

The Fiji to Marshall Islands Compendium

A Compilation of Guidebook References and Cruising Reports

With Cruising Information on

Wallis, Futuna, Rotuma, Tuvalu (Funafuti), Kiribati (Tarawa)
and Outer Islands



Tepuka Islet - Tuvalu

Peter Bennetts Lonely Planet Photographer © Copyright Lonely Planet Images 2011

IMPORTANT: USE ALL INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT AT YOUR OWN RISK!!

Rev 2023.2 – August 5, 2023

We welcome updates/additions to this guide from those passing through!

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You can also contact us on Sailmail at WDI5677

The current home of the official copy of this document is <http://svsgogypaws.com/files/>

If you found it posted elsewhere, there might be an updated copy at svsgogypaws.com.

Revision Log

Many thanks to all who have contributed over the years!!

Rev	Date	Notes
2023.2	05-August-2023	Update on Wallis from Lupina
2023.1	23-June-2023	Update on Tuvalu from Oh Joy II
2022.1	18-Sep-2022	Update on Wallis from Lucky Girl
2016.2	01-Nov-2016	Included comments from Moondance on their trip through Kiribati's eastern islands (Fanning, Christmas, Manihiki), on their way to Fiji from Hawaii
B.1	25-Jan-2016	Updates on Tarawa from Ariel IV
A.4a	20-Nov-2014	More from Radiance (Liberation Day at Butaritari)
A.4	18-Nov-2014	Updates from s/v Radiance
A.3	27-Oct-2013	Futuna run by Island Bound
A.2	10-Sep-2013	Minor corrections & editing. Comments from Streetcar about timing of the passage from Fiji
A.1	21-Mar-2013	Updated with more info from Westward II and Mr John VI
A.0	15-Mar-2013	Initial version, very rough.

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1 Introduction

The original Compendium for the Tuamotus in French Polynesia started out as a way for s/v Soggy Paws and a few friends to organize notes and various internet sources on the Tuamotus, prior to our cruise there in Spring of 2010. Later, it became a way for us to pass on what we've learned while cruising the Tuamotus in 2010 and 2011. Now the idea has migrated with Soggy Paws, from the Tuamotus, to the Marquesas, to the Societies, Hawaii, the Cooks and Samoas, Tonga, Fiji and now the islands between Fiji and the Marshall Islands.

If you haven't found our other 'Compendiums', they're available online at <http://svsoggypaws.com/files/>

It is not intended to replace the guidebooks or charts, but to supplement out-of-date guides with recent cruiser first-hand reports, and fill in places that the guides don't cover.

To compile this 'compendium', we have used all sources at our disposal, including websites, blogs, emails, and our own experience. We always try to indicate the source of our information, and the approximate time frame.

If your information is included in this guide, and you object to its inclusion, please just email us, and we'll remove it. But this is a non-commercial venture mainly to help cruisers from all of our collective experiences.

1.1 *Organization of the Guide*

This guide is loosely organized from north to south from Fiji to the Marshall Islands. It does not include (much) info on the Marshalls, as that will be a separate Compendium. We are still learning our way around, so the organization may be more logical as we actually cruise this area ourselves.

1.2 *Overview of the Area*

1.3 *Time Zone*

The Time Zone here is +12 UTC

1.4 *Weather In This Area*

1.4.1 *General Weather Conditions*

Ariel IV – December 2015 – Fiji to Tarawa: Do not have any expectation for this trip, you will get what you get and can never tell from one day to the other and the Gribfiles we did not take the last days, what's the point? It was all the squalls that made it possible to sail and sometimes the wind was SE and the next one was NW, but the good thing we noticed that the windspeed never got over 20 knots in the squalls and we had full sails and made the most out of it!

The thing that was most frustrating was the confused sea, winds/waves and swells and other waves from four different directions that really slowed us down with both sailing and with engine.

The current was not bad, perhaps 1 knot westgoing.

Streetcar - August 2013: I have been hearing from several boats in Fiji that they want to go north to Marshalls for cyclone season. But they are all saying that they need to leave soon (early September) to get up there before the northerlies and northeasterlies set in.

I couldn't understand where they got this imperative from. So I have done some research and came across your compendium. There's a comment from a boat called Mr John which advises people to go up early to avoid contrary winds. I'm not sure that this is where people have got their imperative from, but the advice from this boat is not necessarily good.

We went from Fiji to Marshalls and back between November and April 2012/13. As well as sailing the route at this particular time, we also did a lot of weather and climate research before leaving Fiji in order to make the best informed decisions. I am definitely no expert but the situation is not as simple as Mr John's advice makes out.

Note: Streetcar has also published a number articles on Noonsite about this trip. One of them is here: http://www.noonsite.com/images/pdfs/pacific-cyclone-season_sv-streetcar/download

Soggy Paws - April/May 2013: We transited this area over a two week period, leaving Fiji in late April and arriving in Majuro in early May, with short stops at Funafuti and Tarawa. In general, the wind was light, except for a *really windy* period the last couple days on the leg from Tarawa to Majuro. Because we were on a schedule, we opted to press on in the light winds, vs waiting for steadier winds. We ended up motoring in zero wind for a total of 2-3 days to get where we wanted to go, mostly on the leg between Funafuti and Tarawa.

Mr. John - Nov 2010: The Southeast Trade season extends from March to November. It is characterized by more or less steady trade winds blowing from ESE and little rainfall.

There is no actual doldrum period and no definite time of calms and squalls, although calms and cat's paws do occur quite often in June and July.

The average wind force during the day is about 12 knots, but occasionally a good fresh trade will blow up to 30 knots. After sunset the wind will fall to 3 to 6 knots, freshening again in the morning about 3 hours after sunrise.

Occasionally, a fresh breeze or squall will be experienced in the morning or evening.

The westerly season extends from November to March, or more precisely, westerlies very seldom occur before the beginning of November or after the end of March. It is not certain that a westerly will occur in any one year during these months, but there have been exceptional cases in which westerlies have lasted throughout the entire year.

In these exceptional cases, gales do not occur, winds are light, and the atmosphere is sultry. Such an unusual year might be encountered once in every decade.

There is some variation in the trades between the N and S Gilberts. In the N group, consisting of Apiang, the N part of Tarawa, Marakei, Butaritari Atoll (Makin Atoll), and Little Makin, the islands come under the influence of the Northeast Trades at certain times of the year.

Apparently the border line of the trades is along this belt. In the S group the trades blow ESE, while in the N group from the E to just a little SE. In the westerly season, winds in the N group will blow ENE, with an occasional NE squall.

The **westerly gales** usually give 24 to 36 hours notice of their approach. The first indication is a bank of high cirrus working up slowly from the W. This is followed by a coppery haze in the afternoon, and a swell from the W.

When these phenomena are observed it is fairly definite that a westerly gale will hit the island group within 36 hours.

The gale itself is heralded by a low bank of dark, nimbus clouds approaching on the W horizon, usually in the form of a horseshoe. The gale comes up fairly fast, and breaks with thunder, lightning, heavy rain, and a rush of wind. The gale may attain a rate of 50 miles per hour, and in localized instances in excess of 60 miles per hour. A very violent gale may last only 5 or 6 hours, but usually it is 3 days before the wind subsides.

The wind then starts chopping from the SW and NW. The sky breaks, the wind and swell subside, and within 24 hours normal conditions return.

The "line island" squall, which is also encountered in these waters, is not to be confused with the westerly gale. These squalls may occur in any season and generally strike toward sunset. Their approach is often heralded by a cloud banking up among the trade wind clouds to windward. This cloud then spreads and forms a dark horseshoe bend on the horizon. Heavy rain and a very strong gust of wind follows, with a force of about 50 miles per hour at the heart of the squall. The squall may last for an hour, or perhaps an hour and a half, but it has no lasting effect and good weather soon follows.

The climate in the Gilbert Islands is warm to hot, and drier in the S part of the group than in the N. Except on calm days, which are somewhat oppressive, the heat is tempered by the trade winds. The nights are cool and pleasant.

Mr. John - Nov 2010: Maybe it was an odd year, probably not.....

In October / November the Trade winds die away and everything gets organised for the wet (Hurricane Season). You really need to get on up north before that happens or the winds will either drop away or turn northerly on you; possibly both.

We left Funafuti on the 5th of November and we were lucky to have good conditions all the way up; those who left a couple of days behind us had a lot of beating in very light airs as the wind went right into the north for them.

Interlude - Oct/Nov 2005: The timing of our trip was dictated by the weather and the Holiday Season. Anytime after November you are really tempting fate in the South Pacific. A stop at Funafuti, Tuvalu in November/December has a small cyclone risk and a higher risk of westerly gales blowing into unprotected anchorages. Westerly gales decrease after mid-December in the Marshalls, but the ITCZ will be passing over on its way south with squally north easterlies through March. We wanted to avoid wind forward of the beam on our way through Kiribati so this meant arriving in Majuro before the end of December and celebrating the Holidays in the Marshalls.

1.4.2 Weather Sources – With Onboard Email/SSB

Soggy Paws - 2012: In our transit through this area, what we used most of the time for watching the weather were 3 files (via the free service Saildocs):

A spot forecast for the location we were in—every 6 hours for 10 days

send spot:17.2S,179.0W|10,3|PRMSL,WIND,WAVES,RAIN,LFTX

A 'local' GRIB file that gave a fairly detailed forecast for a reasonably small area for about 5 days, and included sea state information

send GFS:20S,15S,177W,177E|.5,.5|6,12..120|PRMSL,WIND,HTSGW,WVDIR,RAIN

A 'wide range' GRIB that watched conditions approaching well to the west and south of us. The area we request while in transit was 20N-20S,160E-170W on a 3x3 grid, for the next 10 days. This is about a 25K GRIB file. This provided a good long range forecast.

send GFS:20N,20S,160E,170W|3,3|0,12..240|PRMSL,WIND,RAIN

During times of tropical activity, we also found these two sources useful for additional perspective

[http://weather.gmdss.org/navimail/GMDSS METAREA14-TROPICS INMARSAT](http://weather.gmdss.org/navimail/GMDSS_METAREA14-TROPICS_INMARSAT) (this is Met14.trop on Saildocs)

<http://weather.noaa.gov/pub/data/raw/fz/fzps40.phfo.hsf.sp.txt> (this is FZPS40.PHFO (S Pacific 0-25S, 120W-160E) on Saildocs)

<http://weather.noaa.gov/pub/data/raw/fz/fzpn40.phfo.hsf.np.txt> (this is FZPN40.PHFO (N Pacific 0-30N, 140W-160E) on Saildocs)

Nearing Majuro, this might be helpful:

<http://weather.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/fmtbltn.pl?file=forecasts/marine/coastal/pm/pmz181.txt>

We found 6 possible sources of weather useful while away from internet in this area

New Zealand Weather Faxes - SW Pacific

They only have one transmitter in NZ, so each product is broadcast on a different frequency every 15 minutes starting at xx00 (5Mhz), xx15 (9Mhz), xx30 (13Mhz), xx45 (16Mhz daytime, 3Mhz nighttime). All times are Fiji Island Local times. (+12UTC)

	TRANSMISSION TIMES (Local) & Freqs				
PRODUCT	3247.4	5807	9459	13550.5	16340.1
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
1200 SW PACIFIC MSL ANAL	0445	0400	0415	0430	
1800 SW PACIFIC MSL ANAL		1000	1015	1030	1045
TRANSMISSION SCHEDULE		1100	1115	1130	1145
0000 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 30		1200	1215	1230	1245
0000 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 48		1300	1315	1330	1345
0000 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 72		1400	1415	1430	1445
0000 SW PACIFIC MSL ANAL		1600	1615	1630	1645
0600 SW PACIFIC MSL ANAL	2245	2200	2215	2230	
TRANSMISSION SCHEDULE	2345	2300	2315	2330	
1200 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 30	0045	0000	0015	0030	
1200 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 48	0145	0100	0115	0130	
1200 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 72	0245	0200	0215	0230	

(subtract 1.9 to get dial frequency)

Hawaii Weather Faxes - Western Pacific

UTC	Local	Product	Coverage Area
1724	0524	SIGNIFICANT CLOUD FEATURES	30S - 50N, 110W - 160E
1755	0555	STREAMLINE ANALYSIS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
1849	0649	SW PACIFIC GOES IR SAT PIC	40S - 05N, 130W - 165E
1940	0740	WIND/WAVE ANALYSIS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
1953	0753	24HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
2302	1102	48HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
2315	1115	72HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
2341	1141	24HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
2354	1154	STREAMLINE ANALYSIS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
0524	1524	SIGNIFICANT CLOUD FEATURES	30S - 50N, 110W - 160E
0555	1755	STREAMLINE ANALYSIS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
0649	1849	SW PACIFIC GOES IR SAT PIC	40S - 05N, 130W - 165E
0740	1940	WIND/WAVE ANALYSIS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
0753	1953	24HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
1102	2302	48HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
1115	2315	72HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
1141	2341	24HR WIND/WAVE FORECASTS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E
1154	2354	STREAMLINE ANALYSIS	30S - 30N, 110W - 130E

On the Web

The full Hawaii schedule is available as a text email via Saildocs or online at <http://weather.noaa.gov/pub/fax/hfhi.txt>

The Streamline is available at this URL:
<http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/stream.gif>

And the Significant Cloud Features here:
<http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/neph.gif>

The Sat Photo is here: http://aviationweather.gov/data/obs/sat/intl/ir_ICAO-F_bw.jpg

Getting the Hawaii Faxes via Email from Winlink or Iridium email

From s/v Whoosh: Here are the files I've been sampling using NOAA's FTP file server because I don't find these in the Winlink catalog and Sailmail won't offer graphics files/attachments.

This just boils down to sending an email to winlink with some special commands in the body of the email. They require opening up your file size limit (to 40K in some cases) but one or two are practical with a good connection, without using up all one's time. These are the same products available via wxfax IF propagation supports getting them in a viewable, usable form, and IF the timing fits the crews' other plans. So the FTP option is just another arrow to have in the quiver.

PJFB10.TIF - Pacific Wind/Wave Analysis 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)

PWFE11.TIF - 24HR Pacific Wind/Wave Forecast 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)

PJFI10.TIF - 48HR Pacific Wind/Wave Forecast 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)

PWFA11.TIF - Pacific Streamline Analysis 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)
QYFA99.TIF - Tropical Surface Analysis 40S-40N, 100W-120E (Most Current)
PBFA11.TIF - Significant Cloud Features 30S-50N, 110W-160E (Most Current)
PYFE11.TIF - 24HR Pacific Surface Forecast 30S-50N 110W-130E (Most Current)
PYFI11.TIF - 48HR Pacific Surface Forecast 30S-50N 110W-130E (Most Current)

To get any of these, you address an email to:

ftpmail@ftpmail.nws.noaa.gov

No subject; use the following format with one or more files listed:

```
open
cd fax
get PJFI10.TIF
quit
```

I'm finding that connecting to the Winlink Hawaii station must be done the evening before I do a morning weather report (in order to connect) - do either of you pull down winlink files in the early a.m.? For me, this means using some stale f'cast products (e.g. that streamline analysis) but doing so seems better than not having it altogether.

Note: To get any of these via internet directly, prefix the product above with

<http://weather.noaa.gov/pub/fax/>

If you have trouble viewing or downloading as TIF file, try changing the .TIF to .GIF

For an printable listing of current Pacific "Fax" products

<http://weather.noaa.gov/pub/fax/rfaxpac.txt>

1.4.3 Weather Sources – Voice

North of the Equator: We have heard of the "Shellback Net" on 8161.0 khz USB at 2100 Zulu. This net covers cruisers heading west across Micronesia.

The **Yokwe Net** operates out of Majuro, and covers cruisers in the Marshall Islands. It operates at 0745 Local time (+12 GMT), on 6224 USB

South of the Equator: The best source of voice weather for Fiji is the new Gulf Harbor Radio net, which is now on 8752 (8116??) USB at 0730 local (1930z). David Sapiane (formerly s/v Chameleon) is located in Gulf Harbor, NZ and is easily receivable by boats in the western South Pacific islands, and enroute to/from NZ. David starts promptly at 1930z and gives a full area-wide surface analysis and ~36-48hr prognosis.

Also you can get some weather on the Rag of the Air, on 8173 at 1900z. When you check in, Jim, the net controller, will normally give you 36 hrs of GRIB file information for your location. Towards the end of the net, Jim reads the text weather for Tonga, Fiji, and Samoa.

There is also a net in German on at 2000UTC (8am Fiji time) on 10.090 USB and (later?) on 14770 USB. We were told that if you ask politely, they will give you wx info in English if you need it. At least one of the weather guys on this net has a professional forecaster background.

1.4.4 Weather Sources – Internet

Soggy Paws has compiled a bunch of specific South Pacific weather links on their website. These are mainly for French Polynesia, westward to NZ, and northward to Hawaii. These are all the government office forecast products that I have found to be useful. (and a few non-govt sites)

Fiji Met Service

Home Page: <http://www.met.gov.fj/>

Morning Surface Map: http://www.met.gov.fj/aifs_prods/0992.jpg

Daily Forecast (land): http://www.met.gov.fj/aifs_prods/10040.txt

New Zealand Met

Current surface analysis:

<http://www.metservice.com/national/maps-rain-radar/maps/sw-pacific-recent-latest>

Surface Forecast Series (30, 48, 72H)

<http://www.metservice.com/national/maps-rain-radar/maps/sw-pacific-future-series>

These are great maps in small (PNG) format--about 16K per map. But not easily downloadable via email (appears to be no fixed product name for the graphics, unlike other offices' websites).

Australia Met

And here's for Australia. There may be a more user-friendly page, but I found this that seems to list all the products:

http://www.bom.gov.au/inside/itb/dm/idcodes/tables/current/difacs_products.shtml

NOAA Charts in Color from Hawaii

Though these are highlighted in color (much easier reading), they are small files, only about 30K each.

Current Streamline and Streamline Loop:

<http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/stream.gif>

<http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/streamloop.gif>

24, 48, 72 Hr SFC Prog for Entire Pacific

<http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/24hrsfcpog.gif>

<http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/48hrsfcpog.gif>

<http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/72hrsfcpog.gif>

Full List of Hawaii Marine Weather Products:

<http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/pages/marine.php>

Satellite Pictures

This is likely available on a marine weather site somewhere, for slow connections here's the link I use for a small B/W Pacific Satellite:

http://aviationweather.gov/data/obs/sat/intl/ir_ICAO-F_bw.jpg

This picture is updated about every 15 minutes, and if you download and save successive files, you can get a fairly nice moving satellite picture.

For a really nice animated color Sat picture of the SW Pacific, use this link. It requires Flash (didn't seem to work on my IE installation, but works well on Chrome).

<http://www.goes.noaa.gov/sohemi/sohemiloops/shirgmscol.html>

Bob McDavitt's Weekly Weathergram

<http://weathergram.blogspot.com>

Met VUW

Note this is from the University of Victoria at Wellington (NZ), and is the weather source that the Kiwi's swear by. But it looks kind of like 'repackaged GRIB files'.

<http://metvuw.com/forecast/forecast.php?type=rain®ion=spacific>

Passage Weather

Note this is mostly 'repackaged GRIB' files

<http://www.passageweather.com>

1.4.5 Tropical Weather (Dec-April)

Soggy Paws 2012: We have only experienced one tropical season in the SW Pacific. So we don't really know enough to know whether our experience is typical or not. But here's what we got.

The official tropical season runs 1 Dec - 30 Apr. But the height of the activity seems to be 15-Jan through 15-March. (However, Dec 15, 2012 Cyclone Evan went from Samoa to the west coast of Viti Levu and hit Viti Levu as a Category 5 storm).

From about Jan 15, the SPCZ descended on us, and lay right along a line from the Solomans down across Fiji and down to Tonga. The wind in Fiji was NW and cloudy/rainy for weeks on end. And a new tropical low spawned in the NW and came towards Fiji about once a week. Some of lows have been just squally, one or two turned into 'Named Storms' and got pretty violent. At least one popped up out of a blob of rain over Fiji and built into a cyclone between midnight and 6am (mostly affecting Tonga, not Fiji), and was on top of Neiafu by 7am--with no warning whatsoever. This was right as an MJO peak was passing over us. **So when Bob McDavitt starts talking about MJO's, pay attention.**

Check this link for more info on the current state of the MJO:

<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/precip/CWlink/MJO/mjo.shtml>

The main cyclone forecasting in our area is handled by Fiji. Fiji is not like the US National Weather Service. The frequency of bulletins is not very good, and they don't forecast much more than about 24 hours in the future.

If the tropical system drops below 25S, Fiji stops reporting on it, and Wellington, NZ, picks it up (but lackadaisically). We had one system that walked along 25S, and it seemed neither weather center wanted to take responsibility for it.

The US Joint Typhoon Warning Center is not supposed to be forecasting cyclones in our area, however, they do. If there is an active system, they have a graphic and text forecast out for 120 hours.

<http://www.usno.navy.mil/JTWC/>

I could not find a weather product in Airmail for the text forecast, but once you request it via internet, you can then request the text file directly via Saildocs. For example, clicking on the link on the above page 'TC Warning Text', brings up the following file:

<http://www.usno.navy.mil/NOOC/nmfc-ph/RSS/jtwc/warnings/sh1012web.txt>

You can then request this from Saildocs by requesting:

```
send http://www.usno.navy.mil/NOOC/nmfc-  
ph/RSS/jtwc/warnings/sh1012web.txt
```

This works. Though if the link gets too long, you might have trouble with the 72-character limit on Sailmail

The Fiji Tropical Weather information can be gotten on Sailmail by requesting
Met.14trop

This is the URL in that Sailmail weather product:

http://weather.gmdss.org/navimail/GMDSS_METAREA14-TROPICS_INMARSAT

This is a conglomeration of tropical and high seas warnings, and sometimes runs so long when there are active warnings that Sailmail truncates it. Sometimes, the report is not there, and we get nothing..

There are two satellite photo links that I have been using to monitor squally weather and tropical storms. These are big, animated, infrared satellite photos, but if you have internet, they are the best source of what's happening right now:

http://www.prh.noaa.gov/samoa/satellite/index_flash.php?image=IR

This is from American Samoa, and includes only Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga. You can zoom in a little to better see what's happening in Tonga.

For a bigger picture, all the way out to the eastern edge of Australia, this link is better:

<http://www.goes.noaa.gov/sohemi/sohemiloops/shirgmscol.html>

Finally, if you don't have all this internet stuff, a long range, wide-area GRIB file is much better than nothing. We request this one to be sent daily:

GFS:05S,40S,160E,165W|3,3|0,12..240|PRMSL,WIND,RAIN

It is about 40KB, so you might have to request something smaller if you don't have Winlink (to get around Sailmail's size limitations).

1.4.6 Understanding the South Pacific Weather Patterns

Several really good sources of instructional material on South Pacific weather exist.

Bob McDavitt's "Mariner's Met Pack for the Southwest Pacific" ISBN 1-877197-08-04 published by Captain Teach Press, Auckland, NZ. Though Bob is located in NZ and his weather focus is mainly the western portion of the South Pacific, his instruction manual covers a lot of useful information for the South Pacific in general. Purchase online: [Waypoint Books](#) [Bluewater Books](#)

If you can't find it, email Bob at mcdavitt@metSERVICE.com

Jim Corenmans "Letters from the South Pacific" originally published in the late 1990's in Latitude 38 Magazine. Copies of this series of articles are floating around among boaters, and might be found on Latitude 38's website. Jim had a great article on understanding South Pacific weather that is still really helpful to newbies entering French Polynesia.

Download from here: <http://svsoggypaws.com/files/index.htm>

David Sapiane's Weather for the Yachtsman. I downloaded this document from the Pangolin site:

http://www.pangolin.co.nz/jetsam/view_article.php?idx=19

It is an 11-page Word document dated June 2008, with a bunch of good information on terminology and understanding weather for the South Pacific.

Some practical tips on planning a passage can be found here:

<http://www.pacificyachtdeliveries.co.nz/weather.htm>

The Hacking Family has a great circumnavigation website, and their South Pacific weather page is here:

http://hackingfamily.com/Cruise_Info/Pacific/SPacific_Weather.htm

Check the Pacific Puddle Jump 'Files' section on Weather, there are usually some good, updated documents there. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pacificpuddlejump/>

1.4.7 Professional Weather Routing

Generally, the Marquesas – Tuamotus – Tahiti - Societies runs are not too difficult, but just to add some info for those of you who worry about weather for the Pacific crossing.

One of the most-mentioned names in the South Pacific when talking about the weather is **Bob McDavitt**. Professional forecasts can be obtained from Bob McDavitt. Email him for detail at mcdavitt – at - metSERVICE.com

Soggy Paws used a USA-based weather router named **Ken McKinley at Locus Weather** for the Easter Island to Pitcairn and Gambiers legs of their trip. Ken did a good job for them. Email Ken at locuswx – at - midcoast.com.

Another weather person in the area is **David Sapiane on s/v Chameleon**. They have cruised all over the SW Pacific, and just this year, have opted to stay home in Gulf Harbor, NZ for the winter. He has been lately doing weather synopses on the Rag of the Air net (8173 at 1900z), and he offers his email address: chameleon4844@yahoo.com. I don't know if he's doing 'professional weather routing' at this point, but it would be worth contacting him. He'd be worth paying for weather routing service by email or radio, if he's offering it.

1.5 Customs & Immigration

See individual sections, as there are 4 different countries, each with different laws, as you cross this area.

1.6 Local Information and Customs

1.7 Yachtsmen's Services - Overview

1.7.1 Money

Kiribati Website - 2013: Kiribati uses the Australian dollar (AUD). The ANZ Bank (Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Ltd) is the only International banking company in Kiribati with operating branches on South Tarawa and Kiritimati Island.

On South Tarawa, ATMs are accessible at Betio, Bairiki, Bikenibeu ANZ Bank branches and at the gate of Tungaru Central Hospital in Nowerewere.

Tuvalu – May 2023 is a cash-only economy. There are no ATMs and no credit cards accepted anywhere. You go to the Funafuti National Bank and trade currency. We understand they can make money transfers there but we had US cash so just did it that way. They get make the exchange rate whatever they want because there is no other way for you to get AUD. We got \$1,002 AUD for \$740 US. So \$1 AUD to \$0.74 US. The internet said the exchange rate should have been \$1 AUD for \$0.66 US. If you know you're coming here, we recommend getting AUD currency elsewhere so you arrive ready to spend.

1.7.2 Diesel and Gasoline

Kiribati Cruiser's Guide - 2013: Both gasoline and diesel are available and can be purchased in drums at the KOIL (Kiribati Oil Company Ltd.), located at the wharf in Betio on Tarawa Atoll.

Interlude - 2005 - Kiribati: Fuel is available in Tarawa but the inner boat harbor is very small and crowded. The outer islands have fuel depots with drums of gasoline, kerosene and maybe diesel but these look pretty dicey.

1.7.3 Propane (Cooking Gas)

Kiribati Cruiser's Guide - 2013: Propane or gas can be bought at KOIL in Tarawa (Betio at the wharf)

1.7.4 Groceries

Kiribati Cruiser's Guide - 2013: There is a relatively good assortment of canned goods and fish is freely available.

Imported fruit and vegetables are in limited supply - however local fruits and vegetables - bananas, watermelon, pumpkin, cabbage, cucumber, coconuts and breadfruit are readily available and a lot are available on Butaritari and South Tarawa

Interlude - 2005 - Kiribati: Fresh food was pretty nonexistent in the outer atolls with the exceptions being coconut, breadfruit and, papaya and pumpkin, and sometimes banana. Tarawa did have a monthly cargo delivery while we were there with prices about 30% higher than in the States.

We justified our purchases by reminding ourselves that we are saving money by cooking on board due to the lack of restaurants.

As always, if you see something you want, buy as much of it as you can store.

The **fishing** has been extraordinary. Everyone we talk to has been catching tuna and Wahoo with an occasional (not really wanted) marlin. Be sure to have plenty of lures with steel leaders and 300lb hand line or a really good pole and reel rig. If you enjoy sushi and sashimi as much as we do be sure to stock up on wasabi, pickled ginger, nori and Japanese rice. Have several good filet knives as one tends to permanently live in the cockpit for initial cleaning and another in the galley for final prep. They also make great gifts.

Gift-giving: Always be prepared to give a small gift to a local that befriends you. We found powered milk or a little bottle of cooking oil is always greatly appreciated and usually results in reciprocal bananas, coconuts, breadfruit and pumpkin. Katie also distributes her partially used bottles of nail polish to an ecstatic reception as the local women love bright colors and, despite their remoteness, are aware of and embrace western culture.

1.7.5 Water

Kiribati Cruising Guide - 2013: Water can be in short supply, however is generally available. Drinking water should be boiled. 18 Litre water bottles of pure drinking water can be purchased at the Tarawa Motors in Antenon on Teaoraereke (Tarawa). For enquiries contact – Tel: 21451, Fax: 21451. Delivery services also available

Mr John - November 2010: Funafuti hadn't seen any rain in weeks when we arrived and most of Kiribati hadn't seen any rain in months, I mention this just in case you were thinking of collecting any on the way north.... You can get water ashore in both and if you pay enough it can be quite good but the stuff you don't pay for, you may not want to drink!

1.7.6 Boat Parts & Repairs

Kiribati Cruiser's Guide - 2013: The slipway for dry docking located at the wharf in Betio is out of operation until further notice.

1.7.7 Laundry

Kiribati Cruiser's Guide - 2013: Laundry can be done at Mary's motel/Betio Apartments or by arrangement. Ask at the tourism office for more information.

1.8 Getting Visitors In and Out

1.9 Communications

1.9.1 VHF

General VHF Advice that applies to all areas: Be aware that on high power, a good VHF will transmit 25 miles line of sight. So if you are only doing within-anchorage communications, switch to low power. On the flip side, if you are trying to call across island, or to the next island, use high power, and turn your squelch down. Make sure you are aware which channels are automatic low power (ie 17, 67 on some radios), and stay away from the low-power channels for long distance conversations.

Though widely spaced in channel number, channels 16, 68, and 18 are very close to each other in frequency. Most VHF antennas are 'tuned' for channel 16, so long distance communications will work best on 16, 18 or 68. Conversely, in a crowded anchorage, transmission on high power on channel 18 or 68 may 'bleed' over to channel 16 (and almost any other channel, if you're close enough). You don't need high power to talk to the boat next to you, so turn your radio to Low Power!!

Also be aware that some channels that Americans use frequently are 'duplex' channels in International mode. So, for example, you may have trouble communicating with a European boat, or an American boat whose radio is in International mode, on Channel 18. (see any VHF guide for the full list of international and US channels and frequencies, but any US channel designated 'a', like 18a, 22a, etc will cause trouble with VHF's in international mode).

Make sure you ask in each port what the local channels are--both so you know how to reach someone ashore and so you know not to use those channels for your off-channel conversations.

1.9.2 SSB Radio Nets

The primary net for the SW Pacific is the **Rag of the Air Net**, operating out of NE Fiji. This net is on 8173 at 0700 Fiji time (1900z). This net covers boats on passage to/from Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, Minerva Reef, and NZ, and boats heading north from Fiji. The primary net controller, Jim on Also Island in Fiji, can be a little light and hard to hear, especially if you are in Fiji. But there is some weather info given daily on the net. Good weather coverage and will do spot forecasts for you as well as passage reporting.

Yokwe Net from Marshall Islands @19:45 on 6224.0 – Cary and Karen from SV Seal - passage reporting.

Shellback Net from Micronesia 8101 USB at 2030Z

If you're a ham, for longer passages, we always checked in with the **Pacific Seafarer's Net**. This is also a good frequency to have saved in case of emergency—the Hams on the PacSea net will move heaven and earth to help any boat with a true emergency—ham operator or not.

Even when there is no net going on this frequency, there are often hams monitoring the frequency for emergency traffic.

The Pacsea net operates on 14,300 Khz USB at 0300 UTC. They start with a 'warmup session' at 0300, where you can call in and chat, and maybe hook up with someone who will make a phone call to the US for you. They start calling boats on the roll call at 0330, and when they finish (30-60 minutes later), they call for boats getting ready to go on passage to get on the list for tomorrow's net.

The net control is usually in Hawaii, but there are always relay stations on both sides of the Pacific to help with weaker signals.

1.9.3 Telephones & Cell Phones

At least one cruiser mentioned cell phone use by the islanders, but I don't know of anyone who actually bought a sim card to use while they were there. Most cruisers are blowing through on their way north or south and don't stay long enough to warrant it.

1.9.4 Internet Access

Westward II - January 2013 - Tarawa: We anchored near the airport at Tarawa. It is the best anchorage we've been in so far. We have internet here on the boat--Not great inet, but some.

Learnativity - September 2010 - Rotuma: The Post Office in Rotuma has an internet connection.

Downtime - November 2012 - Kiribati: The only internet in Kiribati is just in Tarawa and very slow!

Brick House - Spring 2011 - Kiribati: Near the immigration office (reached by bus from Betio) is the internet. At 80 miles north of the equator it is always hot. For \$1.80 Australian per hour we could sit in cold air conditioning and surf away on computers that are as fast as satellite internet can be; certainly not fiber optic speed.

1.10 Diving

1.11 Haulout, Storage, and Repair Facilities

1.12 Tsunami Information

The entire Pacific Basin is subject to tsunamis. Since we have been in the Pacific (3 years), there have been 3 significant tsunamis which have affected cruising locations (American Samoa and Tonga in 2009, So America, Galapagos & Panama in 2010, Hawaii & Mexico in 2011). The tsunamis originate in various locations, but the worst origination locations were Japan and Chile, however, many 'tremors' happen in these locations that do not cause widespread tsunamis.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center website is located here:

<http://ptwc.weather.gov/>

If you have onboard email, it is a good idea to subscribe to tsunami warning emails while you are in the Pacific, which you can do on this website. It might be useful to first subscribe from

your internet email for a little while, to understand what messages might be coming your way, and how often, before you chance clogging up your onboard email.

1.13 Cruising Information Sources

We are indebted to the people and organizations below for documenting their experiences and sharing them with us. We hope they don't mind that we've gathered their comments into this document to share with other cruisers who don't have internet

A few details about the boats are included, where we know them, so you can assess what 'a foot under the keel' means, for example.

Where it's important, we've annotated the contributions. But every section is a mix of several sources.

1.13.1 Local Websites

Here are some websites you should visit when you are looking for information on this area:

[Kiribati Tourism Website](#)

[Kiribati Cruiser's Guide](#)

1.13.2 Cruiser Reports

For most of the earlier sources, we have gleaned the information off the internet (cruiser's websites, blogs, and online forum postings) or out of an SSCA bulletin. For the sources reported below as 2011-2013, much of the info has come directly from our cruising friends, helping to round out the information in our various Compendiums.

Heart of Gold (late 1990's) - We are indebted to Jim and Sue Corenman for their Letters from South Pacific, originally published in Latitude 38 in the late 1990's, referenced in our Weather section, but also which contain a bunch of still-relevant information about cruising in the South Pacific.

Interlude (2005) - Interlude made the trip in 2005 and documented their trip well in several SSCA newsletters. Interlude is a 74' Deerfoot with 7' draft.

Billabong (2006-2007) - Billabong made the Fiji to Majuro trip, and back, in 2006/2007.

<http://www.sailbillabong.com>

Tackless II (2007): Tackless II is a CSY 44 shoal draft, owned by Don and Gwen. They made a Customs Reset Run to Futuna from Savusavu. Their website is here:

<http://thetwocaptains.com>

Katie Lee (2008-2009) - Katie Lee made the trip, starting from Apia Samoa, to Wallis, to Funafuti, and north from there.

<http://svkatielee.blogspot.com>

Learnativity (2010): <http://learnativity.typepad.com/>

Mr John VI (2010-2011) - These comments came from a PDF file floating around on the web called **Mr John's Guide to Kiribati** and from Mr John's blog.

John and Paula Wolstenholme have conveniently left a trail of similar documents in their wake as they crossed the Pacific, which we have been gratefully plagiarizing since. The "Mr. John's Guides" provide Informative, detailed information from a veteran cruiser.

It seems to be a compendium of his own experience in 1987 and revisiting again in 2010/11, and shared experiences from other yachts. It is a useful guide and it includes some sketch charts which are not included here, so Google for it and download a copy for yourself. I think I got my copy from Scribd.com but it may be posted somewhere else, too.

Mr. John IV is a Bristol 35.5 with a fairly shallow draft (for a monohull). He has a tendency to want to anchor in shallow water, so if you have boat with a draft over about 5 feet, take care!

Mr. John also has a blog, where they elaborate more on their experiences at each place.

<http://yachtmrjohn.blogspot.com>

Brick House (2010-2011) - Brick House is a Valiant 40. They left Fiji to head north in October 2010, and started back down from the Marshalls to Vanuatu via Kiribati in April 2011. In May, somewhere south of Tarawa, they were dismasted, and ended up limping back to Majuro to make repairs.

Their blog is here:

<http://www.sailblogs.com/member/brickhouse/>

Java (2011): Java is a catamaran owned by Evan with crew Donna. They have criss-crossed this area of the Pacific, stopping in out-of-the-way places. They did the route Samoa-Wallis-Fiji in 2011, and were kind enough to email us a report.

Soggy Paws (2013) - Soggy Paws left in Fiji in April 2013 and made the trip north rather quickly.

Soggy Paws is a CSY 44, a 44 foot monohull with a 5.5' draft. Soggy Paws' blog is here:

<http://svsoggypaws.blogspot.com>

Mahina Tiare III (2010/2011) - John and Amanda Neal run a custom Offshore Sailing Experience business call Mahina Expeditions. They have criss-crossed the Pacific and shared their experiences on their website and on noonsite.com.

<http://www.mahina.com/>

Savannah (2011) - <http://savannahsails.blogspot.com/>

Downtime (2012) - <http://downtimecat.blogspot.com>

Westward II (2012/2013) - Westward II left Fiji in late 2012, and made their way north to Majuro via Rotuma, Funafuti, Tarawa and Abiang.

