

# Australian Air-Ferry

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## *July Newsletter*

### **Asian Express**

Every month we try and bring you a story from a foreign part of the globe, something indicative of our day to day relocation experiences. This month the newsletter is based on a relocation that started in Singapore in a Shorts 360 that was destined for North America.

The night before departure the crew busied themselves with flight plans and weight limitations, the runway length at Singapore's Seletar airport would be the limiting factor on this leg.



### **Unlikely traveling companions stuck in Phonepei**

The fuel required was achievable according to the aircrafts limitations and just before daylight the crew was busy readying the aircraft.

Taxiing for the holding point the tower informed us that our departure clearance would expire in four minutes, we were ready, and that was relayed to the tower.

Cleared for take-off the aircraft accelerated quickly, “airspeed alive, temps and pressures normal, take-off power set” called the non-flying pilot, all the indications were good.

During the take-off roll the crews calculations are put to the test, the first part of the runway seems long and relatively slow, the second portion quick, but the third portion just disappears.



### **Friendly local on Phonepei**

Luckily for us all that checking and double checking the night before gave us some assurance that this shed would fly eventually.

Despite our eagerness to get airborne, the Shed seemingly clinged relentlessly to the earth's surface, for a few seconds the crew thought they'd follow the earth's curvature to North America.

The rotate call came and the front wheel headed skywards, the piano keys were closing fast and the main wheels reluctantly left the ground.

The required runway length was exactly as forecast in the aircrafts performance documentation, air traffic control requested an early right turn to avoid busy airspace ahead.

After getting established in the cruise we start checking our equipment and with every minute we distance ourselves from Singapore.

The waterways surrounding Palau are pristine, the island is mainly lime based and surrounded by naturally deep waterways, this means there's no mud washed into the sea when it rains, and pristine sea water from deep sea channels surrounds the island.

Half an hour before night fall on this sleepy little island we land in Palau and head for the serenity of the local accommodation.



**Phonepei Jetty at dusk**

After checking in and finding the in-house restaurant we found ourselves being serenaded by a very good local musical group, unfortunately all this very good music was wasted on our tied crew members.

Early the next morning were back at the airport getting ready for the next leg to Phonepei.

On approach into Phonepei we discover a 727 operated by Asian Pacific close behind, also inbound to Phonepei. After they landed we met the crew, both Australians, based in Honolulu.

After Phonepei we plan to refuel in Majuro, they're planning runway improvements and the runway closes at 10:00pm tonight, it's less than four hours from Phonepei but Majuro proves to be elusive, delays on the ground mean that we'll be staying for two days, it's Monday morning before we can land in Majuro.

Asian Pacific's 727 taxis out but they have engine problems and are also grounded on Phonepei for the weekend. (The cover photo)

Day one we take a look around and Sunday (day two) proves to be perfect for fishing, we've sort out a local surfing group, they have a couple of runabouts to tow surfers into the waves.

Luckily the surfs flat and we're able to convince the operator to take us fishing. We headed towards the south western corner of the island.

After arriving and setting the massive lures we headed east, an hour later we find ourselves in very calm water, small fish leap out of the water and fly, sometimes only a few metres, other times they get it right and fly for 15 metres before crashing back into the sea.

After observing this freakish behavior we determine that they can only do it in ground effect, and several won't make a feed.



**Flying Fish Phonepei**

There's always that big question at the end of a days fishing, "did you catch anything", and yes we landed a fish, several very big fish (stories in themselves) managed to get away, but we did get to eat fresh fish, far to embarrassing to come back empty handed out here.



### **Fresh Barracuda**

Fresh after our stay in Phonepei we headed for Majuro, the refuellers got us fuelled and departed in less that an hour, next stop Hilo Hawaii.

Four hours from Majuro our friendly 727 was coming into radio range, they'd completed repairs around lunchtime and were also headed for Hawaii (Honolulu).

Ground staff in Hilo awaited our arrival, customs and agriculture asked the usual questions and eager to comply we volunteered some fresh fruit that we'd purchased in Phonepei. The authorities took the produce, read the label, laughed as they handed it back saying, "The label says it was produced in the USA". Why would an island paradise buy their bananas from the USA, very strange but true.

After a day in Hilo we headed for California, we're heading into the sun and the days are short. Eleven hours after leaving Hilo we arrive in California, it's still daylight and we're quickly refueled and dropped in front of our accommodation.

The following day the weather is unusually bad for this part of the world and we depart in what could be described as inclement weather, a couple of hours into our journey we climb to 17,000ft to avoid the cloud tops, and high terrain.

An unexpected tail wind gives us 280 knots across the ground. The customers watching on [www.flightaware.com](http://www.flightaware.com) and cannot believe a Shed is capable of 280 knots, and I'd have to admit that I've never experienced it previously. Unfortunately our oxygen is limited and so after an hour we're heading for a more suitable level.

Future Stories include: Greece to Guam in a Shorts 360, a 310hp Mooney from USA to Townsville, a Yak 18T from UK to Melbourne and many others, stay tuned Australian Air Ferry will bring you more exciting stories from around the globe.

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