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Route p4

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA


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CONTRIBUTORS

The Pilotage Foundation is extremely grateful to the following who have provided information which is now available for the benefit of others;

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INTRODUCTION

The Federated States of Micronesia (or FSM), previously known as the Caroline Islands, form a chain, north of the equator, from the Marshall Islands to the Philippines. They offer an attractive set of stepping stones from the Pacific to SE Asia. Also, as they are not affected by the South Pacific typhoon season (December to March), they are an alternative destination to New Zealand or Australia from the South Pacific. A cruise through the FSM offers unparalleled remoteness and little likelihood of encountering any other yachts. English is widely spoken throughout the islands.

PILOTAGE

As with the rest of the Pacific, eyeball navigation is essential. There are very few navigational aids. The charts are generally well surveyed (even the ancient sketch-surveys) and GPS corrections to WGS84 appear to be accurate where they are mentioned. However, it is essential to take regular fixes by hand bearing compass to check the accuracy of GPS plots if relying on GPS and chart.

Pilots: Admiralty Pilot; Pacific Islands Volume 1, NP60, is the essential guide. Migrant Cruising Notes Micronesia; by Phil Cregeen, has good detail on a limited number of anchorages in FSM and the rest of Micronesia.

Charts: Full coverage on Admiralty charts, including good plans of all the significant islands.

WEATHER

The typhoon season runs from June/July to November, but out of season typhoons are not uncommon. The lowest incidence occurs around January and February, at which time the islands are firmly settled in the NE

trades, the weather dry and the sailing wonderful. It would probably be unadvisable to be in the islands during the typhoon season as some of the most powerful storms in the world develop in the area.

Weather Forecasts; Weatherfaxes are essential, but the surface pressure analyses can be difficult to interpret unless tracking a typhoon. The Pacific streamline analyses from Hawaii are very helpful. Hawaii broadcasts on 9982.5kHz, 11090.0kHz, 16135.0kHz, 23331.5kHz. Australian and Japanese faxes are also helpful. Australia broadcasts on 5100.0kHz, 11030.0kHz, 13920.0kHz, 20469.0kHz, 5755.0kHz, 7535.0kHz, 10555.0kHz, 15615.0kHz, 18060.0kHz and Japan on 3622.5kHz, 7305.0kHz, 13597.0kHz, 18220.0kHz. . Storm warnings included with the US time signals from Hawaii on 5kHz, 10kHz and 15kHz can also help.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Formalities; The FSM is divided into four states, based on ancient kingdoms, now governed from Pohnpei. Local government and authorities exist for each state and it is necessary to clear through formalities when transiting between them. Ports of entry are limited, the active ones being; At the eastern end of the chain, **Kosrae State** - Lelu Harbour and Okat Harbour, **Pohnpei State** - Kolonia Harbour, **Chuuk State** - Weno Harbour, and at the western end of the chain, **Yap State** - Colonia Harbour.

On arrival in FSM, the first requirement is for a Cruising Permit, which is valid for the stay in the entire country. This should be applied for before arrival by faxing/sending the form 'Application for a vessel to the FSM', which can be found in pdf format on the internet. If it is not possible to have the Cruising Permit sent ahead, it can be picked up on arrival. Mayors (or chiefs) on outer islands may request to see this form.

On arrival into the country, or when arriving in a new state, you must Clear In with Immigration, Customs, Agricultural Quarantine and the Harbourmaster. This is usually a straightforward process. The Agricultural Quarantine officers will charge a fee. Officers from all departments may want to come aboard.

To visit the outer islands of any of the states, regulations require you to contact the mayor of each island that you intend to visit, before arrival, to obtain permission. However, these islands are generally friendly towards visitors, and it would be surprising if an island mayor was unhappy to see a yacht that had arrived without warning.

Local customs; The Micronesians are distinctly different to Polynesians and Melanesians. The effects of US colonisation of the FSM are still very evident in the attitude of the people. There are significant differences between the tribes that make up the four states.

Custom demands that when visiting any outer island the mayor (chief) should be sought out and a gift given. Some islands have very strong dress-codes, particularly for women, and great sensitivity should be shown when going ashore.

Provisioning; The Micronesians seem not to have the same instinct to trade fresh produce that the Melanesians have, making fruit and vegetables very hard to find. Food tends to be scarce on the outer islands during the Jan/Feb/March cruising season, so be prepared and don't expect to restock away from the main towns. Fish, however, is always in abundant supply. Ocean fishing is spectacularly productive.