<http://westward-ii.com>

Radiance (2013) - Radiance made the trip from Vanuatu to Kiribati in late 2013. Their blog is here:

<http://www.sailblogs.com/member/thebigblue/>

Ariel IV (2015) – Ariel IV made the trip from Fiji to Kiribati in late 2015. Their website is here:

<http://www.arielfyra.se>

Oh Joy II (2023) - Contributed by Captain Harry Pattison and First Mate Joy Archer, sailing aboard Oh Joy II, a 44' Mason monohull with a draft of 6.5 feet. Home port Bainbridge Island, Washington in the United States.

1.13.3 Noonsite

Originally started by Jimmy Cornell, this site is a great repository of information for all those out-of-the-way places. Made possible by YOUR contributions.

<http://www.noonsite.com>

1.13.4 Seven Seas Cruising Association

The SSCA is a world-wide organization for cruisers whose primary function is to exchange information about cruising destinations. They have a monthly publication that is mostly letters from cruisers about the areas they are cruising. They also have a good website and a well-attended bulletin board. Membership is reasonable, and the monthly publication is available electronically every month. Indexed back issues are also available electronically.

<http://www.ssca.org>

1.13.5 Ocean Cruising Club

The OCC is a world-wide organization for cruisers whose primary function is to exchange information about cruising destinations. They have a website and bi-annual publication that is mostly letters from cruisers about the areas they are cruising. Membership is reasonable, and the publication is available electronically. Indexed back issues are also available electronically.

<http://oceancruisingclub.org>

1.14 Printed Sources

We are consciously NOT duplicating any printed, copyrighted information here. It takes a lot of effort AND money to publish a cruising guide, and we firmly believe that if it is still in print, you should BUY it, not steal it (in electronic form).

1.14.1 The Pacific Crossing Guide – RCC Pilotage Foundation

The Pacific Crossing Guide, published by the Royal Cruising Club Pilotage Foundation in association with the Ocean Cruising Club. Originally edited by Michael Pocock, and Revised by Ros Hogbin. We have the 2nd Edition published in 2003.

1.14.2 Landfalls of Paradise – Earl Hinz

Landfalls of Paradise, Earl Hinz, 4th Edition, 1999, University of Hawaii Press.

1.14.3 The Sex Lives of Cannibals

Most cruisers feel that this is worth a read, if you plan to pass through Kiribati.

From Amazon.com "*The Sex Lives of Cannibals tells the hilarious story of what happens when Troost discovers that Tarawa is not the island paradise he dreamed of. Falling into one amusing*

misadventure after another, Troost struggles through relentless, stifling heat, a variety of deadly bacteria, polluted seas, toxic fish—all in a country where the only music to be heard for miles around is “La Macarena.” He and his stalwart girlfriend Sylvia spend the next two years battling incompetent government officials, alarmingly large critters, erratic electricity, and a paucity of food options (including the Great Beer Crisis); and contending with a bizarre cast of local characters, including “Half-Dead Fred” and the self-proclaimed Poet Laureate of Tarawa (a British drunkard who’s never written a poem in his life).”

[Amazon Link to Kindle Edition](#)

2 Passage Reports

2.1 *Savusavu to Futuna and Back*

This is a fairly common run for long-stayers in Fiji who need to get their boat or themselves out of Fiji due to Customs or Immigration regulations. A number of boats do this trip every year.

Tackless II - August 2007:

Getting there: In some ways, it was a very good passage. We wanted as little wind as possible on our nose as we went eastward past Viani Bay, through the Somosomo straights, and northward out through the scattered garden of reefs and atolls that litter Fiji's northern reaches. The sky was crystal clear, and our friend Bill was treated to his first green flash at sunset.

As night closed in and we were motoring anyway, we made a dogleg to the east below Naqelevu atoll, to gain some easting should the trade winds ever return. But for the wind, conditions seemed idyllic, with a buttery full moon rising in the east. And when I came up at 0130 to relieve Bill of his watch and round onto our final NNE leg to Futuna, there was enough wind to set the genoa and shut down. I thought we might just sail this way the rest of the 153 miles. It lasted barely an hour.

Clouds rolled in along with rain showers, and the wind went away. This cycle repeated itself most of the rest of the night, although we had some pretty decent sailing and motor-sailing stints during the day Sunday.

Sunday night, however, the sky got more seriously overcast, and although the wind picked up, it picked up to 20+ and backed in the NE, too close for old T2 to sail on course. So on comes the engine yet again. Now, I know the sailors among are wondering why we don't tack our way upwind. Well, there's a reason this boat is called Tackless. She just doesn't sail close enough to the wind to make much headway without an engine. We end up sailing back and forth pretty near the same stretch of water.

So despite the wind blowing 15-20 all night, we had to motor, and the ride was pretty bouncy in the confused swell. To add insult to injury, a flat overcast hid our full moon (always the way!) Jetlagged, Uncle Bill had been having some trouble finding his sea legs, and the crappy conditions Sunday night kept him below. At 15 miles out, we picked up the bright lighthouse from Futuna, which, no matter how many fancy electronics you have, is a reassuring moment, the there's nothing to match the silhouettes of your destination -- in this case the islands of

Futuna and its neighbor Alofi – when it appears on the horizon with dawn and breaking clouds behind it.

And Back to Fiji: After another roly night in the harbor at Futuna, we were more than ready to leave Futuna Friday morning, even though it meant that we'd be arriving back into Fiji on the weekend, and so would be subject to their stiff overtime charges. Believe me, after two bad nights, the overtime fees sounded cheap!

Of course, first we had to get there. The better conditions Freedom Hunter reported at sea, we now know fell apart for him within hours. We, too, had pretty decent conditions starting out: sunny blue sky, puffy white clouds and a nice wind of about 18 knots sending Tackless II bounding over the waves at 6-7 knots. Bill set out optimistic, armed with seasickness meds in his system, but that lasted only a few hours. As the wind speeds increased and we took sea after sea aboard the leeward rail, his smile drooped, and by dusk, as we took the third reef in the main sail, Bill disappeared to the sea bunk in the salon.

The good news is the wind stayed just far enough to the east that we could actually sail. The bad news is that wind was so high – 25-30 sustained – that we could carry no more than staysail and triple-reefed main, and the big seas whipped up by the wind would intermittently stop and drop the boat into a trough. It was not pleasant sailing.

Our first mishap of the night occurred when Don, having opted for a bowl of "extra crunchy" French muesli for dinner, cracked a tooth! Then, later in the night Don noticed the topping lift flying free, winding itself up in the upper rigging. Without the topping lift tacking becomes impossible because the third reef does not hold the boom up enough to clear the hardtop and boom crutch. Hmmm. For the time being we were fine, as with luck we'd have the same tack all the way back.

The next day we ventured a handkerchief of head sail and managed to pick up our speed again. Our goal for the day was to get to and through the maze of reefs scattered across the way to the Somosomo straights by passing directly between Vetaua Island and the west side of Naqelelevu Atoll. But of course, the wind unhelpfully veered just enough more south, that our course over ground got pushed to starboard complicating that plan.

To get back east, we would have to tack, but to tack we would have to take the mainsail down. This we managed to pull off with me manually yanking the boom onto the crutch as Don lowered the sail, no mean trick in 27 knots. The problem was, with no topping lift, there was no way to get it up again. However, with no main, our forward progress, even with the engine running, was puny, the autopilot struggling to maintain steerage. Enough stuff was going wrong that we realized it was time to STOP, BREATHE, THINK and ACT.

Stopping in the open sea means heaving-to. We have heaved to in Tackless II on a number of occasions, but never in this much wind and sea. Even though it is the prescribed maneuver, we were not sure how well it would work, especially since we would be trying to heave to with the staysail only. We had just had happy-hour conversation with some skippers in boats similar to T2, who liked heaving to with staysail only, but having never tried it ourselves, we were skeptical. Don went forward and put the preventer on the staysail to hold the self –tending boom to windward when we tacked, and then we tacked her through and put the rudder hard starboard (up). The principle is that the rudder is trying to turn the boat one way while the sail is pushing the bow the opposite direction. Sure enough, presto, T2 came to a stop, hove-to neat

as a pin! It was not quite as nice as heaving to with a main up, where our bow would angle up more toward the wind and sea. But even beam on the ride settled out considerably.

Now the task was to jerry-rig a new topping lift which we did using one of our running backstays. We took its tackle off and used a short piece of Spectra line from the boom through the shackle and back to a convenient cleat to allow us to adjust the height of the boom over the crutch. With the main already triple-reefed it worked like a charm.

Feeling rather chuffed (hard to beat Brit expression for feeling smugly pleased with oneself) by our successful contravention of the problem, we continued on, tacking twice to be able to enter the reef system where we wanted. We made our final turn southward just about sunset, and from there on the trip was a breeze. As the motion settled down, Bill was able to come up and take a watch so that Don and I could get some rest, and by the time I came back up around 1:00 am, we were sailing free and easy in fifteen knots with the moon breaking through the clouds. Now THIS is what it is supposed to be like! We passed through the Somosomo straights around 4:30am in the calm of Taveuni's wind shadow, and by 9:30am, the wind filled back in off our quarter and we made the long run back to Savusavu in a nice broad reach. Back in Nakama Creek, we picked up the very same mooring we dropped nine days earlier, and the officials all came out and checked us back into the country without a hitch. We didn't escape the overtime charges, but, as we slept soundly for the first time in nine days, we all agreed it was money well spent.

2.2 *Fiji to Funafuti*

Mr. John - 2010: First time I went north, I did Apia, Funafuti, Tarawa.... It was a reach and a blast all the way.

This last time, we went Lautoka, (Rotuma), Funafuti, Tarawa. It worked out OK but could have been better, we were looking forward to going to Rotuma and had a Coastal Clearance from Lautoka with the intention of checking out there (It has been a Full Clearance Port of Entry for Fiji for over a year now).

Unfortunately as we got close the wind went around to the Northwest and it promised to increase above fifteen knots.... that made the main anchorage untenable and friends of ours, who were there, were bailing out. Thus we gave up on Rotuma and went direct to Funafuti.

That wasn't bad but we arrived just too late to get anchored before dark and chose to hang off in the lee overnight. We put an anchor light on and let her drift, problem was the current was running and the wind came up fresh easterly during the night, so by morning we were almost eight miles off....it was a tough beat back to the island and then, when we got there, I didn't like the look of the western pass as we would have the morning sun in our eyes AND I guessed the current would be running out strong with the fresh easterly wind driving it....Even had we been able to motor through the pass against all that, we would then have been faced with a tough beat / motor all the way across the big lagoon. SO we tacked north keeping close up to the reef, went in through the northern pass and had a close reach down to the anchorage, where we arrived just after noon.

The Northern and eastern passes are quite easy, even in poor lighting; we found our OpenCPN to be quite accurate through out but not so accurate I'd recommend moving about in the night.

2.3 Fiji to Rotuma

Learnativity - September 2010 - Musket Cove to Rotuma - The passage north is off to a good start and we got away from Musket Cove at 10am after finishing up the last of the boat jobs, getting everything stowed and lashed down for a passage and finishing my network jobs with my last WiFi for a while. Not a breath of wind so motored my way through the circuitous path through all the many coral heads on the west side of Malolo Island and out of its reef at the north end.

Once clear of Malolo the wind and seas started to build and an hour later I was sailing close hauled in about 18 knots of wind and had a wonderful ride straight north past many of the smaller islands I'd stopped at in the Yasawa Group. Made my way along the east side of Waya and turned NW to Porpoise Shoals where I there was enough of a pass to get outside the main reefs around Fiji. It was getting late so I added the motor to push up to about 7.5 knots and be sure we were clearing the pass and the shoals before the sun set. Worked perfect and I got to watch the sun set just as I changed heading for due north to Rotuma.

Rotuma is literally due north so we are on a heading of 000 degrees. The wind has some north in it coming at about ENE to even NE at times so makes it a close hauled sail and right on the limits of wind angle at about 50-60 degrees over the starboard bow. However I put up the stay sail which is a relatively small sail that is hanked onto the inner forestay and adds both some more sail area as well as streamlining the wind flowing over the front of the jib on one side and the back of the main on the other. At least that's my theory and it seems to help with both speed and balance to the sail plan.

The wind and seas continued to build slowly all evening and I rolled in one reef just before 9pm to make things a bit more comfortable with less heeling and because the wind is gusting up to 25+ knots at times and this will be a much safer sail plan for the night. Worked well and yet another reminder of why I need to listen to that inner voice that says "Hmmm, maybe we should reef now." My experience is that these first intuitive thoughts are almost always right on the money and amazingly good early warnings or advice. I'm trying to get better at listening to them and more importantly acting on them rather than the all too common reaction of waiting to see and then it is often too late.

It was a very fast sail all night long with speeds at time up over 7 knots but probably averaging out in the high fives to six knots which is very good and if anything a bit too fast in terms of estimated arrival time in Fiji. I suspect I'll run into some low wind conditions up ahead as I pass through the South Pacific Convergence Zone, which is a band of weather that typically runs from about Papua New Guinea to the Philippines where the wind and current between the southern and more northern parts of the South Pacific converge. It moves north and south over time and looks to now be just south of Rotuma. Typically the SPCZ and its larger cousin the ITCZ (Inter Tropical Convergence Zone) has very unsettled and squally weather within it along with lots of calms as the two weather patterns bump up against each other.

The night went well and other than one relatively small squall with some rain and a bit of wind gusting up to 28 it passed uneventfully and I was able to get some rest throughout. This morning I'm up to a great looking day, a few clouds spread all around but nothing too threatening looking at this point and otherwise clear and sunny. Seas are up to a bit over 2 meters but running NE so we ride up over them quite gently and the ride is quite comfortable.

Day 2 - I had intended to write this update last night but it has been a VERY busy time since yesterday. Nothing in particular, just everything in general taking up my time. The wind has been up and down quite a bit and so too therefore have been the sails. As the wind changes speed and direction I need to adjust for it to keep the boat sailing well in terms of speed, balance and safety so if the wind is constantly changing I'm constantly up and down to put in reefs (reduce size of sail by rolling in), take them back out, put up sails such as the stay sail or spinnaker and take these down and adjust the trim of the sails such that their angle is matched to the wind angle and best capturing and transferring their power.

I've also been going through quite a few squalls and rain cells so I also need to close up the cockpit by rolling down the clear plastic windows, clipping them in and zipping them together. But once the rain stops and we pop back out into the sunshine or moonshine, then I quickly reverse the process and roll them back up out of the way so I can have that seductive sea breeze flowing back through the cockpit and over my skin again.

As I write this in the mid afternoon we have settled back into a slow silent slide through the sea as the wind has dropped down to 5-10 knots from the east putting it right on our beam (side), the sun is out in full force bathing my back in heat and the skies have cleared off almost completely rendering the sea a color of deep three dimensional blue that I often just sit and stare at and ponder the impossibility of trying to describe it to anyone else. After punching and pitching through several series of lines of squalls since this morning, this always feels extraordinarily great to have these contrasting conditions and I'm going to get back to enjoying it all.

Well, the wind as shifted and our speed is dropping so I have some sails to trim and will leave you with these poor attempts as describing what it is like to be back sailing on open Mother Ocean. We should be arriving in Rotuma tomorrow morning if all goes well and I'll update you after that as the grand adventure of the good ship Learnativity continues.

Day 3 - The last 24 hours of my passage to Rotuma were much faster than expected with the wind being much more than forecast and so I ended up with three reefs in both my main sail and jib as I reduced my sail area down to mere hankies to get my SOG (Speed Over Ground) below 4 knots so that I would arrive after first light and with the sun high enough in the sky for the visual navigation necessary to weave my way around the inevitable coral heads on the way into the bay. Some version of Murphy's Laws for sailing I think that just when I've got these great conditions and Learnativity is chomping at the bit to run with the wind I have to hold her so hard back and slow down.

So the scene is that I'm about 10nm south of Rotuma Island at about 5 in the morning. The wind has finally clocked around south to be coming from a bit more characteristic SSE to SE direction putting it just aft of my beam coming over the starboard quarter at about 100-120 degrees, the main and jib are rolled down to mere bandanas of their former selves and the sea has dropped down to about 1m swells, all making for a blissfully quiet and calm sail north.

With the sun still an hour away from rising and the half moon long since set so it is densely dark and yet I have a very full dimensional sense of the cloud tossed sky and seas surrounding me as I stand easily without any support on the forward deck taking it all in and trying to appreciate how fortunate I am to be right here, right now.

Looking intently north, perhaps aided by a bit of imagination and knowing what lies ahead based on my charts, I can just start to make out the black jagged outline of Rotuma and several smaller surrounding islands against the ever lightening sky.

2.4 Rotuma to Funafuti

SloepMouche - Late 2010 - Ended up in Tarawa Instead: This was much easier than our Vanuatu to Rotuma leg. Still the wind was mostly NE the whole time, so we sailed close-hauled the whole way.

We had planned a first stop in Funafuti, to visit and give us a little more easting, but we could not even lay Nanumea so there was no point in tacking just to get to Funafuti. Wind speed varied from less than 5 kts to 20 kts with higher gusts in rain showers. Sometimes the wind was too light so we had to motorsail.

"Once again, we're trying to get to another island that we can't get to! (Funafuti) At least it's calmer and the seas are nicer. We just keep giving up on the next island and say let's aim for the next! (and 4-5 more days at sea). We WILL get somewhere, but where and when are not so sure. We just go where the wind will let us. Our timing seems to be a little out of sync with nature's plan. When we wanted north winds, we got East...now that we want East, we get North! Sigh, the joy of sailing. The wind has turned a little more in our favor in the last 12 hrs, so we can at least point at one of the islands that we want to go to. Of course, that island is days away, and the wx bulletins say that if we are lucky and go fast enough, we can keep ahead of the wind shifting against us again. If not...well, we get what we get.

The wind gracefully turned to the East for the last 150nm, which made for a glorious sail at the end of this leg. The last few miles, we had a fun and fast sail in the calm waters protected by the lagoon of Tarawa. But once we entered the west side of the lagoon, we had the full fetch of the lagoon so we got a lively motorsail to Betio, the check in entrance port of the formerly Gilbert Islands, now part of Kiribati.

Learnativity - September 2010: Based on the weather forecasts and distances I figured it would be best to leave about noon on Saturday, this timing my best guess as to my ETA in Funafuti, which is about 290nm NNE of Rotuma, such that I'd be most likely to arrive during times when there is good overhead sunshine.

Volker was very kind and stopped by with some papaya and oranges he and Philippe had just picked and then with my final wave goodbye to them I bid adieux to Fiji as Rotuma began to fade in my wake. The wind was much lower than expected up through sunset so I had to do some motor sailing and used the opportunity to pick up some Easting (means going more east than I need to go direct to Funafuti) as there is often opposing current and wind later in this passage.

There were two lines of squalls in the early afternoon but they weren't too bad to push through and otherwise the wind was both very low and up and down a lot so it kept me busy with sail adjustments most of the day and early evening. I put up the spinnaker for the first time after my most recent patch job and sewing, and it flew just fine. However even with the spinnaker and main up full I was barely able to maintain 3 knots SOG in the low wind, though it was nice and peaceful. The sun went down in a glorious display of colors and signaled time to drop the spinnaker as well and right on cue the wind piped up over 10 knots so I was able to maintain at least 3 knots VMG with the main and the jib. These conditions lasted all night long and then at

about 5am this morning the wind picked up and we were moving along at 5-6 knots and headed for the next set of squall lines that make up the SPCZ (South Pacific Convergence Zone).

We went in and out of these until about an hour ago (2pm here) and now it looks like we should have clear sailing and skies for the rest of the afternoon. ETA into Funafuti is still looking to be Tuesday morning but of course depends on what the wind does between now and then and it has certainly been shifting in both velocity and direction a lot since leaving Rotuma so will just wait and see. Once I get above 10 degrees South, things should become more consistent as the belt around the equator is typically calmer and less varied. This is weather though and Mother Nature can and does have lots of tricks up her sleeve.

Day 2: Just after I finished writing up yesterday's update the wind picked up significantly and didn't stop for the rest of the run up to the entrance into Funafuti. Wind stayed steady between 18-23 knots and from the East which put it about 70-90 degrees over my starboard bow and our SOG averaged almost seven knots which is very good speed for Learnativity. Much faster than expected and so I arrived a day earlier than expected and we are now calmly anchored here inside the large lagoon created by the coral reef around Funafuti, the main island and only port of entry in this island chain country of Tuvalu.

2.5 Wallis to Funafuti

Katie Lee - October 2008: We left Wallis about 9:00 AM and motored down to and out the pass. It took over an hour. I had forgotten how long the island and its atoll are. We were late for the slack water, but there was still not much current. When we went in last week, we had about 4 knots against us, which made traversing the pass a slow 1 knot ordeal. The wind was light but OK around 10 knots on the stern till we rounded the southern tip of the reef and turned NW.

The wind has been steady except for the occasional squall. We've had 7 or 8 in the last 36 hours! Some with gusts up to 35. But they don't last long.

We had some shoals to pass, about 60 miles out the water goes from 6000 feet deep to only 20 feet! We skirted them with 15 miles to spare then turned directly toward Tuvalu.

We are crossing the real International dateline this time. Although we already had to change the calendar and the clock, we are crossing the 180 degree line. Funafuti lies at 179 degrees East and we have only cruised in the West longitudes so far.

The auto pilot is being persnickety again. It tripped up the steering oar every 30 minutes this morning for several hours. I changed the bungee twice and hammered on it some too. It is wearing out some I think. I may need to have a welder rebuild the catches soon.

Arrival: Here safe and sound. We arrived last night after dark, and waited 10 miles off for the daylight to come into the lagoon. This morning we motor sailed up to the pass and then the 5 miles across the lagoon and anchored about 11:00.

The autopilot finally quit working altogether night before last, so we were hand steering the last day and a half.

While I was bored sitting there holding the wheel, I looked up and noticed a dark looking patch near the top of the main sail! It was night, so I got out a big flashlight for a better look. Darn! The top seam of the sail had blown out. When they sew a sail, it makes a row of little holes in the

material, just like the 'tear here' lines on the plastic bags. Yep, it did, right there all across the top section of the sail.

As soon as the wind died back after the next rain squall (one of many in the last 4 days), we pulled it down. We finished a little slower with just the big jib.

2.6 Funafuti to Tarawa

Ariel IV – December 2015: Do not have any expectation for this trip, you will get what you get and can never tell from one day to the other and the Grib files we did not take the last days, what's the point? It was all the squalls that made it possible to sail and sometimes the wind was SE and the next one was NW, but the good thing we noticed that the windspeed never got over 20 knots in the squalls and we had full sails and made the most out of it! The thing that was most frustrating was the confused sea, windswaves and swells and other waves from four different directions that really slowed us down with both sailing and with engine.

The current was not bad, perhaps 1 knot west bound.

When we approached first the Island Maiana some 20 miles south of Tarawa there was a flashing light every 2 sec witch is not on our charts. But the big light on south of Tarawa with a flashperiod of 18 sec was well seen 15 miles off.

Savannah - October 2011: From Tuvalu all the way up to Majuro, we were bucking a 2-3 knot current. It never really seemed to let up for any amount of time. We had virtually no wind, and had we not had such a bad experience in Tarawa (read on), we would have waited for a weather window. We motored the 2 of the 3 days.

Mr John VI - November 2010: We departed Funafuti on Friday 5th November. It was rather a hasty departure, we'd planned to have a bit longer to recover from the last passage, however we'd seen all there was to see in Tuvalu and the weather window was going to close on us if we delayed until after the weekend.

I went and got 'Cleared Out' in the morning and we were underway by noon, reaching towards the northern pass; half way there however, I noted some stitching failure in a seem on the Genoa so we hove-to for about twenty minutes whilst we changed headsails.....it was fortunate that we had another one ready to go up!

We then had four days of 127 miles per day in near perfect conditions until the breeze started to lighten up, finally calling for twelve hours of motor-sailing before arrival. It had been mainly close-reaching conditions in 8 – 14 knots of breeze, blue sea and sky with puffy white trade wind clouds, we had no room to complain!

I wouldn't have motored during the last day except that 'someone' was impatient to arrive and didn't want another night at sea.....as it was, we just got the hook down off Betio as the sun dipped below the horizon.

Learnativity - September 2010: After clearing the barrier reef surrounding Funafuti I was back where I so love to be, out in open ocean and had the sails up but not much wind. I set up and hoisted the spinnaker but held off setting it free of its sock as there were two sets of squall and rain clouds menacing from the NE and I didn't want to get caught again with the spinnaker up when the wind gusts from the squall line hit. So I motor sailed for about two hours until we were well north of the squalls and then pulled up the sock and out puffed my beautiful patchwork quilt

of a spinnaker and we were suddenly slithering silently through the sea at over six knots! Love that sail.

The wind was actually too far forward for a spinnaker but I kept it flying all the way up to about 70 degrees as the winds were still below 10 and our speed was just too good to miss. Had a wonderful sail for the next few hours and then about 4pm I spotted the next batch of squalls (I'm still making my way through the SPCZ or South Pacific Convergence Zone) and the telltale rising of the wind so down came the spinnaker and up with the jib. Worked out just like I knew what I was doing as by the time I got the jib flying the wind had picked up and our speed was just slightly slower than with the full spinnaker flying and we were doing about 5 knots.

Day 2 - I put the spinnaker up in record time and we were making great speed. Then my fishing line went zzzzziiing and I had a monster on the hook. But then as I was trying to start to reel him in the line snapped and best I can tell it broke where I had spliced the two lines together and so I lost the fish, the lure and most of my line.

Then my last working USB port on my laptop seems to have given up completely in allowing my USB to serial cable to connect up to my sat phone. Fortunately I have another laptop on board (thank you Erik!) and I was able to press it into service and still be able to send and receive Emails with my sat phone. It is a bit of a pain as the spare laptop is almost unreadable in these sunny conditions so I have to read and write all my emails on my newer laptop with the bright screen and then transfer the files back and forth between the two to send and receive. But at least I've got a working solution and can continue to work and communicate.

There were some squalls approaching and so I took the spinnaker down and went back to the jib for the next few hours until they passed and then raised the spinnaker again. But I screwed up and didn't cleat off the sock control line well enough when I went back to set up the sheet and next thing I knew the sock collar had pulled itself half way up the spinnaker and the control line was dangling out 20' off the port side. I finally managed to lower the spinnaker and grab it with my long extended boat hook pole but in the meantime the spinnaker decided to wrap itself around itself and wouldn't untwist on its own. No problem, just pull the sock down, untwist it on the deck and raise it again. But there was a problem as the sock wouldn't come down and was jammed somehow up at the very top. So I spent the next two hours trying to get the flapping spinnaker back down onto the deck. Fortunately the wind didn't pick up during all this and even still it was a heck of a task trying to get all that nylon gathered up and dropped onto the deck and not into the sea as it attempted to fly all over the place. I did get it down eventually but it caught on the big aluminum reinforcement plate on the furled up jib and put some tears into it so the spinnaker and I have a date with the sewing machine again tomorrow. The tears are relatively small and shouldn't be too bad to repair I don't think.

During all this I had to have put the boat on a very different course to get the wind at the right angle for dropping the spinnaker and there was now a small island up ahead in a few hours that I needed to change course to go around now. That put the wind directly behind us which is a difficult angle to sail on and the wind dropped off to almost nothing as well, so I'm motor sailing for the next 2 hours to be sure to get around this little island, Niutao if you're looking it up, and then get back on the original heading that should give us a good wind angle if the wind doesn't change direction.

Day 3 - Today I'm singing "What a difference a day makes" and it was an all-round "UP" day today aboard the good ship Learnativity. Wind is UP. Sails are UP. Seas are UP. Spirits are UP

and we are UP, UP and away to Tarawa! Last night as I left you I had to turn on the motor for a bit as the wind had shifted and dropped and I was passing close by a little island that I wanted to be sure to miss. Well, minutes later and with perfect timing of just as I was about to sit down for dinner, the wind started to pipe up from almost zero to about 5-8 knots and on my beam or behind and so enough to move us along at about 3-4 knots in wonderful sailing silence. By the time I'd finished dinner, pan fried breaded chicken breast, penne, ham & cheese, olives and blue cheese, the wind had built itself up to over 15 knots and we were off like a freight train on liquid rails into the night.

Even though I changed course after swinging around the west side of that little island the wind shifted as well to stay back of 90 degrees which makes for very fast, quiet and comfortable sailing and hasn't changed a bit in the last 24 hours. The seas are up a bit as I think there have been some big storms off to the East and South, so they are running up to three plus meters out of the ENE to ESE but are large enough and far enough apart that the ride is quite good and Learnativity just rolls a bit as they roll under her.

Day 4 - The sun rose into a very clear sky this morning and it remained that way all day with very few clouds and only small ones to be seen anywhere. As go the clouds so too does the wind and it has been dropping off slowly since last night. By mid-day the wind had dropped down below 5 knots and the equatorial current showed up running over 2.5 knots to the WSW which is quite strong. It isn't completely counter to my direction as I'm headed NNW but it did mean that I needed to steer a course almost straight north to counter the current and keep us moving towards Tarawa so that cut down our SOG even further and I needed to resort to motor sailing for a few hours. Timing worked out well though as the batteries were a bit low with the wind generator not contributing as much last night and I also needed to run the water maker which puts out even more water when the batteries are nearing the end of their charge. To top it all off the wind started to pick up about an hour ago so I was able to shut off the main engine and get back to just sailing while the generator finished off the charging and the water maker. Amazing how timing works out if you have some patience and allow it to all come to you.

This morning was sewing morning and I was able to repair the new tears in the spinnaker. Compared to the past tears these were pretty small, only about a linear meter or so all together and it worked well, just takes lots of time to get them all aligned, taped and then sewn. After putting the spinnaker back into the sock, which is a bit of a challenge in itself as the sock is over 65' long and I have to do it all inside the boat by stretching the sail out from bow to cockpit, but I've had lots of practice and the boat motion was very calm so it all went well and I soon had the spinnaker hoisted up the mast again and ready to fly. However the current is still with us and so I'm pointing almost into the wind and the spinnaker only likes to fly with the wind aft of the beam so after a few hours with it hanging from the mast in wait I took it down about an hour ago and will wait for another day for the test sail to check out the latest patching.

Otherwise today was filled with more learning to sail as I spent a few hours experimenting with different adjustments to the sails to see what affect it had on speed and trim. That combined with some reading and writing and Learnativity continues to live up to her name very well.

Hard to say just what my ETA into Tarawa Kiribati will be as our speed is varying so much from very fast to quite slow, but my best guess is still some time on Monday.

Day 5 - If you've been watching the lat/long numbers change at the top of each of these LTY Update postings, you'll have noticed that Ruby and I will be crossing the equator in a few hours!

Unfortunately, even though I've had the spinnaker up almost all day and we've been making great speed hovering around 7 knots, we won't cross over that imaginary line girdling the planet until well after dark and so I don't think we'll stop and swim across this time.

And so the good ship *Learnativity* slides steadily northward and a little bit westward into the northern hemisphere. All this at just about the right time as Oct/Nov marks the transition between the monsoon/typhoon seasons and we need to be out of the south and into the north so we can continue to be in the right place at the right time and continue to have good weather, winds, seas and fortune.

2.7 *Funafuti to Nikanau*

Katie Lee - November 2008: We are under way, a day and a half. Only 100 miles or so though. Not much wind. We have been drifting at 1 to 2 knots for most of the day today.

It may take us 5 or 6 days to make the 450 miles to the first island, Nikanau, where Teuta and Treibau (people we met at Fanning Island) were raised.

We tried to e-mail Tarawa for permission to stop, but got no reply. We may not be allowed to stop and have to go on to Tarawa (250 more miles).

Later... we are at 05 01S by 177 41E About 470 miles from Tarawa and 220 miles from Nikanau.

We have had 2 days of almost no wind. We made less than 50 miles each day. Today we made 50 miles from 7AM to 3PM so it looks a little better. It still says 2 1/2 days to Nikanau.

We still did not get a reply to our request for permission to stop there, so we'll see how it goes. It is not much out of the way, so if they don't let us stop it will be about 2 1/2 days on to Tarawa.

Iornie, Steve and May, are about 60 miles SW of us and getting the same lack of wind.

Arrival...We arrived about 1:00 AM. Too dark to anchor so we put the sails down and just drifted in the kee of the island. I guessed wrong about the drift. We were making 1.5 knots and would pass the island shortly. We had to motor for an hour back up wind before we could sleep.

At 5:30 I got up and we were only 3 miles from the marked anchorage. We motored up and finally found a place to anchor. Only 2 miles offshore the water is 16400 feet deep! I don't have that kind of anchor chain length! Ha!

Just after we got the anchor down in 45 feet of water, just off the reef (there is no lagoon here to go inside of) a skiff came up with 3 folks in it. One had a police uniform. I asked permission to stay and go ashore to visit the families of friends from Fanning first. Then they asked for my clearance papers from Tuvalu. After a little discussion, they decided we could stay.

2.8 *Tarawa to Majuro*

Learnativity - September 2010: My fresh set of weather files said it was a great time to be heading north, clear skies, steady low pressure area, and no rain in sight, low winds and low seas. Time to go and so with the sun high enough by about 09:30 we pulled Rocky (our 70kg Rocna anchor) out of the sandy muck only 20 feet below us and I carefully serpentine my way out of the bay and through the western pass out into open waters.

As forecast not much wind so soon had the main and the spinnaker up and was making a respectable four to five knots in less than 10 knots of wind that was coming almost direct from behind. It was so directly downwind that I decided to try to put the main out to the opposite windward side so it wouldn't be so completely blanketing the spinnaker and causing it to collapse so often. The seas were also very flat and so the total effect is that you are gliding over the water in relative silence to any other point of sail and with such calm seas you barely know the boat is moving (again everything is relative).

We picked up some cross **current** that has been with us for quite a while and goes up as high as 3 knots and as low as half a knot and so the heading of the boat as it "crabs" to keep us on course causes the wind direction to change quite a bit so there is lots of tending to the sails and the spinnaker collapses quite often.

With the winds being so low, about four to eight knots most of the time, this isn't too much of a problem or danger however if the wind doesn't come back soon enough to catch and fill the spinnaker again I need to go out on deck and help it along by pulling on the sheet.

This pattern kept up all afternoon but was quite enjoyable as the conditions were so wonderful. However late in the afternoon the spinnaker collapsed and flapped itself all the way over to the mast up top and somehow the leech (trailing edge of a sail) managed to catch on one of the mast steps and was stuck on the windward side as the sail luffed up and went to leeward. I scrambled up the mast as fast as I could but only got about 50 feet up before I heard the slight but unmistakable sound of nylon tearing as the wind pulled the sail away and tore the leech out of the mast step. So I climbed up the mast a bit further to get a closer look at this tear that was about 10 feet down from the top and watched it as the spinnaker filled and flew with the slightly higher winds. It all looked good and didn't seem to be putting any stress on the sail itself so I climbed back down and laid on the deck for the next half an hour (got to keep this tan right??) and watched it carefully with the binoculars to see if it was going to open up further.

Fortunately it all held up and I eventually decided to even leave the spinnaker up all night as the wind dropped of further in the evening and all indications were for a very calm night and with the wind this low we would barely be moving and not have any steerage without the spinnaker. But at dawn I dropped the spinnaker to repair it.

The wind piped up a bit to run about 8-13 knots and so with the main and jib up we were soon back to a peaceful sail at about 3.5 as much as five knots so I was very happy and could get back to my breakfast.

Day 3 - Busy and productive day aboard with most of the time getting the spinnaker repaired and flying well again. She has been flying all afternoon now and helping out a great deal as the wind has varied a lot today. Sometimes drops off to below 5 knots and has built up to as much as 16-17 (all numbers apparent wind). No gusts it just comes and goes slowly so hasn't been too difficult to deal with.

Weather continues to be excellent and consistent. Hundreds of relatively small puffy white clouds everywhere and they are a bit bigger today so more shade from the sun but no sights of rain or change from what I can read from the clouds. Seas are up a bit with the swell as much as 1.5 meters at times so must have been a storm down south east of us. Makes for a bit more rolling compared to having been so flat the first two days but still a very nice ride.

Should be in Majuro tomorrow afternoon if the wind and our speed hold up

Last Day - Had a slow and steady final day into Majuro with very light winds all last night and this morning. Even with the spinnaker speeds were sometimes down to under 3 knots but mostly 4-5kts and the seas remained very calm with the swell less than a meter and often almost none at all. Did run into some strange and strong currents, up to 5 knots at one point and they were from all different directions over the last 3 days. No big problem just had to do a lot of heading changes to counter act the push of the current.

Skies remained the same the whole trip, clear blue scattered with lots of small fluffy clouds in every direction.

About 15nm south of Majuro the wind finally died completely and didn't come back so I motored the last few hours as I made my way around the east side and over to the pass which is on the NW side of the atoll and then you need to double back to the east side once inside the atoll as that's where the three towns are located; Djarrit in the NE corner, Uliga in the middle and Dalap on the SE corner.

I picked up a mooring ball just off the main commercial wharf at Uliga and am now waiting for the authorities to come aboard to do the check in.

Katie Lee - December 2008: We had very little wind the whole trip. Twice during rain squalls we got to 30 knots, the rest of the time it stayed below 13. We had one 30 mile day due to almost no wind all day. We finally motor sailed the last part for a total of 24 hours on the motor. They tell me diesel here is only \$2.90/gal so maybe it wasn't as expensive as I was thinking. We get better than 1 hour for .9 gal

We left the fishing pole out and drug it almost all the way. We did catch a fish-- a small (18") barracuda-looking thing so we threw him back.

2.9 Butariti to Majuro

Sloepmouche - Late 2010: With stops in Abaiang and Butaritari our trip from Tarawa to Majuro was much easier but still close-hauled so do not give up any easting if you don't have to!

