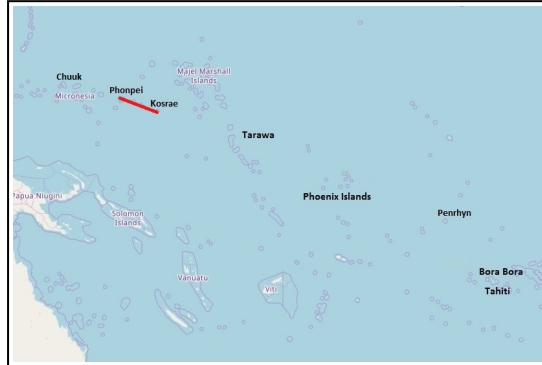




1. Phonpei 2018



by Johan Kjellander 2018



Pohnpei is the capitol of the Federated States of Micronesia, FSM. The other states are Kosrae, Chuuk and Yap. Four islands with a total population of about 100.000 spread over 1.500 NM of ocean from east to west.



We had very light winds from Kosrae to Pohnpei so our speed was lower than usual. We only did about 100 NM/day and had to have one of the engines running some of the time to keep the speed up. Not very fun, but mother nature presented us with beautiful sundowns and that's always nice



First stop in Pohnpei was Kolonia which is the port of entry where you must go to check in with Customs and Immigration etc. We knew we were right when we saw this sign...



The customs dock in Kolonia was the biggest we had seen since Tahiti. For the first time in 3 months we tied up to a concrete dock instead of anchoring and there was even a person ashore to help us with the lines.



Checking in turned into a terrible exercise of bureaucracy. We had to stay at the customs dock for three days before they released us so that we could continue to the anchorage in Mangrove Bay. There we met two other yachts and they told us similar stories of their encounters with the authorities in Kolonia. Falcon, Paul, Doug and Ben on Runaway and Mick, Yen and Mick's cousins from Cairns on Extreme Ways, a big strip plank catamaran. We all had lots to talk about.



We saw many big tuna fishing boats in the harbour. They all seemed to be of a special type, with a huge fishing net stowed on the stern, a high tower midships and a helicopter on board. Really high tech hunting machines.



But there were also smaller boats of course. This man came to pick up a passenger (his wife?) and went away somewhere. Just as natural as if I would pick up Tove with my car after a shopping tour. The contrast between their stone age style canoe and the boats of the hyper modern fishing industry is quite obvious.



Pohnpei and many other islands in Mikronesia were occupied by Japan but surrendered to the Americans during the end of the second world war. Bunkers, cannons and a few old buildings are memories from that time. Even old tanks.

We found one tank outside the tourist office, with Christmas decorations. According to the splendid book about Pohnpei by Gene Ashby (see note 1 below) this is a Japanese tank Type 95 Light, built 1936-43. Crew of three small people, armed with a 37 mm cannon and two machine guns. Weight 7.4 tons, powered by a six cylinder German air cooled two stroke diesel engine. Max speed was 40 mph. In the forest behind Ace Hardware we found many more.



This house is one of the few that were not destroyed during the war. It was built by the Germans, then taken by the Japanese and used as an agricultural research centre with a weather station on the top floor. We found it in the middle of what is called the "Botanical Garden". In a low modern building next to the ruin we found a lady sleeping behind a counter but she heard us come and took us around for a short walk and showed us a starfruit tree full of rape star fruits. We were free to take as many as we wanted, she said.



This is an interesting tree. The leaves don't spread in all different directions to catch as much sun as possible. Instead they spread out like a sun fan aligned in one single plane. I think it is called a *Travelers Palm* (Lat:Ravenala).



This tall tree is not common in the Tropics but we have seen it a few times. It reminds us of our own Nordic Christmas tree but can not live in cold climate.



According to an aged metal plate on one of the trees in the garden its name is *Norfolk Island Pine*. According to Wikipedia it is endemic to Norfolk Island in the Pacific between New Zealand and New Caledonia. It is also grown indoors as a small living christmas tree (Sv:Rumsgran, Lat:Araucaria).