Money; Currency throughout is US \$. Fortunately for yachtsmen, Yapese stone money is used only ceremonially! Banks are available in the capitals of each state and can give cash advances over the counter, or at the ATM if available. Credit cards are widely accepted.

The large towns have good supermarkets, well stocked with good Asian supplies and US supplies imported from Guam.

Water; Supplies are limited and unlikely to be good quality. Catching rainwater or using a watermaker are the best solutions.

Fuel; Diesel, outboard fuel and kerosene should be easily obtainable in the major centres, but the outer islands have very limited supplies and frequently run out, so it would be unfair to ask for fuel there.

Gas; Propane is easily obtainable in Chuuk and Yap. The US POL type connector is standard.

Communications; Postal systems are provided by the United States Postal Service and should be quick and reliable. Telephone systems work well. E-mail availability may be limited but is available.

ISLANDS AND ANCHORAGES

KOSRAE STATE

Visited by Noel Marshall, Roving Commissions 2003

POHNPEI STATE

The capital of FSM is on Pohnpei Island. This is where you are expected to Clear In.

NUKUORO ATOLL

Nukuoro Atoll and Kapingamarangi Atoll are Polynesian and have a different flavour to the rest of Micronesia. They are not only isolated physically, but also culturally.

Pass; Nukuoro has a short narrow pass that may experience steep seas.

Anchorage; 03° 50.32' N 154° 58.25' E. Good holding and shelter in 14m sand off the village. In westerlies, better shelter can be found in a bight in the reef south of the village near the pass, close to a mooring laid by American ex-pat yachtsman Steve for his yacht *Cosmic Muffin*.

Formalities; The mayor will want to see your clearance papers obtained in Pohnpei.

Facilities; Very limited supplies, even for the islanders. Limited connections with the rest of the state.

CHUUK STATE (Previously Truk State)

Chuuk State is regarded as the poorest of the FSM states. The outer islands that rely on Chuuk Island for government and supplies are very poorly served. Chuuk has been occupied by the Japanese and subsequently the Americans and has numerous remains from these days, making it historically fascinating and a mecca for divers.

CHUUK

Chuuk is an island group within a large lagoon. The population of 40,000 has a very bad reputation for crime and violence, caused primarily by chronic alcohol abuse. However, it is a useful port of entry, and the lagoon offers some of the world's best diving in very clear water. More than 50 Japanese ships sunk in WWII have become home to spectacular corals and fish.

Formalities; Go alongside in the southern part of the harbour at Weno Town. Customs are based some way along the main road going north, Immigration in a building near the Truk Stop Hotel, and the Harbourmaster in one of the old copra warehouses by the wharfs. All the officials, including the quarantine officer, will come on board on arrival and will probably clear you in and out at the same time. Customs will want to see you again before your departure.

Weno Town

Anchorage: 07° 26.51' N 151° 50.21' E Off the Truk Stop Hotel pier, in coral and sand. This is a convenient but noisy anchorage with many banana boats passing through in the morning rush hour. It is safe to leave a dinghy at the hotel jetty.

Facilities: The town has some good supermarkets.

Some hardware is available at Ace Hardware.

The Truk Stop Hotel, located in Weno, offers dives including equipment.

Fuels; Diesel is available from the small service station just north of the port.

Gas; Propane is available from the Truk Stop Hotel.

Mail; The post office is in the orange building near the port and general delivery can be sent to General Delivery, Weno, Chuuk, FSM, 96942.

Email is available at the computer shop just outside the Truk Stop Hotel. International phone calls can be made at the Truk Stop Hotel.

Blue Lagoon Hotel 07° 24.7' N 151° 50.2' E A bay at the south end of the island with reasonable shelter and holding.

Facilities; Better security here. Comfortable facilities at the hotel.

PULUWAT (POLOWAT) ISLAND, CHUUK STATE

Puluwat is a stunningly beautiful atoll with a fascinating history and culture. The traditional sailing canoes and navigational techniques are still in daily use, fishing the reefs and visiting the surrounding islands in the group. Many ancient taboos, particularly regarding women, existed in relation to the canoes but these were dispelled when a missionary persuaded a well respected navigator to break every taboo he could think of and then go to sea. A successful trip followed and on his return the population happily dropped all the taboos, which they regarded as a complete nuisance anyway! The book *East Is A Big Bird* was written about the island and is worth reading whilst there. Rapwi, a famous navigator pictured in the book, still lives there and is full of kindness. The Japanese lighthouse, which dominates the unpopulated north end of the atoll, was built in the 1930s when Chuuk was a major Japanese naval base, and is a remarkable example of brilliant engineering and construction. Many remains exist from the Japanese occupation before and during WWII and are easily accessible, including Japanese vehicle wrecks off the road to the lighthouse.