Nice day trip to Abaiang and just an overnigher to get to Butaritari.

From Butaritari, the angle of sail to Majuro is much better and we were almost beam reach. But keep in mind the westerly current that might force you to point 30 degrees more to the East. From the Eastern corner of Butaritari, it was just about 300nm to Majuro anchorage so about 3 days-2 night of sailing.

Billabong - December 2005: While the passage to Majuro was not one of my favorites, I think we really lucked out and it truly could've been multiple times worse. We departed early on Sunday Dec 18th and lucked out with not a single squall hitting us until 3pm. We had 10 foot confused seas, so the ride was a bit bumpy, but the wind had shifted (as predicted) just enough that it was always aft of the beam (so much better than trying to beat into it).

Our first night included lots of rain and squalls, with a max wind of 40 knots (YUCK). We couldn't believe our eyes when we woke up to BLUE SKIES! And were even more pleased when a HUGE Mahi Mahi hooked on at 7am.

We quit fishing until later in the day when we decided to catch extra to share with the large fleet waiting in Majuro. We really didn't expect to catch anything else, and couldn't believe it when a massive yellow-finned tuna hooked on. He was so big we probably would've thrown him back,

but due to his weight the only way we could get him on board was to kill him. Cleaning such a monster of a fish as the sun set and the seas rolled was not easy; it seems every part of the cockpit was covered in blood and guts.

We just managed to finish about 20 minutes before a squall hit ... lucky again! It was another rain filled night, and unfortunately the wind died around midnight, so we had to motor-sail the rest of the way to Majuro (about eight-ten hours). On the plus side we were able to crank up our refrig thermometer to keep all the fish nice, cold and fresh!

We ended up sharing the fish with SEVEN other boats, and we've been eating it for three days straight -- now that's a lot of fish!!!

With our arrival, Majuro hit its all time record for the number of yachts in any one year (somewhere around 30)!

Interlude - December 2005: We made a wet and fast, 36 hour sail through the squally ITCZ to Majuro, Republic of Marshall Islands. We had 18-25 knots consistently at 50° apparent wind angle and 12-15 foot seas with a 35 knot squall about every two hours with 100% overcast and torrential rain about half the time.

Three yachts left the day after us and had a more comfortable but slower passage.

2.10 Majuro to Tarawa

Brick House - Early 2011: It was a struggle to sail into the wind and the wind kept us from sailing directly into Tarawa. We had to sail south past Tarawa then take a left hand tack and sail back to the north east to reach Tarawa.

In four days, we arrived in Tarawa. In all it was an easy sail with fairly flat seas and it was nice to be going somewhere that we knew we liked.

2.11 Samoa to Wallis

SV Lupina – August 2023: The passage from Samoa (Apia) to Wallis was fast but very rainy with heavy cross seas in the 3 meter range. To our surprise, the entry through the pass at slack water (the current indicator on Navionics was spot on) was easy. As we arrived on a Sunday we first anchored just east of the pass behind Ile Faioa in mostly sand. Good holding. The Gendarmerie called us and VHF16 and asked, when we intend to do the clearing. Monday morning was acceptable to them. So the next day we motored the about 7 miles to the wharf at Matu Uta, the place where you have to do the clearing in. There is no port authority answering your VHF16 call. We anchored near the pier on the south side, but were later informed, that this area is banned due to cables they recently placed there. Good place to anchor near the warft is just in front of the pier on a shallow patch at 5-10m. You can land the dinghy just behind the south side of the pier – be aware of the tide, so give the lines room and consider using a stern anchor. The customs office is located in the first building on the warft (open Mo-Fr morning only). The Gendarmerie (= immigration) came with a car to the pier, but their office is a 5 minutes walk past the post office. SIM cards are available in the post office (extremely expensive! 5000XPF for the card and 3000XPF for 3GB data). But there is also a good working WiFi at the post office, which can be freely used (access code written on the wall in the office).

After the clearing process we moved to the anchorage between the 2 islands Ile Luaniva and Ile Fungalai, 0.9nm to the NE of the warft. Well protected from waves in the trade wind directions.

3 Rotuma

Mr John IV - April 2011: Two days sail to the north of Round Island Passage is Rotuma, a little jewel of an island which is now a 'Clearance Port' for Fiji.

We tried to get there on our way north but the wind came around to the NW and that made the only real anchorage on the island very exposed and untenable. Thus we had to wait till we were south bound from Kiribati to get acquainted with this beautiful island.

The Southwest anchorage was recommended to us by the locals for when there are northerly conditions. We had a NE wind and a fairly big swell running whilst in the NE anchorage, thus we were rolling heavily at times.

We thought about moving around to the SW anchorage however others had warned that the southwest anchorage was very 'tight' and if the wind swung back to the SE (where it most often is) then we'd be in a right mess as the swell builds up very quickly.

Anchor Position: 12 29.256S / 177 07.273E

The two Way-points on the way in

12 29.233S / 177 07.202E

12 29.227S / 177 07.163E

Any further north and you will clunk the reef!!!!

Note: The ferry, when it comes, follows the same path indicated but once past the reef she swings to port, hard round to the north. Then she drops an anchor and backs down to the end of the dock and drops her ramp (it's a RoRo). If you anchor right off the dock you may have to move.

Clearing in to Fiji in Rotuma: We conveniently arrived in Rotuma on Monday the 11th April at 1100hrs, convenient because we were clear of any weekend overtime charges and we had plenty of day time remaining to get 'cleared in' with the officials.

The rough weather conditions to the north was sending some swell down and the anchorage was quite sloppy, we moved well in alongside the small jetty, probably further than most other yachts (with more than our four foot draft) would want to go but still we were rolling heavily. When the Customs, Health and Immigration authorities arrived on the jetty, they tooted to make their presence known and I went ashore in the dinghy to pick them up; this is always a tricky operation as most of the officials in the Pacific tend to be a little bigger than most of us yachties and our dinghy is very low in freeboard. The swell didn't make anything any easier and I was more than happy when I delivered them ashore again without any of them getting wet.

Rotuma has only recently become a Clearance Port and the main reason for this change is to allow the Rotumans to export some of the fresh produce that they grow on the Island, they have a ready market in Tuvalu and even Kiribati.

The Official's were very welcoming and friendly so we were quickly cleared, however during the clearance procedure we discovered that the local bus service is no more and unlikely to be resurrected as the bus broke down and was sold off island to an Indian gentleman in Nandi.

On top of that the Island was short on fuel and supplies, the monthly ferry was due soon but until then, there would be little transportation on the move.

Whilst the Customs were aboard we made arrangements to get our coastal clearance for Lautoka on the Wednesday afternoon with the intention of a Thursday morning departure.

As we had no means of getting in touch with the customs other than somehow getting to the government station, we felt it best to have a fixed departure / clearance time in advance; as it turned out, this was a very good move!

On the Tuesday we had a go at walking to the Government Station, which is the closest thing they have here to a town. A couple of stores, a Post Office with internet on occasions but not this time as the computer had failed and was in Nandi for repair (that we also discovered from the Customs, who did very kindly say we could use theirs if we were stuck!).

From the dock they say it's nine kilometres to the Government Station, we walked quite some distance before we found the '9KM' sign but in the end it didn't matter as it was just too far.

Without knowing that you are going to have some form of transport, Rotuma is limited as a place to visit... True, you can walk and you can get lifts (sometimes)....

Rotuma has a Web Page.... maybe, through that, you could make some arrangements before visiting?

M/V Ice - 2011: Rotuma island appeared at first light on Wednesday, completing the 900 miles in exactly 6 days and 210 gal. fuel including all the head currents, so happy about that.

This place is heaven...We anchored in crystal clear 'special' blue water at 0700, with no sign of civilisation, in a beautiful bleached white super fine sandy bay beside a small outer island,,, coconut palms, black volcanic rocks... just incredible!

At 9am .Customs, Immigration, Quarantine and Doctor all turned up from the other end of the mountain's volcanic island that is very spectacular. We were happy about that as Jane and I were about to land and make the 3 hr walk in the sun to visit them.

There is no anchorage by the village they are in...2000 people live here but we have only seen five people in the last two days..and one was a 56-year-old guy who was asking Mark about Jane! He lives with his mum and has never left the island...and there are no available women as they all go to Fiji!

So we have been catching fish, making awesomely spectacular scuba dives, snorkeling and spear fishing , beachcombing, night time crayfish spotting, having barbies etc. all on a place that seems deserted..Very few people come here and they get one supply boat a month...

Tomorrow we are going to try getting around the island..about a 12-mile circuit on a dirt road/track..There is one car here in this bay and the driver may be able to take us... sort of a trip to town too.....not sure what we will find.

Learnativity - May 2011: We made it! Anchored safe, calm and in pure bliss here in the very tiny bay that has a small dock for the supply ships that call here every few months and just

enough room for us to drop our trusty Rocna anchor in 15 feet of crystal clear turquoise water and have it instantly dig up to the hilt in white coral sand that looks like it was manicured to perfection with watery rakes.

Our sail south continued to be ideal and VERY fast as we maintained speeds up in the high 6 knots all night long in 15 to 20 knots of wind and rolling seas. Timing could not have been better for our arrival as we were about 10nm NNE of this spot as the sun came up this morning and was just clearing through the clouds and getting high enough to light up the tricky waters in front of us as we made our entrance into the rocky and coral studded entrance. Fortunately I also had my track from leaving this same spot last year and I used this to carefully guide Learnativity along its known safe path with Linda up at the bow watching out just for good measure and her great enjoyment. There are two small islands of rock just off to the north of this bay and our route arced around their verdant jungle covered surfaces making for a spectacular entrance. Once safely through the narrow entrance to this little bay, we crept forward and over to the far east side near the small concrete dock and one lone building that serves to store some of the supplies when they arrive and Linda expertly dropped the hook and the wind pushed us back to the west, setting the anchor quickly and deeply into the perfect white sand below. We played out about 75 feet of anchor chain before snubbing it up which put our aft end just about 10 feet short of the start of a coral bump below and pretty much the exact same spot Ruby and I anchored in when we were here last October as our last stop in Fiji and on our way up to the Marshall Islands. It was just as gorgeous as I remembered.

More good timing as a small cargo ship that had left Funafuti the day before us had just pulled in a few hours earlier and all the customs, immigration, health and bio security officials were just finishing their work with them and their tender dropped them off onboard Learnativity and we looked after all the procedures for checking into Fiji. They all instantly remembered meeting Ruby last year and were delighted to see us again, asking one more time if they could take her home with them?!

There is a LOT of paperwork for Fiji, with even more carbon paper, but thanks to having a copier/printer/scanner onboard to speed the process a bit we soon had filled out what seems like hundreds of forms for us, the boat, Ruby and we were officially welcomed into Fiji. The officials could not have been nicer and Ruby and I took them ashore in our dinghy and returned to Learnativity to officially congratulate ourselves at being back in Fiji and to take down our Quarantine (yellow) flag and proudly put the Fiji flag back up again.

After all that hard work Linda and I were ready for a swim and couldn't resist that crystal clear turquoise water, a very different set of blues and greens from up north in the Marshalls, and so we donned our masks, fins and snorkels and were off to explore this paradise underwater. We first dove on the anchor and Linda's anchor set was text book perfect so we went aft of the boat to check out that dark spot of coral behind us and found it to be plenty deep enough for us to float over even if we were, very unlikely, to drag backwards over it.

They had erected a new concrete piling on this spot to replace the one that had been pulled down by a big ship in a storm a few years ago and we checked that out a bit but mostly the great variety of new fish that were everywhere and very different from the ones we'd been accustomed to in the Marshalls and Funafuti.

I still had one ace up my sleeve to welcome Linda to my beloved Fiji and so I had her follow me over towards the large coral formations on the other side of Learnativity off the short black rock

cliffs. The coral didn't disappoint with the typical Fijian abundance of fish and coral but what I was really doing was heading for a small opening in one of the black rocks that forms an arched entryway into a perfect white sand beach. Linda kept following me and soon we were being swept by the current through the arch and into this small truly perfect and personal sized white beach with towering palms and growth behind it. Just like in a movie the waves washed us up onto the sandy beach and rolled us around as we struggled to remove our aquatic accoutrements and return to being land based bipeds and we walked up the short bit of sandy beach and flopped down to just try to be one with this scene of truly spectacular scenery. It is hard to describe adequately and we'll try to go back with our camera to take some shots to help show you this special spot. For now, try to imagine this small little beach about 10 meters/30 feet wide in total, behind a black rock face with this arched opening in it through which the crystal clear waters are crashing through and jungle birds are calling from their invisible perches deep within the lush green tropical jungle hanging over top of us, their fronds waving in the slight breeze and partially blocking the sapphire blue sky above. Well, I guess you just had to be there and we were!

We soaked that up for an hour or so and then swam back to Learnativity going over top of the large coral garden once again.

Later.. We are still in that small speck of land known as Rotuma which sits all by itself (well a small cluster of islands) about 300nm due north of the northernmost part of Fiji. They recently (May 13th) had Rotuma day here which is when they transferred from being a part of Great Britain to be part of Fiji. On Saturday, the day after we arrived we watched as almost one hundred men, women and children were taken out to a freighter from Tuvalu which was anchored just offshore. This was a freighter that we had seen at the main docks in Funafuti when we were there and they left the day before we did and then we saw them again when we arrived here in Rotuma. For some fun Linda and I came up with lots of stories as to what was going on, who these people were, where they were going and then when we went ashore the next day we asked some of the locals and these were people from Tuvalu who had come at the invitation of the Rotumans to help celebrate Rotuma day. They had stayed for almost a month, living with different families here (no hotels or any other such provisions here) and now the Rotumans have been invited by the people of Tuvalu to come up there next year to help celebrate their day of independence which I think is in April.

Yesterday was a holiday here in Rotuma as, like Canada and other Commonwealth countries they celebrate the Queen's (Elizabeth) Birthday although we are unsure why we have it on May 24th in Canada and here is June 13th. We looked it up in our offline version of Wikipedia and turns out that "Queen's Birthday" is a general term for a holiday celebrated by 53 commonwealth countries on a date of their choosing. In Canada it is also known as "Victoria Day" as it was originally for Queen Victoria's birthday who was born May 24, 1819 and now also includes (by proclamation) the current Queen Elizabeth II although she was born April 21st, 1926. So there is a bit of your history lesson for today. You (and we) never know just what you will learn following the adventures of the good ship Learnativity!!

As for what else we've been doing I'll keep it short as I can as it will just be an exercise in frustration for me to try to capture in words this magical place. In short we have simply been trying to appreciate and enjoy the beauty we are surrounded by. We are both working hard on our skills of living in life's moments which for us is all about "being present in the present" and

“experiencing our experiences”. Surrounding oneself in beauty has long been a way of life for me and this location and situation Linda and I have put ourselves in is helping us with that greatly as it is ALL beautiful here; the people, the scenery and nature on land, sea and air, sounds, sights and smells. We almost literally see ourselves as sponges and immerse ourselves in the various forms of this beauty such that we can soak it all in, enjoy and appreciate it to the maximum. It is both humbling and exciting; excites ALL the senses. One moment it is all vividly real and literal as we snorkel over vast coral reefs filled with life of all shapes and sizes or walk along dirt roads wedged between verdant jungle growth which you can almost watch growing as it constantly tries to reclaim the roadway. The next life is all very visceral to the point of spiritual as we sit on the aft deck for hours, being present as each day starts and ends with the rising and setting of the sun and otherwise watching Mother Nature seeming to almost show off to an extreme degree with rainbows throughout the day to add and multiply all her other artistry.

And so our days have consisted of hours of snorkelling over different reefs or just jumping into these crystal clear turquoise waters to cool off at random intervals throughout the day and spotting sting rays flying by below us. Yesterday we had a very busy day starting with a leisurely 10km walk along the one lane dirt road that stretches along the north side of the island from our western end in the village of Oinafa to the town of Ahao near the eastern end where all the government buildings are located including a Post Office, general store, schools and the like. Just as we were strolling into Ahao yesterday before noon an elderly lady in her beautiful flowered yard beckoned to us and asked us to come in and sit down for a while, which we did and had a lovely conversation with her, her sister and their granddaughter. They have several properties here on Rotuma as well as a home near the big town and capital of on the main island of Viti Levu in Fiji. After a great conversation with them and getting lots of our questions answered we started to head back to Learnativity in Oinafa and just and within minutes a small pickup truck from the telecommunications company stopped to chat with us and offered to take us the whole way. There were two men and their young children, a boy and a girl and they too answered lots more of our questions about life here, history and how things all work. They were both from the main part of Fiji and transferred here for the past two years putting in more telephone and telecommunications equipment and lines. We noted that the lines were all run underground and all their signals come in via satellite. Internet is becoming more available but interestingly we saw no cell phones either here or in Tuvalu which is unusual in our travels to such remote locations. I might add that this truck coming along was very fortuitous as during our 10k walk in the morning we had been passed by a total of two mopeds! It was a holiday after all, although there are very few motor vehicles of any type here and part of this place's charm is the incredible tranquility and the serenity that seems to just ooze from every part of it and seeps into your mind and body with the most wonderfully calming and joyous effects. Starting to see why I found Fiji to be such an incredible experience last year and why I ended up staying here till the very last minute before high tailing it north to the Marshalls as cyclone season approached last October? And now you and Linda can see why we have come back and will likely stay for at least several months here again this year.

Yesterday morning had started out rather gray and rainy for a rare change and we had some good showers to cool us off on the 10k walk into town, but by 10am it was back to picture perfect blue skies and so when we got back to Learnativity just about noon the waters were calling our names VERY loudly and we had a quick bite of some cheese and crackers and juice

for some energy and headed off to snorkel over some new coral reefs to the NE of us that connect this main island of Rotuma to a small rocky island we call "goat island" as they apparently walk goats out there at the annual lowest tide. The day before we had taken Ruby along in the dingy over to Goat Island and setup camp on the small beach there for a picnic and more snorkelling as we watched Learnativity floating quietly at anchor across from us and again immersed ourselves in all this beauty did our best to just absorb it all and appreciate how special this all is and how privileged we are to be a part of it.

Today is Tuesday and the officials are coming by sometime this morning to issue us with our inter Fiji cruising permits and papers. Fiji is so spread out and has so many islands (322 islands, 106 permanently inhabited and 522 islets) that they require us to check in and out of the four main towns and Ports of Entry (Rotuma is the 5th) as we cruise within Fiji. We think we will likely leave here today or tomorrow, though it won't be easy, and start making our way pretty much due south to the main islands of Fiji. We'll let the wind determine which pass we enter the reefs through and which Port of Entry we go to. Ideally the winds are east and north enough to let us get over to the eastern half of Fiji and if so we'll head for Savusavu on the south west side of the big island of Vanua Levu. If we can't get that far east then we'll either head for Levuka or Lautoka (east & west sides of Vanua Levu respectively) to check in, explore one of those more populated areas, get restocked with provisions and then head out to explore more of those 216 uninhabited islands which are our favourites. Stay tuned to see how it all plays out as you watch the bouncing red dot on your maps as you plug in the various latitude and longitude numbers in each of our posts giving you our location at any given time.

On leaving Rotuma: There are about five small islands off to the west of Rotuma so we headed out that way along the north coast of the main island of Rotuma to check them out more closely as we were leaving. There is one particularly interesting island that I refer to as "Split Island" as it has this very unique vertical split or crack that about 200m tall and goes all the way from one side to the other and all the way down below the sea level cleaving the island in two. Even better there is a very large hunk of stone that is wedged into the top of the crack. We thought we'd check it out and see if there might be some shoaling or coral or sand along the north or west sides where we could anchor for the day and spend the night there after exploring this unique bit of geography.

However we were thwarted, as the island thrusts its stony walls straight up out of the sea on all sides and there was absolutely no place we could have anchored. So we took our time to circle it slowly from about 50m off shore from the north and around the west side to at least get a close up view. In doing so we could see that unlike the other islands this was not volcanic lava but striated limestone, or so we think, unhindered by any great geological knowledge to the contrary. Our close up view showed us that there were many of these same vertical cracks all along the island and just this one that had opened up to be about 50m wide. We got some great photos and will put these up for you to see when we land and have internet again. In the meantime you might be able to see it for yourself with the satellite images on Google Earth or Bing by looking about 5nm off the far west tip of Rotuma.

A bit disappointed that we wouldn't get to explore the island by foot and have a night anchored off this extremely unique and remote island we enjoyed the rapture of this fascinating rock island and the hundreds of birds that called it home. Some of these birds were unique to this

island or at least we had not seen them on Rotuma and appeared to maybe be a type of blue Booby as they had black backs, white undersides and blue beaks.

French Kiss - November 2010: Here are some brief tips on Rotuma, valid at least in November 2010. It is a wonderful place to visit. No resorts, and they seem to want to keep it that way. The people are very friendly and local food can be purchased by asking. Rotuma is a garden island growing their own food with enough extra to export. I was told this is one of the reasons Fiji made Rotuma another clearance port.

There is a new dock on the northeast end of the island near the village of Oinafa. Good anchorage in sand of the small harbor for several boats. Safe in most conditions except for any northwest swell. You should be ready to put to sea if a northwest condition becomes apparent. For excellent navigating information check out Mr-John-in-Fiji document in Scribd. The website location is at end of this document.

Clearance in: Same rules, fees, overtime charges as the other Fiji ports of clearance. You will be met at the dock by customs, immigration, health officers and you will need to transport them out to your vessel. Outgoing clearance is somewhat more difficult unless you have a Vodafone or Digicell cell phone. There is good **Vodafone** (cell) coverage at the dock. Digicell was building a tower for extended service that was not yet completed in fall 2010. No problems communicating near the airport. On clearing in I scheduled an appointment for the time I wished to clear out and they were prompt with no delays. The officials were very friendly and helpful. It was a pleasure clearing in/out with them. The government offices are located on the other end of the island by the airport.

The chief for Oinafa was off island when I arrived. I was met by a fine young gentleman named Philippe. I don't have any contact information but you can ask any villager in Oinafa and they can direct you. He was very helpful, arranged for a truck for an island tour that I really enjoyed. I even went into the jungle on a few occasions with him to feed his pigs. Probably not something everyone would enjoy but I found it rather interesting. He has a cell phone and can contact the local officials for clearance appointments.

Philippe invited me to several of his families dinners. He would also try to feed me lunch, but I found one heavy meal a day to be more than enough. He also took me to a nearby village for Sevusevu. They like their Kava, (Fiji beer, Grog) in Rotuma. They do not have ground Kava, they pound the roots during the ceremony and the mix is pounded and re-used several times. Very memorable hours sitting with the men enjoying their local custom. They of course are very curious and asked many questions about me and my travels.

I have a very positive attitude toward Rotuma and their people. It is different than the typical Fiji location. I enjoyed it very much, and hope to stop by in my travels again.

Well, there are always some negative things. The major problem I had was **flies**. Without landing ashore, the flies will still find your boat. I would recommend having along some standard sticky fly paper to help control them. I had plenty of practice swatting flies during my visit. No one seem to know why Rotuma this problem compared to other Fiji islands.

Already mentioned but worth repeating, the harbor is dangerous if a northwest swell is running.

The roads and public transportation are poor or non-existent. The local bus was broken when I arrived. There wasn't any other public transportation, most people hitch rides with lucky locals.

The sand/dirt roads were actually in rather good shape, I suspect there is not much local traffic to ruin them. I had no difficulty obtaining a ride but your experience may differ.

Learnativity - September 2010: The choice to come to this rarely visited island and part of Fiji has proven to be very rewarding as have all such decisions it seems. The elders of the island only even agreed to allow strangers to come ashore a few years ago and only at the end of 2008 did the Fiji government grant Rotuma the status of an official Port of Entry that enables yachts to check in and out of here without having to go back to one of the other four PoE's within the main area of Fiji. And so it is that according to the officials who so efficiently looked after our check formalities yesterday that I am lucky boat number seven to have ever visited and check in here! And boat # six "La Gitana" from Hamburg is anchored here with me having arrived the day before. VK and Michelle on La Gitana came over last night for sundown and we had a great set of conversations over some wine they kindly supplied as we talked away well into the evening.

Once I was all checked in and had taken the officials all back to shore, Ruby jumped into the dingy with me and we headed off to explore the nearby shorelines and corals. The main island shores include a long crescent shaped palm lined beach that makes up the shore side of this tiny Oinafa Bay with a concreted wharf and small building at the far end where the supply ship ties up about once of month from Suva on the mainland of Fiji.

After the beach though the coastline becomes very interesting being made of very black rocks which jut in and out and have very tiny little sand beaches between them from three to ten meters wide. The black rocks rise up as much as three to five meters above the water and many of them have holes through them forming arches. We took the dingy into several of these mini beaches and Ruby quickly did her race track routine on each one and resumed her recent new sport of sand crab chasing, much to the crab's consternation. The swell was a bit much at many of these but we finally found one where we stayed for several hours as Ruby ran her little paws off and I snorkeled in the crystal clear blue waters and explored many of the caves and arches cut into the black rock.

There is also a small island about 300m north of the wharf which you can see if you zoom in close in Google Earth or Bing and is semi connected to the main island by a large coral reef which the locals tell me they use to walk the goats over to the island at low tide. We went over for a visit at high tide so we were able to get all the way ashore in the dingy and explored the one beach and some of the surrounding jungle. We stayed there for an hour or so before making our way back to Learnativity with a stop along the way so I could jump in and snorkel around some of the large fissures that extend down to pure sand in amongst the large connecting coral reef.

Check in here in Rotuma could not have been easier or more enjoyable. I wasn't sure how this would work as there is no information available with this being such a new Port of Entry. I did know that there was a government office at the airport which is down on the west end of the island about 7 km from the bay, but VK & Michelle told me that the officials had come to them and sure enough within about two hours of arriving I heard a horn honk as five people emerged from a small pickup truck over on the concrete dock and motioned for me to come pick them up. Two ladies and three gentlemen who were the officials from the various Fiji departments of immigration, customs, health and agriculture were soon on board receiving their full complement of licks and love from a very excited Ruby the Wonderdog. As usual she was no problem for

check in either as the only request came from the two ladies who wanted to know if they could take her home with them.

On Friday, Volker, Michelle and I caught the bus at the NE end of Rotuma that took us to the "Government Station" near the other end where the market, Post Office and schools are at. With a population of only 1900 or so it was surprising that there would be a bus but we had a great ride in and back, about 8km or so I think, with all the locals who were similarly headed into "town" to go to the Post Office, which also has the island's only internet connections, pick up some fruit and veggies that don't grow on the island like tomatoes and cucumbers and to visit with friends and relatives. We did all the above as well and had a wonderful morning before catching the bus back to Oinafa Bay where our boats were anchored.

One of the characteristics of Fiji I most treasure and will remember is how deeply happy everyone is. Almost anywhere you go people are smiling, laughing and enjoying themselves from young children playing in the markets as their parents tend to their wares, to adults working together to elders chatting. The bus to and from the Government Office was filled with every age and type of person and the entire trip you could hear and feel this happiness all around you. It is deep and sincere and they share it with you as openly and freely as with themselves. Truly special and infectious. Thank you Fiji, one and all for such gifts!

Before heading back to them though we went to visit with Philippe, a local gentleman Michelle and Volker had met up with the day before and had invited us to visit him in his home. Though it was getting a bit run down his house was pretty impressive easily being the largest home on the island as his father was apparently the president of the Bank of Fiji at one time. Philippe took us out on a long walk down to the far East end of the island and was a wealth of knowledge in answering all our many questions about the incredible quantity and variety of plants, trees, ferns and bushes growing alongside the roads. As with most other parts of Fiji, Rotuma is bursting with verdant jungles of palms and most any kind of tropical fruit you can name and many you can't and have never heard from. The islanders are all subsistence farmers though so they only grow what they need for themselves and while they are very generous and sharing the market in Rotuma is just for those things like tomatoes which they don't grow locally.

Otherwise I spent most of my time the last few days in Fiji working on some writing assignments I had due and then prepping the boat for the next passage to Funafuti. The officials all came back late on Friday afternoon and I hosted them aboard once again while we completed the checking out of Fiji papers and my clearance to leave. These are all very critical to have for the next country, Tuvalu in my case and it took no time at all to complete and I took them back ashore.

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4 Wallis & Futuna

Futuna (14°17'S; 178°10'W) is a small island of 51 steep square miles that, with Wallis Island (250km away to the NE), make up the French Overseas Territory of Wallis & Futuna. Linked together in modern times, the two islands have very different characters. Wallis, a low-lying, volcanic island pocked by a number of lake-filled craters and surrounded by a lagoon, was historically influenced by repeated Tongan invasions. Futuna, a steep-to island with no lagoon, was never conquered by Tonga, but instead became linked to Samoa. The islands became associated with France initially through the efforts of Catholic missionaries, with France making it official in the late 1880s. The islands became an overseas territory July 29, 1961. (Note, we missed the big fete by two days!)

The French seem to be good custodians of their islands. They import an infrastructure of communications, medical, education and police services, staff it with Frenchmen, fund it French francs, import French foodstuffs to feed the staff, and then pretty much leave the cultures alone.

Small and off the usual cruising routes, Wallis and Futuna are not often visited by cruisers, although Futuna has become a popular destination for boats in Fiji who need to extend their time there with a quick trip out to another country. Usually, those boats arrive, drop the anchor, clear in and out in one stop with the officials, and then weigh anchor and head back south.

Since we are not planning to go here, I'm not going to spend a lot of time filling in details, but will gladly add it in here if someone sends me information.

4.1 Wallis

SV Lupina – August 2023: The passage from Samoa (Apia) to Wallis was fast but very rainy with heavy cross seas in the 3 meter range.

To our surprise, the entry through the pass at slack water (the current indicator on Navionics was spot on) was easy. As we arrived on a Sunday we first anchored just east of the pass behind Ile Faioa in mostly sand. Good holding. The Gendarmerie called us and VHF16 and asked, when we intend to do the clearing. Monday morning was acceptable to them. So the next day we motored the about 7 miles to the wharf at Matu Uta, the place where you have to do the clearing in. There is no port authority answering your VHF16 call.

We anchored near the pier on the south side, but were later informed that this area is banned due to cables they recently placed there. Good place to anchor near the wharf is just in front of the pier on a shallow patch at 5-10m. You can land the dinghy just behind the south side of the pier – be aware of the tide, so give the lines room and consider using a stern anchor. The customs office is located in the first building on the wharf (open Mo-Fr morning only).

The Gendarmerie (= immigration) came with a car to the pier, but their office is a 5 minute walk past the post office.

SIM cards are available in the post office (extremely expensive! 5000XPF for the card and 3000XPF for 3GB data). But there is also a good working WiFi at the post office, which can be freely used (access code written on the wall in the office).

After the clearing process we moved to the anchorage between the 2 islands Ile Luaniva and Ile Fungalai, 0.9nm to the NE of the wharf. Well protected from waves in the trade wind directions.

Lucky Girl – Sep 2022: Wallis is a hidden gem! We had never heard of it, but decided to stop on the recommendation of another boat who'd been there this year. I'm glad we did! Things to know:

- It's very beautiful (from the sea – we hardly explored by land) – lots of palm trees, dense jungle, turquoise lagoon, white beaches and good snorkelling
- It's not crowded – there were only 5 boats there at the same time as us – compared to 50+ in Fakarava and hundreds in Tahiti, this was a welcome change
- It breaks up the journey from Samoa to Fiji – two days Samoa to Wallis and 3 days Wallis to Fiji.
- The pass is narrow, but deep and short. We went in just after slack and saw eddies, with 2 knots against us. We came out about 3 hours after high tide, and it was much more challenging – 2 knots with us (so we were going 7+knots) with standing waves at the exit. The path from the pass to the town was fine to navigate though – no bommies in the marked channel, all depths as indicated on the Navionics chart and everything was where it was supposed to be.
- The people are super friendly – they offered to translate for us in a restaurant when they could see we were having difficulties, and hitching is easy
- Immigration and customs are straightforward – no covid test needed, just call 'Michel' on Ch 16 when you arrive and he will arrange for the immigration officials to meet you at the dinghy dock, 7 days a week. The customs office is on the dock, and is open Mon-Fri, 0800-1200. They speak French – not much English, but we managed
- The anchorage at Mata Utu right by the dock is not great – it's full of coral and, quite apart from not wanting to kill the coral, several people who anchored there got stuck on bommies. There is a 6m area about 100m E of the quay that has good holding and no coral, which is good for checkin/checkout. Afterwards, we followed the suggestion in this compendium and anchored between the two islands (Luaniva and Fugalei) near town, and dinghied the 1mile into the dock. It's a wet ride (the waves around the jetty are huge – better to take the long way round). The islands are lovely to explore (one had a couple of hammocks and a fire pit), but be warned about taking the dinghy – it's very shallow and when the tide goes out, it goes out a really long way – we had taken our dinghy all the way in at high tide and ended up having to carry it back to the water – not fun. The next time, we took an anchor and left the dinghy much further out on the sand bar, and waded in to shore.
- We also anchored in the south, next to Isle Faioa– good holding in sand, lovely beaches and great snorkelling.
- Fuel is available in Mata Utu – we hitched with 6 jerry cans to the fuel station and back
- Provisioning is limited – there are two main shops in 'town' – well stocked with dry goods but very limited fresh produce - the only fruit available when we were there was apples, and the only veggies were carrots and potatoes. No eggs, limited cheese.
- Facilities are limited – we only saw two restaurants, near the dock. One was closed the entire time we were there, the other (Snak Oceania) served good food, but only accepted cash (which is the same currency as in French Polynesia)
- There is an ATM at the post office
- There were no SIMs available for tourists, but there is free wifi at the post office, and they don't mind if you sit in their air conditioned room to use it

Java - 2010: Wallis was okay, an easy, well-marked entrance at S13.23.60 / W176.13.16 and good marked channel throughout.

Not good anchorage off the town of Mata'Utu, although we anchored off Isle Fuglei in 6m and dinghied the 1 mile across the lagoon to town. Lock your dinghy to a rock on the jetty on the South side (they tend to "borrow" things on this island since borrowing is in their culture).

The Gendarmarie is close by, but the Customs is about a mile North on the main road.

People are very friendly there, but will not pick up hitchhikers. There seems to be some buses, but don't know how regular they are. It is a nice island, but was hot, so we didn't walk around much.

The anchorage at Gahi village is well-protected, room for about 6 boats in 6m mud. We only stayed one night, dinghied the 3 mi to check in with the Gendarmie and then moved over to behind the large Isle Faioa towards the pass.

We anchored at S13.22.80, W176.10.54 in 7m sand and large coral heads.

Another boat anchored with us for 3 days since they didn't like anchoring off the town either. Nice diving and beaches there. You can rent cars there to get around, but everything is very expensive so we shopped for very little; eggs, bread (baguettes, etc), but no veggies. It's all shipped in.

We didn't stay long because another big high was moving in and wanted to get into Savusavu before the major blow.

Katie Lee - October 2008: We made it here OK from Apia Samoa. It was 298 miles. It only took 2 days, 9:am to 12:30pm. The channel was running about 4 knots against us when we arrived, but we motored in anyway.

We are in a new time zone, +12 hours instead of -11. That makes it Sunday morning so we are a day ahead of Seattle and 5 hours behind.

The only other boat here is Vesper III, the single handler French Canadian we met in Pago Pago. We haven't been ashore yet.

We went snorkeling today. The snorkeling here is not as good as some places, but we did see some things new. They have sea cucumbers about 5 inches in diameter and 2 feet long. Most we saw before were more like 2 inches in dia. and 8 inches long. The water was mostly clear near the reef but visibility was more like 40 feet. We went about 4 miles in the dinghy.

They only speak French and Wallis'ian here which makes it a little harder. Pierre from Vesper III is French Canadian and is fluent in Spanish and French has been walking around town with me. It is a different place when you can speak to the locals. We have found a few people with a little English though.

Trinda and I went around and checked in yesterday. The Gendarmie found one guy to talk to us (they were all Frenchmen) and the Duanea (Customs) had a guy from the West Indies who had pretty good English. It was about a 4 mile walk.

We rented a car with Steve and May from Ironie today and drove around the island and saw the sights. It is only about 8x5 miles so it didn't take too long to see it.

It was a nice day. We have some 500 pictures we and others have taken.

We will check out here tomorrow and head for Funifuti, Tuvalu this weekend.

Wallis is a French foreign port, much like American Samoa is sorta like another state. Most of the folks work for the government. They all get paid twice what the same job pays in France, so the stores are priced double too! Not a good place to shop. Even the fresh cheese in the deli, says either 'pour avión' and \$25 a pound or 'pour bateau' and \$15 a pound. I guess it is heavy for the plane instead of the boat! But still! That's for cheese we bought in Hawaii for \$6 a pound! I didn't actually buy any.

We left Wallis about 9:00 AM and motored down to and out the pass. It took over an hour. I had forgotten how long the island and its atoll are. We were late for the slack water, but there was still not much current. When we went in last week, we had about 4 knots against us, which made traversing the pass a slow 1 knot ordeal. The wind was light but OK around 10 knots on the stern till we rounded the southern tip of the reef and turned NW.

4.2 Futuna

Island Bound - October 2013 - Savusavu to Futuna and Back: We were ready to go.

Groceries bought and stowed, check. Chickens roasted, check. Boat cleaned, check. Fuel and water tanks topped off, check. Life jackets out and ready, Epirb tested, jack lines ready check, check, check. We had just finished our official clearing out procedure and had one hour to leave Fiji. All that was left to do was secure the outboard, lift and stow the dinghy on deck and let loose the mooring lines and we would be ready off in time for our 4pm set departure.

The weather window we had been waiting for never really appeared. We had hoped to have south winds which would allow us to sail the 236 miles but finally settled for little or no winds and a passage that promised to be mostly a motor sail. No wind and motoring is far better than winds on our nose and miles of beating into a rolling sea.

