dinghy. Either in the marina where there is a dinghy dock, or further into Phaeton bay in the direction of Taravao village where there are trees along the shore to tie to. From there you have only a few hundred meters to a shopping centre with Carrefour, free WiFi, bank, shipschandler and more. We went there almost every day for a cup of coffee while we used the internet. You know that you are not in Europe when wild chicken run around your legs insdide a shopping centre.



Along the road from the dinghy landing up to the shopping centre we found this strange tree. It seems like it's growing inside an old wooden pole. I have never seen anything like it. How did it get there ?



Tahiti is a high volcanic island and there is plenty of rain up in the mountains that forms creeks and rivers as it flows down along the hill sides. The base of a waterfall is a good place to collect such water by building a small wall and leading the water down to the village in steel pipes. I have seen this several times in different parts of the world.

There is a waterfall that you can see up on the hillside above the marina and I happened to meet a Brazilian sailor who told me how to get there. It was not very far, less than 2 kilometers along a small pathway. On my way up I met a Polynesian family coming down from the waterfall all wet after swimming in the water.

After ten days in Phaeton Bay we said goodbye to Bengt and Käthe, they were going to stay in the marina during the cyclone season but we wanted to go north out of the cyclone area and then west to south-east Asia. First stop would be Bora Bora, 160 NM north-west of Tahiti and then Penrhyn, the most northerly of the Cook Islands, 600 NM further north-west.

PS:

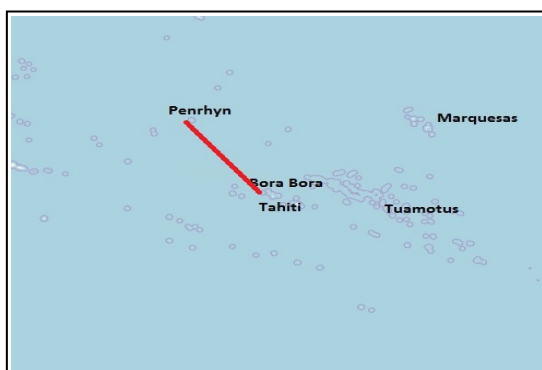


Gas explosion in Port Phaeton, Tahiti, © Bengt Salbro

Several weeks later I recieved a mail from Bengt with sad news from the marina in Port Phaeton. A boat on land had been destroyed in a gas explosion and one person was seriously injured. Bengt sent me these two pictures that he took directly after the explosion.

Bora Bora

After ten days in Phaeton Bay on Tahiti we said goodbye to Bengt and Käthe, they were going to stay in the marina during the cyclone season but we wanted to go north out of the cyclone area and then west to south-east Asia. First stop would be Bora Bora, 160 NM north-west of Tahiti and then Penrhyn, the most northerly of the Cook Islands, 600 NM further north-west.



Before we left Tahiti we filled our tanks and also got some foreign cash to use on our way. The Cook Islands, for example, use New Zealand dollars. We got taxfree diesel in Marina Taine, just south of Papeete. 520 liters for approximately 350 Euros. Last time we filled diesel was in the Galapagos. In Papeete I visited 5 different banks but none of them had Australian or New Zealand dollars. Only one bank had US dollars but they would not let me have more than 400 in one day.



So, finally with diesel, water, propane gas, food and 400 US dollars we set course for the island of Bora Bora, 160 NM to the north-west. Bora Bora is a typical tourist place. Cruising ships anchor just outside the main village and hundreds of tourists pour in to buy pearls and clothing or rent a car and drive around the island. We found a good mooring in front of Maikai Restaurant and stayed there for five nights.



First day ashore we took a walk to the Yacht Club. There are flowers in bright colours everywhere. This one grows on the *Fish Poison Tree*. Its seeds are said to produce a poison that paralyzes fish if you pour it into the water. A real beauty.



Tables with fresh fruit for sale are common along the roads in Polynesia. There is usually nobody there to help you but sometimes a paper note with handwritten prices. Take what you need and leave the money on the table.



The Yacht Club had a nice restaurant so we had lunch there. While waiting for our food we met the crew of the Dutch yacht Jonas that came over from Panama at the same time as us. They were one of the boats in the Puddle Jump Rallye and gave us the latest news about some of the other boats that we also knew about. On the wall next to the pool where all the flags from visiting boats hang, we saw a flag from Swedish boat Tina Princess and another one from Spray.



There were no chicken running around the tables here but lots of crabs. This one came to our table to look for food I suppose.



Next day we took a walk to the main village Vaitape. We needed to visit the Police office for checkout clearance. Every time you leave a country for

good it's important to get a paper to prove that. When you arrive to the next country they will ask for it. In Bora Bora I had to fill in six different forms and wait for two days before they could give me the clearance paper. We then had 24 hours to leave French Polynesia.

