

Waves of TI9KK - An international ham operators Expedition in Isla Del Coco, Costa Rica, Central America - by Ms. S. Yamini, VU2YAM

It was a proud and prestigious moment as the members of Governing Council of NIAR, members of media, family & friends Wish Bonvoyage as I embark on a journey to Isla Del Coco, Costa Rica as the first Indian and only women of the 12 member International team of amateur radio operators. Emotions were floating high in the air and so were the expectations of people around me looking forward to a very successful event.



Unaware of the harsh and unexpected reality, Arno OE9AMJ and I, arrived in San Jose only to learn that the 'TI9K' was cancelled. The disappointment was not that the license was cancelled but the seriousness of the issue was not known anytime during our preparations even before our travel. The license was not cancelled once but twice.

We in India are trained to expect the unexpected, I am lucky to be working as part of the administrative team under the leadership of Mr.S. Suri, VU2MY Founder Chairman, NIAR whose rich experience in dealing with emergency situations help me to gain strength and courage to speak to the concerned authorities in Costa Rica and restore the permission for dxpedition.

The letter of support from NIAR which explained the objectives of the expeditions i.e. to create awareness and encourage amateur radio activity in various countries, to Enhance skills of amateur radio operation under extreme conditions, to Build international relations among the people with two-way radio contacts and to Promote and Popularize local culture and tourism. The media coverage about TI9K event in India, besides individual representations, as well as the explanation of Mr. Arno metzler about the Emergency Training Program organized by him in Austria for 8 Indian hams strengthened our request with authorities to reconsider their earlier decision and re-issue the dxpedition permission with a new call sign 'TI9KK'.

I am grateful to officers of Ministry of Communications, Park authorities in Costa Rica to have agreed to support our dxpedition. I will always remember the words of my mentor Mr. suri - An Impossible was made Possible. I would humbly accept that my inexperience in radio operation may have resulted in reduced contacts but I am happy that my contribution to be part of the team made TI9KK a reality and helped us achieve our goal.

Team Members

SSB : S. Yamini VU2YAM, Carlos EA1IR,
SSB/RTTY : Oscar EA1DR, Guenter DL2AWG, Manfred HS0ZEU/
DL2EBR, Andy DH8WR/EA2CRX
SSB/CW : Norbert DJ7JC, Arno OE9AMJ, Craig K9CT
SSB/EME : Fred DH5FS,
CW : Joe AA4NN, Charles W4GMY



Ms. S. Yamini along with TI9KK Team (L-R): Mr. Joe, AA4NN; Mr. Charles Chuck, W4GMY; Mr. Manfred, HS0ZEU; Mr. Guenter, DL2AWG; Mr. Fred, DH5FS; Ms. Yamini, VU2YAM; Mr. Arno, OE9AMJ; Mr. Andy, DH8WR;

Many of the members did not know each other until this event. Working together to achieve a common objective, understanding each others strengths and not projecting each others weakness made us a team.

Planning and Preparation

Organising a dpxpedition to unknown / un-inhabited parts of the world and challenges of conducting a successful event require utmost dedication and teamwork among members to achieve the target. The team had maintained continuous dialogue and discussions on all issues including Equipment, Antennas, Location, Operation, Propagation, Logistics, Sponsorships and above all safety. Detailed discussions with regard to equipment, antennas, power source for each station were meticulously planned well in advance. It was decided that all members of the team meet two days in advance to re-check the equipment that was brought for the expedition and operating trails were conducted in Playa Del Coco.



The best of Location

Located (5.47N - 5.63N / 86.97W - 87.13W) offshore 330 miles from main land, this island paradise of Isla del Coco, also called Cocos Island, and is the most distant and isolated of Costa Rica's provinces.

Location: IOTA NA-012 - DXCC TI9 - CQ 7 ITU 12.

Isla del Cocos was first discovered by Juan Cabezas, a Spanish explorer, in 1526. Soon after, explorers and pirates were using the island as a place to rest and restock on food and fresh water. From this site, they would also stage their incursions, plundering Spanish settlements and vying for control in the area. Today, the presence of pirates still lingers on the island, part of which is manifested by the prospect of unearthing caches of buried treasure, which allegedly still exist.



Its colorful and mysterious history, natural splendor, and reputed status as one of the world's best diving spots make the journey a truly unforgettable experience. Still, only several hundred visitors take the relatively costly voyage to Cocos Island annually, either by cruise or chartered yacht, and a significant portion of them come

to use this natural laboratory for scientific endeavors.

