

Christmas Island

ONE Opening slide

Joe Brooks. Have this slide on while waiting to start.

TWO Kiritamati

My introduction.

- I have fished a lot having grown up in NE Victoria but a bait drifter or spin fisher.
- About 10 years ago when after we moved to Canberra Kerryn wanted to try fly fishing. We joined ACT Fly Fishers and recently Canberra Anglers.
- Fly fishing has opened up a new world to us. Literally.
- It is a pass-time that Kerryn and I both share and it has taken us to a lot of new places. I am one of the lucky guys whose wife enjoys fly fishing. (or vice versa)
- Not just around Canberra but up in the Snowies, some new places in Victoria and also to Tasmania.
- We have now been to New Zealand six times and made new friends over there and seen the beauty of the country and had fantastic trout fishing experiences on the North and South Islands.

- **But in May this year it took us to Christmas Island.**

- I'll occasionally refer to Christmas Island as CXI out of habit. CXI is what is on your airline ticket.
[\(show ticket\)](#)
- CXI was on Kerryn's "Bucket List" and although I didn't share her enthusiasm I had to tag along. She read lots of material on Bonefishing and started to buy the right gear and tie the required flies.
- When the time came along I too was getting excited for the trip.
- This is not going to be "fish photos" presentation and we're giving an overview of the whole trip. Not just fish. A bit of history and geography too.
- It may give you the incentive to do it yourself.
- Has anyone been to CXI
- Others here feel free to join in with your own experiences

THREE

Where is it and how to get there.

FOUR

Global maps.

Explain on the map where it is and also mention the other Christmas Is. below Indonesia.

With a population of about 100,000, this archipelago of coral atolls covers an oceanic expanse almost equal to the size of the Australia. Most of the island group does not lie more than 3 metres above sea level.

CXI has a population of around 5000 and highest point is just 25 feet! A sand dune!

For this reason, its residents are greatly concerned about the impact of warming seas. Recently, President Anote Tong revealed that his Cabinet had endorsed a plan to buy nearly 6,000 acres on Viti Levu, Fiji's main island. The plan is to potentially move the entire population off of Kiribati. "It wouldn't be for me, personally, but would apply more to a younger generation," Tong said in March. "For them, moving won't be a matter of choice. It's basically going to be a matter of survival."

Then point out How to get there.

Fly from Sydney to Fiji then to CXI

FIVE.

Map of Republic

Christmas Island is part of the Republic of Kiribati. The Republic is made up of 33 islands and reefs contained in three island groups.

1. Gilbert Islands
2. Phoenix Island
3. Line Islands

CXI is in the Line Island group and located about 232 Km above The Equator. It is 6017Km from Sydney

SIX

Date Line

- The International Date Line of 180 degrees is indented to bring in the Line Islands into the same day as the rest of Kiribati. Despite being 2,460 km (1,530 mi) east of the 180 meridian, a 1995 realignment of the International Dateline by the Republic of Kiribati "moved" CXI to west of the dateline.
- Christmas Is. is the first land mass on earth to see the sunrise for a new day.

SEVEN

History

Island was named by Capt James Cook after his visit there on Christmas Eve 1777. The island was **uninhabited** on Cook's arrival.

The language of Kibibati is "Gilbetese" and this language has an alphabet of only 13 letters.

CXI correct name is Kiritimati in the Gilbertese spelling - which means Christmas in English. Gilbert was a British sea captain who explored the group in 1788.

"ti" is pronounced "s", hence Kiribas and Kirismas.

CXI was occupied during the 2nd World War by the Allies and America and Australia used it for mainland defence against the Japanese as protection for Hawaii and Australia.

In the early 1950's some semblance of a population began on CXI with the main industry being Copra. But no permanent settlement was allowed until 1979 when Kiribati gained its independence from Great Britain. During the late 50's and early 60's the US and UK did nuclear weapons testing in the area.

Today the Island has a population of approx 5500

EIGHT

The flag of Kiribati shows a Frigate bird above a rising sun over the Pacific Ocean.

