

ALLAN SEFTON ON TROPICAL VENUES

Following on from Mark, Allan Sefton made a brief presentation on his experiences, mostly on Christmas Island.

Allan Sefton's first taste of Bonefish was in the Bahamas back in 1995. He then had a 10 year spell at Los Roques before deciding to seek somewhere less crowded. It is part of an archipelago off Venezuela but we are assured that it is safe to visit despite the recent USA crackdown on drug running. I believe Allan claimed that there were now over 100 companies offering fishing vacations to Los Roques.

He set about looking for paradise and in 2013 he discovered Kiritimati which is the largest coral atoll in the World and was so impressed that he made another 5 visits. Bonefish were abundant, mostly in the 2-3 pound range but with doubles a possibility. He managed to catch around 30 fish a day. Other species around the island included Trigger fish and Giant Trevally. The drawback was that it is located in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and the journey from the UK involved a flight to the USA, hopping over to Hawaii and joining the turbo jet driven postal flight (once a week) to Kiritimati. An alternative route was from London via Australia! You could see how easily luggage could go astray.

Attached is an account of Allan's second visit to the island, delivered at a club meeting in 2014. Alas, according to recent U-Tube films, the accommodation on the island has been upgraded and is served by Fuji Airways from Adelaide. The aircraft was a twin engined jet which resembled an Airbus 330. Apparently, more Aussies now visit Kiritimati than those from the States. Paradise no more but as it is the largest atoll in the World, there is plenty of room for everyone?

Allan provided a very interesting survey of costs for a one week's escorted stay at various venues: Seychelles £24000, Los Roques £3995, Bahamas £3695, Kiritimati £2350. Allan expressed personal confidence with Frontiers Travel (USA) but I don't think these figures necessarily came from their brochure. Air fares are not included: return flights to Seychelles could cost £1000 compared with up to £9000 for Kiritimati.

Finally, Allan has written a new book: "The Better Flyer Fisher: A Practical Handbook for Skill, Strategy and Success on the Water" which will be published at the end of March.

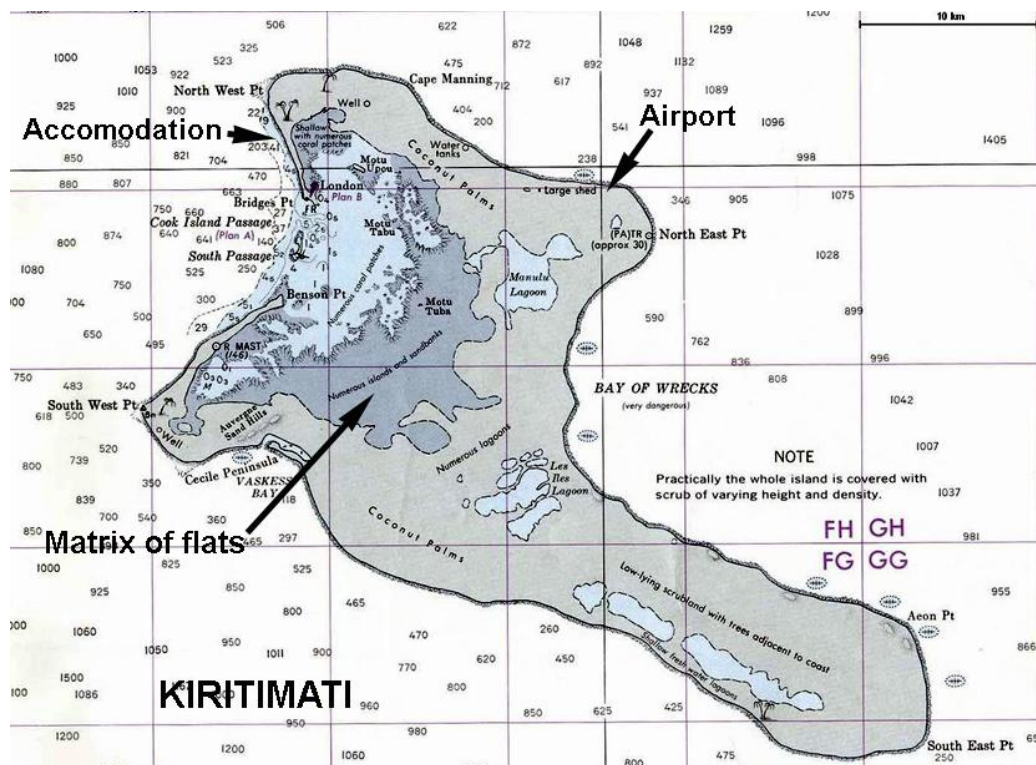
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A FISHING TRIP TO KIRITIMANI. Allan Sefton, December 20, 2014

A NOTE TO KITH AND KIN WHO ARE WONDERING WHAT TO BUY THEIR OTHER HALVES FOR CHRISTMAS.

Allan Sefton's first bonefish trip was 20 years ago, the result of a gift from his wife! The ultimate Christmas gift – go do it!

Allan's talk related to a trip he took in August 2014. This was his second trip and he rates it the most interesting place he has visited and, given Allan's wanderlust, that is saying something. Kiritimati (Kee-Ree-Mass) – formerly known as Christmas Island – not to be confused with the detention centre off of Australia – is roughly located on the equator, in the middle of the Pacific and about 1200 miles south of Hawaii. It sits in the trade winds which always blow according to Allan.