Isla del Coco National Park records the presence of at least 97 bird species that includes the cuckoo and the Cocos Island Flycatcher. About 20% of the diverse insects found here are

autochthonous in nature, apart from the two species of reptiles. The scraggy coastline is bordered with cliffs that shoot up to a height of 183 meters. Underwater caves are common. The transparent turquoise waters are rich in marine life. Sharks are almost omnipresent and the gigantic hammerheads, white tipped sharks and whale sharks are frequently spotted. The smaller fish species include jacks, tuna, parrot fish and manta.

Operation that we did



To conduct round the clock operation 5 independent amateur radio stations were setup powered with diesel generators. One station on the hill and one near the beach were set to be in operate at all times during the period of operation. CW, SSB and RTTY stations regularly in operation each day.

The excitement and joy of reaching the island made every member of the team forget the trying journey of 50 long hours in a yacht across the pacific ocean. The first of stations were setup within few hours upon arrival on an elevated location adjacent to the beach. We used a 18m fibre mast to support a Spiderbeam on the beach and Dipole was the antenna to use for 40m, 160m and 80m using open wire feeder to an MFJ balanced tuner. The dipole proved to be very effective on 160m CW for the U.S. and Europe with excellent receive capability as well.



Isla Del Coco is only a jungle. Toughest challenge was to carry loads of equipment, operating gear up the hill, over 250m were another location was identified to setup other stations. No generator nor fuel could be carried to the station on the hill, a 300m long wires were used to bring electricity. 2 Stations on a hill, 250 m above sea level, worked on 40m

and 20m 4Square antennas installed between 4feet high bushes.

Expect the unexpected, was the statement of the day, and on each day of our expedition. Heavy rains, submerging of antennas in high tide, frequent damage to antennas due to extreme weather, high radio noise in night hours, technical troubles with the generators, and woes of propagation, finally resulted in reduced the number of hours of our operation.

Each operator took every opportunity to satisfy the needs of dxers for a single contact with 'TI9KK'. Negotiating with crowds on the band, making best use of operating conditions was efficiently managed by most members of the team. The use of band pass filters helped us work on different bands within the limited band openings, however the noise from adjacent stations

peaked S9 causing serious interference. The pain of insect bites and a swollen cheek did not deter my commitment to prove as a valuable member of the team. The 4 day radio operation from the Isla Del Coco was certainly a memorable experience.



Radios: Icom IC7000, K2, FT897, IC706 with linear Amplifiers
Antennas: HyGain AV640 Vertical 40m - 6m 2X40m Dipole with symmetric 450 Ohm feedline 18 m high for 160 - 80 m, Tuner AV640, StepIR Vertical, 40m 4 Square, 20m 4 Square, HF6V.

Software: MiXW 2.18.

Results- we can say

The challenge operating under extreme weather conditions, heavy rains and frequent damage to antennas had adverse impact on the operation. Technical problems with generators and equipment were tactfully managed by Mr. Manfred during the entire period. The team members provided their technical expertise in repairing the wireless station and antennas of the local authority on the Island.

The success and achievement cannot be judged only from number of contacts made but the spirit of working towards a goal, excellent co-operation and commitment among the members for a team work has immensely contributed to the success of TI9KK Dxpedition. I could make over 3000 contacts during my operations. We again opened the doors to TI9.

The experience of being the only woman and a vegetarian member of the team, brought out the best of survival skills and have courage to face extreme challenges in life. My first ever dxpedition is the best for a life time.

Your support is our strength

TI9KK was certainly most memorable achievements in my life. I thank Mr. Arno Metzler, OE9AMJ for bringing me on to the team and NIAR for their support. I specially thank my family for their encouragement to make this adventurous trip a success.

I am grateful to NCDXF, GDXF, SDXF, URE, Danish DX Group, INDEXA, Nippon Dx Association, EUDXF, Bittern DX group, SEDCO, REC, RSGB IOTA and other Dx foundations as well as equipment sponsors, without their support and contribution to the team this event would not be possible.

A few Achievements

- Ø ***First Indian to participate in an International Dxpedition, Costa Rica, Central America***
- Ø ***Received a Gold Medal from Disaster Preparedness & Emergency Response Association (DERA), USA***

- Ø *Received a Meritorious Certificate from DERA*
- Ø *Received letter of appreciation from His Excellency Shri. Rameswar Thakur, Governor of Karnataka*
- Ø *Received a Memento and Outstanding Achievement Award certificate from Shri. K. R Suresh Reddy, Hon'ble Speaker, AP Assembly..*
- Ø *Received appreciation from YLRL, USA*
- Ø *Team leader for the Emergency Communications Training Program in Austria & Germany*
- Ø *Received " Visit Indonesia 2008 Award" Certificate*
- Ø *Received a Meritorious Award Certificate during 2008 from Shri. Naveen Mittal, IAS, Hyderabad Collector.*

and many more