A highlight of the trip was the fishing. Bill had been busy making homemade fishing lures. He cuts the top off of a pop bottle cap so all you have is the mouth of the bottle and the screw on top. Then he punches a hole through the lid where the line will be strung. He cuts strips of shiny plastic bags –think lunch box sized bags of Cheetos or chips – folds them over the lip of the bottle cap and then screws the lid over the bottle mouth. The high test leader line goes through hole in the cap and then the bottle top gets screwed down over the mouth of the bottle. We use heavy duty double hooks on a leader line that's set off the bottle mouth with a few beads and viola' a very enticing big fish hootchie lure for the price of the hooks and line! They look like shiny squid and the fish love them. Thanks to Chuck on S/V Jacaranda for the great idea.

The lures have been paying us back in spades. Midday of the second day we caught two yellow fin tunas and a short time later a slight coarse shift to was taking us over a very promising looking shoal. Having just finished catching, cleaning and stowing two yellow tail tuna Bill was below sleeping as I charted our progress toward the shoal. As we closed in on the shallow patch I could see birds working the water and soon saw small fish shoaling the surface. I checked each of the lures trailing behind the boat for seaweed as we approached and was standing on deck in the sunshine watching behind us as we began passing over the bulls-eyed spot. I could see more small fish running on the surface and then a few pan sized fish running towards our lures. Then in a space of a minute four big fish were racing across the top of the water towards the three lures being drug behind the boat. I watched as a huge fish hit one of the lures and came flying up an easy four feet. The huge fish hit and flew up and out of the

water a good four feet with sparkling water and bits of cookie bag flying in a huge arc before the fish slammed back down into the sea. In the blink of an eye I had all three lines running with very large fish, each big enough to run and fight and all three crossing back and forth behind us. One fish successfully fought his way to freedom but with Bills help we soon had two large fish on board –a four foot Wahoo and a twenty five pound Big Eye tuna!!!! Bravo, bravo! Of course that meant a good hour of work. First the fish must be....dispatched and then filleted. Then Bill scrubs up the huge mess that always results from killing and cleaning big fish on deck while I work below in the galley where a bit of fillet fine tuning gets the pieces portioned and bagged and ready for meals and the freezer. For dinner we had a taste test of the earlier caught yellow fin tuna and the big eye –both amazingly delicious but the big eye won out in the sashimi test. The only bad part of the whole deal is that the freezer was now full and until we were somewhere where we could give fish away poor Bill was going to have to stop fishing.

Thirty hours after leaving Savu Savu we had arrived at Fortuna. The anchorage there can be very roly and uncomfortable with a south swell and that was just what was predicted for the following day along with winds on our nose going back so our choices were clear, stay for several days in the roly anchorage or leave straight off. Add to that the fact that we had no French Polynesian francs and there is no ATM on the island so we wouldn't even be able to have a meal off the boat or splurge on baguettes and imported French cheese. Plus it was astonishingly hot even in the early morning. So a quick in and out it would be. We dropped the dinghy off the deck and paddled in to the wharf to a short walk to Customs and Immigrations and then on to the Gendarmerie. Passports were stamped and papers filled out then right back to the boat for a quick lunch and in no time we were raising the anchor and off on our way back to Fiji.

The whole trip so far had been dry and hot and that's what we got going back. Right up until I heard Bill say "Kat, come up on deck and look at this sky." It was nearly six pm and we had just clearing the Somosomo straight -the reefiest part of the six hundred plus mile passage. Ahead of us was a bank of black clouds that spread completely across the skyline. At the bottom of the line of ink black clouds was a strip of lighter color clouds that were rolling and boiling. The storm front was still many miles away but within moments the seas were up and Island Bound was rocking and rolling in short steep wind waves. By the time we got our dodger/bimini side and door pieces in place the rain drops were falling and suddenly we were in some of the worst seas we have ever sailed through. Luckily the winds were not too bad –an easy 25 knots with gusts up into the mid or even high thirties. The rain was fierce and the seas were like a washing machine. The soon to set sun was obliterated and we were suddenly sailing into the night rolling and plunging and trying our best to stay dry.

In the end out of a sixty hour passage the last 12 were pretty uncomfortable. Not scary because the winds didn't get too bad but rough and wet and not much fun. It was too rough to really sleep or move about the boat so by the time we hove too outside of Savu Savu to wait for sunrise we were both completely exhausted. Our concern as we sailed into this weather front had been for the reefs between us and Savu Savu and the lack of anywhere safe to stop and wait out the weather.

As uncomfortable as the end of our passage had been we had been concerned for friends who had left Savu Savu a day and a half after us. Behind us they would be facing this weather in the open ocean and were likely to see higher winds and bigger waves. Leanna and John on Red

Sky and Charlene and Ernie on Lauren Grace struggled through much higher seas and winds over 50 mph! Red sky blew out their main sail and had the fresh water pump on their engine go out leaving them without an engine and beam on into very high seas while Lauren Grace a cat had an easier ride of things but blew out the bungee cord that attaches the trampoline on their foredeck and both came limping into Savu Savu with tales to tell. I was glad we had picked the weather window we had. Out here you can run but you just can't hide. Fair winds, Kat.

Java - 2010: We didn't go to Futuna because we were warned by the Neals on Mahina Tiare (while we were with them at Apia) that it's a hard beat in a SE wind from there to Savusavu, Fiji, if the trades come up...and that's what we were facing. It didn't look like Futuna had much to offer us since the anchorage at the town of Leava is not reported to be good (rough and the trades can blow in there), with the better anchorage being off Alofi Island which is about 10 miles from Leava where you have to check in.

Tackless II - August 2007: We went to Futuna to reset our Immigration and boat status in Fiji. See the Underway reports for our passage Savusavu to Futuna and back.

We followed our CMap right into the Leava Harbor, which is a very narrow "V" through the reef into the shoreline. The island is quite steep, so the village of Leava hugs the shoreline, and the anchorage is made even smaller by several hundred feet of fringing reef. Brand new red and green (French system—red left returning) beacons marked the edges of the reef around the tiny harbor, and a tall commercial wharf for container deliveries juts from the starboard. The beacons are a most welcome addition as the harbor was quite difficult to make out in the morning haze.

Already at anchor was Apogee, the boat we traveled up with ("with" being a relative term as they arrived eight hours before us!) and Curly's boat Stella Rosa. (Curly and his lady friend Barbara came up over a week ago and had a passage from hell with heavy weather and steering failures. They've been here since working on repairs.) We found a spot inside Apogee and got the hook down right at 0800.

On our way north, we had done our usual preliminary orientation by reading about Futuna in our Lonely Planet Guide, and it sure seemed a shame to sail all this way and not give it a look-see. So when we went ashore that first morning to go to customs, we decided among us to stay two days. We arrived with a little anxiety about customs because the last two boats to make the trip had arrived back in Savusavu without the proper clearance paper and been heavily fined. But everything seemed to us straightforward and clear, despite the language difference, and we left the office with our clearance already in hand.

The next stop is the gendarmerie, about a mile or so walk east down the coast road. Outside the gendarmerie, we ran into two men with a TV camera, and we wondered what was going on. It turned out we were what was going on! It seems that this is the first time there has ever been three sailboats in the harbor at one time, and it seems that in Futuna this is newsworthy. The reporter and cameraman --Nasalio Leleivai and Jean Francois Puakavase -- wanted to do a feature on the sailors and what we do when visitinig Futuna.

And so began our day as TV stars. The gendarmes got into the spirit of the filming, serving us a round of demitasse cafés for us in their air-conditioned office. As we've noticed on other French islands, the French gendarmes do not subscribe to a uniform code, more often than not appearing in the briefest of shorts and T-shirts.

From the gendarmerie, we moved on to the money changer, the proprietor of a small store who sat behind a counter and happily changed "Mr. Bush's money" into Central Pacific francs. He had no use for either Kiwi or Fijian dollars, and he had less use for the TV camera. "Taboo," he said, shaking his head repeatedly. "Taboo."

By now we are all hot to trot to find something to eat. We had skipped breakfast saving ourselves for croissants and baguettes. Apparently, however, there are no "snacks" in Futuna, and the only restaurants are at two the hotels and absurdly expensive. So Nasalio and Jean Francois steered us to the supermarket, whose shelves were filled with such French treats as baguettes, small rounds of Brie and Camembert, and canned pate, and armed with this loot, we went back to the TV station to wolf it down in Nasalio's office.

Once fed and watered, Jean Francois took us all on a tour of the island in the station's vehicle. About 33km all the way around, our tour took all of ninety minutes, especially as our guide had some pressure to get back for an interview with one of Futuna's two kings at the hospital.

Our first stop was a fine fale fono in our guide's own village. The fale fono in Futuna, like the ones we saw in Samoa, is where the men gather in the evening to drink kava and discuss community business. A beautiful oval structure in the Samoan style, this fale was built completely with traditional materials: an impressive latticework of beams secured with traditional sennit (much like the Fijian magimagi we saw at Nukubati) and topped by thick thatch with woven palm "blinds" lowerable for shade or protection from the wind. Inside were stacks of mats, several large tanoa (kava bowls) and the mortars used for pounding the roots. A bunch of kids were hanging out in the shade, waiting for the bus to carry them back to school for the afternoon session, and they were quick to speak with us in English. Apparently English is now a required subject in school, as per an edict from one of the kings.

Across the street is a magnificent church of cement painted to look like blocks. The church, with two side towers, an impressive wood carving of Mary and Jesus, huge wooden doors and stained glass windows was built in just five months after an earthquake brought down the original in 1993. (note, this info does not jibe with what is given in the Lonely Planet!)

From there we drove to an overlook of Alofi Island. Alofi is uninhabited but for one caretaker. It is essentially a retreat for Futunans who can go out for the day to maintain gardens or just play on the exquisite beach. There is a church there and some fales for general use, and it is a popular spot for visiting yachts to anchor when winds are out of the southeast.

On the north side of the island at Poi, the main sight to see is the multilayered tower of the Basilica of St. Pierre Chanel. Pierre Chanel was the first Catholic missionary to come to Futuna. Initially he and his colleagues were welcomed by the king, but as he gained converts the king began to feel his traditional power threatened, and sent a band of warriors to kill him. Chanel was the first missionary lost, and eventually became the patron saint of Oceania. The Basilica is huge and cool inside, lit by panes of colored glass. There must have been hundreds of pews, surely enough to seat the island's entire population! Off to the side is an unexpectedly modern chapel where the sacred Chanel relics are kept. This chapel, all angles of wood, is extraordinarily peaceful with the susurrations of the sea on the beach in the background. Oddly, in the center of the church grounds is the tomb of the man who had Chanel killed.

From there the pace of our tour picked up as Jean Francois hurried to get back for his interview. Our only other stop was to admire the lava rock formations on the northwest point.

Jean Francois dropped us back at the wharf in mid-afternoon. For two cruisers who usually nap half the day after a passage, the day's activity was quite the departure from the norm. Don and I both took the chance to crash for the three hours until five pm, when the crews of all three boats gathered aboard Apogee with Jean Francois and Nasalio as guests.

From our point of view, the evening was the traditional gathering of cruisers for hors d'oeuvres and sundowners. From their point of view, this was the official interview of the American, New Zealand and Australian crews. However since I was the only one among us to speak French, I was the primary intermediary. Now I must point out that I haven't spoken a lick of French since the Societies, and that my vast reservoir of school French (a reservoir that has stuck with me faithfully for thirty years) got badly contaminated by my efforts to learn Spanish. So, here I am after a night of night watches trying badly to make sense translating for everyone all day, and I must tell you that Nasalio, with his mellifluous Futunan accent was damn hard for me to understand.

And yet it went well, and the completed "reportage" aired on Tuesday night's news program which we were actually able to pick up on our multi-system TV (the absolute first time we have every used it!) We all looked great, and Jean Francois had edited things nicely so that I did not come across as the village idiot. Some of us had already seen the footage at the station in the afternoon, and Jean Francois made us a DVD that actually plays on our anglo computer!

Two small things that really amuse me about all this. One is that while trying hard to speak coherent French, I actually end up looking French, with the pursed lips, the quizzical tilt of the head, and the hand gestures. The other amusing thing is that a fourth boat cruised in this afternoon. Perhaps they'll have to reshoot the whole story!

We woke Thursday morning at four to the boat rolling in swells rolling straight into the harbor from the south. At four thirty our neighbor called to alert us he thought he was dragging. Fortunately, as he and his wife went to reset, they discovered they'd just let out more scope than they thought.

However, once up, it was hard to go down again as the four boats (the Kiwi boat Freedom Hunter arrived yesterday) in the tiny, narrow "V" of an anchorage were bucking and rolling in a horrid onslaught of 3-5' waves. Don and I sat up until daylight, when we added coffee to the mix, and Bill finally emerged when the dish drain with all the dinner dishes crashed to the floor.

Are we having fun yet?

No. Our little hidden paradise has become a bit of a trap. The prudent mariner would surely put to sea and ride the weather out in the open, but we can't even consider that as our dinghy and engine are in still in the water. Steve on Apogee took a shot at it, and turned right round and tucked back in, meanwhile scaring the beejeezus out of the rest of us.

So we have spent most of the morning staring at the seas breaking on the reefs around us as the tide slowly goes out and the wind ever so slowly backs toward the east. The sun is breaking through and things are beginning to settle. As soon as things settle enough, we will yank the engine off the dinghy and hoist the dinghy itself onto the foredeck to be ready to break out when the time looks right.

Later: The lull we were waiting for came in the mid afternoon. With the three of us working together and a safety on the outboard, we managed to hook it and yank it off the dinghy

transom before the next big roller got us. Smug with our success we tackled hoisting the dinghy onto the deck, and all went well until the windlass –which we use in company with the old spinnaker halyard to raise the 178 pounds of dinghy out of the water – STOPPED three inches shy of the lifelines. Well, the boys were able to manhandle the beast the rest of the way aboard, and we got it down and secured.

BUT what was wrong with the windlass? Don and the multimeter and his ½" wrenches went through every connection. We even opened up the motor cover to see if the problem lay there. To make a long story short, Don & Bill's perseverance (with as Ms. Stepandfetchit) revealed the problem to be the 150amp circuit breaker, even though it had checked positive for continuity. The problem identified, Don was able to wire it direct so we can get the anchor up not just when we are ready to leave tomorrow but should conditions get bad again.

What Uncle Bill makes of the show we are putting on about the cruising life, I cannot say. He was on hand for all the day's projects, and he has been a stoic sport about the nasty roll. Freedom Hunter left the anchorage this afternoon and reports much better conditions at sea. Let's hope they prevail until tomorrow!

5 Tuvalu

<http://www.tuvaluaislands.com/>

<http://www.timelesstuvalu.com/>

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/tuvalu>

Oh Joy II – May 2023: There are 11,200 people on just 10 square miles of “land”. For context, Disney World in Florida is 43 square miles. Tuvalu is a sovereign state within the Commonwealth. This means it's self-governing but still has ties to Britain as a constitutional monarchy. It hails King Charles III as its king.

English is the second language of the country and it's taught from the early grades of primary School. Then in secondary school (high school) “it's required to speak English in school.” This is a significant difference from other small countries where English is taught in the schools. In Fiji for example, English language learning is required in primary school but happens after mastery of Fijian and sometimes Hindi.

Westward II - November/December 2012: Tuvalu is a group of nine atolls, formerly known as the Ellice Islands.

The currency is Australian dollars. There are banks that can exchange currency, however no ATM machines.

Time zone is +12 UTC.

The locals ferment ‘toddy’ in the coconut palms, and you will often be asked to join them for some.

Learnativity - September 2010: Tuvalu became an independent country on Oct. 1st, 1978 having formerly been part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony administered by Great Britain. Tuvalu lies between 5 and 11d south latitude and longitude 176d E and the 180th meridian. It extends for a distance of 360 miles in a northwesterly-southeasterly direction and is composed of nine islands with a total land area of 9 square miles spread across approximately a quarter million square nautical miles of the Pacific Ocean.

Six of the islands are coral atolls and three are coral reef islands with a surrounding fringing reef. The tallest objects on the islands are coconut palms, which reach a height of 60-80 feet above sea level at the highest point and there is an estimated population of almost 12,000 in total. This is quite typical of many countries up in this area of the South Pacific and I'll be visiting many more in the coming months.

5.1 Formalities

5.1.1 Clearing In

Oh Joy II – May 2023: Tuvalu does not require advance notice of arrival. As of May 2023 there are no specific requirements for Covid vaccination or testing.

Upon arrival at Funafuti fly your quarantine flag. Some sources suggest radioing Funafuti Radio but we didn't do this since we arrived on a Sunday and everybody knows nothing happens on a South Pacific island on a Sunday.

We anchored off the big white building. There's also a big pale blue roof in the same area. The white building is the government offices and the blue roof is a conference center. When you dinghy to shore, aim for the blue roof building. There's a smaller blue roof nearer the water. This is where you'll find a concrete wharf with two sets of stairs leading down to the water. We left our dinghy here with a stern anchor to keep it off the concrete wall.

First to **Immigration** in the government building. This office is on the ground floor. Anybody can point you toward it.

After Immigration you must go to the **Customs** office that's "down at the wharf" which is at the northern end of the atoll. There is another Customs office in the government building but they do not process ships/boats. Only the Customs office "down at the wharf" processes ships. It's a very long walk from the government office, about 35-40 minutes. If you are stupendously lucky, as we were, the young woman in immigration who cleared you in will rally her coworker to join her in taking you to the Customs office on their motorbikes.

Alternatively, you can take your dinghy down to where the big shipping containers are and ask for the Customs office there. A third option is to rent motorbikes from the place on Tuvalu Road across from Halavai Market.

After Customs, back to the government building for **health** clearance. Here you'll need to pay a \$25 AUD fee, but it's ok to come back to pay it after you've cleared in and visited the bank.

After health, agriculture/biosecurity. Super quick form to fill out here, and once you've paid your health fee you're done.

Noonsite – December 2015: It is important that yachts do not stop at any of the other islands before clearing in (or out) at Funafuti. If you do so, even for an emergency, you might face difficulties with the police in Funafuti.

Flying the Q flag, anchor for clearance near the wharf, where Customs are located. The Customs officials may deal with everything in their office, or may want to come out to the yacht. If this is the case, the officials must be ferried in the yacht's own dinghy.

No clearance is possible from 16:00 on Fridays until Monday morning.

Permission may be requested to visit some of the other islands, however this concession has been abused in the past and officials are wary.

Immigration: Entry visas are granted on arrival for one month, renewable for a maximum of another three months, if proof of sufficient funds can be shown. The first month is free but subsequent extensions are chargeable. See fees for details.

All visitors must have a valid passport.

Customs: Firearms must be surrendered.

Plants must be declared and kept on board.

Fees: There is no charge for clearance during working hours.

Visa extensions cost AUS\$30 for each month and proof of available funds of at least AUS\$2000 must be demonstrated (i.e. a bank statement) each time.

Every island can set its own rules with regards to anchoring fees.

Pets: Animals must be declared and kept on board

Restrictions: Social customs: One should remove shoes before entering church, the maneapa (meeting house) or private homes.

The drinking of alcohol in public is not permitted.

Women should be covered from the neck to below the knees.

Westward II - December 2012: On arrival, we anchored off the government buildings (the biggest building you will see). After getting no response on VHF16, we took the dinghy ashore (there is a small jetty near government offices).

In the government building, we went to **immigration**, receiving a 1-month visa after completion of entry form. (Extensions are available for AUD 30).

Quarantine is in the same building, and after another quick form this was complete.

For **customs** clearance we had to go to the port. We walked as were told it is only a couple of minutes down the road, in hindsight we should have taken the dinghy, as it was quite some way more than a couple of minutes on foot.

Clearance was quick and easy and there were absolutely no charges. The first free country for entry we have come across. Apart from the stamp in our passport, we received no paper.

Street Car - December 2012 (from Noonsite): Make sure you arrive here Monday to Friday, customs and immigration do not work on w/e at all. We arrived at 16:20 in Friday and, despite pleading with a departing customs official, had to sit on board under Q flag until Monday 0900.

To clear, in first go to 3 story government building and check in with immigration, then follow their directions – probably to customs at end of warehouse at new ship wharf. Lots of dinghy action to get around.

Mr John VI - November 2010: Clearing-In for us went without a hitch, despite the fact that we had planned to clear out of Fiji in Rotuma, and we were unable to stop there due to weather. So arrived in Funafuti with only a local clearance from Lautoka.

Learnativity - November 2010: Check-in: Once we were anchored I took the dinghy ashore to Customs to start the check-in procedure and then “drove” down to Immigration in the dinghy as it was about 3km away.

All the official paperwork was completed very quickly and easily and while not as openly friendly as I found the Fijians, everyone was very pleasant and helpful.

5.1.2 Clearing Out

Oh Joy II – May 2023: First to Immigration in the government building. Then to the Customs office at the north end, on the wharf. The most time-consuming aspect of clearing out will be getting from the government building down to the Customs office at the wharf. We rented motorbikes for the day and did our clearing out as part of our motoring around.

Westward II - December 2012: Outward clearance is also at Funafuti – Immigration at the Government Building, Customs at the Port.

We had written a letter to customs requesting permission to stop at some of the northern islands. We submitted this to the customs office in the Government Building. Once our clearance paperwork was complete, they gave us letters for each of the islands we had requested, allowing us to visit these islands on the way north to Kiribati. The atolls we requested permission to visit were Nukefetau and Nanumea.

5.2 Funafuti Atoll

5.2.1 Approach & Exit

Oh Joy II - May 2023: We entered through Te Avo Fuagea passage, which faces east. We had swell running east to west and moderate easterly trades blowing 15-20 as we approached and we were concerned this might make the pass a little tricky. But it was completely calm and easy to get through. The pass is quite narrow here but plenty deep and easy to navigate.

We exited through the same passage with no trouble.

Westward II - December 2012: We entered the lagoon via the Te Avo Fuagea passage (the western pass) – it is narrow but has plenty of depth. We left via Te Avo I De Lape passage (the northern pass).

Streetcar - December 2012 (from Noonsite): CM93 and latest admiralty charts seem to be exact for Funafuti. But, looking at the Google Earth images, charts may not be correct in Nukualufa and other islands.

We used the Southeast pass. Very easy, although would need to be treated with caution in a strong SE wind. Follow charted lines for ship channel right into Fongafale, these seem to avoid all shallow patches.

We used North pass out. Easy, but much shallower and would definitely be trouble in north swell or big wind from N sector. Some sources recommend against this North pass.

Other boats used the West Pass and reported it to be easy provided there was good light.

Mr John VI - November 2010: We arrived at the atoll just too late to get anchored before dark and chose to hang off in the lee overnight. We put an anchor light on and let her drift, problem was the current was running and the wind came up fresh easterly during the night, so by morning we were almost eight miles off.....it was a tough beat back to the island.

When we got there, I didn't like the look of the western pass as we would have the morning sun in our eyes AND I guessed the current would be running out strong with the fresh easterly wind driving it.....Even had we been able to motor through the pass against all that, we would then have been faced with a tough beat / motor all the way across the big lagoon. SO we tacked north keeping close up to the reef, went in through the northern pass and had a close reach down to the anchorage, where we arrived just after noon.

The Northern and eastern passes are quite easy, even in poor lighting; we found our OpenCPN to be quite accurate through out but not so accurate I'd recommend moving about in the night.

Here are the waypoints from the anchorage to the North Pass:

1. 08-31.476 S / 179-11.447 E Anchorage off S End of Runway
2. 08-31.436 S / 179-11.329 E
3. 08-31.158 S / 179-11.176 E
4. 08-28.475 S / 179-08.026 E
5. 08-25.958 S / 179-06.265 E Middle of N Pass

5.2.2 Anchorages

Oh Joy II – May 2023: We anchored off the government building (the tall white one – there's only one) in about 25 feet of water with excellent holding in sand. This is some considerable distance from shore but you wouldn't want to get closer as the reef comes up fast.

As others noted this wouldn't be a great spot in strong winds from any direction except east. We had some strong squalls blow through with winds from NW and a day of 10-15 knot winds, also NW. The seas got a little bouncy but the holding is so good we weren't concerned. We've been in anchorages with significantly less reassuring elements, and being open to the north and the west in these moderate conditions was fine.

Westward II - December 2012: We anchored in two places while in Funafuti.

Vaiaku Anchorage - 08°31.489'S / 179°11.389'E.

This is the anchorage near the Government Building. We found this to be a good anchorage with good holding. We did not have any westerly winds while there, however there would be

little protection from this direction. The small jetty near the Government Building was good to leave dinghy when ashore.

Funafala Island Anchorage - 08°36.813'S / 179°05.642'E.

This was a good anchorage with a small friendly village ashore to visit.

Conservation Area - There is a conservation area in the south western side of the atoll. There is no fishing, and to anchor you need to get permission and pay a fee. The permit you obtain from the town council for \$50 per group. We couldn't get consistent information on where we could anchor, or how long the fee covered you for. We therefore did not proceed with a permit and did not visit this area of the atoll.

Streetcar - December 2012 (from Noonsite): There are two anchorages off town: one straight off 3 story government building at South end of town, boats reported good holding and easy dinghy ride in; one about half way between there and new ship wharf North of town, very good holding but longer dinghy ride

There is an all-tide small dinghy dock off Government building with good access to town (but use stern anchor). Also a very good dinghy landing on S side of new ship wharf, next to police boat dock.

While we were there boats anchored in various locations inside the lagoon & outside the marine park and there was no problem with this, no charges were made or suggested.

Mr. John VI - November 2010: The anchorage was flat (fifteen feet, sand bottom), there was a dinghy dock and

more over, we were re-united with our friends Patrick and Rebecca from "Brick House" who had come up from Rotuma and arrived the previous evening. It's always nice to have friends in an anchorage and as we were feeling somewhat worn, we were especially grateful for their welcome.

The **anchorage** is good in anything Easterly but would be a worry in anything else; one has to bear in mind that they did have a Tropical Storm go through here in October a few years back!

Learnativity - November 2010: My anchor position: 08 32.746 S, 179 03.593 E

Billabong - September 2005: Tuesday we motored to the South East anchorage off of Funafala Islet. (Approx anchorage position:

During WWII most of the villagers were relocated to Funafala for the duration of the war. Most moved back afterwards, but there is still a small community of about 30 or so that live here. The water colors in this area were truly amazing, although due to suspended algae & plankton the visibility wasn't real great. We spent two nights; enjoying a walk along the outer reef, a bit of snorkeling, and a quick visit to the settlement.

5.2.3 Useful Services

Money

Oh Joy II – May 2023: Tuvalu is still a cash-only economy. There are no ATMs and no credit cards accepted anywhere. You go to the Funafuti National Bank and trade currency. We understand they can make money transfers there but we had US cash so just did it that way.

They get make the exchange rate whatever they want because there is no other way for you to get AUD. We got \$1,002 AUD for \$740 US. So \$1 AUD to \$0.74 US. The internet said the exchange rate should have been \$1 AUD for \$0.66 US. If you know you're coming here, we recommend getting AUD currency elsewhere so you arrive ready to spend.

Streetcar - December 2012 (from Noonsite): Still no **ATM**. Bank will change USD, Euro etc for AUD (local currency, with Tuvalu coins) but exchange rate is painful.

Fuel

Oh Joy II – May 2023: We've found it less stressful (if more work) to re-fuel with jerry cans than to try to take the big boat into a wharf we're unfamiliar with, and which generally has surprisingly few places to tie the boat up and no protection against a concrete wall. We understand there is a wharf here for re-fueling but we did not investigate or use it.

We took jerry cans ashore and walked about three blocks to a small blue shed (next to a larger green shop) and bought diesel at \$3.60 AUD per liter. They only had enough diesel for one run on our six jerry cans (we needed two runs), and they said they'd ordered another barrel to be delivered the next day. It didn't arrive the next day, and on the day after that we had to go elsewhere because we were leaving the next day and needed our fuel.

In our explorations we'd found a fuel station that's kind of hidden, off the main road toward the ocean side near the big blue supermarket. It's called MacKenzie Trading Limited and they sell diesel at \$2.80 AUD/litre. This saved us about \$100 AUD and I wish we'd looked around a little more for our first full run. They are significantly further from the dinghy dock area but also provided us with a motorized cart and driver to deliver. We paid the two helpers \$5 AUD each for delivering us and helping carry the jerry cans down to the dinghy. They genuinely tried to refuse our money and were surprised by our offer, but we insisted.

All fuel stations that we saw appeared to sell both diesel and gas/petrol as well as a gas mix.

Fuel stations are NOT obvious here. The only signage you'll see will be a torn piece of cardboard on a shed wall with prices handwritten on it. There will also be a lot of official "No smoking" sort of signs. This is how you know fuel is sold there. There are no other signs. But ask people where to buy fuel and they'll be able to point the way.

Westward II - December 2012: We got **diesel** from Pacific Energy for \$1.90 AUD per litre. The wharf is good to tie up to at high tide; it has large nylon fending strips. They brought out a fuel truck to us. Unleaded **gasoline** was available for \$2.00 and outboard mix for \$2.45.

Streetcar - December 2012 (from Noonsite): You can get **diesel** AUD 1.60 per litre (you have to 'jerry can' quantities less than 1,000 litres). Buy it from the Pacific Energy depot to the north of the new port (which is to the north of the town) - its cleaner. They claim never to run out. Buy the guys who fill the jerry cans a coke and they'll probably deliver the jerry cans to the dinghy dock in the new port. They will bring a tanker down to the dock for more than 1000 litres.

Mr John VI - November 2010: Petrol (gasoline) is easily available anywhere, sold out of buckets in most shops. It seems to be mostly clean.

Water

Mr John VI - November 2010: I did get some **water** which I was warned to boil well if used for drinking (we just used it for showers and looking at the dregs in my jerry cans it was good that we never put it in our tanks!).

Internet

Oh Joy II – May 2023: You can get SIM cards and buy a data plan in Tuvalu. The government funds the only telecom company in Tuvalu. It's a public agency, the Tuvalu Telecommunications Corporation. Most know it as TCC. Apparently the government has not allowed any other companies to come in with telecom services. However, they're seeing now how expensive the infrastructure is and apparently are partnering with a telecom company in the near future to get better coverage. We did not buy a local SIM or data plan since we have Starlink on board and felt we could manage without phones for a week or so.

Westward II - December 2012: There are a couple of **internet** cafes. We generally went to Filamona Lodge as can logon with own PC's.

There is **mobile phone** coverage and we purchased a SIM card for our phone. Calls were quite expensive back to Australia and New Zealand.

Streetcar - December 2012 (from Noonsite): Internet is available, but very very slow so do any downloads etc in Fiji. Best we found is wireless at Filomena Hotel by airport. This is also a nice place to sit and wait, you even get to watch an airplane land twice a week. Patience is required.

Learnativity - November 2010: I was able to sniff out a **WiFi** connection and while it was very on/off I was able to get a new batch of weather files and catch up on my regular Emails

Boat Parts and Repairs

Oh Joy II – May 2023: There's a hardware store on Tuvalu Road north of the government building. It's called Ocean Hardware and you'll find bolts, washers, outboard engines and similar items. It's across the street from the JY Ocean Trading Supermarket.

There's also a shop nearby on the same street called Nang Store that has a bizarre supply of things like a small inverter, motorbike batteries, carburetors (not sure if for motorbike or outboard engine) and similar.

Katie Lee - November 2008: I got the windvane quadrant **welded** at the PWD (public works division). I thought I had one more grinding wheels for the bench grinder we bought in Hawaii. I made a deal with the welder to give it to him for the repair job, but I couldn't find it. I did find a couple of angle grinder disks and a wire brush wheel. He said it was 'exactly the right payment!' I think he was glad to get them. It is all back together and looks like it will work good again.

5.2.4 Provisioning

Oh Joy II – May 2023: The best grocery store we found is called JY Ocean Trading Supermarket. From the dinghy landing it's on the main road (called Tuvalu Road) and north. It's not a short walk, but if you take it slow and stay in the shady spots you'll be there before you know it.

JY Ocean Trading Supermarket has a lot of freezer options for all kinds of meat and frozen vegetables. We also found fresh apples, carrots, pears, enormous cabbage and bok choy, onions and potatoes. They had some basics like powdered milk, flour, rice and a weirdly big selection of cereals like Choco-pops and Weet-a-bix.

There are a lot of smaller markets for groceries as well, but less well-stocked and none had fresh vegetables beyond onions and potatoes when we checked. For eggs, the atoll doesn't seem to have any chicken farmers (though we did see a handful of chickens in some yards). So eggs only come with the supply boat, which comes once per month. Apparently eggs disappear quickly once they come in.

Westward II - December 2012: There are a number of supermarkets and small stores, where you can purchase most food items. The challenge is fresh fruit and vegetables, as are mostly imported and look a bit tired by the time they hit the supermarket fruit and vegetable section.

There is a Korean garden that you can get fruit and vegetables from on a Friday morning. Need to be there early to get a good number. Then you purchase a pile of fruit and vegetables when your turn comes up. Everything was charged at \$3/kilo.

You may be able to purchase from the Korean gardens at other times, but we did not make further inquiries.

Streetcar - December 2012 (from Noonsite): For fresh produce, you can get cabbage, salad and some other vegetables and fruit at the "Taiwan Garden" farm other side of airstrip (next to prison), but it can be expensive. There are other supermarkets. Best is in side road, just off runway approx 500m north of airport building - behind basket ball courts.

Mr John IV - November 2010: Fresh Fish is about the best deal as the fishermen are always landing small Tuna and these are available for just a couple of dollars, however you'd best make sure its FRESH-fresh as they don't seem to gut it or refrigerate it whilst out on the boats.

Billabong - September 2005: We spent our first two days in Funafuti relaxing and getting a feel for the town and area. There are two main roads, running parallel for about 1.2 km before joining up on either side and then continuing along a single, narrow road. Although there are three main **markets**, a **bakery**, and one restaurant, fresh food of any sort is practically nonexistent (it's an atoll after all!).

5.2.5 Wining and Dining

Oh Joy II – May 2023: We had a pleasant lunch at the **Funafuti Lagoon Hotel** restaurant. Two items on the menu: Chicken in Oyster Sauce (\$18 AUD) and Stir Fried Shrimp (\$21 AUD). Both served with what was once frozen vegetables and white rice. Delicious if expensive.

Sue's Kitchen, north from the dinghy dock on Fongafale Road, was also tasty. We had the day's special of Chicken Curry and it was delicious. \$12 AUD per plate. She also offers fish and chips, burger and chips, sandwiches, and roast chicken and chips.

Our other meal out was at **Halavai Restaurant** on Tuvalu Road. This is Chinese food. I had the Chicken Chowmein and Harry had Chili Chicken. Both tasty. \$9 AUD per plate. Enormous servings. A lot of locals (what am I saying – they're all locals since we were possibly the only visitors on the island while we were here) came in for lunch, boys and men eating a pile of food that would literally feed a family of four.

Westward II - December 2012: We found a couple of restaurants with cheap and cheerful meals. Do not expect anything too fancy. There is the Filamona Lodge, The Blue Ocean Restaurant, and Vaiaku Hotel. There is the sunset bar at the end of the island where you can get a cold beer, but they do not serve meals.

Mr. John VI - November 2010: I don't think Funafuti is ever going to become a great tourist destination, it's rather overcrowded and a bit of a slum, apart from which, they have a rubbish problem that is getting away from them. The hotel by the dinghy dock has dancing and a BBQ meal for \$15AUS on Wednesday nights (if they have enough bookings) and we might have been tempted had we not been completely knackered that first evening.

Billabong - September 2005: We did enjoy a few decent meals at the restaurant though. It didn't take long before our favorite thing to do was visit the Government building. An impressive three story, mostly glass building, hosting a variety of official offices ... but most importantly the building is air conditioned!

5.2.6 Getting Around the Island

Oh Joy II – May 2023: Motorbikes/mopeds are the way to get around in Funafuti. There are some cars but they're far outnumbered by mopeds. The people of Funafuti are careful, slow drivers and there seems to be a speed limit but we didn't see it posted anywhere. You can rent mopeds for \$20 AUD for 24 hours per bike from a shop on the main road across the street from the Halavai Market. You can ask at the Funafuti Lagoon Hotel (a half block from the dinghy landing) where to rent mopeds and they can describe it, if my instructions are unclear.

Westward II - December 2012: Everyone gets around on mopeds with very relaxed road rules.

We hired a moped for \$5 for return the same day. To keep 24 hours is \$10 AUD. We went from one end of the island to the other in no time. No helmets are required and road rules appear to be optional.

You can use the moped to carry all sorts of goods, babies, baby baths, pushbikes, luggage and more – and they can carry up to 4 people! (All of the above witnessed by us, although we did not attempt ourselves).

Mr. John VI - November 2010: Most transport on the island is on two wheels and there are a plethora of motor-scooters and bicycles.

There is also a bus service that runs the length of the island. We took a ride in one of these clapped out mini-busses on our way to Customs and discovered that all braking was done with the hand brake; not that there was a lot of momentum to stop as the thing only had first gear!

Katie Lee - November 2008: We took the bus all around the motu, \$1 each and only about 30 minutes all the way to each end. There is only one road most of the way. Through the center of town and next to the airport there are several streets though. They all live here on the one motu. There are several other motus but two are game reserves and the others are too far to commute, I guess.

Billabong - September 2008: One day we rented bicycles (called pushbikes here) and road the entire length of Fongafale Islet along with MJ & John from Island Sonata. While the flat

paved roads made for easy riding, the blazing sun wore us out. By the end of the day we were ready to collapse.

5.2.7 Sightseeing and Things to Do

Westward II - December 2012: Visit the information centre on the second floor (northern side) of the Government Building. They do not have much information, but do have handy maps on where the main sites and services are.

There is a Philatelic Society that we found interesting. It is amazing the volume of stamps on display. We bought some to send back to stamp collecting friends at home.