Breadfruit is a large tree that seems to grow on all the tropical islands we have visited so far. The trunk is used to make canoes and the fruits are used in cooking, boiled, fried or barbequed. The taste reminds of potatoes and you use them the same way. In my opinion breadfruit tastes better than potatoes and Tove loves them so we always look for them in the shops.



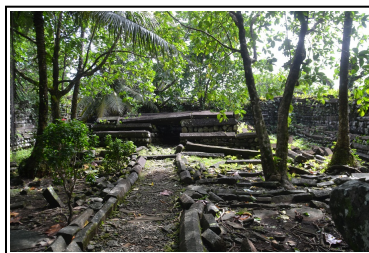
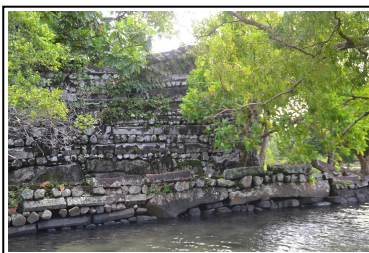
Next to the garden we found the library. It looked pretty much like any small library in the world with signs reminding you to be quiet etc. but there were a few things that struck me on this sign. Check the two bottom lines!



Seeing the old city of Nan Madol was the highlight of our time on Pohnpei of course, and the reason why we stopped there in the first place. According to Wikipedia, Nan Madol is a World Heritage site comparable to places like Machu Pichu, the pyramids in Egypt or the city of Venice. There is lots to read if you Google.



Nan Madol is built on a large number of man made islands with canals in between. More islands were added to the city by bringing basalt pillars from far away and stack them on each other around the perimeter of the new island. The interior was then filled with coral to form the new land.



For hundreds of years the *Saudeleur* dynasty of kings lived on the biggest island, *Nan Douvas*, with the highest walls of course and inside there was a stone tomb used for religious ceremonies.



Mangrove trees grow everywhere in and around Nan Madol. The fruits that Tove are holding can be used to prevent condensation on the inside of your diving glasses. You break the fruit in two and scrub the glass with the end of the fruit. All according to Salvador, the son of a former King who was our guide at Nan Madol.



On our way back from Nan Madol Salvador showed us the house of the current King. A big ceremonial building where celebrities of Pohnpei meet every year to drink cava and let the King hand out new titles to people who deserve them.



Sakau pounding stone, Pohnpei

Volcanic rock

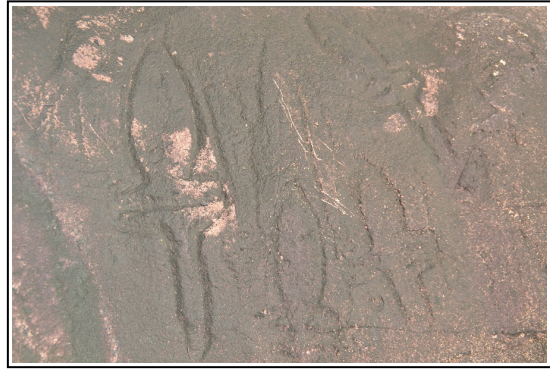
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Gift to the Guam Museum

Sakau, is a nonalcoholic beverage made from the pounded root of the pepper plant (*Piper methysticum*) and water. Also known as *kava* or *ava* in other Pacific societies, *sakau* drinking in Pohnpei continues in a variety of contexts, from ritual sharing to commercial *sakau* bars. *Sakau* drinking is one of the most important daily social events, allowing for people to meet and talk. Lower-ranking participants often wait until the highest-ranking participants takes his first drink.

Preparing *sakau* is a lengthy process. Pepper plant roots are pounded on a large flat stone until they are pulverized. Water is added and the mass is squeezed through soaked hibiscus fibers. As the roots are pounded, the pounding stones clang rhythmically, and the sound alerts anyone in surrounding homesteads that *sakau* is being prepared.

The Cava plant is a low bush with large rounded leaves. The root is grinded and used to make a drink that has a weak relaxing effect on your body. In Pohnpei Cava is also called Sakau and you can buy a cup in a stand for 1\$.



