

South Pacific



Micronesia and
Polynesia

14 Jan – 2 Feb 2024



Stockholm - Philippines



The flight-route ARN-CPH-SIN-MNL went without incidents. I arrived Terminal 3, Manilla around 1 PM as scheduled. Changed some money and walked across the **skywalk** crossing the highway to find my accommodation – One Palm Tree Villa apartments. Not the easiest to locate, but eventually I found it. Nice apartment hotel with guarded reception and excellent room with wi-fi, A/C and a kitchenette. Near to shopping mall and restaurants. I break my travel here to recover a little bit after all the flights before continuing to Koror, Palau on Tuesday evening.

Well so much for the positive news. Upon leaving Manila for Koror – all checked in waiting at the gate – after 2 hours delay, we were informed the flight was cancelled. We were routed out from airport and checked in to a nearby hotel for 1 ½ waiting for a replacement flight to Koror on the 18th. Lost 1 ½ more and had to reschedule my whole flight schedule including hotel bookings.



Palau

Alii (Hello) from Palau © 192 (195) I honestly did not think I would make it to Palau on this trip either! Rescheduled 3 times due to my own health issues with DVT (Deep Vein Thrombosis) not being able to do long haul flights. When I then was ready to go, UA (United Airlines) cancelled on me from Manila to Koror (Palau). Lost two days and had to reschedule all my later flights including all the hassle with accommodation etc. – well you know the drill. My replacement UA flight was supposed to take 3 hours, but with yet more delays (3 in total) the trip took 9 hours instead. United Airlines awarded “Worst and most Unreliable Airline of the year”. They are unfortunately known in travelling circles for constantly, cancelling flights, having delays and just fuc...ing up in general especially on this Pacific Island-Hopping route they do between the US and the northern pacific islands. Enough of wining☺

Staying at **Shell Villa apartel** just outside of Koror. Run by Leo who was most helpful with booking and arranging all excursions and transportation. He’d drop me off and pick me up when going into town for dinner and shopping. I tried the Taj (Indian) and the Tori (Japanese) both very good. **Use Smile-air for Rock Islands prop-plane flight** (lolita@smaile-air.com) They quick to respond and do not require a minimum number of people to take. There is also the Milky Way Lagoon and the Jellyfish Lake. However, most of the jelly fish (used to be completely covered) have all but disappeared. Palau is well developed with good infrastructure and quite expensive (European/US prices).



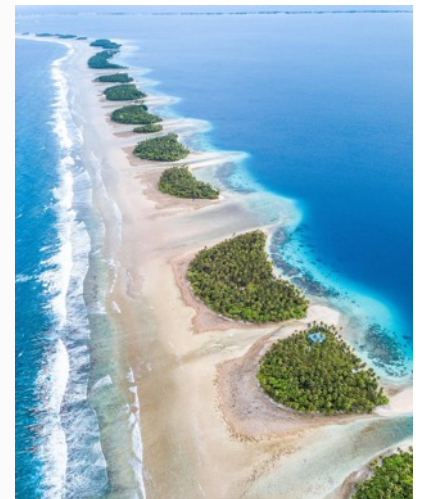


A paradise for diving

Kalimán en ángran from Chuuk, Micronesia © 193 (195) As I was coming down hard on UA for previous two flights, I suppose I must give them credit this time for making two flights on time. Not the best flight connections though, as I had to stop-over in Guam for 14 hours! So, it took me 22 hours to get from Palau to Chuuk Micronesia. Staying four nights here at the *Blue Lagoon Resort and Dive Center*. Chuuk Lagoon is the Mecca for Divers from all over the world with all the WW II shipwrecks scattered all around the lagoon.

Jacques Yves Cousteau spend a lot of time in the Chuuk Lagoon back in 1969 also produced a famous film of all the shipwrecks. It is estimated that over 60 Japanese shipwrecks are in the Lagoon dating back to 1944, including warships, aircrafts and merchant ships. The Lagoon serves as a unique underwater museum.

Not able to scuba dive unfortunately myself for DVT and heart reasons I had to content with snorkeling on some of the shipwrecks which could be seen from surface. That was awesome, but of course a real dive with tanks would have been preferred. I went out with three other scuba divers, and they were so pleased with what they got to see. I have included some photos of what they got to see. We had some fun together during the evenings as well the Divers and me. Lots of interesting stories to share – as always.





Marshall Islands – from the Waters

Komol tata from Majuro, Marshall Islands © 194 (195). Nearly all the visit reports I've read have been quite negative of the Marshall Islands. My three days here are now coming to an end, but I must say they have actually been quite positive. Perhaps that is because I've spent most time on the waters around rather than on the Island itself which really doesn't have much to offer. I highly recommend getting out to outer Islands when here. I did the *Eneko Island* one day, owned by the Reimer family and possible to visit. Beautiful archipelago going out there. The calmer lagoon water on the inside and the rough Pacific Ocean Sea on the other side. Such contrasts. *The Arno Atoll (Island)* is another possible visit. There is a boat going out three times a week to deliver goods, food and transport people to/from Majuro. This is a much rougher journey going out over the open Ocean. However, a great way to meet local people and to be able to interact a bit. We were also *Deep-Sea fishing* both ways. Advisable to bring along packed lunch and water.

A stayed at *the Robert Reimers Hotel*. Good service and nice bungalows. I was lucky to get a Luxury Suite Bungalow on the waterfront for a standard price. :-) It is so enjoyable to sit outside on the veranda seeing the sun set over the lagoon. The food however is rather bland at the restaurant. There are some supermarkets around. However, the prices are horrendous.





Kiribati – pronounced Kiribas

Komol tata from Majuro, Kiribati © 195 (195). Mission accomplished. I finally made it to Kiribati and the last of all the UN-countries in the World (at least for me)! Pleased to announce that I have now “graduated” from “The School of World Travel” 😊. I can now count myself being part of an exclusive group of some 300+ people around the world who have accomplished this same feat (193). Whereas we (Club100 of Sweden) count 195 including The Holy See (The Vatican) and Taiwan. I can now call myself UN-Master, whatever that means ;-)

I stayed at **Dreamers Guest House** on the waterfront in South Tarawa. Robert, a retired Englishman and owner of the lodge came to pick me up at the airport upon arrival. The location is lovely with a three small islands outside and located just on the waterfront. The rooms were not airconditioned, but with the wind blowing through it was quite OK. Good Wi-Fi. You can borrow a bicycle from Robert to get around on. Breakfast included at 70 \$ / night. He also prepares dinner should one want to. There is also a Chinese take-away walking distance from the lodge. Should one require a guide – contact mollybrown413@gmail.com (rec. by Lucy). Another option to stay at is the **Terau Beach Bungalow on one of the smaller islands**. This was my initial plan, but with changed flights, I had to a few days off my visit to Kiribati.





Arrived pretty much on time from Kiribati into Nadi, Fiji. Got a hotel shuttle to **The Gateway hotel**. Decided to stay near the airport this time around. Rested it up on the first day of arrival. Called my driver/guide from previous visit back in October to check if he was available – he was. He came and picked me up for a full day tour. This time we did the **Natadela beach** and relaxed for a while. Continuing further south down to **the Sigatoka Sand and Dunes National Park**. The one-hour trek took me more like three hours as I got lost. Tough going in 33 degrees heat and with hearth condition. I was completely out of breath and wasn't actually sure I'd make it back. I did obviously but had to rest up at the hotel all afternoon.