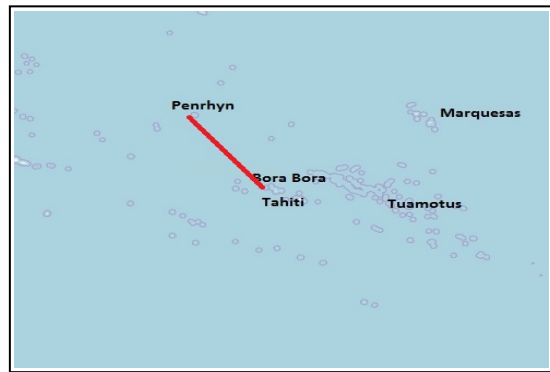


Vaitape has two super markets and lots of tourist shops. We renewed our supplies of fresh vegetables and bought some souvenirs. Then on the sixth day in Bora Bora we left our mooring and set course for Penrhyn, the most northerly of the Cook Islands, 600 miles NNW of Bora Bora and sufficiently far north to decrease the risk of a cyclone, at least at this time of the year according to the statistics.

Penrhyn



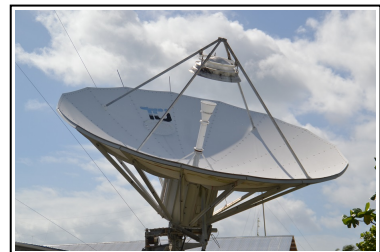
In light winds it took us five days to reach Penrhyn. On our way I saw this bird for the first time. It looks like a Swedish Tern but the colors are swapped. Black body and white head instead of white body and black head. I looked it up and the closest match I found was a bird called *Brown Noddy* (Sv: Brun Noddy, Lat: *Anous stolidus pileatus*).



One job on the way to Penrhyn was to prepare the Cook Islands courtesy flag. Tove made this one reusing a part of an old british flag, a leg from a pair of jeans and adding the stars by hand stitching with white yarn.



The main village on Penrhyn is Omoka with about 250 inhabitants. There is a school, a small hospital, a primitive shop with very limited supplies and a very modern solar power station. A cargo ship arrives every second month or so and it also takes passengers. An alternative is to travel by air. There is a 3 km long airstrip built by the Americans during WW2 but there are no regular flights so tickets are extremely expensive and very few people use this possibility. As a result, Penrhyn is a very poor and lonely place, we were the 8:th visiting yacht this year. The first from Sweden.



The main road starts in the village and goes south to the airstrip. We took a walk along the road and found lots of crabs and a big satellite dish owned by Blue Sky, the telephone and internet provider. The technician on site was a former New Zeelander, Warwick Latham, who had been on Penrhyn the last 34 years. He was also an advanced HAM radio operator using things like moon bouncing to communicate with people as far away as Sweden. From

him we purchased an internet voucher valid for 3 GB at 500 Kbit/sec to the price of 50 NZD. Good coverage on the boat even in the village on the other side of the lagoon.

The second day in Omoka we were invited to participate in a social event called Kai Kai. As we understood it this event is to celebrate that a new set of wooden drums had been fabricated and were now going to be used in a public performance for the first time. All the important people of the village had a short talk and tried the drums and in the end even Tove and I were invited to try them.



Then the real drummers came on stage and played a traditional number for us.



Many from the audience, young and old, took the opportunity to sing and move around in traditional dancing,

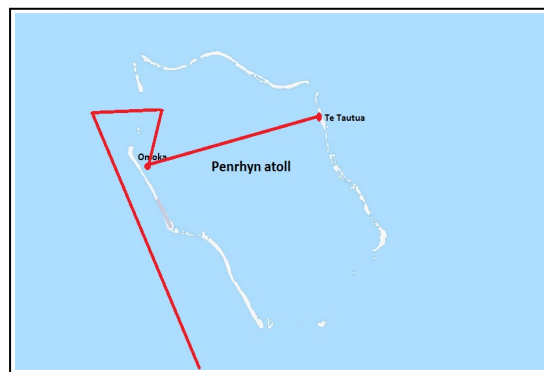


The food that was served after the ceremony was fantastic. Fish, chicken, breadfruit and a lot of coconut in various forms. Plates were provided but no forks or knives. Everybody eats with their hands.



Rio, the mayor of the village, adopted us and made us feel comfortable. Everybody was very nice to us and we had a great time. The next day I visited Rio in his house and met his family. His wife makes fancy hats that are sold on the markets in Rarotonga.

Rio told me he wanted to build a sailing dinghy for his son but he had no drawings. Could I help him ? I searched the internet and found a set of drawings for a small dinghy, similar to the Optimist. They were free to download so I printed them and gave them to him together with a box of screws, some rope and an old fender suitable for the dinghy. For his daughter I gave him a pack of vanilla cookies. All the people on Penrhyn seemed to be short of something and Rio was not the only one asking for things that he needed.



On the third day we decided to try the anchorage in Te Tautua on the other side of the lagoon. Rio told us he had a house there on the beach of the village and that we were free to anchor just outside which would be a good spot, also to land the dinghy. He even said we were free to take rainwater from the tap on his house. All that sounded nice and after an hour of motoring against the wind it showed to be true. A beautiful anchorage, close to land, no swell and just a gentle breeze from the east.