Not far from Nan Madol there is an area with nice Petroglyphs. Canoe paddles, people, the sun and the moon, some of them over 2000 yeras old.



A rainy island like Pohnpei will have many waterfalls. This one, at Kepirohi, stands out a little and is absolutely worth seeing.



Water is always an issue on a cruising boat, specially in the Tropics. You need to shower in sweet water now and then to get rid of the salt from swimming in the sea or sweating. You also need sweet water for laundry. As an average we use about 10-15 liters per person per day.

Bird of Passsage has two large water tanks so we can survive a month or more and still live comfortably but now one of our tanks was empty so we decided to fill it up with water from the small marina in Mangrove bay. We have two plastic jerry cans of 25 liter each and we put them in the dinghy so that we can fill them up each time we go ashore. We then use an electric pump to transfer the water to the boat tank.

If you're interested in sailing to Pohnpei

- We visited Pohnpei in January 2018 and stayed there for two weeks.
- We approached the pass in to Kolonia from the north and called Port Control on VHF who gave us instructions on where to go. You have to be quite close before you see the pass but then it's easy to enter in daylight. Our Navionics charts seemed to be correct.
- You need to have a valid *Vessel entry clearance* (Cruising Permit) to the Federated States of Micronesia, FSM before you go to Pohnpei. Coming from Kosrae which requires the same permit we had already taken care of that earlier (See the logbook from Kosrae 2017). There were still some days left before we had to renew it. (See below).
- We tied up to the Customs dock and soon the boat was invaded by officials. It was Saturday which meant that we might have to pay overtime duties. Immigration was quick. They checked our Cruising Permit and left. No payment. For quarantine we had to pay 27\$. Customs turned out to be a big problem. They asked for our customs clearance from Kosrae but we did not have any such paper. During our two weeks in Kosrae we never saw any customs officer and when we checked out from Kosrae the people from the port authority said we were free to go. I clearly got the impression that customs clearance was not necessary between Kosrae and Pohnpei as they both belong to FSM. This was a big mistake however.

The customs officer said he had to contact Kosrae and sort out what had gone wrong. This would take an hour or two and during that time we could not move the boat. So we waited and he never showed up. They kept us in "arrest" at the customs dock for three days. Then we were suddenly free to go without any explanation or any further paperwork. A man from the Port Control took a small boat with an outboard and showed us the way into the anchorage at Mangrove Bay where we anchored.

Two other visiting boats were already there and they told us similar stories about their contacts with the authorities. It is quite clear in my opinion that Pohnpei has a very long way to go in how to welcome visiting yachts. During almost 40 years of sailing in more than 30 different countries I have never experienced anything worse than the way we were treated by the

customs in Pohnpei.

- There are many cash machines (ATM:s) in Kolonia and several good food stores. You need a taxi to get there. One dollar per person one way.

- On Pohnpei we used the prepaid SIM-card from FSM TeleCom that we bought on Kosrae. Adding more data for Internet access worked the same way as in Kosrae. You buy a 10\$ voucher and activate a 5 day plan with unlimited data at 3G-speed. At the anchorage I also accessed the WiFi from Mangrove Bay Marina using my NanoStation WiFi antenna.

- The Marina charges you 10\$ per person per week for the anchorage. Showers, toilets, garbage disposal, WiFi, Dinghy dock and water (non drinkable) is included in that price. The bar and restaurant next to the marina office building has drinks and food at reasonable prices. Rumors bar up the hill is closed. There is a laundry service in the marina. We paid 10\$ for one machine dried and folded.

- The holding at the anchorage is fair but there are violent squalls and fall winds from the steep mountains. All three boats at the anchorage experienced problems with dragging. There is well protected space for a few boats inside the marina.

- Diesel and gasoline is available in the marina. In calm weather you might be able to tie up to their fuel dock.

- In order to renew our Cruising Permit we had to take a taxi to the city of Palikir where the office of immigration is located.

- On the day we left, we tied up to the customs dock again and waited. This time it took only a few hours before customs arrived and gave us departure clearance. The Port Authority charged us a 100\$ port fee.



End of Phonpei 2018