Pilotage: The pass is tricky and requires keeping very close to the reefs on the starboard side of the entrance to avoid coral heads in the middle of the pass. Coral heads exist within the lagoon, particularly in the western part, so keep close inshore. Reasonable daylight is essential for entering.

Anchorage; 07° 21.19' N 149° 11.54'E. Excellent shelter and good holding in 8m sand and coral off ruined jetty at Rewo village. There is a strong current through here, but this is not problematic. For a shallow draught vessel it is apparently possible to enter the inner lagoon, though this seems unnecessary as the shelter is similar. Yachts have ridden out typhoons in the lagoon and the islanders could advise on the best position, which seems to be off the south shore of Alet Island.

Formalities; Several chiefs and mayors exist on the island. One of the traditional chiefs is a good English speaker. You may be directed to the mayor in the village of Relong.

Facilities; None at all, not even any medical care, fuel or cigarettes for the islanders.

YAP STATE

Yap and its outer islands are a well organised state where traditional ways and values are held with great regard and carefully protected. Dress-codes are particularly important here and traditional dress is commonly worn.

YAP ISLAND

Tomil Harbour

Yap Proper Island is capital of Yap State. As such, the town of Colonia is small but important. The island is very friendly and interesting and a very pleasant stop. There is excellent sightseeing and diving. Yap is famous for its stone money and its manta rays. Tourism is easy on the island, although public transport is limited.

Pilotage; Entry through the pass is not difficult. The principle beacons marking the entrance were in place in 2004, as were most of the beacons marking the channel. However the docks have been considerably modified from those charted, with large areas of reef being reclaimed and built on. Be aware that there may be changes.

Anchorage; 09° 30.88' N 138° 07.32' E. The best anchorage is in the southern bay with good shelter and holding in 12m mud, directly below the bridge. On the ebb a strong current flows from the inner lagoon.

Formalities; Colonia is a Port of Entry and officials are helpful and organised. The harbourmaster is based near the main wharfs west of the anchorage and the customs office is in the mall just north of the anchorage. Customs will arrange for the immigration and quarantine officers to come to their office, otherwise quarantine is based at the top of the hill south of the inner bridge across the small lagoon.

Facilities; There are several small supermarkets. You may well need to shop around to find everything you need, particularly if the regular supply ship from Guam has yet to arrive. Check with the harbourmaster to see when this is due as the shops will be much better stocked with fresh produce after this. Several reasonably stocked hardware stores are available.

Fuel: Diesel and petrol are found from the service station next to the anchorage. Bunkering alongside can probably be arranged at the fish wharfs.

Gas: Propane is easily obtainable from the gas plant near the main wharfs.

Water: Limited amounts of drinking water are negotiable from the fish wharf.

Communications: The post office is located on the north shore of the inner lagoon, and is well organised. Mail can be sent to General Delivery, Colonia, Yap, FSM, 96943. There is an international telephone office up the hill just above the road junction near the mall, which also offers internet access. However, free fast internet connection (probably the best in this part of the Pacific) can be found in the large modern computer room at the government Educational Department, at the end of the road with the telephone office, about a ten minute walk.

Several dive operators are based near the anchorage.

There are good restaurants to choose from including the pretty hotel on the south shore of the inner lagoon.

OLIMARAO ATOLL, YAP STATE (see plan)

Olimarao is an uninhabited atoll and stands out as a Pacific jewel. Two small islands stand on the coral ring, which is a little over two miles diameter, and excellent shelter can be found from the NE trade winds. There are signs of many turtle nests. Islanders from Lamotrek and Elato come here to catch turtles. Coconut crabs are abundant, if you know how to catch them. The snorkelling and diving are wonderful.

Pilotage; Chart BA772 (1992) is reported to have negligible GPS error to WGS84. The pass lies in the south part of the reef and is not difficult. Suggested directions for the pass are as follows. From position 07° 40.54' N 145° 52.52' E, which lies close outside the reef, steer for the western end of Olimarao Island on 005°T until you reach position 07° 40.76' N 145° 52.50' E. You should pass close to breakers at the edge of the reef to

starboard and leave a shoal on the inner side of the reef to port. There are least depths of 8.0m in the pass, and only weak currents through the pass. Crossing the lagoon, there are no reported dangers on the approach to Olimarao Island. There is a 5m coral head close in the anchorage.