Two boats were already anchored there so with us there was now three visiting yachts at the same time and this must have been a record. One was an Ovni with British flag and German crew (Marcus and Michaela) and the other was American (Gary and wife).



In Te Tautua we met the church minister Saitu Marsters. He invited us for lunch and the next day he visited us on the boat with his wife Hakono and daughter Dora. He asked for fishing gear but we don't have much of that so he started asking for other things. When he understood that Tove had a sewing machine on board he asked us if we could make him a cover for his outboard engine from blue sunbrella cloth. Why not ? We actually did have some spare pieces of blue sunbrella.



A few days later the cover was finished. Saitu also asked me if I could help his father to repair his boat. It was a well used aluminium boat, leaking water and full of cracks and damages. Not easy to get in shape. His pop rivet gun was not working so I started by fixing that. I then helped him to insert some missing rivets and remove old ones that were broken.



I had read somewhere that the Penrhyn lagoon grows rare and beautiful yellow pearls. I asked Saitu about this and he told me that nobody was diving for pearls right now because the community had agreed on a voluntary stop for five years in order to let the pearls grow bigger. If I was interested his father might have a small collection though.

We talked to his father and he showed me some pearls. Not big but very beautiful. I picked one out and the price for that one was 50 New Zealand Dollars (about 35€). I said yes without haggling and he then gave us one more to be included in the same price. One for each of Tove's ears.



We didn't see a single dog on Penrhyn and only a few cats but we did see pigs in several places and also a couple of sea birds that were kept as pets. I think this is a chicken of the Brown Booby.



One day we took a walk along the ocean side of Te Tautua to collect sea shells.



We found lots of beautiful shells and many of them were inhabited by hermite crabs. They make funny patterns in the sand when they crawl around.



We also saw many kinds of fish that we had never seen before.



After a week at the wonderful anchorage of Te Tautua we sailed back across the lagoon to Omoka village. We had to see Ben, the customs officer to get our departure clearance and we also wanted to be there when Lady Moana arrived the next day.



Lady Moana is an old long line fishing boat that has been converted to a combined cargo/passenger ship. She takes 40 passengers but has only cabins for a few. Most of the passengers sleep outside on deck during the 6 day long voyage from Rarotonga to Penrhyn.

For the Penrhyn people, Lady Moana is the only way to get to the outside world and it usually takes two or three months before she's back again. Her arrival is a big thing for the Penrhyn people and I think almost the entire population was there in the small harbour to welcome her. First person was the minister who went aboard to comit a traditional church service accompanied by the singing of the passengers. According to Lady Moana's captain this was the only port on his route where this old ritual is still in use.



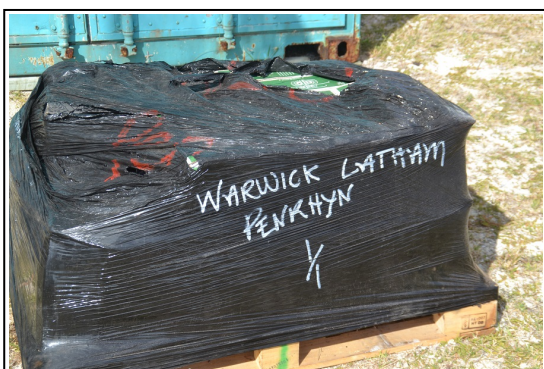
When the passengers started to unload you could see that they were tired but also that this was a big moment. Many had flowers in their hair and the welcoming scenes on the dock were warm and touching. Wives, husbands, children and friends united again after such a long time in distant places.



Next day the cargo was unloaded. Once again people arrived and collected what they had ordered. Food, fuel, home electronics, construction materials, tools and all the other things that an isolated community needs.



Lady Moana has a crane to unload the heavy stuff from the cargo hold but many things are stored on deck and unloaded by hand.



We saw many things with familiar addresses. Warwick is the representative of the telephone company but can also sell you a beer if you want one. One of the green boxes on the pallet to the left ended up in the cargo hold of Bird of Passage. The barrel to the right belonged to Rio, the mayor.

This was the last of our ten day stop on Penrhyn. By noon the 25:th we had left the lagoon and raised our sails again now aiming for Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands of Kiribati.

If you are interested in sailing to Penrhyn

- We visited Penrhyn in Cook Islands for 10 days in November 2017. Clearing in was no problem. Four officials came out to us in their own boat. It seems it is not nessecary to announce your arrival in advance. Max stay is 30 days. They charged 20 NZD for healt control and 10 NZD for Quarantine. Customs charged about 80 NZD for cruising permit plus 2.2 NZD/day. On

top of that we had to pay 71 NZD/person when we left. Altogether around 250-300 NZD in total depending on the length of our stay.

- Credit cards are not accepted, you must bring cash. I only had USD and they accept them on a one to one basis as NZD.

