

On Kiribati - Part Two

It is a great night. The room is simple - it has walls, doors and I feel safe. For dinner I order a bowl of seafood chowder in the restaurant and it is delicious.

The next morning Peter drives me to Toberoi Travel's office where I am to rendezvous with the group.



Friend Karyn (who had visited Kiribati a few years ago) had clued me in that the building has a good coffee shop called the Chatterbox Cafe along with an excellent selection of handicrafts.



We are early, and guess who offers to make me a cappuccino? Peter!

He is a man of many talents. Before he became a guide, he was Chatterbox Cafe's barista.

Soon the others arrive and we set out for our day of touring this long skinny island atoll.

Houses are simple, many with thatched roofs, Stores are small, selling just the necessities. I ask Peter about shopping and he says about the only thing tourists can buy are tie-dye sarongs and jewelry made from shells.

Kirabati has lost much of its natural resources. They were stripped of their most important export - commercial phosphate - by the British when they occupied the island. They had claimed the land in the 17th century and once its natural resources were gone, The UK gave Kiribati its independence.



Whatever there is to see on the island, we see it: the museum, Parliament House, stadium, commercial areas, and WWII sites. We learn about the long and brutal battles against the Japanese in World War II.



There are numerous WWII sites in South Tarawa including bunkers, guns and a monument to the Marines who fought so bravely during the Battle of Tarawa

That evening we are treated to a private performance from the award-winning Kiribati Traditional Dance Troupe.



And finally.....

Dear sweet Kiribati with its friendly, kind and generous people is not without its problems.



The highest point in Kiribati is just nine feet so with global warming and the inevitable rise in sea levels, this island nation faces major problems.

To further complicate matters, the shore is eroding and in an effort to stop it, Kiribati imported tons of boulders to use as a breakwater. It helps a bit.

The government has also purchased land in Fiji so that when the time comes, the entire population can be evacuated.

Kiribati was the first country to see the sun that first morning of the millennium; and will most likely be the first country to disappear due to rising sea levels

On a happier note.....

Kiribati might just be on the cusp of solving a great mystery -- an answer to what happened to Amelia Earhart.



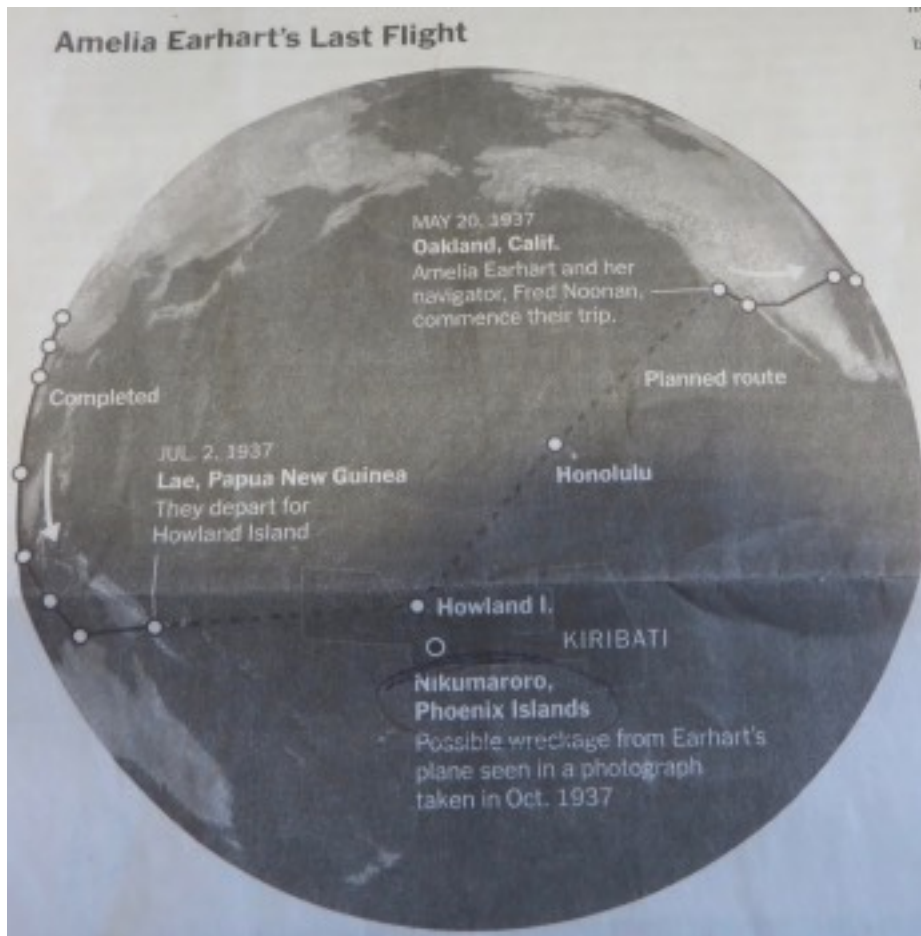
Note the circled area

Source: New York Times

In 1937 Eric Bevington took a photo of a freighter that had run aground off Gardner Island (now called Nikumaroro Island). There appears to be something sticking out of the water near the edge of the photograph and its shape is consistent with the landing gear of Earhart's type of plane.

Over the years, several promising clues have surfaced. The current expedition to Kiribati's Nikumaroro island is funded by the National Geographic Society and the documentary is due to air on October 20th, 2019.

It is gratifying to know that the remote island nation of Kiribati might once again be at the center of the world's attention.



Source: New York Times