

CW5F IOTA DXpedition to Timoteo Domínguez Island - Uruguay - IOTA SA-057- Feb 21-25, 2014 by Ghis-ON5NT/CX5DNT

Timoteo Domínguez Island is located in the Uruguayan waters of the Rio de la Plata. The mouth of the Uruguay river ends up in the Rio de la Plata, which is already 10km wide where Timoteo Domínguez is located and ends up to 300km wide at its maximum when it reaches the Atlantic Ocean. The nearest harbour, Carmelo, is 20km away from the island. The operating site was at about 3km from the Uruguayan mainland. SA-057 is not the most rare IOTA but Timoteo Domínguez is the most challenging island in the group to go to and operate from. Although being summer in the area, three weeks before our departure, access to the island was denied by the Navy due to heavy rain and too high water at the island. But the weather became nice again, but for how long, we would find out ourselves. The team (as can be seen on the team picture) from left to right: Paco-CX3BV (CX2AM's son), Mario-CX4CR, Ghis-CX5DNT/ON5NT, Gustavo-CX2AM, Oscar-CX2FR (sitting), Wilson-CX2RU (standing), Marcelo (no call sign; CX2RU's son) and Beto-CX3AN.



We left Montevideo in three cars on Friday Feb 21 at 4AM local time for Carmelo, about 300+ km west of the capital. Our meeting point in Carmelo was at the entrance of the yacht harbour, which is almost in front of the local Navy offices.



Oscar-CX2FR, who came from Colonia, about 60km east of Carmelo had already arrived. His car was pulling a small trailer with a mast of 2 times 3m. Few minutes later the two men crew of the boat which should take us to the island arrived also.

We had rented the boat, the "Bremen", of the local sea life saving association. While the captain of the boat paid a visit to the Navy building for the necessary paperwork for travelling to the island, we all drove to the centre of Carmelo to buy fuel for our two generators, food and water supplies. We then drove to the main harbour for loading the boat. As we had to follow the international ship routes of the Rio de la Plata, the boat trip from Carmelo to Timoteo Dominguez Island under a blue sky and a burning sun (pretty hot as we were all wearing life saving vests), took one and a half hour, sighting Juncal and passing Sola, El Maton, Dos Hermanas (all uninhabitant islands counting for SA-057) and just before heading to Timoteo Domínguez also sighting Oyarvide (counting for SA-055).

The closest the boat could get to the island was still about 80m away from a small beach. Wilson-CX2RU, our cook, was the first to jump into the water. Looks like he knew what he was doing as he had landed before on the island in 2010 (CW3TD). With the water reaching up to his chest, a thick rope in his hand, he waded to the beach and fixed the rope to a tree. That way the others could hold on to the rope if needed when wading to the beach. Gustavo-CX2AM, had purchased a brand new inflatable zodiac just before our trip.



This rubber boat was very helpful and safe to transport all radio equipment, laptops, cameras, kitchen gear, antennas, mast, tents, fuel and the heavy generators to the island. It was good to have those two youngsters aboard to help out during landing. The entire landing went smoothly. After having said goodbye to the "Bremen" crew, we started putting up our tents and some of the antennas.

The operating site was located on the far north western tip of the island, in fact the only easy accessible part, with a beach on each side of the tip. Both the 40m and

30m verticals, with radials hanging above the water level, were installed on the larger beach.

Both verticals (made by CX2AM) were fixed on a base standing in the water. After having finished our first meal on the island, the first QSO was made on 30m at 2102UTC. As we arrived with bright sunshine, we all went to bed in our tents, even leaving open the outside window protections against rain of the larger sleeping tent. At least one of us (the writer of this story) found out that in the early morning hours heavy rain came down as he found himself laying soaking wet on the ground.. Not a good start but lucky the next day bright sunshine returned and dried up everything quickly.



During the morning, the two element 15/10m cubical quad was installed by its owner Oscar-CX2FR. It was installed on a mast of 6m high, two pieces of mast, each 3 m high, the upper one capable to fold down on the lower part allowing easy access to mount the quad on the upper part. The quad could also be rotated manually with a rope from the ground.



A 14AVQ vertical mostly to be used on 20m, was put on the small beach where we had landed. For 17m, a delta loop was hang up in a tree and a inverted V dipole for 12m (CX3AN made) with the apex at only 4m above ground was hang up from another tree. Gustavo-CX2AM had made a shack (height 2m, wide 2m, length 3m) entirely made of mosquito nets. The shack had a cover against the rain fixed at four points to trees.

During the day when the temperature was high a cool breeze blowing through the mosquito net walls made operating a joy. Gustavo deserved a reward for that, as the island, with a lot of creeks filled up with water, was a mosquito paradise. That site used an Icom IC706 and an Icom IC-2KL solid state linear producing 500W out.

The other operating site was just outside a large tent and could be pulled into the tent at rainfall or at night. Here an Icom IC735 and Kenwood TS50 (thanks to CX2FR) was in use. This site was operated by the mosquito resistant guys. All Icom transceivers and linear were brought by Mario-CX4CR. Tools, cables and connectors were provided by CX2AM and CX4CR. For food, we were spoiled by Wilson-CX2RU. We had nice openings on all 7 bands we used, with 10m being the best band. Even 12m, with just an inverted V dipole produced very nice signals and big pile ups.



All went well until the evening of February 24, when it started raining heavily again and the wind became pretty strong. Hours later with extreme high tide on the Rio de la Plata, heavy rain still pouring down, strong winds coming from the south east, the water was pushed back into the Rio de la Plata and onto the island. By 2 AM local time everyone was awake.

With the highest point of the dune of Timoteo Dominguez being at only 2.5m above sea level, we started to get worried as after a while the water had risen up to 1.5m forcing us to move our tents higher on the dune. Only the larger tent we did not move as it had initially been put higher on the dune. At 5 AM, with the ditch we had digged in front of that tent already full of water and all of us looking very worried, the water finally stopped rising and we could breath calmly again.

As we had not had much sleep that night and after we were assured the water had stopped rising we went back to sleep until sunrise. At daylight we found our 30m

and 14AVQ verticals, which we had installed in the sand on the beaches, floating in the water, luckily entangled in the branches of some shrubs so they had not drift away or sank in the water. Our 17m wire delta loop had fallen down from the tree.

Fortunately the 15/10m 2 element cubical quad survived, although the small tower it was installed on was standing in the water. Also the 12m inverted V hang up in a tree stayed alive. All coax cables were buried under up to 30cm of sand. When checking the weather forecast, even stronger SE winds and more heavy rainfall was announced for the coming night.

We then decided for our safety, as there was no safer or higher area to hide, to leave the island one day earlier. After a last long run with Europe on 10m (last QSO was Feb 25 at 1333UTC) we took down the remaining antennas and tents.

Despite all misfortune, we ended up with a total of 3122 QSO's, 2092 SSB and 1030 CW contacts. Having heard a lot "thank you for a new IOTA" gave as a good feeling that we achieved our goal.



The boat to pick us up arrived at 5PM. As the water level was still very high, this time the boat could come much closer to the small landing beach. With the water being very quiet and a much smaller distance from the beach, transporting all goods and the team with the zodiac to the boat went very smoothly and very fast. As a last goodbye to the island we took the team picture.

By 7:30PM we set safely foot on ground in the Carmelo harbour, unloaded the boat and drove back to Montevideo. The day after, we heard that the weather during the night between Feb 25 and 26 on the Rio de la Plata was even worse than the night before. So looks like we made a wise decision to have left the island one day earlier. As we had a weekend included in our operation, we are sure though that everyone needing SA-057 had a fair chance to make a contact.



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