- Internet is provided through Wi-Fi from the company Blue Sky. Ask for Warwick Latham. He has a small office in the southern outskirts of Omoka village. A voucher for 3 GB of data at 500 Kb/sec was 50 NZD. He also had beer for sale. Good coverage on the boat even in the village on the other side of the lagoon. Warwick accepts payment by card through PayPal.

- There is a small store run by a local family with limited stock of canned food, pasta and other dry food.

- Don't expect to get diesel, propane or water and you are not allowed to take your garbage ashore. We got rain water in a jerrycan.

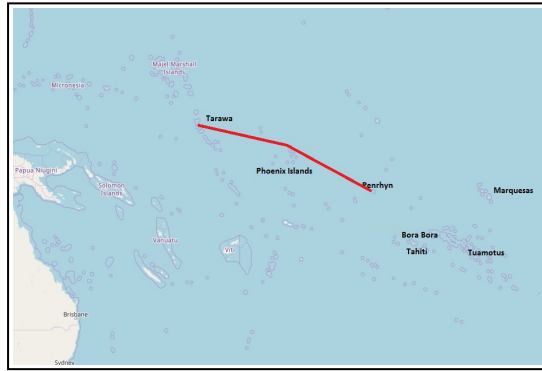
- Navigation was easy. We use Navionics on an IPAD. We entered through the pass on the north west side and followed the route on the chart to Omoka village where we anchored in a patch of sand located at 8 degrees 58.69 minutes N and 158 degrees 3.08 minutes W. The customs called us on VHF-16 and told us to wait on the boat. 30 minutes later they came out in their own boat and we filled in all the papers. All were very friendly.

- After two days in Omoka we crossed the lagoon to the small village Te Tautua. Navigating across the lagoon is easy but you need to watch out for coral heads. Te Tautua anchorage is more protected from the easterly winds and smaller than Omoka, about 50 people, but they have both school and a church. We anchored right in front of a blue house with a red roof and landed with our dingy on the concrete in front of that house.

- Almost everybody asked us for help in some way. It might be a good idea to bring wood screws, big pop rivets to repair aluminium boats, tools, fishing gear, lines, cloth, cookies etc.

- Before leaving you need to visit the customs office in Omoka village to get your passports stamped, pay your fees and get your departure clearance paper (Zarpe, if you are leaving Cook Islands).

Tarawa



Having sailed in Europe for most of my life the Atlantic ocean has always been the big challenge. Now, having sailed in the Pacific for almost a year I suddenly realize that you could easily fit three Atlantic oceans inside the Pacific. The Pacific is so much bigger and the distances are so much greater. From Penrhyn to Tarawa for example, the distance is 1870 nautical miles. This is almost like crossing the entire Atlantic along the popular route from Kap Verde to Barbados (which is 2050 NM).

It would have been nice to be able to stop somewhere on the way to Tarawa but this route only passes the Phoenix islands and they have no port of entry as far as I could understand. The Canton atoll in the Phoenix group has a pass through its reef and the lagoon is partly charted on the Navionics charts but the only information I found before we left Penrhyn was that Canton is a nature reserve and that you need permission in advance to go there, possibly also a guide. It would have been interesting though, Canton has a unique story as a refueling depot for trans pacific flights and a radio station in the early NASA space program. Air strip and radio antennas are said to be still there but only a handful of people. I tried to call Canton on VHF as we passed only 10 NM away but there was no answer.



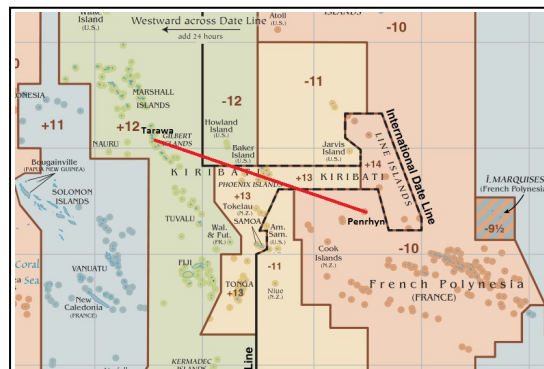
This juvenile Brown Booby (Sv:Brunsula, Lat:Sula leucogaste) followed us during the first days. It is all brown, but as it grows adult, it turns white in under.



Note that the navigator displays Lat/Long with very high accuracy. The last digit represents a distance of less than two meters. Since the boat itself is much larger than that we must have passed over the exact spot 0-180 with some part of the boat.

We had good winds and after 10 days we had less than 500 miles to go. Once again we were now going to cross the equator but also cross the 180 degree longitudinal which is opposite to the zero degree longitudinal in Greenwich, on the other side of the world. It just happened that the exact position where these two lines meet (Lat=0, Long=180) was straight ahead of us. With careful navigation as we came closer it would be able to pass from the south hemisphere to the north at the same time as passing from the west hemisphere to the east, and who could resist that experience?