Visit the airport when a plane is coming in. The place is humming. Fire Engines drive down the runway, sirens blaring to get people off, although the last minute mopeds still zoom across. Nothing like a good game of chicken.

Mr John VI - November 2010: There are a few local handicrafts available and some small supermarkets have basic items at rather expensive prices.

The people are all most friendly and considering the conditions in which they live they are surprisingly happy and contented..... not bad considering that their whole island may well vanish below the waves in fifty years or so if some of the climatologists are correct in their predictions!

Customs was at the 'Port' near the north end of the island so by the time we were cleared in we had actually seen all there was to see.

So it was that we arrived on the Wednesday and 'Cleared out' on the Friday.

If we had stopped in 'Nuku', perhaps I would be more positive about the Tuvalu Experience, as it stands I'd say the only reason to stop would be if it gets in the way and you want a little break. Otherwise, I'd give it a miss!

Learnativity - November 2010: Had a fun day exploring and experiencing Fongafale, the capital of Tuvalu. It isn't a very large town but it sure is a long one!

Fongafale sits in the crook of the long thing boomerang shaped Funafuti atoll which in parts is less than 100' wide so all the houses and buildings are spread on either side of the road that stretches along the length of the atoll.

The Americans built a large **airport** on this small but very strategically located island and plunked it down right in that same crook of the boomerang so it sits smack dab in the middle of town. Yesterday being Tuesday it was "plane day" when the twice weekly (Tues/Thursday) Air Fiji flights come in and it is quite the social event with seemingly everyone on the island making the trek down to the airport for the event. All the crafts people, pretty much all ladies, had their wares on display consisting of mostly necklaces and other jewelry made of shells and a few carvings and cloth.

To picture this airport you have to pretty much forget any other airport you've seen and instead imagine a drag strip with two long straight parallel ribbons of concrete that stretch about a mile or so with grass on either side and in between. No tower in sight and the airport "terminal" is a small open sided building sitting on the side of the runway at the north end.

Most of the time the runway area serves as a general purpose playground for the kids and living area for many others who use it to camp out on, but every **Tuesday** and **Wednesday**, about 10 minutes before the plane is due to land, the warning siren starts to rev up slowly, sounding just like the old WWII warning siren it is. It climbs up the spiral of volume and pitch like an old man climbing a big spiral staircase and finally reaches the top and holds for a minute or so before fading back down in reverse. Everyone calmly makes their way off the runway area and then there is another two minute warning siren and we all get up and watch as the plane touches down with that telltale screech of the stationary tires kissing the pavement for the first time and the telltale puff of smoke.

Later I took off in my dinghy and we went off cruising the **beach areas** north of town looking for a secluded spot where I could get away with taking my dog ashore for a run. Unfortunately we didn't find any as the atoll is so narrow that all there really is for the whole length of the islet is the road and a coral and rock beach on either side. Any spots that were wider were filled up with house. Ruby spent the whole time perched precariously on the top of the bow tubes of the dinghy, hyperventilating as she sucked in all that beach air and the visions of a mad dash on the beach or grass danced in her head, but alas these visions will have to do for a while as there was just no place for her to go ashore for a run.

Billabong - September 2005: Along our bike tour we enjoyed the stunning turquoise waters of the lagoon along with the sounds of breaking waves coming from the ocean side of the atoll. We looked for a few of the sites pointed out in our Lonely Planet Guide; finding the rusting Japanese fishing boat that was wrecked during Cyclone Bebe (1972) and the borrow pits (small man-made lagoons where coral material was extracted for the construction of the airstrip during WWII) -- now stinky with pigsty drainage.

Chris was determined to find David's Drill, a drill site from 1898, where Darwin's controversial theory on how atolls are formed was proven true (in 1835 Darwin proposed that coral atolls were built on slowly sinking volcanic rock, which at the same time was being built up by coral, whereas others believed that the reefs grew on underwater platforms that had been raised by volcanic action).

We looped and we circled and rode and rode without finding this 'famous' hole in the ground. We received many strange looks as Chris continued to ask local after local (none of which had heard of the site of course). Finally, three days later, we found it! And oh how uneventful; a concrete base with a small hole in it, surrounded by weeds and bush! Well, it was fun looking for it anyway!

On our bike trip we also discovered one of the huge problems on Tuvalu ... trash. With their growing population, limited space, and trend away from subsistence agriculture towards a cash economy, their environmental issues are mounting. A throw-away mind set still seems to exist, but the increasing dependence on imported packaged food is leaving them with an uncontrollable rubbish problem. The north side of the road actually ends at a sea of trash that seems to run to infinity. In addition, the rising sea levels due to global warming could eventually wipe out the entire atoll. It's sad to see such deep environmental issues in such a lovely place.

5.2.8 Fishing, Diving, and Snorkeling

Westward II - December 2012: The diving and snorkeling inside the lagoon was ordinary. On the couple of dives we did, the coral looked silted and washed-out – mainly stag-horn coral – with small fishes near the coral heads.

We did some drift dives through the Te Ava PuaPua Pass and Te Aa Mateiko Pass, both on the incoming and outgoing tide. Luckily, there was another yacht around with one diver on board, so we took it in turns to sit in the dinghy. The current was quite strong and you got a bit of speed up! We saw plenty of fishes, both big and small, and some large schools. We saw turtles who were not at all worried by our presence, and a few sharks – mainly reef shark, hump-head Maori wrasse, moray eels, and more.

Learnativity - November 2010: However on the way back to Learnativity in my dinghy, I stopped at something I'd spotted on our way along the beach which was two white poles sticking out of the water at a rakish angle about 100m from shore. Sure enough and it was the masts of a sunken ketch (sailboat with two masts) that had sunk. It was a bit eerie as I peered over the side of the dingy and stared at the whole sailboat silently resting on its side down there under about forty feet of clear blue/green water.

I tied the dinghy up to the top of the main mast, a rather odd feeling as well, and then put on my snorkeling gear and dived in to check out this wreck. I dove down quite a few times to look around the deck and hull of this forlorn boat resting on the wrong side of the surface and based on the growth I'd guess it had sunk only about a year ago or so.

Katie Lee - November 2008: We went **snorkeling** with Steve and May about noon. May is from the Solomon Islands and she recognized some cone snails that they eat 'at home' so we gathered a few to try. They were very like clams, but more tender and a little sweeter. Very nice too.

5.2.9 Impressions

Oh Joy II – May 2023: There's something different about Tuvalu from the other small South Pacific countries we've visited.

I had a chance to chat with a woman who spoke excellent English and works for the government. Her name is Fenua and she is happy to talk about her country. She works in the government offices as a director. Her team is in charge of monitoring fiscal responsibility for the 7 public programs administered by the Tuvaluan government. I could've talked to her all day.

Why is there no ATM Machine?

Tuvalu uses the Australian dollar for their currency. Fenua tells me credit cards are in the 10-year plan for Tuvalu. "You must think we're so old-fashioned." She says it's taken so long because the cost for credit card infrastructure is high and her country is poor. "The people here don't spend a lot of money so to put in an ATM or have merchant services would cost a lot and we wouldn't regain that expense for a very long time." This is so sensible.

I ask Fenua how much money the average Tuvaluan makes. She tells me a government worker at the base level, sweeping the floors, makes about \$10,000 AUD. "A director – and here I know she's referring to herself because her eyes focus inward for a minute – makes at the top level about \$20,000 AUD." I ask her how the other people on the island make money, those who

aren't lucky to have a government job. She says there's fishing, and this means men leaving home to work on big fishing boats and sending money home to their families.

Why do Tuvaluans have such beautiful teeth?

Their smiles are bright and white. Everywhere we've been, including New Zealand, dental care is poor. But here I notice right away that so many people have really good teeth. Of course not everyone. But in comparison to Fiji or Tonga, where most people had something going on with their teeth, the Tuvaluans shine. I ask Fenua about this and she says she sees plenty of people with poor teeth but she didn't let her son have "lollies" until just recently as his teeth are bigger and stronger. (When he smiles at me I see his two enormous adult front teeth.) We've only visited a couple of small grocery stores but I didn't see big displays of candy ("lollies") or soda as there is elsewhere. I wonder how much the government has to do with this.

Learnativity - September 2010: Funafuti is the capital of Tuvalu, and is itself made up of thirty islets with a total land area of 625 acres on a reef surrounding a lagoon 13 miles long and 10 miles across at its widest point and a population of about 2700.

In WWII Funafuti became a major forward base for the USA forces until the Japanese invaders were driven from the Gilbert Islands to the north and as a result the present airstrip which dominates the town was a WWII airstrip that for reasons of expediency at the time was laid directly across the most fertile lands of the islet.

The island is very thin and narrow being perched on the reef as it is so there is really just one road running down the length here and all the homes, businesses and schools are spread out along it. My initial impression is that it is one of those rather sad situations where it is too big to have the quaintness of a tropical village and yet too small to have the benefits and interests of a city, but I'll give it a much more fair assessment tomorrow when I can spend some time with the locals and looking around.

Billabong - September 2005: The first thing we noticed on arrival was the dramatic increase in temperature! Even the water temp was up, hovering around 87 degrees.

We were anchored near the main part of the atoll, Fongafale Islet. The Islet is only 12 km long and between 10 and 400 m wide with well over 4,000 residents. Our Lonely Planet Guide reported a density of about 1600 people per sq km on Funafuti!!! The entire country totals only 26 sq km, making it one of the world's smallest countries.

The people of Funafuti were quite friendly, although we noticed they tended to keep to themselves more so than the Fijians and other South Pacific Islander's we had visited. It also seemed as though the local drink, Toddy, might be a bit of a problem here; we ran across many a drunk man at all hours of the day. Toddy is fermented coconut juice.

The most activity seemed to occur in the early morning or late afternoon (outside the hours of the heat of the day); where we enjoyed watching the locals zoom around on their mopeds. The other thing that stood out to us was their grave sites; most existing in the front of people's homes and extravagantly decorated with flowers, shells, fabrics, tinsel, and even flashing twinkle lights that glowed through the night!

Saturday, October 1st, was Tuvalu Independence Day. We got up early to attend the 7am parade. Which really didn't get going until 7:30 am (typical Island Time). And which really wasn't a parade as we know it. Five groups stood standing (at a somewhat weak attention) facing the large grandstands. Next the prime minister 'inspected' the parade (basically walking around the various groups), and then the parade began ... the five groups marched along the outer edge of the field. And that was about it. So much for floats and fireworks! The parade was followed by young children races and food & drinks.

Afterwards we returned to our boats to cool down, coming back in around one for the soccer tournaments. By now the sun was burning full and sneaking its way into the grandstands. There was nowhere to hide! We watched all of the Division B game and then part of the Division A game before the sun did us in and we had to leave, seeking out shade. Apparently these were huge matches; Funafuti was playing their neighboring atoll, Nukufetau. The crowd was rowdy and the event was fun to watch. We don't know how the players managed to not pass out running around in the heat of the day like that!

After a rest and cleanup, we came in for the evening festivities. M.J. and I followed the local tradition and wore head leis. We started with dinner out, and then crossed over to watch the dance performance that was taking place at the local meeting house (maneaba). The dancing and chanting was a bit mellow, especially compared to the hip shaking dances of Tahiti, but fun to watch nonetheless. We especially enjoyed watching some of the crowd; a few joined in, smiles proving the pure enjoyment received from these local dances.

When we first read in Lonely Planet that waiting for and watching planes land is a big thing "to do" in Funafuti, we laughed out loud. But before long we were joining the rush of locals to watch the planes land and see who would be arriving next! We're actually surprised planes still use the old airstrip at all; in its current state I'm not sure it would even be considered a good road in the states! We laughed too when we thought of all the strict safety violations of the States that were being broken. On approach a single fire track parks facing the runway and sounds its siren for a minute or two; this is the cue to clear the runway if you happen to be playing or walking on it. We stood less than a couple hundred feet from the runway as the plane touched down and barreled passed us. There are no fences, security, or it seems general safety measures!

Besides visiting the government building to take advantage of the air conditioning, we were also continually checking on the status of their wireless internet installation. We couldn't believe it when Chris first read that Funafuti had free wireless internet (think of all the emails & updates we could do!), but sure enough they are trying. Of course who knows when it will actually work, everyday that we checked, we were told "tomorrow"! It wasn't too much of a disappointment however, as there was more than one internet 'cafe' and they were air conditioned as well! Chris worked a deal with one of the owners who allowed him to download large files for minimal cost ... Chris was working on his satellite photo collection which are great navigational tools (sometimes better than the outdated charts we own).

By Thursday we were ready to move on. We departed Funafuti at four in the afternoon enjoying a leisurely [short] sail to Nukufetau. We were quite surprised when we went to pull in our fishing line for the evening and discovered not one, but TWO yellow-finned tuna! The excitement of the catch led to stupidity as Chris struggled with the second fish; while standing on our itty bitty transom step, at night, underway, WITHOUT A HARNESS!!! Afterwards we severely chastised ourselves, and promised to never let that happen again. We only kept one Tuna as they were quite large and we didn't have that much room in the frig.

5.3 Visiting Other Islands

Westward II - December 2012: Outward clearance is also at Funafuti – Immigration at the Government Building, Customs at the Port.

We had written a letter to customs requesting permission to stop at some of the northern islands. We submitted this to the customs office in the Government Building. Once our clearance paperwork was complete, they gave us letters for each of the islands we had requested, allowing us to visit these islands on the way north to Kiribati. The atolls we requested permission to visit were Nukufetau and Nanumea.

Streetcar - December 2012 (from Noonsite): We were initially told it was not possible.

However, a favourable response from head of Immigration indicated it may be possible if head of Customs approved. We met with the head of Customs and on request wrote him a letter explaining our intentions - to visit Nukufetau and Nanumea for a few days en-route to Kiribati, and committing to keeping in email contact with Customs regarding our whereabouts.

Our request was granted. We were cleared & provided with a letter to show to the Police on both islands.

This prompted a number of other yachts in Funafuti to do the same, and each similarly had their request granted. There is a serious interest amongst the Tuvalu authorities in promoting tourism through responsible yachting, but this granting of permissions was initially greeted with some suspicion and only made after a few day's consideration and based on our assurances of keeping in email contact and not abusing our privilege in visiting these islands.

Mr John VI - November 2010: I did ask in Funafuti about stopping at Nukufetau on the way north but was told this was a definite NO-NO and one would need a special clearance and a return to Funafuti before departure onwards.

With this sort of regulation in place it is small wonder that very few (if any) yachts visit Nukufetau or any of the outer islands of Tuvalu; I really don't think they are doing anything to help their tourist industry..... I'm fairly certain that the people of Nukufetau would love to have the cruising yachts visit and it wouldn't take much to instigate some sort of 'Clearance Facility' which could be handled by the islanders.

5.3.1 Nukufetau (N of Funafuti)

Westward II - December 2012: This is 87nm from Funafuti; we did it as an overnight passage.

We didn't connect as well with the local community here as we have in other places. They seemed quite lethargic and didn't engage with us much at all.

We entered the lagoon through Teafua Pass. These are some waypoints provided by SV Renata for entry into the lagoon.

1 Outside 07°59.637S 178°19.324E

2 Middle 08°00.167S 178°19.922E

3 Inside 08°00.582S 178°20.450E

4 On the way to village 08°01.105S 178°20.327E

5 Anchorage near village 08°01.296S 178°19.3E

On arrival went to police station to give our letter from customs.

We **anchored** in several locations, waypoints are:

North East 07°58.572'S 178°25.550'E 16m

North West 07°56.208'S 178°22.659'E 8m

Mid West 07°59.555'S 178°20.659'E

Village 08°01.964'S 178°19.656'E 15m

We moved around a bit based on wind direction. We found we could get protection from all winds, but a strong westerly uncomfortable at high tide even in the best of spots.

The water was much clearer in the NW corner, but had to pick your way through bommies to sandy patch on southern side of island. We had NE winds while here so was okay, except for small roll right at high tide. Also, this was a conservation area, so no fishing allowed.

There is **Internet** at the government station at the telecom building. You can take your laptop and costs approximately \$5 for 49 minutes.

There is a bank where you can change **money**, but no ATM machine.

Fuel supplies were low on the island, and we did not need any so were okay.

There are several small **shops** with basic staple foods. The supply ship comes from Fiji, and this was delayed due to the recent cyclone Evan, so shelves very bare.

We **snorkeled** and found some interesting bommies and channels. We got 'approached' by a school of 15 sharks while snorkeling in Deafatule passage. We decided to make a hasty retreat to the dinghy.

We did not dive as would have had to go outside the reef and the seas were big.

Billabong - October 2005: Position: 08°02.88' S 178°22.79' E We arrived in Nukufetau yesterday morning. Nukufetau is the next atoll north of Funafuti (about 50n.m.). We are very happy we got permission to come here. (Funafuti is the main port, so we had to check out of the country there, and normally they don't want you stopping anywhere once you've checked out).

It was an enjoyable overnight trip. We left Funafuti around 4p.m. for a slow relaxing sail. Just after dark, Chris checked our fishing line and sure enough something was on it!! We thought it was a bird at first, as there was one nearby squawking away. Then as Chris pulled in the lines, I turned on the flash light and we had caught not one, but TWO yellow finned tuna!!!

I also enjoyed a huge lightening storm. It's fun to watch when they are off in the distance and not right over you (that's when fun turns to scary and pain-in-the-ass). We luckily skirted squall after squall as the convergence zone just missed us.

The next morning Chris got to enjoy a huge pod of dolphins that surfed along at our bow.

We easily navigated the pass entrance, and due to wind strength and direction opted to anchor in the Southeast corner instead of in front of the village. After setting our hook, a very friendly police official came over to check our papers (Funafuti had faxed them the okay for our arrival).

5.3.2 Nanumea

Nanumea is about 245 NNW of Funafuti.

Westward II - December 2012: We found the locals here welcoming and friendly.

The entrance to Nanumea is a narrow channel, blasted through the reef. It is well marked and reported to have a depth of 2m at low tide (on lagoon side of channel) – on entry we had 3m on mid-tide.

There is also quite a strong tidal flow through the channel to watch out for.

These are the waypoints we got from SV Celsius:

Outside channel: 05°40.380'S 176°06.368'E

Inside channel: 05°40.120'S 176°06.552'E

On arrival the police paddled out to us to ask for our letter from customs. We handed this over and were immediately welcomed.

Anchorage: 05°40.256'S / 176°07.081'E

This was nice and calm, protected from 3 sides by island and reef on the other.

Internet is available in the telecom building, \$5 for 49 minutes, and can use your own laptop.

There is no ATM, however can exchange **money** at the bank.

Petrol is available from some local stores.

There are a lot of small **stores** with basic supplies only.

We found no restaurants, other than having a meal with local village people.

For **sightseeing**, go to the church and climb the stairwell in the belfry tower – it has a great view. The church has beautiful lead-light windows.

Snorkeling inside was interesting and shallow. The water was extremely warm, only saw small fish. We went to southern end of lagoon. We snorkeled on the outside reef, but very sandy and sloping away. It was not that interesting so we did not go back for a dive.

Street Car - December 2012 (from Noonsite) - We didn't go ourselves due to a lack of depth in pass. However, three boats we know that did visit in Nov 2012 gave good reports, including the following information:

- Pass is approx 20m wide, blasted through reef in a straight line.

- Can be strong currents so go through near slack. Reported to be approx. 1.5 hours after high and low water.

"We arrived in Nanumea at 7:30 at low tide we had a current flowing out at 1 kt. We saw 6 ft depth, this being on the lagoon side. We had more than 9 ft all the rest of way in the cut. The channel is very well marked, new steel post on each side lighten or reflective. 2 way points: Outside S 05 40.380 .E 176 06.368. Inside S 05 40.120 E 176 06.522" ... "We have left Nanumea at High tide yesterday afternoon. In the pass I have seen 2.7m on the lagoon side."

"I took the dinghy through first with the depth sounder, and found the shallowest spot where you described on the inside, at about 6.5 feet an hour or two after what we thought was low water, but the water was still ebbing, at about a knot which was nice to work against. We lifted the rudder all the way and the keel about half way about half way through the pass and didn't touch. Apparently the Swiss boat came in yesterday several hours later and had three knots of current with them! must have been quite frightening."

Mr John - November 2011: Nanumea (5°39'S., 176°08'E.), Also part of Tuvalu and something you may want to look at on the way north, is the northern most atoll of the Tuvalu group, consists of a coral reef, with two principal islets, Lakina and Nanumea, about 0.5 mile within its W and SE extremities, respectively, with a lagoon between them.

There is a small boat channel, available to boats at HW, which leads W of the W arm of Nanumea into the lagoon.

It has been reported that a pier, 82m in length, extends from the village, and that two other piers exist in the lagoon.

Reefs extend off the SE point of Nanumea. !!!!

Billabong - 2005: An hour or so later we went with Island Sonata (who made the passage with us) to meet Teseai (the police official) and his son. They were coconut crab hunting near an old WWII plane wreck. He showed us the B17 crash and also gave us two coconut crabs.

Back on Billabong we swam (in 87 degree F water) and napped.

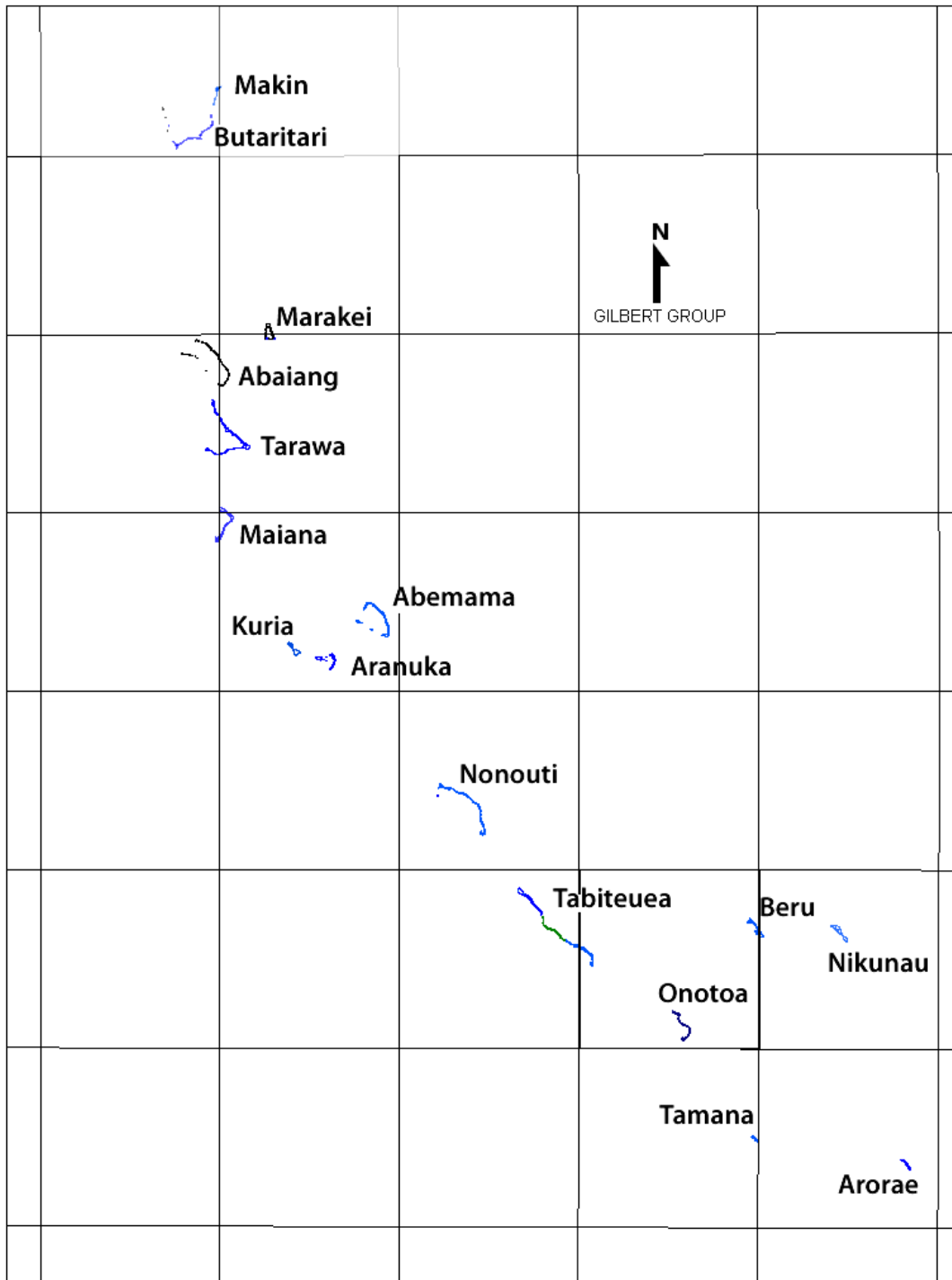
This morning a local stopped by to say hello, and in the usual friendly local manner, gave both us and Island Sonata a fish! It's not proper to say no, so we gratefully accepted!

We can already tell in difference between the small village here in Nukufetau versus the more largely populated Funafuti. We are excited to go into the village tomorrow and get a closer look!

6 Kiribati - Gilberts Group

Note Kiribati is pronounced Kiri-bahs.

<http://www.kiribatitourism.gov.ki/>



6.1 Language and Customs

Learnativity - October 2010: As with many of the countries out here in the South Pacific, Kiribati is a group of islands which are very small in size individually and yet spread out over a huge area of literally millions of square miles of ocean. Yet each country and often each island within them are very different in so many ways and makes for endless fascination and varied experiences for me.

The native language in Kiribati is somewhat similar from what I can understand to the languages in Hawaii, Polynesia and other spots I've been. It has far fewer letters in the alphabet, thirteen I think in total and some uniqueness in pronunciation. For example there is no S in the alphabet but they pronounce the TI combination as an S so the country is spelled Kiribati but pronounced "Kiribass". Similarly the town I was anchored off was Betio but pronounced "Besso".

Also the people don't refer to themselves as Kiribatian but rather as I-Kiribati. Physical traits wise they have dark olive skin similar to India but typically a more husky build. Culturally they were very different than Fiji in that they are very communal and have very strong community traits.

For example many of the people on Tarawa come from the many outer islands of Kiribati and they stay in large buildings that I found everyone on my travels all over the island. These look a little bit like a church at first from a distance in that they have very tall steep roofs, usually made from corrugated steel if they are more recent construction as most were and some with the more traditional roof of woven palm leaves. There is only one floor, always made of smooth concrete and all there are no walls inside or out, just posts to hold up the large roof above. Each island or clan has their own building or several of them in many cases and everyone lives, eat

6.2 Approach, Arrival, and Formalities (Tarawa)

6.2.1 Approach

Ariel IV – December 2015: We made landfall around midnight and so we were slowly making our way to the pass we saw a big, 180 meter cargo ship leaving the harbour and we followed him on the AIS all the way out and he was right on track on Navionics charts and Google maps, but on Open CPN we were surprised he took a northern course and went over shallow waters, so with that in mind we followed our Navionics charts.

We also had the radar on and all the buoys were visible 4-5 miles away.

We came to the first buoy No 1 and this was unlit, broken! But the rest of the lights were working ok.

Coming in the big wide pass the Open CPN did show us like 100 meters to the north, so if you do not have Navionics just follow the Buoys and lights, they are close and very easy to see the next.

Buoy No 5 came perhaps 20 meter before but no practical problem, but on the Navinics charts there is a 1,3 meter just SW of buoy No 5 but that should be 11,3 meter instead!

Buoy No 6 and also the next buoy to port has been changed to red and that makes more sense, red port and green lights starboard!

We passed buoy No 10 and then you are in the anchorage and when we came all the big working lights in the harbor was on and we saw every boat and mooring bouys.

We anchored 03.00 and felt very happy, and after a beer and a one little tequila shot, anchor shot, we slept and slept!

We did have full moon yes, but we also did have clouds and some rain coming in and it made no difference, all was very well marked.

The harbor has also been rebuilt, there is a long, perhaps 300 meter container ship going out north of the old pier, there is a orange light at the end of the pier.

Kiribati Cruiser's Guide - 2013: Anchorage is west of the Pier, amid anchored ships. It is in 15-25 ft of water with a sand bottom and good holding. The anchorage has the potential to be choppy. Do not get to close to the atoll or the wrecks on the beach as the tide shallows quickly. The following are the way points for Tarawa Atoll channel. The waypoints are a guide and caution is advised:

N01.25.100 E172.54.345 outside the channel

N01.24.744 E172.55.152 north of a flat rusted can with a short stake on top inside the channel

N01.23.448 E172.55.857 Can with a tall stake inside channel, take to port. Next is a buoy with a green post on top with an up arrow, pass north off starboard

N01.21.646 E172.56.268 A red nun, take to port. You will see 2 more rusted cans in a line toward the wharf, pass to port

N01.21.934 E172.55.823 Off one of the cans above

Mr John - November 2010: The reef at the SW of Tarawa extends well offshore but, for yachts, does not shelve steeply so once you get down to thirty feet, just follow the contour around and follow it north till you see the fairway buoy.

The unlighted buoy is easy to spot in calm conditions, less so when it's blowing but not a bad radar target.

Here are the waypoints we used:

1. 01-25.001 N / 172-54.172 E
2. 01-24.369 N / 172-55.898 E
3. 01-23.794 N / 172-56.213 E
4. 01-23.468 N / 172-56.369 E
5. 01-23.026 N / 172-56.272 E
6. 01-22.387 N / 172-56.133 E
7. 01-21.873 N / 172-55.779 E

6.2.2 Checking In

Kiribati Cruiser's Guide - Downloaded Early 2013:

Radio Procedures: On entering Kiribati waters, contact the following on VHF range channel 16 Port Betio Tarawa "Tarawa Radio" – Tango 3 Charlie

Boarding Party – Clearance: On arrival boarding party officials (Customs, Health, Immigration, Police and Quarantine) will board the vessel to arrange clearance. Clearance involves processing of crew and passengers, intercepting dangerous goods, collecting any revenues applicable and issuing or withholding clearance.

Boarding Party Requirements - The Master is required to produce the following documents:

- Clearance from last port (Zarpe)
- Crew List and passengers
- Crew declarations
- Arms and ammunition – (may be secured on board or temporarily seized and held by police until departure.)
- Yacht particulars.

Cost: Clearance is free if done M-F during normal working hours (8:15am to 4:15pm). After hours on weekdays, the cost is \$5 per customs officer per hour. Weekends the cost is \$10 per customs officer per hour.

Immigration: A 30-day stay is granted to visitors on arrival, this may be extended by 4 months by application to Immigration. Visas are not required for US, Canada, Australia, NZ, and many EU countries. See the full list on the Kiribati website.

Westward II reported Feb 2013: We obtained a 3 month extension from immigration for \$60 each. The fee was the same for 1 month, and you could get up to 3 months.

Ariel IV – December 2015: Call Tarawa radio on VHF 16 when you get inside the pass and they will ask for your boat information and they will arrange a boarding party for you. If you arrive weekends you just ask if they can come on Monday to do the clearance, we do not know what the overtime fees are, we checked in on a Sunday and did not have to pay anything, but they had four other boats to check in that day so perhaps they did not bother.

You anchor to the right of the pier and harbor but look out for mooring bouys and the swinging old ships on rope, be prepared to go inside the harbor with your dingy to pick up the boarding party, they are four sometimes five? So if a small dingy they would like to have a life vest (immigration lady) and you have to go several times.

You pick them up in the very end of the harbor in the left corner you see some steps going down in front of the blue house. The "party" is nice people and no problems, customs and bio security wanted to look down below, they just opened some doors and looked random, just to have done it.

You get 30 days visa on arrival, you can then pay extra, AUD 60 dollar, valid 4 month if you want to stay longer.

From Westward II - Jan/Feb 2013: On the way into port we called Tarawa Radio on channel 16 to give them our ETA. On arrival they arranged a boarding party to come to our boat. We

didn't realise that you had to go and pick them up, so the boarding party was ready, and our dinghy wasn't!

We went to pick them up from the fishing wharf, and only quarantine was there.

Immigration arrived an hour later, and we got a stamp in our passport for 1 month. He had his stamp with him, but other boats had to later go to the immigration office to get their passports stamps.

The next morning we got police and customs on board. All wanted a crew list and details of the yacht.

We received no paperwork, and there was no charge.

From Noonsite, reported Dec 2012: Fly yellow flag and call 'Tarawa Radio' on VHF16 once through the pass and be prepared to give vessel and crew details, this is a 7 day a week service.

- Anchor in Betio inside fishing boats, watch out for rapid shelving and be prepared to swing in all directions. Some fishing boats are anchored on rode with very long scope. Most wrecks are visible.
- Betio anchorage likely to be tenuous in strong Westerly although holding appears to be good.
- Dinghy landing in the harbour is difficult, be prepared to be imaginative.
- Customs and immigration and others will come to boat for clearance, be prepared to provide transfers from/to shore.
- Clearance does not seem to be possible on the weekend.
- You will then need to go to Biariki Island (bus ride is an easy and interesting experience) to complete formalities with immigration department.

Savannah - October 2011: We entered the pass around 10:30 at night. Andy drove using the radar and electronic charts while I stood on the front with a spotlight trying to identify the buoys. There are a few, but not all that are described on the charts. As we approached Betio, we pulled out of the channel and anchored. In the daylight, we were surrounded by derelict boats and wrecks. Hindsight, entering at night might not be the best idea. We picked up our anchor and anchored to the right of the wharf.

We called "Tarawa Radio" on ch 16. They took our particulars (boat name, last port, next port, net/gross tonnage) and asked us to go to channel 06 where we would talk to Port Control. They told us we could anchor and to stand by for more information on check in (all of these conversations took several tries to complete, this is the condensed version). They called us about an hour later and set up a time for the "boarding party" to come to the boat. At our set time, Andy went in the dinghy to pick them up (they don't have their own boat, so be prepared to pick them up). The boarding party is supposed to consist of Customs, Health, Immigration, Police and Quarantine. Ours only included Customs and Health. We had to go to the other two ourselves. Customs was extremely simple in as much as we had a newbie and he didn't even ask us to fill out a form. Other boats were greeted with two customs agents but still said they were laid back. Health was a simple form. After waiting a few hours with no one showing up, we went to Immigration.

To get to immigration, take a bus to Bauriki, across the causeway (80 cents per person) and get off in front of the town square. With the ANZ/bank on your left, walk down the road on your right, towards the water tower. You'll walk past some vendors (good Chinese rest. On the left), and across from the water tower you will see a few government offices. Immigration is the first one.

To get to quarantine, after parking your dinghy, take the first road on your left. You'll walk a little bit and see the police station on your right. Go in there and ask where quarantine is. It's close by but there's no way I can explain in writing how to get there. You can take care of your check in with the police at this time too. They need a crew list and a copy of your boat documentation.

After checking in (or before hopping the bus to immigration), go to the tourist office. They have some good maps of the islands and can help orient you. After parking your dinghy, go to the second street on the left and turn, the tourist office will be on your right.

Mr John VI - November 2010: On the morning after our late afternoon arrival, we called in on the VHF at 0830 to say we'd arrived and had to wait an hour or so for immigration to come down from Bairiki. I then had to use the dinghy to ferry them all out to the boat; two at a time, two guys and two gals.

They didn't seem too confident when they were sitting in our canoe with little freeboard and a lumpy sea running in the anchorage.

The paperwork however, went smoothly and everyone was most friendly and helpful; it was interesting that they actually had no papers, they explained what they wanted and then we just made it up on the spot. So, it was back to the good old days of Carbon Paper and inky fingers!

Interlude - 2005: We recommend getting a one year multiple entry Visa from a Kiribati consulate and a letter giving permission to stop at specific atolls before you reach Tarawa. The Immigration officials in Tarawa, still require yachts to clear into Tarawa first and then after clearing out, will allow a three day stop at one atoll.

However, the High Commissioner at the Kiribati embassy in Suva, Fiji, told numerous cruisers they could stop at the outer islands before checking into Tarawa if they had a visa.

It is important to check in with the local police on any island you visit (even if you are officially checked into the country) and show them the visa.

We found that by inviting them to a tidy boat and offering them a soda and some snacks for an hour or so gave them some indication of our character. Hospitality is very important in their culture and the police are very serious about monitoring the villages. They have a very peaceful, tribal lifestyle where the children are very open with strangers and other villagers.

An atoll may also have a Quarantine Officer that will also ask to see your yacht and if you have any plants or animals aboard. This unofficial check-in before Tarawa would be similar to stopping in the Marquesas or Tuomotus and going to see the local Gendarme before arriving at Papeete, Tahiti the only real Port of Entry in French Polynesia.

On arrival in Tarawa you will receive a one month visitor's permit free for the first month and then one month extensions for \$60USD per person (not issued in advance). This charge is in addition to the \$60USD three month visa or \$80USD one year multiple entry visa, which starts

the clock ticking when they are issued at the embassy. The one year multiple entry visa may come in handy on the trip south back through Kiribati.

6.2.3 Checking Out

Ariel IV – December 2015: You start with the Immigration in Bairiki and then the Custom in Betio, we have not heard of any fees from the other boat that checked out.

Westward II - Feb 2013: Betio in Tarawa is the outward clearance port.

We caught the bus to immigration at Bairiki, and then to customs at Betio, to clear out. There were no problems and no charges.

However, we have heard of yachts being charged from \$0 to \$50 for outwards clearance, so appears to be quite random.

Downtime - December 2012: Early morning I started my run around with paper work and visiting local markets...

Around 1pm, I went back to the boat. I got all papers for next port, but did not pay the tax yet... Truck with diesel just arrived... Pete was so pissed off after waiting diesel for 5 hours, that we left without paying tax.. he-he.. no idea how much it was! *(Ed Note: Thanks Pete and Daria, for leaving a clean wake--that'll be really helpful for the rest of us following behind)*

Savannah - Oct 2011: Go to Immigration first, then Customs to checkout. When we left there were no fees. However, boats after us were charged \$25/day harbor fees. Evidently, these fees are on the books, they have just never charged them before. Ask what the fees are when you check in so you don't get surprised.

