

TRAVEL

# Nomads take an around-the-world odyssey

By J. LEWIS AND GAYLE FOUNTAIN  
AROUND THE WORLD TRAVELERS

Oh! The places you got! The people you meet! When you are a Nomad, the world is at your feet. In the 727 Nomad Clubhouse members jet off on trips ranging from one day mystery trips to a 28-day trip Around the World. Of course, there are countless other exotic destinations in between.

Our Around the World Odyssey, the 13th for Nomads, but the first with this plane, began on Oct. 19, 1998. We arrived at the Nomad's World Terminal and the capable ground staff lifted our bags from the trunk of the car, and took them to the plane while we parked in the well-lit lot. We were assigned seats which we kept for this entire 28-day trek which covered 28,255 miles, 61 hours of flying time, included seven additional refueling stops, visited nine destinations and encompassed some memorable experiences than we even imagined.

It is difficult to comprehend the number of hours, days, months and the countless details required to plan a trip of this magnitude. Trip directors Whitehead accomplished this and the trip was not only memorable but flawless.

An orchid lei welcomed us to the beautiful Garden Island, Kauai. The Kauai Marriott Resort and Beach Club was exquisite. Even the dolphins seemed to realize this group was special as they punctuated our boat trip with leaps and spirals over the course of several miles. The scenery was magnificent. Spouting Horn, Blow Hole, Hanalei Bay, Waimea Canyon, Napoli Coast, The Fern Grotto was special to one of our couples and they celebrated their honeymoon spot with their four children. One son accompanied his parents with an Hawaiian melody.

Three members dropped out of the odyssey in Kauai. One woman suffered chest pains and ultimately had triple-bypass surgery. Another couple decided that the trip might indeed prove too exhausting and decided not to go on.

Our next destination: The Cook Islands. But before we reach the Cooks we must refuel on Christmas Island. We landed to an audience as this was not the day for the scheduled weekly flight. It was our lucky day. The tanker truck only had half enough fuel and had to go to the other side of the island for more, so we were allowed to deplane. The natives, like entrepreneurs everywhere, quickly rounded up supplies of T-shirts, caps and shells and set up shop. Many of us waited in line to have our passports stamped with Christmas Island. Imagine our surprise when the stamp read Kiribati and also had the next day's date on that was when the scheduled plane arrived.

Finally, on Oct. 22, beautiful Rorotonga, a South Pacific island most often reached via New Zealand. Another lei welcome, and the tour group took us to the cultural activities and scenic highlights in shifts as they were not accustomed to such a large group. The friendly Rorotongans are renowned Polynesian dancers and singers and entertained us in full costume. A glass-bottomed boat took us to a nearby island for a barbecue in quite a rustic environment—especially in regard to bathroom facilities. The food was wonderful and the grilled walrus out of this world.

The next destination was another beautiful South Pacific Island and we crossed the International Date Line to reach it. A

native flower lei welcomed us to Vanuatu on Oct. 26. Agnis, tours were in smaller groups to adapt to the limited island resources. A cultural tour included a demonstration of the past: food and its preparation, costumes, crafts, medicine and dance. These people do know how to barbecue and the food was fit for a gourmet.

Manila in the Philippines was reached on Oct. 28. Red Carpet cannot begin to describe our welcome here. We were whisked (along with our luggage) onto buses from the tarmac and a police escort delivered us directly to the historical Manila Hotel. We passed the colorful Jeepneys sitting in the rush hour traffic. What a thrill to see Gen. Douglas MacArthur's headquarters in the hotel and sit at the desk where so many momentous decisions were made. A private shopping tour at Tesoro's was available.

The Manila American Cemetery and Memorial was breathtaking in most eyes as we gazed out over the 162 acres and onto the 17,206 white granite crosses arranged in concentric circles marking the graves of allied war dead.

The ruins and memorial at Corregidor made one almost believe they could see Gen. MacArthur standing on the Lorch Deck and exclaiming, "I shall return."

But another adventure loomed before we left Manila. As we taxied out to the runway, it was discovered that one of the wing flaps were not operating properly. Not to worry! It was for this reason that Nomad's very capable mechanic was aboard. Bill Santina Jr., with the help of Harry Boyd the flight engineer soon had the problem solved and we were safely air borne.

The "fine" city of Singapore was reached on Halloween. Our arrival was somewhat delayed, but our tour group whisked us directly to the scheduled cultural event and nothing was missed. A tour of the city including the Indian Temple, Chinatown, the harbor from Mount Faber, the Botanical Gardens, shopping was part of this stop. Malaysia was truly a shopper's paradise. For \$5 American we bought two T-shirts, four postcards, two stamps and \$3.20 change in Singapore dollars.

Our welcome to India on Nov. 3 was a flower lei and a good luck statue. Madras, India, was a change from the pristine Singapore. I don't think any of us were properly prepared for India during the monsoon. The staff at our hotel could not have been more attentive. Their aim was to



Beachcombers: Nomads relax on the beach at Rorotonga.

please and our slightest wish was their command. Our days were spent on leaky buses visiting temples, the museums and the city. Buses even stayed overtime to take us on a shopping junket.

Another unexpected event occurred as we prepared to leave India during a torrential downpour. It seems that we did not have the necessary military clearance to fly over the Maldives, and it took the best efforts of the Roger MacDonal and Allen DeRiemacker, the pilots, Harry Boyd and Patrick Whitehead, the trip director, to get us airborne again.

From the Seychelles and two refueling stops (Djibouti and Cairo) the intrepid Nomads followed a course to Rome, Italy, in the midst of labor disputes with transportation and the cats were on strike during our three-day stay. We visited the Vatican and we all marveled at the Raphael frescoes and Michelangelo's work in the Sistine Chapel. St. Peter's Basilica and Square were toured at length with many other landmarks of ancient Rome seen from the bus. A tour of the Colosseum was awesome and one could almost see the lions pacing in the lower level as they waited to be released into the arena.

London was reached on Nov. 12 and was the last stop on the Nomad's odyssey Around the World. It was seen in grand Nomad style. A marvelous dinner aboard the Venice Simpton Orient Express and another dinner on the River Thames. There were tours to Stonehenge and Windsor Castle. Visits to the tower of London, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, Harrods, Hyde Park, the Cabinet War Room and all else that makes London special.

On Nov. 15, the nine-member Clubhouse crew delivered its 141 passengers safely back to the Nomads terminal, tired, but well satisfied. There was a rousing thank you to Patrick and Ann Whitehead, the trip directors who attended to the endless details (and headaches) that go into a trip of this scope. We are all deeply indebted to the very capable crew: pilots Roger MacDonal and Allen DeRiemacker, flight engineer Harry Boyd, mechanic Bill Santina, flight attendants Jessie Weyand, Judi Hunter-Sawyer and Barbara DeRiemacker, who made our trip so enjoyable, comfortable and safe.

We said our good-byes to the 150 people who are now much more than traveling companions and wished them God-speed until we meet again on another Nomad Odyssey.

For more information on the Nomads, write Nomads World Terminal, Detroit Metropolitan Airport, Detroit, MI 48242-1799 or call (734)941-8000.

J. Lewis and Gayle Fountain live in Plymouth.



Big Ben: The famous London tower was one of the must-see sights the Nomads experienced.

World traveler: Gayle Fountain models a T-shirt on Christmas Island.



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