As we approached I slowly manouvered the boat to follow as close to Lat=0 as possible and then, when we reached Long=180, Tove let the camera go. As you see on the pictures above, there is only one second between them.

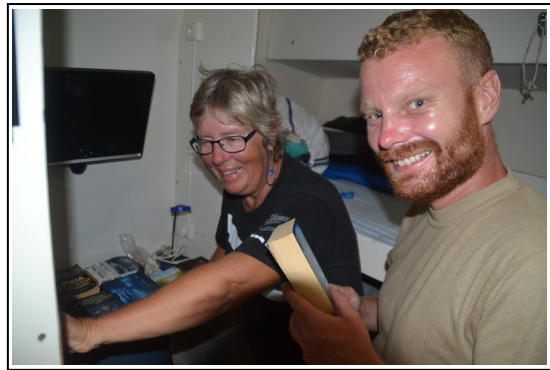


Kiribati timezones © Public domain

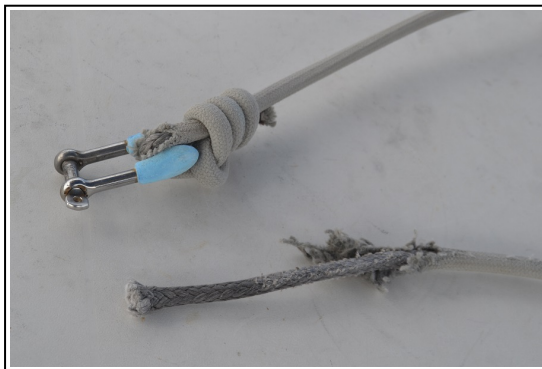
When you move from the west hemisphere to the east, you also cross the international dateline and that can be quite confusing because suddenly a whole day disappears. It must have been very confusing for the people in Kiribati when, in the past, the dateline cut the country in two halves. Today, the international dateline has been adjusted to the border of the Kiribati state which you can see above.



After 14 days at sea we anchored in Betio, the capitol of Tarawa. We had good winds most of the way but had to motor the last 24 hours. The sundown in Betio was fantatsic.



There was only one more visiting yacht in Betio while we were there. Ulf, a young singlehander from Norway on his way around the world. We had a nice time together and exchanged books.



The long distances and the many hours at sea take their tribute. For the second time since we left Sweden I was now forced to cut off a piece of the main halyard that was worn out. I'm afraid that the next time the halyard will be too short and I know that a new one is quite expensive.

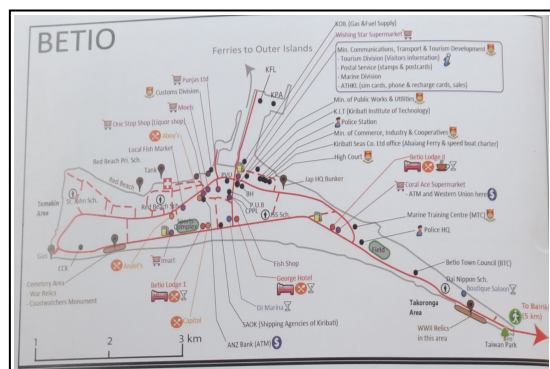
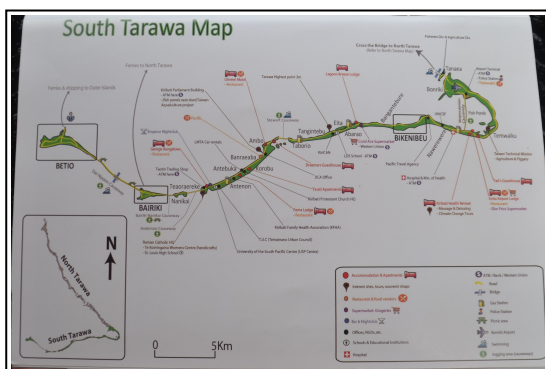


Betio is not a big city and not rich. Here is the entrance to one of the few hotels with a bar and a restaurant. Cheap, clean and nice people but no luxury.



There is a small tourist office in Betio and they organized a half day tour with automobile around the island, from Betio in the west to the airport in the east, about 35 kilometers one way. The guide was a young lady from whom we learned a lot about life today in Kiribati. A big concern for many people in Kiribati seems to be the climate change and what it does to the sea level. Highest point on Terawa is only 3 meters above the ocean.

One stop on the tour was the museum. Not big but nice with an interesting exhibition of old armour and weapons. Before the Europeans arrived to the Pacific people here did not use metal so all weapons were made of wood and bone.



We got a Kiribati Travel Guide for 2017 at the tourist office. Here are two of the maps from that guide.



People in Kiribati are more religious than we are in Scandinavia. There are many churches and they are in good condition. More than 50% are Roman Catholic and 40% are Protestant.