Mr John - November 2010: Our clearance out did take a little longer than expected, there was some delay whilst they found someone to approve our request to call at Butaritari on the way north, and then there was a little extra time involved in getting out to Bairiki on the Bus to see Immigration.

6.2.4 Obtaining Permission to Visit the Outer Islands

Ariel IV – December 2015: We suggest that you give a letter asking permission to visit whatever outer island you want to see while in Kiribati and give to immigration and customs, it will save you one day of going to Bairiki where Immigration is.

We have spoken to several peoples about the issue of clearing out and then have a permission to visit some islands on the way north but that is not going to happen, they have to change the law first. We told them that both Fiji and Tuvalu made exceptions but No, not here. The manager of tourism have several times had this agenda in the parliament but without any luck.

Westward II - February 2012: We enquired about stopping at the northern islands after clearing out of Tarawa; however they would not allow this.

To go to any island other than Tarawa atoll, you need permission to go to the other islands from both immigration and customs. We requested permission to go to Abaiang, Butaritari, and Abemana. But even with this permission, yachts still must return to Tarawa.

We received our letters for the above islands, which on arrival are to be presented to the local police.

Streetcar - January 2013 (via Noonsite): In order to visit Butartari, it was necessary to obtain permission from both Immigration and Customs in Tarawa (the same applies for all the outer islands).

- We submitted a written request to Immigration & then Customs (in person). They each provided us with a letter of introduction to give to the local police on arrival in Butaritari. This stated the length of time we were permitted to stay, and boat/crew details.

- We were directed to hand the letters to local police in Butaritari immediately on arrival. The police in Butaritari were expecting us and waiting for us to report in with them. They wanted to see permit letters and passports.

- Permission to visit one of the outer islands is granted for a fixed period, usually no more than 2 weeks.

- Current policy (6/01/13) is that all yachts MUST return to Tarawa for final outward clearance, and yachts are not allowed to stop at any of the outer islands after making final outward clearance (without prior permission).

Noonsite - Posted Dec 2012: To visit other islands during your stay in Kiribati you will need to write a letter to Principal Immigration Officer requesting permission - at least 3 days prior to intended departure. You will also need to clear with Customs to visit other islands.

Current policy is that you must return to Tarawa for final clearance. It is possible there may be some flexibility in this. Suggest writing a letter and offering to stay in daily email contact with Tarawa authorities. This may work - but may not.

Savannah - Oct 2011: At the time we were there, Oct, 2011, the officials were not allowing anyone to visit the outer atolls without coming back to Tarawa for checkout. This was a change from their policy in September. Several yachts wrote letters trying to change their mind and by the time we left, they were waivering...definitely ask about it and try talking to the tourism office too if they're on the fence.

They seem to be trying to attract more yachts (at least that's what they said). If you do want to see the outer islands, you have to write a letter to Immigration asking for permission. We wrote a very simple letter stating the amount of time we were requesting and which island. Abaiang is a 25-30 mile sail, and from what other's said, well worth the effort. When we took our letter back to Immigration, they typed up another letter and gave it back to us. This was to be presented to the police upon our arrival.

Brick House - April/May 2011: When we went to Kiribati the first time (Nov 2010) we went first to Tarawa and got permission to visit Bhutaritari for 10 days, as did 2 other boats. 2 others were rejected- who knows why but we didnt stick around to find out.

The second time we went to Kiribati was because we hated Majuro so much (because of the repeated attempted break ins to our boat and the governments treatment of it primarily), that we decided to spend the rest of hurricane season in Kiribati where we at least felt safe.

That time we again went to Tarawa first and got a permit to go to Abiang and one other island just south of Tarawa which we never went to).

We came back to Tarawa after 2 weeks went back in the same office and showed them the pictures and talked about the people we met there, and told them that we now would really like

to go to some of the southern islands - and which ones did they think we would enjoy the most. They offered suggestions and we asked for permission to go to those islands, but then showed them on the chart how difficult it would be to come back to Tarawa and then back down the chain again to get to Vanuatu.

They saw our logic and hesitantly granted us permission to go there without coming back to Tarawa. We suggested that they require us to send them emails as we moved from island to island so they would know where we were at all times, and that we would send another email as we left the last island. We suggested that this is the way that they do it in Fiji - that a form is required to be sent in when you get to the last island and that perhaps they could require that too.

But they said good ideas and said just to go and signed paperwork as such. Now with one caveat...at the time there was a little bit of a war going on between immigration and customs, and we were told that their permission was all that was required, but not to tell Immigration--just clear out with them without talking about plans to stop on our way out.

So we sailed south and not a single person, chief, major whatever ever wanted to see a single piece of paper nor asked us for it.

Now with all of that said, there is a long history there of cruisers doing bad things in the islands. Not many boats go there so if one boat does a bad thing, that's about half of all cruisers. In Abemama they hadn't seen another boat for a year, but in Tabituea they had not seen a boat for 4 years, Kuria had never seen a sailboat there if I remember correctly. But the people are somewhat fearful of sailboats (hopefully not as much since we were there and tried to be good representatives).

More advice later by email: The first time we went through, we had to write a letter explaining where we wanted to stop, for how long, and why. It was a one page letter. This is also how we started the second time that we went and got a "permit to cruise to 2 northern islands and come back. It's also where we started, although we left some blanks in the WHERE to section because we wanted to get a feel from them about where they would allow etc...so start with that letter in hand.

But most of all- just ask them what you can do, ask them what you need to do to make that happen, and just go with their pace about how quickly they will approve it all (we waited at tops a week for approval). Don't get upset or mad at them - it will get you nowhere at all. And understand that there seems to be no rhyme or reason as to who they allow to do things and who they don't...the nicest people in the world were rejected, and some people I wouldn't have allowed to go got allowed with little hassle. It depends on the mood of the persons involved on the day that you ask.

If you don't get the feeling you are going to get the answer you want with someone, just go back the next day and hope to find another person. There is definitely no way to do it in advance - it seems they really want to size you up to decide if you should go to their out islands or not....so can't advise on anyone to write to.

Mr John - November 2010: We did visit Butaritari on the way north, but we did that with a permission from the Customs, without the Immigration knowing about it.....At the time, we didn't know that Island Visits were under the jurisdiction of the Immigration department and

didn't think to ask them about it.....Customs had said it was OK... we went.... We enjoyed...we moved on to Majuro.

It wasn't until we were headed south through Kiribati again that we discovered that this visit was not quite kosher.

On the way north Customs gave other yachts permission to call at both Abaiang and Butaritari.....which they did and there were no repercussions.

I wanted to do it legal on the way south and made sure I was getting the official version.....

Some friends of ours found a way to get around the regulations and still have a permit in hand even though officially 'cleared out'. You may be able to do similar but the risk is yours to take.

I do however offer the following which was sent to me by the yacht Brick House:

"I think you heard that Tom on Running Tide checked out a few weeks ago from Tarawa to go to Fiji and he claims that Immigration SUGGESTED to him that he stop somewhere on the way to Fiji - so he got a permit to stop at Abemema from immigration. He didn't even talk to Customs about it.

Then a few days ago, Summer Sky got a permit to cruise several islands while still checked in, and were given a permit that allowed 5 days in each of the 4 islands that they named, with a set of dates for each of the 4 islands, with no transit time in between. So they decided to just check out and leave.

They asked immigration about stopping at one or two of the islands on the way out, and immigration told them no. Then they said that they were allowed to last time they came to Kiribati, some phone calls were made, they waited a few more hours, and then were given a letter to allow them to stop in Kuria and Tabiteuea on the way south after checking out."

So there you have it..... you may get to spend time in Paradise, you may have sailed a couple of thousand miles to be disappointed.

Whilst this state of play exists..... Kiribati is NOT a great cruising destination although it could be once they decide to clear yachts at the northern and southern end of the group. Maybe they will come up with some clear cut guidelines on the permits that they will issue to Immigration, Customs and publish via the Tourist board, that way we can all be working on the same page.

If however, you are going this way anyway..... then it is certainly worth calling in and doing whatever you can / what ever they allow you to do. The people and the culture of the outer islands is something special and we had a GREAT time and met some really NICE people here. The toughest thing about visiting the islands is finding nice ways of politely refusing all the stuff they want to give you but really can't afford to part with!!!

Katie Lee - December 2008: To check out here we need to write letters requesting permission to stop at the outer islands to both immigration and customs. We were told that in order to stop at the outer islands, we would have to pay for two officials to fly there and process the paper work there. We decided to go straight to Majuro instead.

Noonsite (summarized) In 2008, a boat named s/v Atlantis stopped in Butaritari on their way south from Majuro, without first clearing in to Tarawa. They were arrested on arrival in Butaritari (after announcing on the Rag of the Air that they were going to stop there without prior permission)--the officials apparently heard about it. They claimed when arrested that they had

engine overheating problems. This was eventually resolved, but causes problems for cruisers following in their wake.

Read for yourself the whole thing:

<http://www.noonsite.com/Members/doina/R2008-04-18-1>

6.3 Tarawa

Interlude - November 2005: Unlike the mostly unspoiled charm of the outer islands, Tarawa is truly a stinkhole. One only goes there to process visas and provision, and to tour the WW II sites.

Kiribati is comprised of 33 coral atolls which are sprinkled across the Pacific roughly the distance of NYC to LA with a population of less than 100,000 people. One third lives in south Tarawa on some low islands a few hundred feet wide and connected by causeways. The result is that they, including the main island Betio, are crowded and dirty, and lacking in any basic municipal services like water mains, garbage pickup or sewers.

6.3.1 Anchorages

Westward II - Jan/Feb 2013: We found the best spots to be outside the parliament building or at Bikenibeu.

Betio (Port) - 01°21.970'N / 172°55.802'E

This anchorage was not comfortable or well protected and is among the fishing fleet. It is necessary to stop here to clear in, but we left as soon as we were able to.

Parliament Anchorage - 01°21.400'N / 173°02.021'E depth 4-5 m

Need to be careful of shallows and sand bars when navigating to anchorage.

We were able to use the parliament jetty for dinghy access – there is a channel through that can be accessed even at low tide, so a convenient anchorage for getting ashore.

It is nice and calm if winds SE to N, otherwise gets a little choppy.

Bikenibeu - 01°22.292'N / 173°06.950E depth 8 m

There is a channel ashore that is accessible even at low tide although need to be careful where you leave your dinghy so don't get left high and dry. We usually anchored in the deeper pond where the locals anchor their boats.

There is a fish and produce market, Bikenibeu Chinese Restaurant and shops ashore for groceries.

Downtime - November 2012: We anchored at 1°21.915N 172°55.791E next to two other boats in 25 feet of water.

Mr John VI - November 2010: Anchoring outside the harbour is fine in good weather but when the trade winds blow, even from the SE, the swell curves around and under the outer jetty causing some uncomfortable pitching.

Being a small boat we were forced to sleep in the saloon as we were almost shipping water over the bow. It does go down somewhat at night but it's still uncomfortable.

In 88/89 I went inside and anchored..... It was fine but you needed half water to attempt the channel with over six feet of draft and I'm sure my keel went into the mud at low water. They may have done some dredging since then as our friends with Brick House (a Valiant 40) went in and anchored May 2011, reporting a \$20 / month charge and plenty of water.

The local authority has put a large rubbish tip just west of the Harbour (What would you do with prime waterfront?) and whilst this is downwind I'd be careful of rats if anchoring in the harbour. Also, there were some 40gal drums dotted around on the bottom, used for moorings, to try not to move around at speed....especially when going astern!

Going to temporary anchorage inside, just to get the clearance done, makes good sense, especially when you have a little dinghy like mine.

Whilst we were there, another cruiser had his engine stolen off his dinghy..... this is unusual, but if you want to leave your dinghy tied to the dock whilst you party till 0400hrs then its best to leave it near the watchman on the west shore and maybe make an arrangement that he watch over it.

During the day we left our dinghy near the steps in the SE corner and used a stern anchor to keep it clear; the steps are well used by the locals so don't block them.

North Tarawa is quite some distance down the lagoon, we just hired a car to go down there this trip; however on my previous visit some friends with seven foot draft went and anchored aways off the runway (Airport) and spent an enjoyable couple of months there. You can get ashore at either location and Taxi/Jitney rides are frequent. This end of the island is less crowded, much cleaner and well sheltered, so if you want to spend some time in Tarawa this should be considered.

Getting there, just motor up the southern shore, 200yds off the reef, (which is clearly visible) with the sun above and behind.

Interlude - 2005: We spent one night at Bikeman Island; a sand spit in the middle of the lagoon that has beautiful pink sand, great shelling and was a nice reprise from the filth of Betio.

6.3.2 Useful Services

Ariel IV – December 2015:

Diesel: With jerry cans easy, you go to the same stairs you picked the "boarding party" up and just across the road is the gas station, 1.53 dollars per liter. If you are a couple of boats you do it together and no could even be fun!

We do not recommend to go in with your boat, it looks shallow, sandbars at the entrance and we see rats and cockroaches everywhere

Water: You do not want to drink any of the water here!! If somebody offers you tea in a house be polite and ask for a coconut water instead. If you do not have watermaker, collecting rainwater is the best option here, it rains nearly every day or night.

Propane: There is a filling station cross the road from the Gas station, also easy access from the dingy and left corner of the harbor.

Internet: The best we found is on "George Hotel", it is one block up from the harbor, pass the gas station, cross the main road and go up 100 meters and then it is to the left, nice bar and

restaurant and you buy a voucher for 2 Aus-dollars per hour and it is almost ok as long as there is not too many people. The food is also good and nice staff.

There is also now 3G available and have not heard if any have better luck with getting internet via telephone?

A few years ago, there was one boat who got internet via the port authorities and it was also cheap, but we will not involve the port people because we heard some rumors that we also shall pay anchor fee in Betio, like all the Taiwan fishingboats etc, but if nobody tells us we will not insist paying!

Banks: There is an ATM machine at the ANZ Bank close to Moel supermarket in Betio. There are also ATM and Western Union exchange banks in Bairiki.

Westward II - Jan/Feb 2013:

Water: There was not much rain while we were here and we didn't like to run our water maker in the lagoon, so we enquired about water at the wharf. We didn't need to get any in the end, but here is what we found out.

The fish factory sell good quality desalinated water to fishing boats for \$8/tonne. If you need any contact the General Manager Mr. Lee to make arrangements.

Then contact Port Control (VHF channel 06) to arrange to tie up to the wharf. Explain you are getting water, as only one watering point. You can also organise delivery of bulk diesel if required.

Washing: We found most places charge per item for washing, making it very expensive. Mary's Motel in Bairiki charge \$10 per load (very big loads).

Car Hire: For \$50 per day, you can hire a car from the Utirerei Motel (phone 22530) at Ambo Village. There is no paperwork, they just give you keys and off you go.

Internet: There are a few internet cafes around. We found the most convenient internet at Bikenibeu. Here you get vouchers from TSKL for \$1.80 per hour. With a booster you can then log on from the anchorage.

Alternatively sit at TSKL to use the internet – the office is air-conditioned.

The Chatterbox café also has internet, but \$5 for ½ hour.

Downtime - November 2012: You can have **fuel delivered** to the boat for \$5 a gallon! Although it is a pain...you have to go to the fuel office on the left side of road by big fuel tanks and pay first. They brought ours in a tanker un-metered? but I think the amount was right? The 8-10 am delivery was actually at 1:30 and the hose was a 2 inch reduced to 1 inch with no valve on the end! let her rip and cross your fingers it will all fit!

We met Kaure, who has a **cab** and is a retired school teacher and knows every one the island. He might be a good tour guide. He gave us a ride two days for 6-7 hours all over town and charged \$30.

Dinghy dock: You can park the dink at the head of the harbor next to concrete steps.

There is an **ANZ Bank** if you take the first right from the dinghy dock and walk half a mile.

Savannah - Oct 2011: You can buy **wifi** from the Port Authority for fairly inexpensive rates. The best deal is for a week or a month, but with a month you get over 700 hours...almost impossible to use them all. I think it was \$35/month....cheaper for less time. One thing to note...they use this for their employees so the social networking sites like Facebook are blocked. We were able to get news, email and update our blog on blogspot without any problems, though. The speed was sporadic from fairly decent to extremely slow. For the most part, it was somewhere in the middle. Most were able to get a weak signal from the anchorage, but with the booster antennae, we had no problems.

We were told you could also buy wifi, less expensively at Moel's. We saw their signal on our computer but when we went to ask, they appeared as if they knew nothing about it. Worth a shot...they obviously had a signal, we just probably talked to the wrong people. We found communicating to be harder than planned as we thought they spoke English here. Some do, but most don't speak it very well. And some pretend they do, but it turns out they don't....just be prepared if you're making any official inquiries or plans (like taking on diesel or asking about the outer islands).

Diesel/Gas: While we did not fill up in Tarawa, two other yachts did. We were told they do it by the barrel, but these other yachts were able to arrange for the tanker truck to pull up to the wharf. They scheduled a time for 10:00. The tanker showed up at 9:00 and the yachts weren't there yet, so it left to deliver diesel around the island. They had to wait until it came back at 2:00 or so. They even had the time in writing. So, get there early if this is the route you take (and be prepared to wait). They were also told they wouldn't have to pay to be tied to the wharf, but once there, people gave them a hard time. In the end, I don't think they had to pay, but there didn't seem to be a particular policy in place.

Learnativity - October 2010: As I walked around Betio after getting my checking out papers and was trying to see if there was an internet connection. The island itself is very well connected I had previously learned and most people who have a home, have full internet access there, all they need to do is provide the modem and the satellite based internet connection is provided by the state. However it is almost all wired and I was only able to find a WiFi signal when I was at the Immigration building and found an open WiFi print server connection for a while when I was there.

But as I was exploring Betio I heard a lot of excited voices of young children coming from a small little shack set back 100m or so from the road. Walking closer to find out what was going on I found it to be filled with banks of computers each with one or more young boys, about 6 to 10 years of age, fully engaged in playing games. I stepped into this hot and humid box full of fun and soon realized that they were playing online games and after checking for a WiFi signal and not finding any I asked if I could jack into their wired network and they said "Sure!", cleared off a space enough for my laptop on one of the benches, handed me an Ethernet cable and bingo, I was online!

No doubt due to my ADD habits of having many many windows and tabs open and active at the same time and bouncing back and forth between them every few seconds, I soon had a large audience of boys surrounding me as they tried to figure out what this weird white guy with the white hair was doing. They were particularly enamored every time I went to Google Earth where I was zooming in and around the Majuro atoll

The teacher in me wanted to launch into a full explanation and capture this “teachable moment” to show them how much more fun they could have beyond games when they are online but I resisted and simply “flew” us all over to Kiribati, then zoomed down to Tarawa and then all the way into the building we were sitting in. They loved it almost as much as I did!

6.3.3 Provisioning

Ariel IV – December 2015: We found the stores are not any different to the ones in Tuvalu, expect no more!

In Tuvalu you could get good fresh produce but not here! Bananas, 3 dollars per kilo, and some pumpkins in the streets minimarket.

The biggest shop in Betio is Moel and when the supply ship came in they had carrots and some cabbage, apples and oranges -expensive!

The same white fluffy bread here as in Tuvalu.

Westward II - Jan/Feb 2013: There are plenty of supermarkets and small stores. If you shop around you can get most things. It depends on when the last supply ship was in as to what is available.

Fresh fruit and vegetables are a lot more difficult, as are dairy products. Some local produce is available if you hunt around.

Downtime - December 2012: Across from the ANZ bank (first right from the dinghy dock and walk half a mile) is a shop that has **fresh produce** in a refrigerator, onions by the bag full and tons of **frozen meat**, and canned and **paper goods**. Best shop I saw in town.

Some prices for things in (AU dollars)

- lettuce - \$10,
- 1 avocado -\$8,
- 1 apple - \$2,
- 12 eggs - \$8,
- huge flying fish at local market \$2 per pound
- coconut \$0.5.

Savannah - Oct 2011: There are stores in each of the little towns. The biggest one in Betio (within walking distance of the boat) is Moel. They have most everything you need in a warehouse type fashion. Next door to Moel's is a smaller store that carries a good bit of Indian food. We found it to be cleaner and carry better produce when available. At times we saw cabbage, carrots, lettuce (wilted), apples, plums (bruised), onions, potatoes, squash/pumpkin, and even little tomatoes. But like everywhere else, they weren't always desirable looking and if they are, grab them when you see them because they won't be there when you come back. I saw unrefrigerated eggs, but the produce for the most part was refrigerated. When we were at Immigration, I did see a tiny market where I bought some of the pumpkin/squash and a small bag of tiny tomatoes. If you walk to the back of the shops by Immigration, you'll see a long table. The ladies sit here every day. I also saw breadfruit here and other food they had already made and were selling for lunch.

6.3.4 Wining and Dining

Westward II - Jan/Feb 2013: There are a number of restaurants and cafés.

For a proper coffee, treat yourself at Chatterbox Café. Inside are a lot of local crafts, DHL, and a travel agent.

We enjoyed Aboy's in Betio and Bikenibeu Chinese for freshly cooked, tasty, Chinese style food, at a good price.

Don't get too excited by the culinary delights of this country. Only very basic fare is available.

Savannah - Oct 2011: In the general area of the Immigration office, you'll see some tables outside. This is a Chinese restaurant. You order inside and they'll bring it to your table. We found it to be cheap and pretty good (no after effects either...an added bonus).

The only other place we ate at was next to Moel's, Aboel's Kitchen. It was more Chinese food, much like we had near Immigration but slightly more expensive, and they sell beer. The restaurant on the other side of Moel's also sells Chinese food that some other cruisers reported to be pretty tasty as well.

Learnativity - October 2010: One thing I was looking for this time was a Kiribati flag. It isn't absolutely required and referred to as a "courtesy flag" by marine law and custom in all countries, but for me it is simply the right and only thing to do. However I had not been able to find a Kiribati flag in Fiji or anywhere on my way so I was now in search of one. So I used my usual strategy of just asking in every store or person along the streets where I might find one. After about half an hour of this and many stops in many shops I met a man at one small shop who thought long and hard about where I might find one and couldn't really come up with anything after consulting a few others but he pointed me to what appeared to be the main store in town and said to go ask there and so I did. While I was there I heard someone call out "Wayne, Wayne" and turned to find this man walking up to me and telling me that he had called around (cell phones are ubiquitous EVERY where I go) and found a friend who had a flag in stock at their store. Great! Said I, can you tell me how to get there? Oh, much too far to walk it is many villages away but if you like I can drive you there? Are you sure? Absolutely! OK, very kind of you, thanks! We walked over to his car, he introduced me to his two young passengers his brother's two sons, one about 18 one about 16 and away we went.

Turned out he was an "elder" for one of the outer island communities and the older nephew had just graduated from the big marine school they have on Tarawa (I've heard of this from many commercial captains I met and is well known and respected all over), and was waiting for the ship he was going to finish his final apprentice on to arrive in the next few months. Turns out the "short drive" was actually to the far end of the island and we stopped at two of those large community buildings I described earlier so he could tell them that he would be staying in Betio that night and not coming to join them for dinner or sleep there. Along the way I had fabulous conversations with all of them as we quizzed each other about our respective families, cultures, language, politics, religion, etc. It was very dark and quite late, about 8pm by the time we finally got back, after successfully finding a gorgeous if expensive Kiribati flag and they dropped me at the dock where I had tied up the dingy. We stood around and talked a bit more and I tried to pay him for some of the gas but he refused, however I was able to convince him that all the Australian coins I had were of no use to me once I left Kiribati so he agreed to take them which

amounted to about \$12 and I felt a bit better about being able to help offset some of his gas costs and repay his kindness.

6.3.5 Getting Around the Island

Ariel IV – December 2015: There are hundreds of mini-busses going around Betio, little bigger mini-busses going to Bairiki and further for 80 cents. Just flag one down and you are in an overcrowded buss experience!

Savannah - Oct 2011: I can't say we mastered the bus system, but it can't be that complicated. They're not buses, they're actually mini vans. Someone drives while another person takes your money. In general, I think the blue buses went across the causeways. The Betio bus (sign in the front says Betio) would take you to the edge of the causeway and then turn around and go back through town. Rides within Betio were 60 cents/adult and 20 cents/child. If you went across the causeway to the next town over it was 80 cents/adult and still 20 cents/child.

Mr John VI - November 2010: We did manage to arrange a hire car for the Saturday morning and this we did through the tourist office a short distance from the dock.

The tourist office gave us all the information they had and a list of up-coming events so the next morning we were all ready to see the island, the car was \$60AUS and as we shared it with another cruiser.

The car was waiting for us when we went ashore and it all went smoothly except that there was suddenly mention of a deposit, which was a significant amount, which we didn't have; after a bit of negotiation the deposit was forgotten and we just paid for the car in advance.

Learnativity - October 2010: On the Tuesday when I set out to see the island and after walking through more of Betio, the town where I was anchored and where I'd been for a few hours the day I arrived to check in, I wanted to go see some of the other towns and villages which are scattered all along the shores of this atoll.

I like to use local buses for transportation wherever I can as this is what the locals use and I get to be a part of it all for a little while. This has served me well all the way from Mexico to here. Part of the fun is in figuring out how it all works and Tarawa was yet another variation and here's how it worked.

There were designated bus stops complete with a pull off area and a proper sign marked "Bus Stop" (all signs and billboards were in English BTW and the Australian dollar is their currency). The buses however are all privately owned mini vans, many of them with raised fiberglass roofs and then filled with bench seating inside of about 4-6 rows. The vans are not painted alike or marked in any way though some do have a hand painted sign in the windshield indicating in a way I never fully figured out, how far up and down the island they went.

After a while you could pretty much tell which vehicle was a "bus" by looking for the ones full up inside with people. Even after I could spot the buses, it took a while to figure out how it all worked because most of them didn't stop at the bus stop. After verifying from others who were usually standing with me at the bus stop that this is where the bus that would take me to where I wanted to go would stop, I started to figure out that they only stopped, and honked their horns as they were doing so, if there was any room inside. Otherwise they of course just kept on going.

Once inside a bus, it was cozy! The working definition of full was pretty much just what the word implies, can't fit another body inside. Again a part of this culture was the great closeness of the people. In the vans many people would sit on each other's laps and otherwise make room. As someone exited anyone up near the sliding side door would make their way to the back so they were out of the way for the next person to board.

Staffing for the van/bus consisted of the driver, always a man, usually quite young 18-25 years old and then a "conductor" always a lady usually about 40-60 years old whose job it was to determine if anyone standing at a bus stop wanted to go where the van was going and if so to slide the door open, help the person inside, slide the door closed and collect the fare, usually about 20 cents.

Windows were all open as there was certainly no AC and as with everywhere I went the music was dialed up full and blasting out a nonstop hit parade of heavy duty pop songs, mostly sung in the local language though some in English and all sounding like they were in about the 70's era of Europe and the Americas though I think they were all recent recordings. And AWAY we went at breakneck speeds, passing every other vehicle on the road.

And so I used these bus/vans to get around the island as it is all spread out over a distance of many kilometers because for most of it there is just enough width of land between the two opposite shores to fit the road and some houses on either side.

On the return from my trip to Immigration, I was so busy taking in all the sights, smells and sounds around me as we sped along the route that I didn't notice we had got to the far south end where the island widens out a lot and where Betio is and made what amounted to a large U turn and started heading north again. By the time I realized I had missed my stop it was too far to walk back and so I stayed on. And on, and on and on!

When we finally got to the end of the line for this van I was up in Bonriki where the airport is and the only one left on the bus. After a bit of back and forth with the driver and conductor lady they understood what had happened and that I needed to get back to the other far end to Betio. So they said no problem, we'll take just make another full circle route, make us a bit more money and show you our island! So that's what we did and I got a fabulous tour and explanation of the whole island as well as providing great laughter for all the new passengers who came onboard and the lady explained how I was on the guided tour part of their service. Great experience.

6.3.6 *Sightseeing / Activities*

Ariel IV – December 2015: Start with going to the "Kiribati National Tourism Office" at the Ministry of Communications, Transport and Tourism Development in Betio. It is at the crossroad one block up from the harbor and the gas station to your left in the crossroad, ask if they can print out the very helpfull and nice "Kiribati, Tarawa & Outer Gilbert Islands, Travel Guide 2015" Lots of information and maps!

Westward II - Jan/Feb 2013: The tourist information office has pamphlets and is located in Betio near the Post Office and Philatelic Society.

We hired a car for a day and had a good look around, visiting the war wrecks, armaments, and memorials.

Mr John - November 2010: We rented a car (see 'Getting Around'). To be honest, there wasn't an awful lot to see, but we managed to pad out the day enough that we didn't get back till late afternoon.

We drove right out to the airport and a little beyond, until we could go no further; then had a picnic lunch whilst some pilot went round and round doing 'circuits and bumps'.

The eastern end of the atoll was a good deal more scenic and considerably less over-crowded than the Betio end where they were shoulder to shoulder in little more than a ghetto.

We noted many areas where small **vegetable** plots were growing and these always had the "Made in Taiwan" label attached, it would seem that the Taiwanese are throwing money at the Kiribati's, they have quite a high visibility (where as the British have no visibility at all!). There is of course a reason for this diplomatic courtship and its not just votes in the UN (where the Taiwanese get support from those it assists).

There is also the fishing and that is a very big prize. Kiribati may be small in land mass but controls the biggest chunk of the Pacific Basin, its maritime area is greater than the mass of the USA or the Soviet Union; Taiwan like many countries on the Pacific Rim, would like to share in the bountiful supply of fish this area produces.

We stopped and had a look at the **Parliament Building**, which was very nice but we were informed that it was rarely used; there was a nice little dock and a dredged out basin in front of this area however there was no real channel to the deeper water and the money put in to this development was bringing little or no reward.

Next door to the Parliament, the Taiwanese had built an **Aquatic Centre**, which was closed on the Saturday but security let us in anyway and we got a little bit of a tour. They were breeding 'Milkfish' but we were not too sure what they were doing with them, these fish are full of bones and don't have much taste!

They did have an aquarium of small tanks containing some of the local reef fish and this was very interesting; we got a few good pictures and moved on to the War Relics.

There are quite a few **WWII relics** littering the foreshore and the reefs around Tarawa, it seems incredible to me that any sane government could have let thousands of young citizens be wasted away in an action to take this small piece of Coral Atoll in the middle of nowhere. Having taken out the airstrip and all the planes, there was nothing this island was going to do to threaten the allied advanceSo why throw thousands of young lives at fortified machine gun posts? I guess we'll never know!!

It was just 'sad'--Sad that it was obviously such a great waste of manpower. Sad that there were so many blunders that led to an even greater death toll. Sad that the relics were rusting away and would soon no longer be there to remind us of our follies. Sad that the bunkers and guns were being used as toilets by the natives and all stank. Sad, that the war memorials were inundated with litter and refuse. Sad that we forget so quickly how stupid are those into who's hands we entrust the youth of our nations. Sad that thousands upon thousands died here and we have not learnt one thing from it!

Interlude - 2005: The only other reason to visit Tarawa is to tour the old WWII relics. Admiral Nimitz wanted to secure Tarawa as it was geographically the closest Japanese occupied

territory to Hawaii and in striking it, the Allies launched the strategy of capturing important islands as the navy advanced towards Japan, while cutting supply lines.

Tarawa was the first real test of American amphibious assault tactics and proved valuable, yet painful, given the mistakes and difficulty encountered. On November 20, 1943, 20,000 US marines stormed Betio beaches and after 72 hours of fighting, claimed victory to a land area about the size of New York City's Central Park. Casualties 1,113 marines killed and 2,290 wounded. The Japanese lost close to 4,500 men - out of 4,600 defending the island.

6.3.7 Fishing, Diving and Snorkeling

Westward II - Jan/Feb 2013: The water in the lagoon is murky, not good visibility and shallow, so didn't dive or snorkel here. It is difficult to get to the outside reef, and there are only a few breaks in the reef (and not near the good anchorages).

The best fishing is at the fish markets or from the locals on the side of the road, fresh and cheap.

Soggy Paws - Mar 2013: Our friends on Westward II reported being disappointed in the diving in Kiribati. Basically the diving inside the lagoon wasn't very good because the visibility is not so good. And it is difficult on a sailboat to get to places outside the lagoon. We did note this ad in the Kiribati newsletter for December 2012:

Are you up for underwater sightseeing? - Available any weekends or weekdays prior booking 48hrs ahead

The expedition will be guided by a PADI accredited Dive Master Mr James Smith where the underwater sightseeing will cover the following sites choices WWII landing aircraft wreck at Betio lagoon side at 7- 8m depth, MV Toata wreck at Bikeman islet at 9m depth, MV Mataraoi wreck at Betio ocean side at 10m depth and also reef dive for 15 to 25 meters depth.

The package includes 2dives, dive guide, boat hire, boatman, bowman, fuel, dive tanks, weight belts (leads) and refreshment.

Price: AUD\$160 if only one interested, AUD\$140 for two interested, and AUD120 for 3 or more interested and for an extra supplementary dive or 3rd dive is AUD60.

Note: divers are encouraged to bring their own BCD, Regulator, mask, snorkel and pair of fins. However we can

provide you with the above equipment's for AUD\$20.00 each as a hire charged. For more information please contact James Smith via email address jameswillie.smith2@gmail.com or Mb: (686) 96545

6.3.8 Theft & Security Issues

Ariel IV – December 2015: It is hard to say if there is a problem still as long is nothing happens.

Make sure you have good anchor lights, lots of fast boats go by at night!

We lock our boat always when we go ashore. The dingy matter is the problem, we leave the dingy in the far right corner of the harbor inside all the badges and locked to the last badge, it's been ok so long, but we have not yet left it at evenings and night?

The water in the harbor is very, very dirty still children play and swim there!

Look in your dingy for cockroaches and even perhaps rats because there is a lot and big ones!

Savannah - October 2011: Prior to arriving, we had not heard of any theft in Tarawa. When we arrived, there were two other boats there. Both, when left in the anchorage by themselves (i.e. no other yachts around) and after having left their boat to go ashore, were boarded and broken into. The first yacht had left a spare key where it was found. The thieves didn't take too much of value and the second yacht had their cockpit deck boxes broken into (by actually breaking the locks). The repair to the boxes would be more than the replacement of the things they took (knives, snorkeling gear).

Since there were three boats in the anchorage including ours, we locked everything inside, including snorkeling gear, deck chairs, etc. and hid our electronics (in hindsight, not very well) and locked our door with a fairly large padlock. We're a metal boat with a pretty sturdy door and felt secure. The day the other boats went to the dock, we were broken into as well.

This time they broke our lock (brought a tool with them to do this and left it...they had intent), stole 2 laptop computers, an iPad, a pricey pair of binoculars and a scuba mask. They left a purple hat, the tool they used to break in, and a piece of Styrofoam – they fish on Styrofoam around the shoreline.

Andy took the items to the police station where they didn't seem to know what to do with them. After talking to a police officer and waiting on an investigator, Andy finally suggested that he write something down for them. They felt this was a good idea and while he was doing it, asked him if he had any suspects (this would be a question asked more than once). Another cruiser went around to several of the local boats/Styrofoam floats and asked if anyone saw anything. He took the picture of some guys willing to talk to the police (they didn't see anything though), typed up a flyer and took it in on our behalf. That was it for the police. No one checked into anything.

After three boats being broken into in one week, no one even came out to the boat. The investigator offered, but when Andy picked him up he said he couldn't find his camera so could he come back another day. Andy told the customs folks as well and they appeared shocked, but just as uninterested.

We finally offered two of the guys on a float \$100 each if they could get our stuff back. One was an older guy and seemed somewhat interested. In the end, we left within a few days and nothing was ever found. The funny thing is, they didn't take the chargers to anything. I have no doubt the batteries were dead within a few hours. I also have no doubt they didn't even know what the iPad was (at least the investigator didn't).

We heard later that Savannah eventually had their stuff returned--after they arrived in Majuro.

Mr John VI - November 2010: Whilst we were there, another cruiser had his engine stolen off his dinghy..... this is unusual, but if you want to leave your dinghy tied to the dock whilst you party till 0400hrs then its best to leave it near the watchman on the west shore and maybe make an arrangement that he watch over it.

6.4 Visiting Outer Islands

Make sure you read the section on [obtaining permission to visit the outer islands](#) before stopping anywhere outside the main harbor at Tarawa. It IS possible to get permission to go while you are officially cleared in to Tarawa, it's NOT possible to get permission to stop on your way in before you have cleared, nor on your way out after you have cleared out.

6.4.1 Onotoa Atoll (S of Tarawa)

Mr. John VI - November 2010: We did not stop here, but here is the result of my research. This island lies about 31 miles SE of Tabitaua. At LW, it is possible to walk all the way around the islands in the lagoon so clearly you would have to real shallow in draft to get in here and you'd have to rely on the tide. You could probably find a place to anchor off but it would be rolly at best.

There are two boat channels leading through the reef. The N channel is S of Temuah Island (1°47'S.,175°29'E.) and leads to the jetty on the W side of Tanyah Island, which is the northern most island, where there is a coral rock jetty with enough water to lay afloat at all states of tide (if you have a draft of less than 6 feet). It has been reported that the N channel is hazardous.

Looking at the Admiralty Chart, the north channel seems not so bad to me and I'd certainly be up to give that one a go.

The South channel (N of the SW island), leads to the lagoon and the village on the S island. The tidal rise is about 1.8m. so if your draft is less, you may just squeeze in.

There is a conspicuous stone beacon with a white top on Temuah Island, at the NW extremity of the atoll.

