

Australian Air-Ferry

April Newsletter

Environmental Vandals

Christmas Island is one of the picturesque little places used for refueling during a ferry flight through the Pacific. This mostly sleepy little atoll hides an enormous secret; it has made significant contribution to global warfare and has literally changed the course of history.

The island is part of the Kiribati group of islands, it was named by Captain Cook who discovered it on Christmas day. And I think it's the largest coral atoll in the world.

Late 50s early 60s the English Government used the area to test Hydrogen bombs.

During atomic testing the local indigenous people, approximately 50 of them, were told to stay in their village (London) approximately 30 nm away while the English Armed Forces detonated the devices near the northeastern end of the island.

After successfully detonating six or seven bombs the English moved out leaving a lot of destroyed equipment and a few buildings.

The Americans considered testing in the area and no sooner had the English gone when they arrived. They detonated approximately 15-20 bombs (No one knows for sure, or their not saying).

Almost everything was detonated prior to it reaching the ground, so the devastation to the coral island appears to have been minimal.

Now forty years later the English have sent a cleanup party to the island – On our last trip through the Pacific we met an English Army representative who was staying in the Captain Cook Motel, the only accommodation on the island.

The conversation with this atomic test veteran revealed that Christmas Island had played a monumental role in the development of nuclear equipment for both England and America.

Current radioactive testing has revealed very little contamination and all the rusty old equipment is being loaded onto ships and returned to England for recycling.

The islands population has grown over the years to approximately 4,000, most of these people have migrated to Christmas from other Pacific islands, although the 50 or so locals (who mostly worked for the English Armed Forces) are apparently still there.



Christmas Island Airport Terminal

I'd have to say that I've never seen anyone over the age of 40 – 45 on the island since I've been frequenting the atoll.

If you'd like to visit Christmas Island there's a commuter flight from Honolulu once a week, so you'll have to stay at least a week.

Today the island is a renowned fishing destination for Bonefish enthusiast. Apparently the fishing for this species is the best in the world, but to catch a Bonefish you need to be a very good fly fisherman.

Daybreak on Christmas Island



Free Ferry Flights

Some of you will remember our lead story last month – the very young pilot who braved the unknown and ferried a Cessna 182 to Australia from California. His first Pacific crossing and very little assistance from the organizer, marginal weather with head winds.

Well it gets worse, the writer had dinner with young Dave in California recently and the old ferry pilot that sent him of into the unknown has decided not to pay him a cent.

Dave spent the modest amount of money given to him for the trip and when that ran out he managed to put an additional three thousand dollars on his credit card.

He retains the HF radio (probably worth \$500.00), but he has literally paid to ferry the aircraft to Australia.

It's probably important to mention that the aircraft owner paid cash for the ferry, so the funds remain with the nice old guy who sent Dave into the Pacific alone with nothing but a fist full of ones.

Surplus Equipment

We have a black and white Lowrance 1000 GPS available for \$1,150 Australian. They're equipped with a pacific international database, and have seen very little service. We've also got a six-man life raft that has all sorts of inclusions, never used. Talk to Darren Gibson about these items.

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