During the early phase of World War Two, many atolls in the east Pacific were occupied by Japan. Tarawa was one and was heavily fortified and armoured by Japanese troops. In November 1943 the Americans attacked with 20.000 soldiers and after a week of heavy fighting Tarawa was free again. The Americans lost about 1.500 soldiers and practically all of the 4.500 Japanese were killed. The *Battle of Tarawa* was one of the bloodiest actions in the Pacific during WW2 and there are still remains to be seen. If you play computer games like COD or Battlefield you might even have been there. We saw this canon IRL.

Here is a text with details about the Battle of Tarawa:

<https://www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck/gallery/battle-tarawa>

I also found this documentary on YouTube that gives you a glimpse of the horrors that must have been experienced:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbX6Uvn2vME>

If you are interested in sailing to Tarawa

. We stayed for seven days at the anchorage in Betio during December 2017. Seven days much more positive than we expected. Noonsite, SoggyPaws and other sources of information from cruisers that had visited Tarawa before us told sad stories about poverty, insecurity, unprotected anchorages, difficult navigation and so on. We saw little of that. Most people are poor, that's true, but they live in houses and drive cars and there is not much to by for money anyway. People we met seemed to be honest and hostile.

- Navigation was easy. We entered the pass north-west of Betio during daylight. Our Navionics charts seemed to be correct except for the placement or color of some of the floating beacons marking the route into Betio. It was still very easy to find your way safely. Red to port and green to starboard coming in, as usual (System A). We saw a fairly big container ship using the same route a few days later.

- The anchorage is not very well protected and can be choppy at times but the holding seems good. We used our dinghy to go into the old harbour and tied it up on the west shore among the local boats, close to the garbage dump. This is also where we left our garbage.

- On arrival I called Tarawa Radio on VHF-16. As it was Saturday and they had a container ship to take care of they told us to wait until Monday. I called them again Monday but then the answer was that this Monday was a holiday so I had to wait until Tuesday. Tuesday they came, at least Customs and Immigration. They got a lift to our boat with a local fishing boat so I did not have to go in and get them with the dinghy. Procedures took only a few minutes and did not cost anything. After that I took them ashore in my dinghy and they told me to take the Q-flag down. We saw no sign of any other officials.

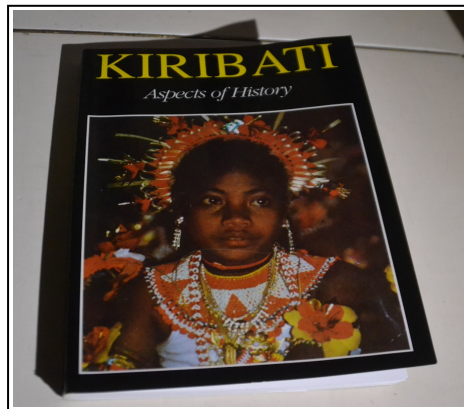
- Cash is easy to get through one of several ATM machines close to the harbour and there is also a relatively well equipped food store close by. They had a limited supply of fresh fruit and vegetables but they were out of eggs, cheese and UHT milk. We found this in other shops a few days later.

- I bought a 10\$ internet Wi-Fi voucher from TeniCom with 850 MB of data. They have several hotspots in Betio and I reached one of them with my NanoStation antenna from the anchorage so we had Internet on board during our visit.

- On the day of departure, which was Friday, I went to the Immigration office in Bairiki for check out. Bairiki is the village next to Betio, about 5 kilometers east. My plan was to take a taxi so I went to the Tourist office to ask them to find a taxi for me. They tried hard but after many phone calls and no answer one of the employees drove me in his own car, waited for me to get our passports stamped and drove me back again. He didn't want anything in return but I gave him 10 Australian dollars.

- Last thing before we left was to fill our water tanks. To do that I went to the KPA Office (Kiribati Port Authority) in the harbour and asked them if i could come alongside the pier with our boat and have a truck deliver the water. No problem, but determining the price took some negotiation. Minimum pay was 10\$ for one ton of water. Then there was a fee for coming alongside and a fee for the watertruck. After some discussions we agreed that I would pay 60\$ in total for 1000 liters of water. The rest was easy. We took our anchor up, went alongside, the water truck was waiting with a two inch diameter hose and good quality drinking water.

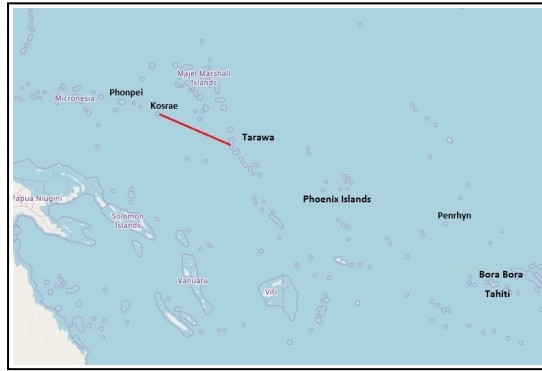
- After that, we left Tarawa. We saw no signs of a Quarantine- or Health officer and we did not have to pay any other fees than the 60\$ we paid for the water.