Interlude - October 2005: Our first landfall after leaving Fiji on October 18, 2005 was Onotoa Atoll in the Gilbert Island group in the Republic of Kiribati. We were heading north to escape the southern hemisphere cyclone season which could begin as early as November. After a slow, seven day squally passage we dropped anchor just outside a break in the reef, about two miles from the main village.

Onotoa meets our cruising criteria mission statement: Visit places that would be hard or impossible to get to without your own boat. Four other yachts had run the gauntlet of coral heads and shoals to anchor inside the lagoon closer to the village.

They all agreed it would be too difficult for a vessel of INTERLUDE's size, so we were glad to have our 12 foot RIB dinghy with its 18 hp outboard, to make the trip. A dolphin pod of fifty or so, escorted us every time we went to "town."

We caught a nice 50 pound tuna the day before and had a great sushi party with the other yachts, all making their favorite Japanese dishes.

On our second night there, we were invited ashore to a gathering of the entire village of about 80, to welcome the yachts. Previous to our group's arrival this season, there had been only two other yachts that anyone there could recall - ever!

We sat down on woven pandanus mats under the thatched roof of a traditional maneaba or village meeting house and were handed drinking coconuts and floral head leis.

A master of ceremonies laid out the evening's program, which began with the village elders introducing themselves and the yachties doing the same. The entertainment began with a local girl in a very elaborate costume, performing three traditional dances. Then the Catholic missionary gave a blessing and we were presented with a huge spread of traditional food including pandanus, breadfruit, taro, shellfish and Spam. Singing and dancing followed with natives choosing I Matang (foreign) dance partners and vice versa all ending in a big conga line.

All in all, it was a great honor and a lot of fun. It also has encouraged us to keep practicing our guitars as we realize that playing music is something that we could share with all the different cultures we encounter.

The islanders on Onotoa are known throughout Kiribati for being hard workers. Their maeabas are built entirely of natural materials including hand hewn coral block columns, palm beams tied with coconut fiber lashings and thatched pandanus roofs. They still fish and get around with sailing outrigger canoes, eliminating the need for outboard mechanics and gasoline which so many other cultures have become dependent on.

6.4.2 Nikanau (S of Tarawa)

Katie Lee - November 2008: We arrived about 1:00 AM. Too dark to anchor so we put the sails down and just drifted in the lee of the island. I guessed wrong about the drift. We were making 1.5 knots and would pass the island shortly. We had to motor for an hour back up wind before we could sleep.

At 5:30 I got up and we were only 3 miles from the marked anchorage. We motored up and finally found a place to anchor. Only 2 miles offshore the water is 16400 feet deep! I don't have that kind of anchor chain length! Ha!

Just after we got the anchor down in 45 feet of water, just off the reef (there is no lagoon here to go inside of) a skiff came up with 3 folks in it. One had a police uniform. I asked permission to stay and go ashore to visit the families of friends from Fanning first. Then they asked for my clearance papers from Tuvalu. After a little discussion, they decided we could stay.

We gave them coffee and a tour of the boat. The policeman got a little queasy down below. They told us where the families lived then said to just come ashore and they would show us. There is a festival going on for the next 2 days.

From a later post from Tarawa - about their stop in Nikanau without permission: As you know we decided to stop in Nikanau and visit the relatives of our friends from Fanning Island. According to Kiribati rules, we were supposed to have gone to Tarawa and checked into the country before visiting any other island here. It seems that immigration didn't think visiting relatives was a good enough reason to break the rules, even though the policeman there in Nikanau gave us clearance.

They took our passports and had us write out a statement and sign it. It might have been easier if we had said we had boat problems, but no, we told the truth. We have been waiting since Tuesday for the results. Our "case" is with the "principle investigator" and still pending a decision. We have gone back 3 times and they keep saying come back later. Now they will contact us next week.

We met the head of immigration in Christmas Island last year when we checked in there and she remembers us. Also Elizabeth and William, that we gave a ride from Fanning to Christmas, is the presidents daughter, and they say it may not be too big a problem. Trinda is getting an ulcer worrying that we'll be put in jail, but I think it will work out, maybe.

They eventually got their passports back but their written request to stop at Abiang and Butaritari were denied.

6.4.3 Tabiteuea (S of Tarawa)

Brick House - May 2011: After a lot of pleading with Customs in Tarawa, we finally got permission to stop in Tabiteuea on our way out of Kiribati--without having to go back to Tarawa. (see the beginning of the Visiting Outer Islands section for info on obtaining permission).

48 hours after leaving Tarawa, after zagging to get around atolls in our path, we were 16 miles west of Tabiteuea, having sailed comfortably past Abemama- the atoll it had taken us so long to get to on our previous trip south!

But Tabiteuea was still to our windward requiring one tedious long tack. All day it took to reach the northern end of 25 mile long Tabiteuea, near Peacock Anchorage. Now I know why they call it Peacock anchorage. Everywhere you look, its dark blue, aquamarine, light blue, and brown REEFS!. Lots of things to weave your boat around or run solidly into.

There are no detailed charts to show this. You are in 15 feet of water, 2 miles out from shore, with coral heads everywhere - some breaking into white foam, some not. It's a good thing we came in with perfect light overhead to see everything. We slowly sailed around the heads, and the shallows, and found some deep water- about 30 feet, surrounded by very shallow reefs. They would provide some nice protection and nice snorkeling for our stay here.

An hour later, knock knock knock on the side of the boat. We figured it was likely the police, so we invited the 2 men onboard. One spoke excellent English and we soon learned they are fisherman, and not police at all. We offered them a cold drink and chatted for a little while before they offered us some eel and to come to his house today. We declined the eel, and accepted the invitation ashore for tomorrow since we were very tired today.

The next day, we enjoyed an eel lunch with breadfruit, paepae, breadfruit slices, and some rice with luncheon meat. Remarkably, it was all delicious. We prayed for no bad intestinal effects

We were very happy to have the opportunity to try some "Mantis Prawn", which is a big white shrimp, nearly as big as a lobster. The prawn is caught during the day in very shallow water. We only recently learned about these creatures. We could not leave without at least trying one...so this celebration was perfect timing. The I-Kiribati people are right to consider these a real delicacy - these saltwater prawns are more tender, sweet and absolutely more delicious than lobster. And this is from a girl who really loves her lobster!

The next day, we went ashore again, tested his well water for him for pathogens, had another eel lunch, and took a walk down the road. The children are very shy here...needing encouragement to even wave back at you. The adults are all very friendly, but not as engaging as other islands. I had the sense that they all knew we were guests of Tabukirake and Newi, and this is not an island where things are shared freely between families.

We had lots of conversations about social issues here and in America; marriage, women, men, weight, fishing, lobster traps, etc. Newi and I traded shirts one day...a nice tibuta (traditional Kiribati shirt), for one of my shirts...

We visited others in his family, and walked to government center with him. He receives a pension which is more than what he needs, so he takes a portion of his check and loans it out with interest, He has a small store at his house. He sells the fish and eels that he catches. People are not lazy or short of entrepreneurial spirit in Kiribati. They work hard to feed and clothe their family and provide for them as good as life as possible. They talk of their lives being easy and simple here

Tabuki, and assumingly others, are very concerned that they may look like an "I-matang (a foreigner). If his wife doesn't listen to him, he accuses her asking if she thinks she is an I matang. He is constantly afraid that people may think he is showing off, trying to look rich, or look like an I Matang.

Another interesting thing, observed in the islands is the concept of fines for bad behavior. If you misbehave, the village council immediately decides on a fine you must pay.. Rarely is this money. More often it is something that the council needs - such as a pig for an upcoming botaki, or some bags of sugar or rice. You can not argue it or there is great shame upon you and your family coupled with further consequences.

One day, four very large men came to tell Newi, the wife of Tabuki, that Tabuki was fined one pig. They were not told the reason. We watched as his wife and grandson shrieked and cried as the pig was taken away squealing and loaded in the back of a small rusty pickup truck. Tabuki was so embarrassed that he avoided us for the final 2 days of our stay here, unable or unwanting to face us to say goodbye. Pigs are about the biggest fine that one can get, so whatever he did, it was very bad.

Most likely he showed up to an afternoon maniaba meeting with alcohol on his breath. There is no tolerance for alcohol in a maneaba, even carried on ones breath. Fines are assigned and carried out the same day as the behavior happens. This is the judicial system. There is no appeal, no court date a year in the future.

We were definitely spectacles here. Everywhere that we went, we could hear children shouting excitedly with the word "I-Matang" in their sentences. They wanted to see us, to touch us, to stare at my blue eyes, and to see the pictures that Patrick took of them. Adults came out to shake our hands, even if they couldn't speak a word of English. The policeman told us that we were the first legal boat (hence were the first to stay for longer than 24 hours), for many many years. We think the last legal boat was in 2008.

We ate eels, lobsters, octopus, sea worms (look just like earthworms), fish, and lots of coconut cream, breadfruit and pae pae creations. In return, I brought brownies, macaroni and cheese, pickles, a tuna fish, eggs, potato salad, chocolate, and a few other things that they enjoyed trying out.

Newi and I "relaxed" in their bouia countless hours every day, grating coconuts and eating different foods, talking about how its done in America, and how its done here...ancient customs, beliefs, wives tales, health issues, men and women in Kiribati, marriage, divorce, dating, sex, traveling, sailing, other countries, aging parents, insurance, nursing homes, pets, food, money, you name it...Every day was fascinating, lazy, and hot.

The last 2 days, we spent at the finale of the Easter Botaki. Easter Sunday we attended Mass, and the singing competition in the afternoon. Each village was represented by their own group of singers. There were no judges in the end so everyone was a winner. Monday was the finale and the dancing was undescrivable. You really had to be there to truly know what I mean, when I say that it was the most emotional, riveting dancing I have ever seen. Some women cried before they started dancing out of joy, and then broke down during the dancing with crying, yelling, and then covering their eyes while they bawled. Their dancing here is not a tourist show or a way to have a lot of fun...it's very very heartfelt, very honorable, and very spiritual, and it evokes great emotion in the dancers as well as those watching. I was not the only one in the audience in complete tears. I think I cried my whole supply of tears for the whole year that day.

The day we were to leave, we couldn't leave...too much to do, long goodbyes, and making a movie from the hundreds of pictures Patrick took for them consumed the day. Plus Tabuki was nowhere to be found. The next day, after waiting hours for him to come to say goodbye, he still didn't come and his wife gave us the hint that he was most likely avoiding us. What the loss of a pig will do.

So we said our tearful goodbyes to her and to some of the family, and made our way out of the anchorage. Headed to Vanuatu.

Mr John VI - November 2010: We did not stop here, but here is the result of my research. This island lies about 24 miles SE of Nonouti and could be done as a day-sail if you cover the ground fast enough. The sun would be rising behind you as you leave and setting behind you as you arrive.

Watch however, as some nasty over-falls and tide rips have been reported N and NW of Tabiteuea and they may appear as surf from a distance!

Peacock Anchorage, sounds great on the Admiralty Chart but means little to yachts, it's just an area way offshore where a ship may anchor with depths of 10 to 22mtrs.

Tabiteuea is actually a chain of islands and reef some 32 miles long and there are several places you can get inshore for anchoring and shelter but none of them are 'easy'!

There is a lagoon of sorts at the southern end and a passage into it marked by occasional stakes. It is said to be deep enough for 8 feet of draft.....

This is Known as West Passage and it starts at a position with the north end of Buariki (1°28'S., 175°04'E.), bearing 254 degrees at 13.5miles. It's another tortuous trip through coral heads and 'Local Knowledge' is advised.

Whilst in this area make sure to avoid Nautilus Shoal (1°34'S., 174°55'E.) and a nasty rock, awash at LW, called The Breaker (+/-1°29'S, 174°51'E). There are other shoals around this rock, close E and SE

Another 'BOAT' passage which lies 2 miles W of Umai Ataei (1°33'S., 175°00'E.), the southern most islet and it starts with the islet bearing 085° and proceeds in an easterly direction.

Eanikai (1°10'S., 174°43'E.), the N island of the atoll, has several mission stations and villages. A beacon, 18m high, and a flagstaff are useful landmarks on the island.

Shoal water and breakers were sighted by a ship (1966) at a position about 12 miles S of Tabiteuea. THAT may be worth looking out for if you go S from here to Onotoa

IN 2011 the yacht 'Auspice'(draft a little over 6 feet) reported anchorage off Tabiteuea at 01 12.7S / 174 43.9E Apparently the water starts to shoal almost 15 miles to the east and runs down to 2 feet about 2 miles offshore. He threaded his way in "through a minefield of coral heads"!

Soon after arrival two uniformed police came out to check for the permit etc.

Billabong - November 2005: After leaving the clean, friendly atoll of Onotoa we visited Tabiteuea (aka Tab-North). Supposedly Tab-North is known for their knives, but we didn't have any troubles what-so-ever. In true I-Kiribati fashion, we did a whole lot of nothing in Tabiteuea. Just tried to keep cool! (*They stayed 6 days*)

6.4.4 Nonouti (0°40'S., 174°27'E S of Tarawa)

Mr. John VI - November 2010: We did not go here, but here's the info I gathered. The next island south of Aranuka is Nonouti which is seldom visited by yachts due to its long and tortuous entrance. There is no real lagoon as such so protection from anything westerly is limited, there are plenty of reefs however and this dampens any seas / swells from that direction.

The (semi) marked passage leads from Archer Entrance to an anchorage off the Government Wharf. They claim that vessels of 150ft in length and 13feet draft can make the passage; however that would require 'extensive' local knowledge (and a small miracle!).

Archer entrance is located about 9 miles south of the northern tip of the island and you should stay 2 miles off to the west all the way down due to the extensive reef system

Offshore, along the western coast, currents may run up to 2 kts either N or S parallel to the coast.

There is not a lot to see until you get close in and any of the landmarks that show up are most likely different from what is on the Admiralty Chart.

This passage will almost certainly require the sun overhead but behind and a good lookout at all times. If the wind is fresh it could take you almost four hours to get in so best not to leave it too late; however there are many places on the way in that you could just anchor until there was enough light to proceed.

At the Southern end of the lagoon passage **may** be found in which is a little shorter and a little easier for a small yacht (see Google Earth).

Mr John has some GE chartlets and a suggested route in his guide, which I have not reproduced here.

6.4.5 Kuria (S of Tarawa)

Brick House - May 2011: After 10 days in Abiang, we decided to make an overnight sail to Abemama, 110 miles to the south east of Abiang. We knew it would be a tough sail with the north west currents, and south east winds all working against us. I came down with a stomach bug within a few hours after passing Tarawa, and spent a lot of time in the bathroom as we headed south. We could make no easting at all, and all of the atolls we wanted to go to were in a southeasterly direction.

Once we were south of Maina, we did manage to make a bit of southeasting, and after a few long tacks, were near the island of Kuria, about 30 miles southwest of Abemama. My stomach was happy at the idea of a rest, and we had gotten permission to visit Kuria thankfully, so we were in business.

Kuria is not a well charted island and the only book that has any information at all about it says the anchorage is 70 feet deep. At 10am, we found a nice place to anchor in 30 feet of turquoise water (*Approximate anchorage position: 00-13.466N / 173-24.147E* Not the smooth anchorage of an enclosed lagoon, for this island is a crescent shaped coral island. The open deep ocean lay to our stern and the fringing reefs off our bow. Going ashore can be done only at high tide for the extensive reefs and sand flats extend a mile from shore.

It had been a long night of navigating so we quickly slipped in to a deep sleep. At 5pm, we heard a shout and a clunk on our boat and woke with a start. I opened my eyes and looked up at the companionway and a man was staring down at me. I yelled to wake Patrick, and told him that there was a man onboard. It didn't register for a couple of seconds and I yelled up to the man - "we are sleeping". He yelled down that he was the police and needed to see our papers.

Patrick snapped to attention and started to pull his shorts on. I went to find some decent clothing. After we showed our cruising permit and offered a cold drink, the police was very friendly, and we had a nice conversation. He had even come with a bag of bananas for us. I don't think he clambered onboard to be forceful or authoritative...I think that he had just no idea about boat etiquette. We were the first yacht to arrive in a year. This isn't an atoll on the coconut run for cruisers.

Being the only tourists to walk the central dirt road in over a year, we were often asked to sit and drink coconuts with friendly villagers. One grandfatherly gentleman told us he had moved his family to this island 9 years ago when he was forced to leave the island nation of Nauru. He had worked for the phosphate mining company on that island. The phosphate was all mined, the local bank made terrible investments with the islanders money and the good times ended. With the disappearance of their savings, they moved to their relatives land on Kuria.

Along the road we eventually reached the bouia of the policeman. The bouia is the traditional, open air, raised platform with a thatched roof which is their daytime living room in Kiribati. A "house" for a family consists of the big bouia, and a smaller bouia for sleeping. Mosquito netting can be dropped from the rafters to encircle someone sleeping on the floor. A pandanus mat is all the cushioning they use. The Kiakia is where food is stored and prepare. Here, there are enclosures to keep the chickens and pigs and dogs from the food. Some families living rooms, and even their sleeping quarters are instead maneabas, which are ground level huts. These are then used for sleeping and entertaining. The floors of course are covered with plaited pandanus mats.

Kiribati tradition dictates that a green coconut is opened for a guest, or some sweet toddy is served, and the guest drinks it first. We didn't notice till after many visits on many islands, that the hosts never drank with us...they waited until we were done, or gone. We enjoyed some sweet toddy with the policeman and his family and chatted for a while. For two years he had attended middle school in New Zealand while staying with some distant relatives. His spoken English was very good.

Kuria was the tidiest island we went to in Kiribati. I had a banana peel with me when I went ashore one day and I could not find a comfortable place to throw it until we left the main village! There were no piles of coconut branches, no barrels, no trash anywhere at all. Kuria is also the widest piece of land in Kiribati and hence has the coolest temperatures. We were never overheated walking around or riding the motorcycle on Kuria like we were on other atolls. It was very breezy and because they kept everything so well groomed, it was very open to the breezes no matter what direction they blew.

The children were very shy, almost as if their parents had warned them not to talk to strangers. It was rare for a child to approach us or engage us in any way. Mostly they ran away. Some cried like they had just seen a ghost..we are a lot paler than most people they have seen!

We always bring bags or recycled plastic jars of rice as gifts to people who offer us coconuts. For the policeman we gave DVD movies and the "Turtle, Incredible Journey" DVD. We give the turtle DVD to as many villages as possible in hopes that there will be some recognition for the need for conservation.

6.4.6 Arunuka (S of Tarawa)

Mr John VI - November 2010: We didn't stop here, but I was told in Majuro that you could get inside the Arunuka Lagoon. Google Earth seems to support this.

If you try this, you'll be a pioneer! However, beware; there is a vicious current and a few obstructions in the Pass on the way in. It would be best to anchor off the pass, which is anyway the best yacht anchorage on the island and take the dinghy for a good look-see at Low Water.

6.4.7 Abemama (S of Tarawa)

Radiance - November 2013: The 90 mile sail to Abemama from Tarawa took much longer than expected as we beat against SE winds and a foul current the whole way. It took a full 24 hours before we arrived at the western pass near the end of the flood. A 2-knot inflowing current made for some choppy standing waves in the pass, but visibility was good enough to avoid the shallow spots.

Using our eyes and Google Earth, our track ended up slightly south of the waypoints given by Mr. John. The red barrel noted on the chart (approx 0 25.35' N, 173 49.58' E) does not exist. Also, the OpenCPN chart appears skewed north about .3 mi from the Google Earth image. Otherwise, the pass was no problem.

We proceeded directly to the main anchorage at Kariatebike and anchored in 20-feet over sand (00 23.9719 N, 173 54.7126 E.) This anchorage is in front of a large red and white radio antenna next to the government station and police station. On Saturday we tried to check in, but the police office was closed. Just north of the causeway there is a wrecked WWII F4-U Corsair Fighter plane which is pretty cool. But while we were looking it over, some young men decided to lynch a dog from a tree right next to us and kill it with a stick. When I asked someone why, she replied with a smile, "It's for the feast."

We could not find Robert Louis Stevenson's house and many of the old WWII bunkers have people living in them.

Surprisingly, this anchorage has wireless internet ("angel tern") and you can buy a 1-week subscription for \$10AU at the office in the government building. Then the IT guy will set you up with a login and password. The signal was strong enough to reach our boat at anchor.

Abemama appears to be relatively affluent and the I-Kiribati did not have any interest whatsoever in interacting with us. In fact, some would actually turn and walk the other way to avoid interaction. This was quite off-putting at first as we'd just come from Vanuatu and Vanikoro where villagers were exceedingly friendly and hungry for interaction.

Kava is now being imported from Fiji and has largely taken the place of beer and sour toddy. It appears to be the latest fad and locals stay up literally all night drinking kava. However, unlike the quiet rituals in Fiji and Vanuatu, the Maniaba blasts loud overdriven techno music 24/7 and you will hear it all night from your boat. It is for this reason that we moved to another anchorage north (00 27.2933 N, 173 51.9158 E) and tried to find George (mentioned by Brick House), but learned that he has since left Abemama. We met another school teacher at the Seventh Day Adventist Secondary School who was very friendly and spoke good English. He filled us in on the latest island happenings and served us green coconuts and bananas.

George told us of a volunteer organization called "Search for One" that does a lot of civil work on the island and was due to come back soon. In fact, they had left their trimaran anchored in the lagoon and usually use it for a base camp while working on the island projects.

By dinghy, we explored some other WWII wreckage (at 00 28.6068 N, 173 51.3091 E) and went ashore there. The kids were friendly, smiling and fun, but the adults ignored us.

Since the water in the lagoon is quite murky, we sailed south and anchored at 00 19.1261 N, 173 54.4044 E to do some snorkeling. This was a beautiful spot and our favorite on the island. The water is crystal clear and we snorkeled near the reef in shallow water and once outside where there is a much better array of reef fish. It was tricky getting beyond the breakers with the dinghy and the surge made it a bit uncomfortable. You could not do this in unsettled weather.

Next we moved the boat north and anchored at 00 20.7751 N, 173 55.7490 E to visit a famous WWII battle site.

Info gleaned From US Military VAC RCN Overlays: "On the afternoon of Nov 21st 1943, American submarine USS Nautilus landed a force of 78 Marine Amphibious Reconnaissance Scouts to seize the island. A strong west sweeping current caused the amphibious division to miss their proposed landing beach, landing instead on the last of the southern islets before moving up the southeastern side of the atoll. Later that same afternoon US Marines had first contact with the Japanese Defense Position (approx 00 20.94 N, 173 56.60 E.) The battle continued for several days and on the morning of 25 November, a native reported to the Marines that the remaining Japanese had committed suicide."

We dinghied to the site through a mangrove-lined slough, passing villages and huts and even motored through the causeway to the other side of the atoll which was very beautiful. This was a pretty interesting excursion and there are still remains of many Japanese bunkers to be seen near the causeway.

We had been in Abemama for 6-days and had still not seen the police. So the next day we moved back to the main village and checked in at his office. He did not seem overly concerned about us being there. After some last minute internet business, we left on the ebb for Abaiang.

Downtime - November 2012: On the second atoll we stopped at illegally at we had quite an exciting time! We always ask ourselves when we hop into SD what kind of adventure will this turn into today? We brought our bag full of gifts and had Downtime safely anchored just inside the pass into the atoll as we headed to shore with our tool bag intentionally left out and a few parts laying around to claim engine trouble if the authorities were to show up again and ask what we were doing here. After all there is always "something" that needs to be worked on and fixed when you live on a boat right?

Off to shore we went and made our landfall at the first small village on the left of this remote island. We pulled up to the beach and the people kind of just stared at us and did not know what to expect from these strange visitors. Later we found out there had been only 4 boats that had visited here in the last 12 months!

We went ashore and were greeted by the chief who's name was Daryl, he was a young man in his mid 40's and spoke good English. I gave him a Downtime hat as he started talking to us and became friendlier and he welcomed us into his village. We sat down in the shade of a small palm thatched hut and had the customary fresh coconut which he had a boy climb a tree and then open for us. We sat there and shared stories while drinking our coconuts and passed out our gifts to the villagers which always lightens the mood of the whole village.

After talking a while he offered to show us around the atoll and down the road we went to the main part of the town. Well, town was just a church, a meeting hall and a small store and that was it. Along the way to town we met other families who lived along the shore, on the whole Atoll. Daryl guessed that a total of 2000 people lived on this small piece of land in the middle of the Pacific.

Without the coconut tree there would be no way to survive here on these remote atolls. The tree provides a variety of necessities starting with shelter in the form of shade and then there are the leaves can be woven into very durable shelters. Then there is the coconuts, the green (young) coconut offers a very refreshing and nourishing drink and then there is the meat of the mature nut that can be grated and cooked or pressed to make coconut milk to be used as a sauce. Then when the nut matures fully it can be dried and sold as copra which is made into oil products. This is a labor intense process which involves first finding all the nuts that have fallen to the ground in the last few months and hauling them (by hand) to a central point where they use a spike set in the ground to pry the husk off the nut. Then they split the nut with a machete and lay it in the sun for a few days to dry. This is made difficult with the frequent rain squalls that pass over the islands and they have to be always ready to put a tarp over them to prevent them from getting wet. When the shell and meat are completely dry they pry the meat from the shells and put them in a large gunny sack that when stuffed to capacity weighs about 120 pounds. For all this work they are paid 25 cents a pound which is about \$30 for a sack which contains a little over 300 coconuts or roughly 10 cents a piece!

Dried coconuts are used to feed the village pigs and dogs and even the chickens!

Some of the questions we asked along the way were about drinking water and getting supplies delivered to the atoll. We found out that the drinking water comes from shallow wells that had

been dug by the Peace corps and military years ago and have a small hand pump to lift the water which is only 10 feet below the surface.

A supply ship comes once a month to bring food and fuel and to haul back the copra crop to Tarawa and was late as usual and everyone was out of fuel for their generators.

While we walked along I was thinking, what do these people do all day? Is there ever any excitement and what do they do for entertainment being so far away from it all? The answer to that would come all too soon.....

No sooner had that thought crossed my mind when Daria said, "I think I left a banana bread baking in the oven on Downtime" Oh Snap! We have been gone 2 hours with the oven on and no one aboard the boat! We made our way back to where we left our big dinghy to find her sitting high and dry on the sand with the tide all the way out! There was no way possible we could drag the 900 pound dink 400 yards to get her back in the water and we found ourselves stranded! To add to our frustration we found out all the village boats were out fishing and Downtime was anchored 3 miles away so the option of swimming back was out of the question.... Here was just the beginning of our island excitement!

The Chief told us that since we were stuck here we might as well stay for lunch while I gazed at the horizon looking for signs of smoke from where Downtime was anchored.. He invited us sit down on some nice woven mats that he had brought out to the middle of the village under another thatched roof area while the women prepared lunch in the cooking hut. While we were sitting there I asked Daryl if they ever went lobster fishing? He answered that they usually went at night with flashlights to catch them then and then he asked if we would like to come back for dinner and they would go out and catch some for us if we provided the flashlight. We thought this was a great idea and accepted the offer thinking they must do this all the time right?

Lunch was served and we dined on clams and rice with coconut sauce. They also served dried fish (salt fish) which Daria likes a lot. All this was washed down with a few more fresh coconuts. After lunch they brought out a few pillow and told us we might as well take a nap since the tide would not be back in for a few hours. I tried to sleep but the thought of the oven being on and who knows what happening to the banana bread that had been in there for 4 hours at this point kept me from dreamland. While I was resting (actually thinking we might be stranded here), Daria was recruited to learn how to weave palm leaves that would later be used for a new thatched roof panels by the women of the village. She picked it up amazingly fast to the astonishment of all and was weaving palm leaves like she had been doing it her whole life. That was good since I was thinking we might need this skill later to build a house if the boat burned down!

Finally after a few more agonizing hours the tide came back up and we drug SD out to deeper water and raced back to Downtime to see what kind of damage there was. To our amazement there was not even any smoke in the salon, just a burn banana smell that left a stench for a few days and the charcoal black remains of what would have been desert that night. What a relief!

Brick House - May 2011: We had tried to beat the 110 miles to Abemama from Abiang, but ended up at Kuria instead, failing to make the easting we needed against both the wind and current. After a few days at Kuria, we left there at sunrise for the 25 miles upwind to Abemama.

We had to tack a lot, and the 25 miles turned in to an all day proposal. By about 7pm we got there, but by then it was dark and we could not risk going in the pass. So we heaved to for the night outside the western pass.

In the morning, it still took us 3 hours of tacking to get back to the pass, but that allowed the sun to rise higher so we could see our way in through the coral. The wind was blowing 20-25, and the current in the pass was strong against us, so the engine was at high RPM and the genoa was pulling. Brick House made its way at 2 knots.

Once inside the atoll we were able to fall off a bit and pick up speed. By 2pm, following the center of 3 magenta lines, we anchored in 12 feet of water just outside of a village called **Kauma**. At about 00-27.310N / 173-51.931E.

In the morning, timing the tide to float over the extensive sandy flats, we launched the dinghy to go to shore and make some new friends. Almost immediately we met a man by the name of George who greeted us enthusiastically. He was hoping that we were Sam and Sally, from a boat called Moana who had been here 4 years previous. He always hoped they would return. He felt that they would be the only boat who would come and anchor immediately in front of his home. But we were Brick House...his new friends. It's funny that we ended up meeting this man and his family, since I had googled "Abemama sailboat" earlier and had saved to my hard drive a blog about Moana and their friendship with this family. There are lots of families on Abemama and it's a long atoll. That we should end up here by chance was remarkable!

We sat with George and talked about why he moved his family from Papua New Guinea to Kirabati 9 years ago...his wife is Kiribati. George has 4 girls from age 21 to 30. They are all in the process of getting advanced educations and we got to meet 3 of them. The other is away at school in Fiji. Georgina, who is his oldest, is working next door at the Adventist School to try to save money for her 3rd year of school in Fiji. The University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji is the center of the universe for an islanders advanced education. The youngest is studying for her exams to try to get scholarship for school next year. It's obvious that education is a priority for his girls.

George explains that he does not have a pension from anywhere, so his girls know that they must get good jobs to take care of themselves.(and maybe him too) He talks openly that education and making a good living is NOT just for boys anymore - his girls must be able to support themselves. He and his wife met in teaching school in PNG and brought their girls up there until it became too dangerous to live there anymore. He says that he enjoys going back to this simpler life, where his home can have open doors and windows, and he doesn't have to worry about his family's safety anymore.

When you ask the girls how it compares, they say they miss the great food of PNG, but they love the open air houses and that they don't have to lock things up and worry about their safety here.

We borrowed George's push bike for me to ride while Patrick did his power walk. One day in one direction on the single island dirt road, the next day in the other direction. Meeting people along the way, and resting under coconut trees with snacks was a nice way to pass 2 days here and get some exercise at the same time.

This is an extremely remote island. There is no central electricity or water, yet the 7th Day Adventist school has a satellite dish and computers and internet. We were able to use the computers at the school one day for internet.

This island for sure has been, besides Tarawa, the most technologically advanced atoll so far. The people seem to be much more affluent for the most part here, with little stores to help them make a living, and lots of copra production. We are constantly impressed by how industrious and busy these people stay throughout the day. They do their share of sleeping during the hottest part of the day, but they always seem to be working on something to advance themselves and their families. George's wife Mary works as a teacher on the far end of the island, and seems to always be at work, as does Georgina, the daughter.

While we visit with George, he is always watching for customers at his store, and working on his pile of coconuts for harvesting copra. These people do not wait for the breadfruit and coconuts to fall of the trees, and for the SPAM supply boat to arrive like they do in the Marshalls...they are movers and shakers to say the least. And they have good family values and morals. And although not all of them can afford to provide higher education for their children, even the poorest children will tell you that education is important.

Mr John VI - November 2010: Means "Land of the Bright Moon"; that's what it's shaped like also and gives perhaps the most all-round protection of any of the Kiribati Islands.

This is a slow overnight from Tarawa in light or NE conditions.....however there is a **strong** west going current between the islands (A friend of mine got swept sideways onto the reef of Maiana one a dark night in 1988; how he got his boat across the island and back in the water on the other side was a feat of seamanship beyond most of today's cruisers). WATCH OUT FOR THE CURRENT.

Here is a SUGGESTED set of waypoints for entry via the NW Pass

1. 00-25.804 N / 173-46.507 E Outside
2. 00-25.194 N / 173-48.302 E
3. 00-25.198 N / 173-49.496 E
4. 00-24.740 N / 173-54.316 E
5. 00-24.520 N / 173-54.851 E

Billabong - November 2005: After six days in Tabiteuea, we left for Abemama (an overnigher from Tab-North), where we had a "thrilling" pass experience as our instrumentation (like much needed depth) continued to go out and 17knot head winds met a 4 knot tail current creating large standing waves. Chris (who stands watch on the bow) was SOAKED as the bow punched through the waves on more than one occasion!!! On the bright side, we were greeted by a pod of dolphins (although they are hard to enjoy in such conditions)!

Just as the previous atolls have some sort of reputation (cleanliness & knives), Abemama is also known for something. But you'll have to read "Sex Lives of Cannibals" for that bit of information as it a little to risqué to post!

We had a great time in Abemama, exploring various parts of the atoll as we moved around utilizing three different anchorages. After eleven days we pulled anchor and headed for the "big city" of Tarawa.

Interlude - November 2005: After a 30 hour passage we arrived in Abemama where it was a typical 90°+F and sunny. We were invited ashore to a middle school graduation ceremony for about 50 kids and sat on the mats reserved for honored guests and elders. They fed us a ton of food including lobster and turtle.

It was pot luck and all the women who had children graduating, brought food for several hundred people. Next year's class provided the entertainment to send off the graduating class so all their families were present as well. The festivities lasted about six hours with everyone sitting cross legged on mats, so about every 30 minutes they would fire up the generator and play disco music over the PA.

It was like prom and graduation in one event. Every time they played music we were all asked to dance by the graduates.

Kurt and another cruiser, our 72 year old friend Rod, were the big hit. Kurt was informed, that under no circumstances, was he to get an additional wife (polygamy is still practiced here - usually by marrying sisters within the same family).

Body powder and spray deodorant are applied to anyone (including us) as they are performing in front of a group to give them courage and ward off evil spirits.

Unfortunately, we picked up a bug, as the islands have had a small outbreak of flu and for three days we both had fevers and stomach distress. Once recovered, we resumed our daily band practice and on the following Sunday, we played guitar and sang for the village.

That Wednesday, they reciprocated with a feast and local dance for all the cruisers in the anchorage (11 in total). Kate, a young woman Peace Corp worker from the Bay Area, also learned some traditional dances and participated in the show.

6.4.8 Maiana (Just S of Tarawa)

Mr John VI - November 2010: We did go here, but here's the info I collected...Very few people take yachts to Maiana....there's a reason for that.....unless you have very shallow draft you'll have to anchor way off and it's rolly with a long distance to shore.

There are many dangers in the lagoon, which is shallow and has not been surveyed.. Lots of Coral Heads all over.

There is a small boat passage, which dries 0.3m, and leads through the reef near the N extremity of the atoll to the island of Tebikerei (1°00'N., 173°01'E.), on which there is a village. The passage is marked by "perches" standing in piles of stones which cover at HW. A shoal, with a depth of 3.7m, lies about 0.5 mile WNW of the entrance to this boat passage.

Another passage used by the local ferry boats to Tarawa has reported depths of 1.8 to 5.5m and lies about 7 miles SW of the N extremity of the island. This passage is/was marked by perches, and goes up to the government station on the SE side of the lagoon where there is a small jetty and some conspicuous buildings.

If you want to try this it may be best to anchor off the entrance until the Ferry comes over from Tarawa....then follow it..... A lot of the beacons are missing!

WATCH OUT...the shoal on the SW of the island goes a long way out; seas break on it even in moderate conditions!

6.4.9 Abiang (Just N of Tarawa)

Kiribati Cruiser's Guide - 2013: Waypoints below were taken in the Abaiang Channel and Lagoon on November 30, 2008. MaxSea was spot on at this date. There are no markers in the Channel or Lagoon.

Careful conning with proper sun light is advised.

The following way points are provided – but must be stressed these are a guide and caution should be advised. The lagoon can be traversed with proper sunlight and careful conning.

N01 44.90 E172 57.92 Outside the channel

N01 45.30 E172 58.26 Entrance to channel

N01 45.78 E172 58.75 Just past midpoint in channel

N01 45.90 E172 58.85 Edge of Lagoon on inside

N01 49.10 E173 00.80 Anchorage off radio tower where town council and Police Office are located

Westward II - Feb 2013: There is very little available here. We were able to buy some local fruit – bananas, coconuts and breadfruit and fish was offered also.

We hired motorbikes to explore the main island, ask at the council building, also a guide is a good idea. The quarantine officer, Kaboua, was our guide. The bike cost us \$15 for 6 hours and we tipped the guide \$10.

We were taken to the place of the ancestors to give them a gift and receive their blessing. This was on the Main Island and also Ribona Island and worth the effort.

We did not dive at Abaiang atoll as inside was shallow and outside was a long dinghy ride from the closest anchorage. Snorkeling was average inside also.

We found two places worth a look:

01°43.75N / 172°58.95E near Tebontibike Village on the incoming tide

01°51.96N / 172°52.96E, we anchored here over night but was very roly and a lee shore when the wind picked up.

Fishing at both these areas was very good with some nice sized coral trout and cod caught. Trolling between Tarawa and Abaiang also good with some nice Mahi-mahi caught.

Brick House - May 2011: Abiang was a restful place to spend 10 days with good anchorages everywhere.

Abiang appeared to be poorer and more traditional than Butaritari, if that's possible. No one seemed to even have a generator, so light at night was limited to kerosene lanterns or a glass jar of kerosene with a wick suspended in it by a wire. When the sun went down, it seemed the only artificial lights in Abiang were on our 2 sailboats. Very dark, except some early night fires where piles of palm branches were being burned. Rather than leaving the vegetation to deteriorate into soil, throughout the Pacific it is tradition to burn the potential compost to the bare sand or coral ground. That is tradition which cannot be changed by anyone's logical explanation.