- (I'll mention the Frigate Bird later.)
- The Coat of Arms is the same as the flag and the motto, Good Health, Peace and Prosperity.

NINE

Flights

Read and point out times of flights.

The Sydney plane arrives in Fiji at 6.50 PM but the CXI flight cannot depart until midnight. It is a 6 hour 40 min flight to CXI. If it left earlier it would be too dark to land in CXI. There are no runway lights on CXI

TEN

Lounge at Nadi

- Cost was \$75 Fiji Dollars each which is about \$50 each Australian Dollars

It was worth the expense because of comfort, drinks and snack. Otherwise would have been waiting in noisy, dirty, crowded transfer lounges.

ELEVEN

View of CXI before landing

TWELVE

The airport.

- Tin shed
- Hand painted "Cassidy International Airport"
- VIP Lounge at end of building
- Immigration

You will also purchase your fishing licence here for \$50 (show) A good souvenir!

THIRTEEN

VIP lounge

FOURTEEN

Aerial photo of CXI

- Highest point of CXI is 24ft above sea level (a bit over 7 metres)
- Show where we fished and some go outside of the island to target bigger species.

FIFTEEN

What to take with you.

Then,

Arrived at Ikari House (means Bonefish) about 8.00 and had a breakfast waiting for us. Then asked if we wanted to relax or go fishing! Although we were tired had had no hesitation to go fishing!
On the flats at 10.30 with Tyrone.

SIXTEEN

Our first time on the water with looming rain.

SEVENTEEN

It was pelting in sideways at this point. Like being hit in the back by shotgun pellets! It wasn't cold but humid in the rain jacket. The jackets were on and off all afternoon.

EIGHTEEN

BUT What Were We Here For?

NINETEEN

Underwater shot

TWENTY

Kerryn on a big one

TWENTY ONE

My turn

TWENTY TWO

Some early results. Note the BIG smiles!

TWENTY THREE

Weather

TWENTY FOUR

Rainfall & Temperature

TWENTY FIVE

This is as deep as we got & was on first day with Tyrone. Sharks?????
Note: the waterproof bum bags. (Show later) Need heavier flies.

TWENTY SIX

One of my biggest Bonefish (Day one)

TWENTY SEVEN

Another one for Kerryn

TWENTY EIGHT

Essentials and Equipment

TWENTY NINE

Gear at the ready (this was another boat that was going outside the lagoon)

THIRTY

Equipment we used.

THIRTY ONE

New becomes old (the fly is imitating a crab or shrimp and stripping it across sand bottom sends up puffs of sand which then attracts the fish)

THIRTY TWO

Our guides for the rest of our stay. Dennis & Moana.

- Moana Kofe is the head guide and Dennis is a trainee.
- Moana was named Rod & Reel Magazines "Guide of the Year" in 1998
- He has been guiding for over 30 years and a lot of the flats were named by him. Eg, "Pipeline" and "Go Like Hell" (**Explain**)
- Brilliant eyesight! They will see fish you can't.
- Mention Moana and scales on bonefish.
- Initially you will be blind to the fish, but just trust the guide and do whatever he says. Eventually though, you will start to see the fish, understand the retrieve techniques, and catch more and more of them.
- Hard to get out of the trout strike habit

THIRTY THREE

- White board of next day's fishing program done by Moana

Most days for us started around 5.30 for a 6.00 breakfast. We would collect our prepared lunches and drinks.

On the boat around 7.00

- The boat we were on most of the week called "Wai Knot".

TO THIRTY FOUR, THIRTY FIVE & THIRTY SIX THIRTY SEVEN

Fish photos

You will see and cast at over a hundred bones every day, not all massive, but even a pound bonefish may run you into the backing!

When you get a bone that is over 4lb, then you will know you're alive, and so will your gear!