Anchorage; 07° 42.00' N 145° 52.80'E. See plan. Good shelter and holding in 13m sand and coral on a steeply shelving bottom. Alternatively slightly further off in 15-20m sand and coral on a less sloping bottom. Buoys the anchor. It is possible to get closer in and anchor in 3-4m sand off the beach, but beware of coral heads. Contrary to the comments in the Admiralty Pilot, landing is very easy.

Facilities; Coconuts ashore!

OLIMARAO IS. FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA.

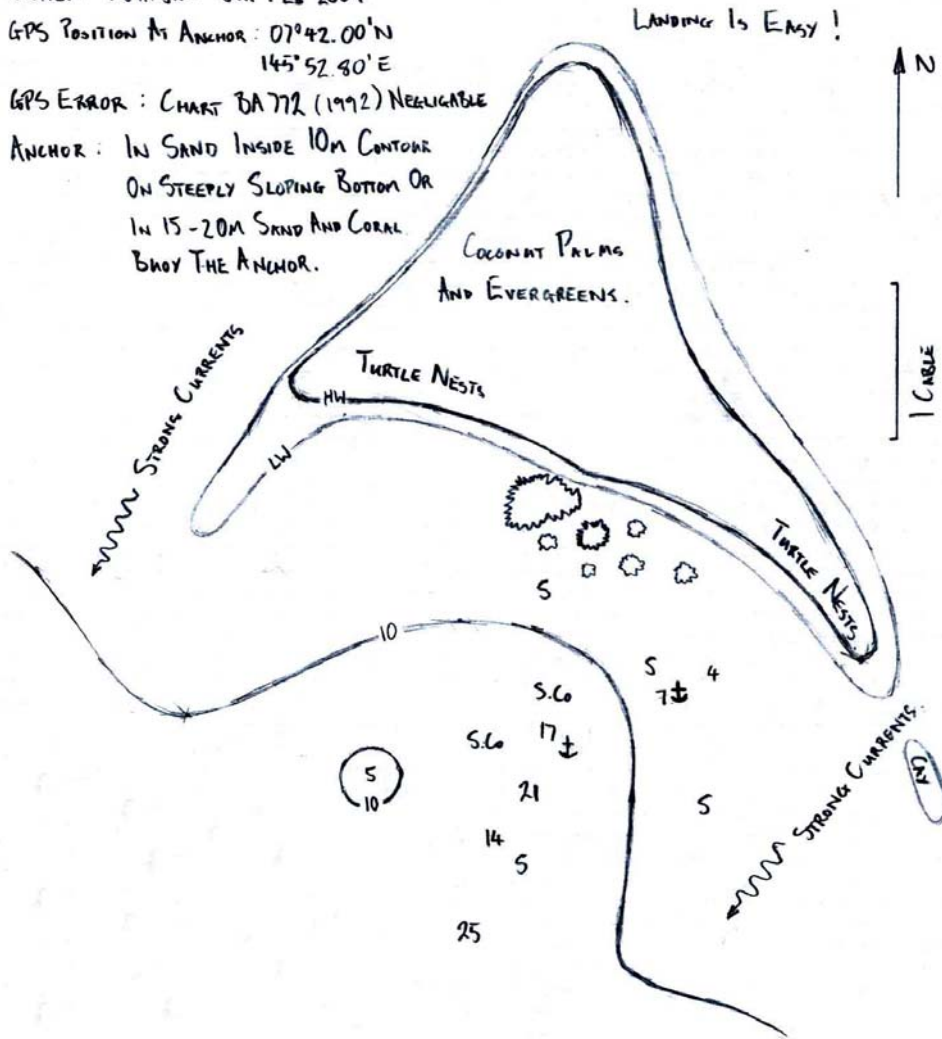
VISITED : 28TH JAN - 5TH FEB 2004

GPS POSITION AT ANCHOR : 07°42.00'N
145°52.80'E

GPS ERROR : CHART BA 772 (1992) NEGLIGIBLE

ANCHOR : IN SAND INSIDE 10M CONTOUR
ON STEEPLY SLOPING BOTTOM OR
IN 15-20M SAND AND CORAL
BUOY THE ANCHOR.

LANDING IS EASY!



24/1/2009