Kiribati : aspects of History / (authors, Sister Alamia Talu ...). - Suva : IPS : Extension Services, USP; Tarawa : Ministry of Education, Training and Culture, Kiribati Government, 1998. - xiv,- 146 s. : ill. Reset and reprinted, cop. 1979 Bibliography : S 135-140

- I found this book in a shop in Bikenibeu. Being written by native experts and not by academics from the west, I think it gives an interesting view of the history of Kiribati. Ask at the tourist office. They also had a free Tourist Guidet about Tarawa and a another booklet about the Battle of Tarawa 1943.

Kosrae



Kosrae lies approximately 650 NM north-west of Tarawa. It's a small nation, only 8,000 people and one of four members of the Federated States of Micronesia, FSM. The other states are Phonpei, Chuuk and Yap islands further to the west.



Kosrae is also called the *Sleeping Lady* because of the shape created by the mountains in the east. The two pounders are also symbols for Kosrae. You see them for example on the registration plates of Kosrae cars.



If you look above Toves head, you see the lady lying on her back. First her legs and then her tits and finally her head just left of the Swedish flag.



We arrived early in the morning and anchored inside the reef just south of Lelu village. Lelu is actually a small island connected to the mainland by a causeway. It was here that the King resided in the old times and there are still ruins left from that time. High walls were made out of big basalt pillars transported by boat from far places. The same technique was used here as in the well known archeological site of Nan Madol on Phonpei, 300 NM west of Kosrae.



Lelu Island is surrounded by mangrove and the island itself seems to grow all the tropical fruits you could ever think of.



Flowers, fruits, leaves and roots are used everywhere for practical reasons, food or decoration.



On Christmas eve we were invited to the home of Smith Sigrah, the owner of ACE Hardware in Lelu Village. He and his big family were celebrating christmas with songs, food and presents. We were treated as very honorable guests and recieved lots of presents. Thank's Smith for a wonderful evening.



Next day, the 25:th, we attended the traditional christmas celebration in church. Hundreds of people were there.



Most people belonged to one of many church groups, and each group performed an act with songs, costumes, dancing and presents for the audience.



There were lots of children there and they recieved a lot of presents. Most of it was candy.



As each church group performed their act they threw presents to the audience. Most of it ended up with the children...



...but we also recieved gifts. A lot of candy but also some beautiful laces made of sea shells.



After Christmas, we made a tour around the island. Wiya Cave is a large waterfilled cave on the north shore of Kosrae. It looked like the end of a lava tunnel but further in, the tunnel was full of volcanic ash. Our guide told us that the ash was used by the locals as a fertiliser in their gardens. Thousands of Island Swiftlets (Sv:Karolinersalangan, Lat:Aerodramus Inquietus) live in the cave and came flying out as we approached the entrance.



Not far from the cave lies a small factory that makes paper from banana. The process is similar to normal paper manufacturing but everything is made by hand and the fibers come from the trunk of the banana plant. They also made paper from Pineapple fibres. There was a nice shop there where we bought souvenirs.

See: <https://greenbananapaper.com>



The Rainbow Tree or Eucalyptus Deglupta only grows in this part of the world. Its trunk is truly colorful.



On a small islet along the causeway between Kosrae and Lelu Island there is a big tree full of Flying Foxes (also called Ualan Fruit Bat)(Sv:Flygande hundar, Lat:Pteropus ualanus). These bats are endemic for Kosrae and from what I understand very rare. There are only two colonies left, the one we saw and another one on the south of the island. They belong to a group of bats called megabats because of their size. We went there with our dinghy to take some pictures but it was not easy to come close.



In Utwe village we visited a family where one of the men was a traditional canoe builder. He showed me some of the tools he used to carve the shape out of a log from the Ka tree. I was surprised when he told me that a canoe would only last six or seven years, even if you treat it well.



It seems that most islands in Micronesia have sad memories from WW2. We saw many remains of Japanese installations in Tarawa a few weeks ago and now there was more. A Japanese radio station and a tank destroyed by American troops.



Hamilson Philip was our guide. He was very nice and helpful. His car was also nice but it would not have passed a Swedish safety control. After the tour we invited him for a beer on Bird of Passage and Tove took the opportunity to dress up in her new Micronesian skirt.



In "Fuelland" cars are filled with gasoline from one gallon bottles, two at the time.



We needed more than a few gallons so we arragned with Smith Sigras to deliver two 55 gallon drums of diesel to the dock where I could pump it over to the tanks in Bird of Passage.



A group of children gathered on the dock to have a look at the boat and Tove presented them with candy. When I asked the girl above about her plans for the future she said she wanted to go to California. Many young in this part of the world dream of a better life somewhere else.

After having filled our tanks with diesel we checked out and left Kosrae for Pohnpei, the capitol of FSM 300 miles further west, so this is where the logbook from 2017 ends. See you again 2018 !

If you're interested in sailing to Kosrae

- We visited Kosrae by the end of December 2017 and stayed there over Christmas and New Year.