One day while trolling in the lagoon from the stern of Brick House, we caught a huge 45 pound Trevally Jack. We all had a nice dinner that evening and for many evenings afterwards.

Patrick took ¼ of the fish, complete with head and carcass to a family onshore. These people have nets which they walk out on the shallows to use but they have no boat or way to catch the deep water fish. In return the family filled our plastic container with fresh made coconut cream wrung from the grated flesh of brown coconuts.

On Tuesday, our first full day in Abiang, Patrick and I ventured ashore to take a walk and some pictures of the pretty village of Tebunginako. We met a couple of people, shared a lot of smiles and hellos, and then a few hours later are on our way back to our boat.

That evening, we heard some laughing and splashing and came to the cockpit to see 3 older children on a wooden outrigger canoe. The two boys, age 12, did not speak much English, but the 15 year old girl spoke a little bit and we managed a conversation of sorts. They told us their Kiribati names, but to our ears they were incomprehensible and unrepeatable. We gave each child an English name which they accepted with smiles. Joseph...George and Susan.

Even though it had gotten dark, it was obvious these children would not go home until they had at least partially if not fully sat on at least the edge of Brick House. They took turns edging their bums up on the railing- until they all abandoned their ship. Patrick grabbed a spare rope from our lockers and tied their boat up so that it could not accidentally drift away. Soon the children were invited into the cockpit being served cold lemonade and conversing with stumpled English.

We brought out the World Map, so they could find Kiribati, the USA, and England. Once we pointed out where the equator was, and where Australia was, they quickly located Kiribati. It seemed like maybe they would stay all night if given the chance so we had to give them fairly strong directives that it was time for us to go to bed, time for them to go home, etc, Besides not really knowing when it was time to go, at least not by US standards, they were well mannered, said thank you, and were very pleasant, charming children.

The next evening the children paddled up as the church gong rang out. We invited them aboard for some more lemonade. They came with a big bag of husked coconuts and cooked breadfruit for us. We offered them coconut water, but the refrigerator cold lemonade was apparently much more desirable for them. Rain started for a bit so we all giggled as we crowded underneath the dodger. Quickly it subsided. Left with a language barrier and a "what to do next" atmosphere, Patrick pulled out lengths of rope and taught the three of them how to tie a bowline. They were quick learners especially Susan. Susan also had an easy charming laugh which was attractive to the ears of any world visitor. The three were given the rope to take home for future practice.

They asked if we had any books that they could read, but all we could find was two National Geographic magazines for them...one about malaria. I also brought out a book about Australia to sort of read with them... They knew what a kangaroo was, and the mountains were wonderful- especially the one with snow and skiers on it.

They taught us some Kiribati words like Manu (brother) and Tar Bin (coconut cream). We learned that Susan was not in school right now because she waived school this term until her father made more money for her to go back. Its \$200 per four month term. School is free up to 6th grade. She told me that she knows that "education is the key to success", and she wants so

badly to go to university some day. She really wants to see the world and it is unfortunate such a bright person can not get the basic education she do desperately wants and will probably be stuck living a subsistence life on a coral island.

The children asked if we would stay here for another day and we mentioned that we would probably sail somewhere else the next day. Susan nodded and looked a little sad but didn't say anything else about it.

After an hour, George decided they should go home (what a surprise). So we sent them off with the magazines, and a bit of rice for their families.

10 minutes later, we hear a knock and laughter again by the side of the boat so we go back up in to the cockpit. Susan lunged off the boat on to ours, and asks us fairly directly if she can come with us tomorrow to another island. Since we don't know if we would be returning she might never see her village again. Susan is disappointed so asks us to come to her house in the morning before we leave.

The next morning, indeed, Susan greets us at the beach, anxious and smiling. At her families hut, food preparation is in full activity.

Mother was breast feeding baby. Father was grating coconuts. Susan was tending the smoky coconut husk fire and cooking the breadfruit soup. Breadfruit and Tar Bin. They boil big slices of the breadfruit for an hour and then mash it, and then add the coconut cream. She was also preparing little clam looking shellfish things. They had been soaking in water, and she would then boil them for about 4 minutes. This was lunch.

We chat with her parents. They seemed to understand some basic slowly spoken English, but didn't speak much. However once in a while they would surprise us and say something that showed very good understanding.

The policeman rolled to a stop on his Honda 125cc and joined us under the thatch roof of the elevated hut. He told us that there isn't too much trouble in that village, and that he doesn't carry a gun- he just uses karate and gave a laugh. He said the biggest troublemaker was Susan's father which set off another laugh.

I went on to say that this is the hardest part about making friends from other countries...saying goodbye...but that she should keep making friends with the boats that come here...that she is a very kind, nice person for people to meet when they visit here, and that she should keep being friendly like that...that she has made Abiang very memorable for us, and that we will always remember her. That her friendliness and her charming laugh makes her very special, and that she should never lose that. She bawled her eyes out. Finally the embrace was released and we said our final goodbyes. She waved repeatedly as we drifted slowly out to our boat.

I have been struck for months by this experience - will likely never forget it.

We have had many less emotional goodbyes from people we knew much better than her. It seems that we represented to her, a different way of life, an option she had never thought of before. It made me think how vulnerable the people of these islands could be.

I think as cruisers we become accustomed to saying good bye to our friends, knowing we will make other friends in the next anchorage, or will see our friends in an anchorage somewhere

over the horizon. But to this girl...even if she learned English well and finishes her education, it's probably only a very small chance that she will ever leave her village or see more than Kiribati at best. I feel so fortunate to have been born an American.

Mr John VI - November 2010: If you don't go anywhere else, at least go to Abaiang which lies only five / six hours sail to the north; most of which is an easy reach in flat water.

The Bingham Channel is not a big problem and as you generally leave Tarawa in the morning (having got your permit the day before), you will be off the channel in the early afternoon with the sun overhead and behind.

The last time I did it was all wrong; we left Tarawa just before midnight (because of the Japan Tsunami warning) and arrived at the Bingham channel early morning.

Getting in and out of Tarawa in the dark is fun, it's not the worry of running aground, it's all those unlighted buoys!!!

We had the sun in our eyes at Abaiang all the way in to the anchorage and I swear I went over just about every reef in the lagoon on the way. But we didn't see less than eight feet under the keel (I draw 4').

We went up to Abaiang using the Guide put out by the Kiribati Tourist Office but I didn't stick to it, I went left of track thinking the Admiralty might be right for a change...

Wrong move. When we came out I was horrified to see that our inward track seemed to go over, or very near, some very shallow stuff. So the guide may be OK.

However, if I was going back, I'd take my preferred route as below; it's simple and keeps you away from all the dangers that can actually rip off your keel.

1. 01-45.224 N / 172-58.194 E
2. 01-46.158 N / 172-58.891 E
3. 01-45.546 N / 173-00.339 E
4. 01-44.450 N / 173-01.810 E (Anchorage)

There were some patches on the way down and one is shown on the chart, however I feel confident that there was nothing the average yacht could hit You should of course watch the depth sounder on the way down--the good news here being that the shallow patches don't seem to come up abruptly (like the Tuamotu's) and most of them seem to be hard sand rather than coral.

This was our favourite anchorage; it was most protected from the ESE but was good for winds from S to NE.

Although anchored some ways offshore (a normal event throughout Kiribati due to the extent of the internal reef shelf) the Palm Trees ashore do take away a lot of the breeze (hence we were surprised to find so much wind outside when we eventually left!).

Getting ashore two hours either side of LOW WATER is really not possible and you have to time your day around the tides.

Here, you are at the southern end of Tanimaiaki Village. The last 'house' on the beach side of the road belonged to Teaoka & Banrenga with their family. They were very good hosts to us and spoke good English so we enjoyed the communication.

Going ashore we could walk north, past the little medical clinic, to the village where there is a school and where we met Esta, one of the local teachers. In this direction we were always greeting and being greeted, heavily into socialising as everyone wanted to talk to us.

Walking south, there was very little until the next village a couple of kilometres away, thus we could step out and get exercise (which we badly needed) without interruption.

There were a couple of days when it blew so hard we didn't fancy going ashore, still it seemed a safe anchorage in about ten feet of water with a sandy mud that sucked the anchor in and wouldn't let go.....Very relaxing!

Abaiang Offers good protection and even were it to blow from the west, you could find shelter in the SW corner. The main thing for us was the absence of swell, something we'd found annoying at times in many other Pacific Island groups.

However, when the wind blows fresh from S of SE it causes a small sea to run right up the shore of most of the island and there is little protection from it N of the Government Station at Taburao (anchored at 01 48.858N / 173 01.080E).

Up near the northern end we found a little shelter at Tebunginaro where there was a pretty little village ashore and a hook of land to anchor behind; still some swell got around the point with the SEly honking but you could probably move in a little closer than we did (anchor posn: 01 55.011N 172 56.564E).

Right up at the northern end is Ribona, which requires a NE wind for a comfortable visit; that didn't happen this year but I was up there in 88/89 and found it delightful, lots of pools in extensive shallow areas; great for exploring.

Through binoculars it looked a little more 'built up' since that visit and Brick House, who went down for a look see, said it didn't look that inviting and moved on.

Another anchorage was off Koinawa (Posn: 01 52.368N / 172 58.959E); where the conspicuous church makes a good landmark. You used to be able to climb to the top of the belfry for panoramic photos over the island. Unfortunately the steps are now giving way and this is no longer possible. It is however a pretty village (mission) with some interesting (big) Manaba.

The people were also most hospitable and this is your best bet for getting some Fresh Water if they have some to spare.

Billabong - Dec 2005: After some relaxing time in Abaiang we returned to Tarawa for a quick check out and then headed on to Butaritari.

Interlude - Nov 2005: The following day we had a nice beam reach in 12 knots of breeze for the 20 mile sail to Abaiang. That evening we had another round of sushi as our friends had caught two Wahoo along the way.

The next night we had 20-30 knot winds so we stayed anchored in front of the main village for Thanksgiving. We invited our Canadian friends to join us and although we missed our turkey we were able to have fresh pie made from locally grown pumpkin, one of the few vegetables that will grow in the poor soil on these atolls

Unfortunately, a lack of fresh vegetables and an overabundance of processed carbohydrates are resulting in vitamin deficiencies, obesity and diabetes. The government is currently trying to educate the people on the danger of adult onset diabetes which is proving quite difficult as their culture is very food centric.

Every time we visit a new atoll we are greeted with an offer to sit and drink coconut nectar and are often invited to a local feast.

Our next feast was in a small village on the southern edge of the Abaiang's lagoon where we moved a few days after Thanksgiving, once the weather settled. The feast was to celebrate the first born child and wish success to the new family in the village. The father was a merchant seaman and could not attend, but for three days, the new mother and the five-month old child lived in the maneaba while the village provided her food, clothing, household gifts and entertainment.

We contributed by playing our guitars for the 200 people gathered at one of the lunch festivities.

Again, we were all asked to dance afterwards and of course we exhausted ourselves as it is considered poor manners to decline any invitation. All ages participate in dancing and the more one hams up the performance the louder the cheers.

Humor is greatly appreciated in their culture and clowning around was explained to us an expression of joy in the heart.

In addition to socializing with the locals, we also did a drift snorkel in the south boat pass which had 100 plus feet of visibility in about 60 feet of water with coral canyons on the bottom, big schools of fish and a small sea turtle. The sand is very fine in the middle of the lagoon creating limited visibility so snorkeling was limited where we were anchored.

6.4.10 Butaritari (N of Tarawa)

Radiance - Nov 20, 2013: Today was a special day for the island: a day to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Kiribati liberation from Japanese occupation during WWII. Lolo and I had timed our visit here to witness this little known event.

In the morning we piled into the back of a covered flatbed truck with about 20 other villagers and slowly made our way to the village of Ukiangang at the southwestern end of Butaritari atoll. The wheels splashed through puddles from the night's rainfall and coconut palms and breadfruit trees brushed the canvas covered framework shielding us from the mid-morning sun. We stopped many times to pick up people along the way and after about half an hour, arrived in the bustling village. As we made our way to the school grounds, the road was lined with young children - all wearing Kelly green- and-white school uniforms, and each adorned with a freshly woven coconut palm leaf hat that oddly resembled a military helmet.

When our truck came to a stop, we were swarmed by a hundred smiling kids, some toting homemade toy rifles and pop-guns. They were shouting "I-Matang! I-Matang!" - the Kiribati phrase for white man.

Being ushered to our front row seats, we had become the de facto American Representatives for this day of commemoration. As over a hundred children lined up in their respective primary school grades (starting from preschool), they enclosed the perimeter of an open weedy soccer

field. The drum major began to beat and a contingent of police officers marched to the center of the field to open the ceremony.

The crowd was addressed by high ranking local chiefs and the events of November 20th, 1943 were explained. This was the day that American troops and air support overtook the Japanese stronghold on the island - in what became known as the Battle of Makin. There were many brave Americans that gave their lives in this effort, and also many I-Kiribati people that died despite being mostly hidden in caves.

We were seated next to a war memorial that commemorated the loss of those lives. Each school group marched with proud banners around the perimeter of the field, and then paraded in front of all the dignitaries, stopping for a unique salute at the memorial before moving to the center of the field. The kids were serious, proud and disciplined beyond any grade school presentation I have seen. After the last group had taken the center, the Kiribati flag was raised and we all stood while the Kiribati National Anthem was sung with great harmony. Next, they raised the American flag on a flagstaff adjacent and then to my surprise, whole of the student body sang the American National Anthem - The Star Spangled Banner.

Tears welled in our eyes. It is so difficult to imagine that a tiny group of children in a tiny village on a tiny atoll in the middle of the vast Pacific Ocean would pay such an honorable tribute - a tribute to America. But it is somewhat embarrassing to realize that almost no school age child in America would even know where the Battle of Makin was fought or what they were commemorating. While the people here celebrate this special day as an important part of their history, the events that took place in the South Pacific are all but forgotten in the US.

On this sliver of land in the middle of nowhere, children still swim quite literally among the wreckage of WWII carnage. Japanese flying boats rest on the lagoon shores, bullet riddled fuselage still remain beneath the coconut trees in people's backyards. American fighter plane wings are used for tables and pig pens, and Japanese artillery shell casings still lie on the ground. Including a US escort carrier torpedoed by a Japanese submarine, there were 763 Americans that gave their lives at the Battle of Makin - a number that exceeded the entire Japanese Garrison here. With the Japanese and I-Kiribati losses, it was a bloody battle by any measure.

It was a somber moment as each classroom continued the ceremony by placing a wreath of flowers on the memorial. But it was two preschoolers that brought tears as they laid their wreath atop the others.

After the ceremony, we were escorted back to the maniaba and seated front and center, and then treated to traditional dance performances, song and a huge feast (no dog that I could discern.) Many speeches were given and the words "America," "Alaska," and "I-Matang" were uttered many times with glances in our direction and nods of respect. We were treated as distinguished guests of honor and as such, the first to be served food. Lolo and I were humbled beyond words, but that was not the end.

After the feast, there were more traditional dance performances and then it was time for us to dance... Lolo was approached first by the unimane (chief elder) of the village and joined him for a dance in the center of the maniaba while some 200 onlookers cheered them on. The custom in Kiribati is to dance in as silly (and provocative) manner as possible. Lolo is a great dancer

anyway and the cheers roared as she mimicked her distinguished partner's moves on the floor. In comparison to the other women, Lolo looked like a pixie flitting around the room.

Then it happened, as I knew it would. I was approached by a woman with very different proportions than Lolo, and egged-on to join her on the floor. It was just the two couples now and I was mortified enough to be part of the spectacle for the entire crowd when the woman suddenly lurched toward me, and threw her arms around my neck. The crowd went wild. There was not much I could do as she kissed my cheek but pray for the song to end - when she launched her next attack - a full body hug - with some blatant pelvic grinding. While I diverted some of the momentum to one side, she circled around my back and jumped on - piggy-back style. The crowd roared with laughter as I tried to pretend I was somewhere else.

Luckily there was only one other such dance before rounds of speeches brought things under control. I was asked to say something, but as I knew it would have to be translated, kept it short. I told them we were honored to attend the ceremony and humbled by the commemoration and singing of the American National Anthem. I mentioned how we had sailed some 15,000 nautical miles to be here and that several years ago we had met Hal, an Alaskan man that had served here during WWII. I thanked them for the beautiful dance performances and delicious feast.

We were told by several important people that our presence was greatly appreciated. While the people of Makin Island clearly commemorate this day for their own reasons, it seems fitting that there should be someone from the USA in attendance. Last year, no one from America came.

Kiribati Cruiser's Guide - 2013:

N03 05.78 E172 44.00 Deep water, approach to pass

N03 06.04 E172 44.47 Channel Entrance, passing "Ramanaba" to the North. 110 feet of water. "Ramanaba" was not visible on our approach.

N03 06.20 E172 44.80 In Pass, shoal to Port. 120 feet of water

N03 06.63 E172 45.38 In Pass, shoal to Port. 70 feet of water.

N03 06.95 172 45.82 Buoy at end of Channel. Steel "house" shaped can with short stake. Turn to South East and head to radio tower.

Good light and careful conning is advised from Buoy to the anchorage in the area of the radio tower.

If conditions are good with proper light and visibility you can see the Buoy from the deep water approach. It is a straight shot in on a course of 40 degrees magnetic (not all compasses are created equal).

- The channel is wide with a minimum depth of 60 feet.
- Pass can be choppy with strong current.
- There is no mark on Ramanaba.
- Only mark is inside pass and indicates it is safe to head Southeast towards Radio Tower/Kings Pier. There are many shoals on this track.
- The Betio wharf is "L" shaped and constructed of sandbags, is overgrown with a small dilapidated shack towards its end. It blends very well with shore.

- Anchorage is in about 20 feet or less of water in the area of the Wharf.
- As of December 2008 there was a flashing light on the South West Point of Butaritari.
- 4 seconds, white, visible at 12 miles.

Streetcar - December 2012 (from Noonsite): We have just spent 3 weeks in Butaritari, one of the most northern islands of Kiribati. Below is some information that might be useful.

- Although Butaritari has air access to Tarawa it has very few facilities and is very quiet.
- There is no mobile 'phone coverage. There is at least one public telephone in the main village.
- The islands are lush and fruit and vegetables are grown locally. There are a handful of very small stores, in which it is possible to buy some canned provisions and sometimes flour.
- The lagoon has fewer obstructions and has clearer water than Tarawa or Abaiang.
- While we were there the climate felt very different to Tarawa with more variability in wind direction and more rain. Winds often came from various directions (including west and north) around large areas of convection that moved past the atoll. These temporary winds were sometimes strong and made lee shores uncomfortable, but never untenable. It often took several hours for the gradient wind direction and strength to return.

NAVIGATION AND ANCHORAGES

- We entered the atoll through South Channel Pass. This pass is deep and easy. There is currently one red buoy on a shoal in the middle of the pass on the lagoon side.
- CM93 charts seem to be reasonably accurate without need for correction. We also used Google Earth charts which we had previously set up. There are some uncharted bommies and shallow areas, particularly in the eastern part of the lagoon.
- The anchorage off the wharf in the southeast corner (Butaritari island) can be rough when the prevailing wind is east or north of east. This is not a great anchorage but gives access to the main village with police station. The old wharf provides a good dinghy landing.
- The best anchorages we found are at the eastern end of the lagoon. There is good holding in places off Natata Islands, but still plenty of coral to wrap around. When the wind goes south of east the anchorage off Kuma village provides an interesting change of location - holding seems to be good here as well.
- The village of Kuma has one small shop. Some fruit and veg is available although this may not always be surplus to the needs of the village.
- Where the lagoon's fringing reefs are wide there seem to be good protection from ocean swells, even at high tides. At low tides it is possible to walk considerable distances, exploring the exposed reefs and islands.
- Some protection from temporary westerly and north westerly winds can be found in the very north east corner. This may not work in stronger and more sustained westerlies.
- There have also been reports from boats anchoring in the very northwest corner of the atoll. We did not explore this area.

Mr John VI - December 2010: It is a fairly slow overnight sail to get to Butaritari from Tarawa. As it is almost due north, it is possible to get a good window, either way, for this trip almost any week of the year. There are some over-falls to the north of Abaiang and the current can set strongly to the west between them.

DON'T leave Tarawa too early as you don't want to arrive until close on midday, so as to get the sun behind and above for the entry. As usual, most of the marks / beacons on the chart are missing so don't expect to see any stakes until you get close to the anchorage.

Both Tarawa and Butaritari were not charted well, there was an error between the charts and the GPS (WGS84) positions of about 0.3' and there were many shallow areas not appearing on the chart.

In most cases the water is fairly clear and dangers are readily apparent in good visibility. Unfortunately our early arrival in Butaritari put the morning sunlight in our eyes and when it was obscured by cloud we couldn't see much either. On top of this we had fifteen to eighteen knots of wind and a three knot current rushing out of the entrance!

On arrival we had the way-points from the Cruising Guide and they worked quite well, problem was we had the sun in our eyes, twenty plus knots of E wind and about 3 knots of current going out and some lumpy little seas. Under power alone we were not going in so we did a bit of tacking.

Without the mainsail and the motor giving us their best effort we would not have got in, as it was, it took some time and we shipped a couple of green seas over the bow in the process.

You should really try and have the sun above and behind when moving inside this Atoll, there are many more coral patches than shown on the chart.

None of the beacons in the pass area were still standing but they did all seem to be there around the anchorage area off Butaritari Village and as we eventually closed on this area, we gained some shelter. The anchor went down in ten feet of water over a sand bottom a little ways off the Kings Wharf and we were overwhelmed by the sudden peace and serenity; most of all the boat was still and this was the first time the motion had stopped since leaving Funafuti.

Butaritari is the most northern island in the main Kiribati group, it is closest to the ITCZ and gets more rain; thus it is the most productive of the islands when it comes to growing things. Only problem with that, are the locals, having plenty enough for their own needs, are somewhat reluctant to put a lot of time and effort into producing for others.....

We went ashore on the Kings Wharf (which is not much of a wharf) and walked along it towards the village; just before reaching the village is an old Japanese Flying boat which has made many a good photo over its lifespan, I still have the picture I took twenty three years earlier when I passed this way as a single-hander.

The normal Island Hospitality was in full swing and we were invited into the first Kiakia we passed.....it was just a little unfortunate that our host was an ex seafarer who had been on the 'sauce' for breakfast and slurred his way through a greeting offering us Toddy and coconut milk. Moving on, we had a little walk to the east until the village petered out then returned to the boat feeling the strain in our legs which were way out of practice with walking.

The next day, after a very quiet and blissful night, we walked the other way, politely avoiding our seafarer friend.

The village was notably much cleaner than Tarawa and most of the islanders had planted shrubs around their properties to delineate borders, it was quite well done and far from the squalor of Betio. The people were very friendly, everyone greeted us as we walked along the road, there were big smiles and many stopped to chat a little wanting to know where we were from and where we were going; as English is their second language, we could only be impressed with the general standard of education.

A lady (Diamond) at the end of the village invited us in for refreshment and a chat and we found a few things that we could attend to which would make life easier for her at little or no cost to ourselves; the most important of these was her solar lighting system. The bulb had blown and her battery was frying due to regulator failure. We returned the next day and fixed it all for her over a little lunch she had prepared for us..... last time seen it was still working!

On the way back to the boats we were tracked down by the local 'sheriff' who rode up on his big, white bicycle. No horse I'm afraid! He wanted us to produce some paperwork at the Police Station in the morning and this I would have already done had I recognised the Police Station when I first walked past it. We attended to that the next morning and he was most happy just to see our letter of introduction from the Customs in Tarawa. We got a tour of the Jail and were surprised to find some gaps in the bars that most adults could squeeze through but on a small island like this I guess there would be little compulsion to escape.

The school at the village on the southwest tip of the island (Ukiangang) was also the home of the Memorial to the fallen US marines (and other service personnel) that gave their lives in the reclamation of the island from the Japanese during WWII and the 20th of November was their remembrance day so we went along to see the commemoration that we'd heard was taking place.

The girls were given a lift to the village in an overflowing truck whilst us guys walked. On arrival we were made most welcome and given seats in the front row. Someone cracked open a few coconuts for us and shade was rigged over our seats. Shortly after 10am (as advertised) the demonstration began with all the local school groups and people from various sections of the village doing a marching display.

They were very much in step and it was a first rate event which ended up with them assembled in front of the memorial; there was a presentation of wreaths which were laid on and around the memorial as the US flag flew atop the rather crooked flagstaff, taught in the trade wind breeze. I was personally surprised and had one of those gut pumping moments when the whole group launched into a rendition of The Star Spangled Banner with hands over hearts.....it was a really moving experience and I was touched deep down with the sincerity of these islanders.

It occurred to me that back in America close on 100% on school children wouldn't know where Butaritari was or care what took place here but the Islanders are still grateful for their American saviours and speak glowingly about them. If this were part of the Marshall Islands, receiving fat cheques from the American Tax payers, you might expect a little show of sympathy but these people rarely see an American and receive no support other than through the various churches that prevail; yet every year, without any fanfare, with or without any outside onlookers (us), They Remember..... and a huge American sacrifice is not forgotten.

At the end of the event the children did a little re-enactment of the American Landings using Pop Guns and running around shooting at each other, they seemed to die very convincingly but in a little bit of Paradise that has seen so much death, maybe the act of dying comes easier!

We all adjourned to the local Maneaba for a late lunch and the locals all waited for us to eat before feeding themselves, there was heaps of food to say the least and it was all very well presented. This was followed by dancing, speeches and more dancing.....

One of the speeches was by someone from the Taiwanese Cultural Mission who proceeded to let everyone know about every Dollar the Taiwanese Government was putting into the place and how they were going to change the lifestyle of all the islanders to the better encouraging them all to plant more, harvest more, export more and eat more healthy themselves. It was one of those long drawn out speeches that reminded me of Political Officers I'd previously had contact with from both the USSR and China when they were all hell bent on communism and full of it!

The dancing that took place after the speeches was more of a free-for-all and we were all dragged up on the dance floor. We'd been warned about the dancing here, it can get a bit 'raunchy' and the older the dancers the more raunchy it gets.

After a day of recovering from our dancing activities, we moved down to the next anchorage, not far from where the new centre of administration has been moved.

Unfortunately the extent of the off lying reef and the time of High Water did not make for easy access to shore so the next day we gave up on the place and moved up to Kuma Village on the eastern end. We motored up there hugging the shore as much as we could, the wind was honking over twenty knots out of the east and at the points where protection was lost we struggled to make headway. Once the eastern end of the island had been gained there was much better protection and the anchorage, when we reached it, was calm; it seemed that there would be good protection here from NE through SE to SW and again we were in about ten feet of water over a sand bottom.

Getting to the shore in the dinghy was only possible three hours either side of High Water otherwise there would be quite a lot of walking over the reef dragging the dinghy.

This is one of those 'last bits of Paradise' and it will be one of our fondest memories of the Pacific Islands; we only wish we could have spent more time but our drinking water was almost gone and we were in need of a few things not available in this out island location.

Striking features included the tidy and neat way they maintained the village, the lack of rubbish and the high standard of English spoken by the school children and their hospitality to visitors.

We were welcomed at the school where the children put on a show for us and we tried to reciprocate in kind, a great time was had by all and we were very impressed. We got to talk with George, one of the teachers at The Anderson School, and he explained how difficult it was to run a school in such a far out location with the lack of even the most basic of supplies; we handed over what little we had (a few books and packs of crayons, pencils and pens) but it was only a minute fraction of what was required.

Whilst we were there we were all invited to a wedding which took place at the Village Church; it was quite a sombre affair and Paula had difficulty getting a smile to put into a photo. We were happy the next day, to be able to present them with prints from the wedding, something they would not otherwise have had.

They were obviously greatly appreciated and we went away loaded down with bananas. Bananas are just about the only commodity they can give here and we were always inundated with them wherever we went; in the end we had so many bananas hanging around, we couldn't sail the boat! Needless to say, we had no shortage of wind when we finally departed.

Billabong - Dec 2005: After some relaxing time in Abaiang we returned to Tarawa for a quick check out and then headed on to Butaritari.

Butaritari is amazingly different from the other atolls of Kiribati with colors of green that jump out at you and dense vegetation. Of course there is a reason for all the green -- RAIN!

We didn't do much while there, as squalls seemed to endlessly travel through the area bringing rain and wind along. We were ready for Majuro.

Interlude - Nov 2005: After ten days in Abaiang we made a quick trip back to Tarawa to officially check out of the country, before an overnight passage to Butaritari Atoll.

We entered through the South Channel because the Central and Northern Channels may still have mines. Here, as on all the other outer atolls, we introduced ourselves to the local police commander and showed him our letter from the Tarawa Immigration authorities, allowing a three-day stop.

He asked us how long we would like to stay and we said at least a week to which he replied "no problem."

We headed for Kuma village up in the northeast corner of the lagoon to get permission to visit the magical island of Natata. We took Moanrunga, the village elder, out to the island to present our gift of compressed tobacco to Kaobunang, the spirit that lives on this island at his shrine. Of course the spirit can't smoke so the elder got permission from the spirit to use the tobacco himself. Without this permission we would not be welcome to set foot on the island and Kaobunang would haunt our presence there.

The elder, through his translator, explained how Butaritari was formed by pulling it up from the underworld with a giant fishhook. A large sinkhole in the lagoon represented the spot the island came from.

That afternoon we played our guitars for the local primary school children and they sang for us in return. While walking through the village one feels like the pied piper with at least a dozen children wanting to hold your hand or touch you as they guide you around. With only a handful of white visitors a year, it is not uncommon for the children to be seeing a white person for the first time, and they often want to touch your skin to ensure that we are not ghosts, as their culture is very superstitious, in spite of many generations of missionary influence.

Butaritari is not to be missed, if you find yourself in this part of the world. It is very lush, in part due to higher rainfall from the Intertropical Convergence Zone and the pink sand beach on Natata is spectacular.

After five nights at Natata Island we left for the 36 hour trip to Majuro.

6.5 Sample Request Letter for Outer Island Visits

Compliments of yacht Mr John VI

From:

30th March 2011

British Yacht "Mr John VI"
Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati

For the kind attention of:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
Bairiki
Tarawa

Dear Sir.

With regard to the above vessel, I wish to thank you for the permission that you granted us to visit ABAIANG, this visit was most successful and we are most grateful for the time we spent amongst the amazingly friendly people of the island.

I now respectfully request that we may be permitted to visit ABEMAMA, for tourism and sight seeing, whilst on route south towards Rotuma / Fiji, for a period not exceeding two weeks.

We are particularly looking forward to visiting ABEMAMA to see the historical sites and experience the rich cultural history which makes this a unique tourist destination.

My wife and I understand difficulties of issuing this permit but we would be most grateful if you would take account of the small size of our sailing boat and the great difficulty we have, battling strong winds and currents to arrive at even one of the above islands. We have in fact sailed half way around the world to visit these beautiful islands and would gratefully appreciate any time that we are able to spend in them.

Whilst in ABEMAMA we will maintain contact with the local Police and advise them of our departure outwards for Fiji so that you may also be informed. On arrival at our next port outside of Kiribati I will take the necessary steps to inform you / your department that this vessel has indeed departed Kiribati and safely arrived in Fiji.

Thanking you for your co-operation in this matter

Ko rabwa

John Wolstenholme
Master

Note: The above request was refused. The Immigration Officer in charge--loane Anerika--told us that "under no circumstances would any yachts be granted permission to stop / visit any islands after they had cleared out, If we wished to visit any outer island we would have to return to Tarawa to properly clear out."

7 Islands Between Hawaii and Fiji

7.1 *Fanning Island*

Moondance – September 2013: There is a short pass into the lagoon. There can be a strong ebb and flood current and the standing waves can be a problem. The period of time that the waves prevented entry into the lagoon seemed to be very short. We arrived a couple of hours before slack and the waves were up pretty good. We circled around and were about to anchor outside of the lagoon, and the waves had subsided enough that we decided to head in. We entered about 45 minutes after we had first arrived. Waypoints for the pass, courtesy of Anton and Vesna from s/v Mala:

03 51.364 N 159 21.954 W

03 51.499 N 159 21.827 W

03 51.596 N 159 21.707 W

Fanning Island is a day ahead of Hawaii now. They changed a couple of years ago to be on the same time as Tarawa (the Kiribati capital). It was after 5 when we dropped anchor, so we thought it would be the next day before we checked in. A small aluminum boat soon approached and informed us that they were customs and immigration. We didn't have any fenders down, a big mistake. Although the skipper of the boat tried to keep them off Moondance, they banged a couple of times. A couple of scratches - really wished we had fenders in place!

The fees seem to be a moving target (all in US\$). We paid \$30 immigration, \$20 Anchoring, and \$20 transportation since we didn't go ashore and pick them up. The official that took our \$20 transportation fee tried to give it to the skipper of the aluminum boat, but he wouldn't take it. We didn't get it back though. Talking with other boats, the fees always total about \$70, you just pay for different things. One boat that was there when we arrived had to pay an additional \$50 for a rat inspection.

They recently got internet access there with several computers setup in one of the offices in the L shaped building with all of the government offices. They charged \$5 per hour. The supply boats that come in haven't had a regular schedule, so the shelves were pretty empty at the 2 small markets. Both the Kwai (from Hawaii) and the Moa Moa (government freighter) arrived while we were there. It had been 3 months since the Moa Moa had been there and 2 months since the Kwai. The supplies they have on the island are needed by the local population, so don't plan on doing any provisioning.

There are lots of fish to catch in the lagoon, pass, and outside the pass. The local fishermen will also sell you some of their catch.

Bruno, a French ex-cruiser, owns a guest house, along with his wife Tabata, on the island and offers assistance to the cruisers.

In a lot of the information about Fanning, they suggest bringing in supplies for the schools and locals. We had brought a lot of donated items with us from Hawaii, but when we mentioned this to Bruno he indicated that the customs officials wouldn't appreciate us bringing things in duty free. We ended up giving the items to his wife, Tabata, and she took them to her church.

Tyrone is another local that can be helpful. He is the shipping agent for the Kwai, but he wasn't on the island while we were there.

Because of the ebb and flow of the lagoon, expect to turn 360 degrees twice a day. The anchorage off the main village is all sand with good holding and a short dinghy ride to shore.

7.2 Christmas Island

Moondance – Oct 2013: We arrived at Christmas Island late on a Friday. We called 'Radio Christmas' on the VHF as we approached, but no answer. We anchored just north of the pier in sand. There were two other cruisers, Hoo Roo and Wind Castle, anchored just north of the pass into the lagoon off of the village of New London. We moved the next day to shorten the dinghy ride through the pass into town. Both anchorages had good holding, sand north of the pier and rock / coral off of New London. You anchor in the lee of the island and it is protected except in South, West, and North winds. There were 3 large ships anchored off the island being loaded by smaller fishing boats. The crews we met were from South America. The Kwai and Moa Moa use the area near the large pier while they are unloading cargo. When the large ships are anchored, they have their deck lights on all night. Even if you could get into the lagoon, it wouldn't be an ideal anchorage due to the fetch across the huge lagoon. We were comfortable anchored in the lee of the island for 2 weeks in June.

If you anchor near the pier, there is a nice dinghy dock at the foot of the stairs for you to use. You then walk to the main road and hitchhike into town. If you anchor in the southern anchorage, dinghy around the point through the pass into the lagoon (it is a long dinghy ride). There is a red marker at the pass you want to leave to port entering the lagoon (give it a wide berth). Head straight to the radio tower, then take a left turn to a small beach. There is an older panga style boat that will be on your right as you approach the beach. There is also an area in front of the Ikari House accommodations you can land at (check with the management first though). Easily spotted from the water due to the small mushroom shaped tree.

We arrived at the beginning of their independence day celebration, which shuts all government offices down for a week. We located the police department and met one of the officers, Sam. We told him we needed to check in, and he said not to worry. He thought the immigration officer was at some of the events going on at the stadium. We walked to the stadium and found her announcing the races going on. We arranged to meet her at her office in a couple of hours.

Everything here is done using Australian \$, so the first stop is the ANZ ATM which is next to the government offices. We met the immigration official at her office. We were checking in with the crew of Evergreen, and she split the overtime fee between us. The total cost was \$62AUD for immigration. Customs didn't charge us anything for overtime when we checked in with them. We had to pay \$50AUD to the port authority for anchoring and \$50AUD for a rat inspection (nobody inspected the boat).

The best internet was through the government communications facility, near the radio mast past the Ikari House. You can get it in the anchorage if you have a booster antenna. For 1 week of service, it was \$35AUD. There is also an internet cafe at the head of the pier by the port authority. You can also purchase internet time at Dijon (sp), a large warehouse near the Ikari House. You can only use it at the Ikari House and they didn't seem to want us around when they had clients.

There are lots of small stores in town to provision from. Things a little expensive, .90AUD per egg. Fresh bread is available at a lot of the markets, \$4AUD for 2 loaves. The best store we found for most things was Punja. It is located past the pier going away from town. They gave us a ride back to the pier with our purchases. We went out to the big box store near the Captain Cook Resort. It had a lot of electronics and things besides food. No one seems to sell papayas, but are happy to give them to you. We like that!

The locals were all very friendly and we easily got a ride around the island.

7.3 Manihiki

Moondance – October 2013: No matter what any of the guide books say, there is no safe anchorage at Manihiki. To get close enough to the shore shallow enough to anchor, you could probably jump from your boat to land. The Kwai has a mooring there that they let our friends on s/v Evergreen use since they were just leaving when Evergreen got there.

This is not a public mooring and we are not sure if it would have been available for our use if we hadn't met with the crew of the Kwai at Fanning. If the wind has any component south of east, the roll becomes very uncomfortable even on the mooring. The pass into the lagoon is only for small boats.