

T2AQ, T2QR - Tuvalu 2017



We started to plan this expedition in late spring 2016. After several inquiries we decided on Tuvalu T2. John Mitton KK7L, who activated T2 several times, provided us a lot of tips and helped to get licenses and import permits concerning our rigs as was requested by 3D2 customs (even in transit). It was the most vital help, as Tuvalu has only one hotel and due to change of its owner it was hard to get any feedback. Since John has several good friends in T2 and 3D2 we got all paperwork done in time including hotel reservation and licenses - T2AQ for Jacek SP5EAQ and T2QR for Marek SP7DQR (who kindly agreed to serve as a QSL manager).

As it turned out, Funafuti Lagoon Hotel formerly known as Vaiaku Lagi Hotel (namely its room 108) hosted nearly all T2 expeditions over the last years. The atoll is densely inhabited and does not provide too many options for suitable accommodation.

Tuvalu is a small country, with a population of 10,000, spread across several atolls and islands, some 1000 km north of Fiji. There is one reasonable way to get there - by a plane from Suva. Logistics turned out to be complicated due to significant amount of luggage. We had to take over 90kg, including only 5kg of personal belongings for each. Moreover, we had to include layovers in Suva in our plans, to accommodate eventual delay in baggage delivery. We took two transceivers, filters, some antenna materials including three masts, a homemade antenna tuner aimed for 80m, and two transistor PAs. We planned to use a set

of vertical antennas supported by three fiberglass poles and (eventually) hanging from trees.

We left Warsaw on the 8th of March 2017. Upon arrival at Suva we learned that our stuff arrived intact and we had a few days to recover after three-day flights (Warsaw-Dubai-Bangkok-Sydney-Nadi-Suva). We paid a nice visit to Tony 3D2AG helping him in some preparations of his next activation of Rotuma. Finally, we departed from Suva early morning on 14th March. After a 2-hour flight we landed at Funafuti atoll. We were met at the airport by Tili T2AT, the good friend of John. He provided us with some additional coax to be more flexible with our antenna installations and helped us a lot in several everyday issues.

The only drawback of our QTH was the very limited space, practically eliminating the TopBand activation. The same day, we installed our verticals (some with elevated radials, others in the form of vertical dipoles with suitable matching units) covering 40 to 17m. However, due to mutual interferences, we were unable to use in the same moment some antenna combinations.

At the beginning, the SSB European pile-ups were significant on 20m and 17m but these good openings lasted only a few days. The relatively good QSO rate has been obtained also on 40 and 30m. Jacek T2AQ was operating exclusively SSB and Marek T2QR digi modes (including slow but reliable JT-65) and CW. While in the first days Marek worked mostly RTTY, he realized soon that, as conditions dropped down,

that CW became a fruitful (however tiresome) option. Unfortunately, the propagation into Europe on upper bands became after a few days like a disaster. The highly demanded 10 and 12m bands turned out to be completely closed in any direction (except one short 12m opening toward JA a few days before our QRT).

At the same time JA stations enjoyed several hours of openings on 20 and 17m. During the second week, we were happy to log several EU QSOs on 20 and 40m including Jacek's entry into CQ WPX Contest on 20 meters. Most EU stations were barely readable at T2 though.

During the third week for a few days we stopped hearing EU stations at all. The 40m vertical mounted on a Spiderbeam mast has been removed and replaced after two weeks by 80m one with a top hat and two elevated radials mounted on a 15m DX-wire mast. 80m was used only on CW but the propagation at our gray line was sporadic and rarely reaching Europe. Just before our QRT conditions toward EU improved on 20m but it was too late to change our overall impression that 2017 was not favorable for dxing.

We made almost ten thousand CW/digi/SSB QSOs during our stay in Tuvalu. We would like to thank all our sponsors and donors that helped us to cover some extra expenses. The help of KK7L and T2AT concerning local arrangements was priceless. This was 'a suitcase dxpedition' and we tried to activate T2 on as many HF bands as possible.

Jacek SP5EAQ (T2AQ)
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