- They don't run just once. They will do it two or three times more! The speed is amazing and I read that a top speed is around 60 KMH. Trout maybe half of that if a big one.
- You generally will know how big the fish will be by the take off speed, the length of the run and the number of runs. You get to know when it will go again, you feel the fish's strength!
- Keep fingers away from the reel handle. It hurts!
- We caught over 160 Bonefish each. On the last day I got 63 and Kerryn more. (She lost count)
- Biggest was around 6 pound for the week. And of course we lost a few as well.
- Almost every cast was a hookup on the last afternoon.
- You don't have to be a gun caster. As long as you can get the fly near the fish and listen to the guide the fish will see the fly if it is in the right zone.
- The guides will avoid making you cast into the wind and will go to places on the lagoon where you will have the wind at your back
- Sometimes you will be fishing on the flats well away from land and sometimes from a shoreline.

THIRTY EIGHT

Frigate Bird Male, female and Chick

THIRTY NINE

The Thief!

FORTY

The competition

(Explain)

At the end of the last day we gave our bum bags and fly tying stuff to Moana and Dennis

FORTY ONE

Species we caught

FORTY TWO AND FORTY THREE AND FORTY FOUR

FORTY FIVE

Species we saw

FORTY SIX

Ikari House.

- Don't expect the Hyatt but has hot showers, air conditioning and comfortable.
- The guides washed your rods and reel after getting back. Note the rod holders on the wall to store them.
-

FORTY SEVEN

Services

FORTY EIGHT

Typical breakfast and Dinner

Every evening we had fresh fish, chicken or pork with rice, salads and vegetable. AND Lobster!

FORTY NINE

The drinks honour system

FIFTY

Tipping etc

FIFTY ONE AND FIFTY TWO

Postie Bikes & Some sights of the island.

- **If there is time read out article from Kate Witcombe**

FIFTY THREE

The end of the last day. We were given floral headgear.

FIFTY FOUR

Other people with us.

Elaborate each group.

- Victoria University Coral Research. From British Columbia Canada
- Tim & Sonya
- The UK crew (Ian's joke)

FIFTY FIVE

Staff of Ikari & guides sang and danced for us.

FIFTY SIX

The evening's meal

FIFTY SEVEN

The others were up at 4.00 and gone on early flight back to Honolulu at 7.00 AM which was the flight we came in on from Fiji.

FIFTY EIGHT

The airport check in and departure lounge. Mention door out

FIFTY NINE

How we got there

SIXTY

A nice Bonefish

SIXTY ONE

Winding down

SIXTY TWO

Thank you.

Kate Witcombe is a Nurse Teacher from Australian Volunteers for International Development.

Written in 2003

For the most part this was a rewarding experience and I enjoyed getting out of the classroom and into the wards. However, it also meant that I was exposed to the reality of a developing world hospital, in a remote small island developing state. With this came the heartache of watching patients suffering from diseases such as tuberculosis, leprosy, and others that rarely affect us in the developed world. I also watched children slip away from pneumonia and diarrhoea and was constantly haunted with the thought '...if only they were born in Australia'.

While there were many challenges to living in Kiribati, it also held many rewards. Little outside influence means that the Kiribati culture is very well preserved. Kiribati people are proud of their country, their people and given a choice would not live anywhere else. Their culture and traditions are still very much part of day-to-day life; from dancing and feasting to the use of traditional healers and black magic at the hospital. This is so refreshing to witness in a world where cultural identity is fast disappearing.

Sometimes I would forget just how isolated the country was. I was brought back to reality one day when teaching the students about particular sedatives, and how dangerous they can be. I thought I was being clever and gave the example of Michael Jackson, using the drug on which he overdosed as an example. "So you have all heard of Michael Jackson," I asked the class. The students nodded back at me, someone started singing Thriller and soon the entire class joined in. "Well," I interrupted, "this is the drug he used on the night he died."

There was dead silence in the classroom and immediately the smiles were replaced with sad and disappointed faces. The whole class was staring at me. One of the students raised his hand and asked, "Is Michael Jackson's dead?"

Oh that's right; I'm living on a tiny coral atoll in the middle of the Pacific with no TV and very slow and often inaccessible internet, news that shook the world four years ago still had not filtered through to Kiribati!