- Navigation was interesting. Our newly updated Navionics charts on our IPAD seemed to be displaced by several hundred meters so we had no use of them. On the other hand, we had reduced our speed during the last 24 hours to arrive to Lelu early in daylight. That gave us the sun from behind and with our new fisfinder on, to see the bottom, we slowly approached the pass aiming at the place where the sea was calm and not breaking. That worked fine. Once inside we turned right and followed the shoreline of Lelu Island until we found the concrete dock and the ACE Hardware building where we dropped our anchor in 10 meters of water. Holding was good. A lot of clay on the anchor when we left two weeks later.

- Before we left Tarawa for Kosrae we applied for *Vessel entry clearence* (Cruising Permit) to the Federated States of Micronesia, FSM. This is done by downloading a form from a FSM website, printing it, filling it in, scanning it and sending it by e-mail to the immigration authority. There is more information about this in the Soggy Paws Micronesia Compendium. After a few days we still had no answer so I sent the mail again, this time with CC to Smith Sigrah (Ace Hardware) and a few more officials listed on Noonsite. This seemed to get the process going. Smith answered that he was checking with the authorities what was going on and on our last day in Tarawa we recieved a mail from one of the officials saying that the Entry Permit was attached but there was no attachment. So, when we left Tarawa we still didn't have the Permit. We learned later that it arrived while we were at sea on our way to Kosrae.

- We anchored outside the ACE Hardware store and went ashore with our dinghy. On the shore, the Quarantine officer was waitng for us. He had seen us coming and informed us that we should have tied up the boat to the old concrete dock instead of anchoring because he had no boat of his own and could not come out to visit us. I offered to give him a ride in our dinghy and that was OK. He checked our boat and informed us about garbage handling and then I took him back to his car again. 30 minutes later I repeated the process with the Immigrations officer. He knew we had applied for a Permit and asked if I had recieved one. I told him that I still didn't have it but that it might be in our mail. We hadn't been able to check because we had no internet (yet). This was no problem for him. He stamped our passports and gave us 30 days (we are EU citizens) which he said could easily be extended if we asked for more later. The missing Permit was not a problem. After that he said we could take our Q-flag down and that we were welcome ashore.

We had no more visits by any officials until the day we left.

- We found only one internet provider, FSM TeleCom (FSMTC). At their office they told us that they did have WiFi-hotspots on Kosrae but none at the anchorage at Lelu Island. I searched for WiFi access points with my Nanostation but I did not find any belonging to FSMTC so WiFi seems not to be an option. Instead we bought a local SIM-card for our Iphone and charged it with a Mobile Data plan for 9\$ that gives you unlimited data at 3G speed for 5 days. This way we had internet on the boat, even if it was slow and only on an Iphone. First thing I did was to check my mail and there was the missing Permit from the Immigration Headquarters. It had arrived while we were at sea, as I suspected. About 10 days after our first application.

- The quarantine officer told us that we were not allowed to bring any garbage ashore or throw any garbage in the lagoon. Not even rests from food or fruit. All garbage had to be kept on board until we left Kosrae and then we were free to dump it overboard ! However, we saw a landfill (dump) on the other side of the lagoon and the taxi driver said he could take our garbage there. Smith Sigrah solved our garbage problem by taking care of all our garbage on the day we left.

- There are only two cash machines (ATM:s) in Lelu and none of them are on Lelu island so you need to take a taxi or a long walk. The stores on Lelu Island only take cash.

- I asked Smith Sigrah about water and he said we were free to take as much as we wanted from the same rain water tank he uses for his household. He said the quality was good and that they use it for drinking. As it was rain season, water was not in shortage.

- I also asked Smith Sigrah about diesel and he offered me one or more 55 gallon drums delivered to the old concrete dock. The day we left, he delivered two drums at the dock and I pumped it over to our tanks without any problems. You need your own pump.

- We had lunch several times at the Tree Lodge Bullys Restaurant. Not expensive and a wonderful place to be in the mangrove with the water close to your table. We went by taxi a couple of times but also by dinghy from our anchorage. There is a second restaurant, Atlantis, close to the Tree Lodge but we didn't have time to try that one.

- One day we took a 4 hour guided tour by car. We saw the Lelu Ruins, the Wiya Bird Cave, the Banana Paper Factory, the Australian Rainbow Tree and the Museum. Another day we went south to Utwe village and visited a local canoe builder. Hamilson Philip tel:370-4405 was our guide. His car is a

miracle.

- On the day we left, Smith Sigrah called the Immigrations and the Port Authority to come to the boat while we were tied up to the concrete dock. Immigrations stamped our passports and the port guys charged us 50\$. That was the only fee that we payed to any of the officials.

- NOTE: We never saw or heard anything about clearing in or out with Customs on Kosrae. Later we learned that there is a customs office in Tofol, at the other side of the Island. For some reason they never showed up so we left Kosrae without clearance from Customs. This gave us lots of problems when we arrived to Pohnpei. See the logbook for 2018.



End of Polynesia 2017