The weather is pleasant enough thanks to the moderating effects of the trade winds. Full protection from the sun is essential. Contrary to popular belief the atoll was *re-discovered* by Captain Cook in 1777, annexed by the UK in 1888 and granted sovereignty in 1979; English is the spoken language. It was not populated until 1912 when various religious groups moved in. The population is now 5000 but a sad fact of life, according to Allan, was that few people survive past 45 due to a preponderance of diabetes. (*Wikki says that the average age is around the mid 20's but life expectancy is at least 60 years*). Allan travelled with Frontiers, which cost \$2350 per person for double occupancy and a shared guide. Air fares were extra; the journey involved a flight from London to Los Angeles, on to Honolulu and down to Kiritimati (1 flight per week). Although Allan said that Frontiers were amongst the most expensive of the travel companies, he praised their competency. The air-conditioned cabins on the atoll looked perfectly acceptable to me. A great advantage of organised trips is that you can insist on going when the tides are ideal for fishing the flats. Unlike Los Roques, Kiritimati remains unspoilt. The lagoon is the largest in the world and covers 320 km². As yet there are few tourists. There are three fishing operations each supporting 5 anglers so that it is unlikely that there will be more than 15 anglers at a time. Last August there were 4 anglers! The map is slightly misleading because the lagoon is filled with a mosaic of interlinking flats so that the shore line is immeasurably great. Anglers are taken to venues on home-made Polynesian style boats featuring an out-rider. Fishing the flats is

then done by shallow wading. The sand is a dazzling white but the coral is deadly sharp and necessitates decent boots to avoid getting cut to pieces. A line raft was useful if fishing was conducted near the reef. The sea is usually transparent but a severe blow might generate some murky areas in which case a spinning outfit is essential if fishing is to remain productive. Long distance casting is not required at Kiritimati so that a 20-foot chuck would be considered sufficient. It does need to be accurate. A 7-weight rod would normally be considered an ideal weapon. However, given the short casts it might be necessary to use a lower rated rod for it to be fully loaded by the short length of fly line in the air. A fluorocarbon leader with a 12lb bs tip would be the norm for these fish which weigh in at 2 - 5 lbs. The usual flies such as streamers, gummi minnows, and crab imitations are not the usual fare at Kiritimati. Flies tend to be on the small size – no larger than 10's, lightly tied on stainless steel hooks by Allan himself. The colour of the fly was chosen to match the sea bed. Note that the fly was tied to the tippet with a Kreh loop which allowed maximum articulation. Fishing is catch and release so the barb must be removed before use.



Allan made some interesting points about tackling bonefish. They are renowned for making long runs especially in shallow water. The advice is to stop them as soon as possible or they will spook all of the other fish in the area. Bonefish are notorious for being invisible. It needs practice and, according to Alan, you are unlikely to acquire the skill in just a week of fishing. Sometimes the fish are hiding in the weed. If it is sunny, the fish may cast a shadow on the sand. In shallow water, the fish in their attempts to explore the sea bed, may stick their tails out of the water. The tides are critical because shallow water offers bonefish protection from being chomped by cruising Barracuda; aim for a rising tide.



Giant Trevally frequents the flats where they cruise up and down the deep-water inlets. These fish are aggressive feeders and a lure dropped in their vicinity will be taken with little discrimination and the angler will be faced with runs of 200 metres. GT's can weigh in at over 30kg. Tackle needs to be beefed up. Allan liked a Snowbee Blue Water 5 No.12 4-piece 9 ft jobbie. This model is currently on offer at £150. The reel was equally beefed up, also a Snowbee, which I think was a Geo, loaded to the rim. A 60-80lb.bs leader was required. An articulated fly

was used. The fishing technique was to visit the flats on a boat. Hand the GT rod to the guide who might use it to point to potential quarry. The routes these fish take through the flats is well known to the guide but contact with them is relatively uncommon. Once located, the GT rod is returned and it is up to the angler to do the business. Not quite as easy as it might seem as the GT's move through the flats at a considerable speed. Allan did manage to catch a GT but it was of a modest size and succumbed to a spinner. A relatively undeveloped aspect of fishing on Kiritimati lies in the deep water beyond the reef. At present the guides are using their flats boats for trolling which are far from ideal. However, Allan noted the capture of two Black Marlin as well as Yellow Finned Tuna, Barracuda and GT's. The elusive Milkfish lurking around the mouth of the lagoon and weighing in at 40-50 lbs, look to be an inviting quarry. There is a danger of this fishery being destroyed by legally authorised commercial operations from Japan, Korea and China.

There is an alternative route to Kiritimati which might interest anglers visiting Australia/New Zealand. This involves a flight from Sydney to Fiji and on to Kiritimati. This will set you back about A\$1800. The contact in Aus is Nial Logan in Queensland and he is well worth Googling to reveal his numerous publications on the www.

Finally, I was encouraged to hear that Allan's attitude to the high cost of these trips was that they

took you to wilderness areas and that alone is worth half the fee. For those who remain unconvinced I recommend Allan Sefton's book "Getting Started at Flyfishing for Trout" which retails at £5.99. I was delighted to hear that he has just finished a new text on salmon fishing. I will make that top of my reading list for 2015.

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References

Frontier Travel

(http://issuu.com/frontierstravel/docs/swg_2015_swg_issuu?e=5749889/9902080)

Aussie Agent Nial Logan contact
nial@learntoflyfish.net

www.thevillages.com does not work

www.learntoflyfish.net is an excellent source of information

Kiribati Tourist Guide - good for fishing photos

http://kiribatitourism.gov.ki/images/Download/s/Kiritimati_travel_trade_brochure_2014.pdf

(I have not checked if these addresses work in 2025)