

PACIFIC OCEAN OUTBACK...WITH SOLAR ECLIPSE

As everyone knows, travelers to Australia love to visit the Outback.

Did you know the Pacific Ocean has its own Outback too? :)

Join us for four days in colorful Yap island, Micronesia, including the annual "Yap Days" celebration of traditional culture and arts and their world-famous "stone-money" 2016 February 29 Monday and March 1 Tuesday.

But by Micronesian standards, Yap is practically Collins Street :).

So from Yap, join us via two small chartered vessels accommodating 11+7 travelers, on March 3 in which we'll head to an outpost of the Pacific Ocean's Outback: remote, seldom-visited Yap-affiliated Woleai atoll, for five days.

At Woleai (pronounced WOH-lay-eye), the Woleaians are consciously preserving traditional islander ways...but not just for special occasions, for year round!

Woleai has no functioning airfield so there are no "regular" means of getting there other than by slow supply ship three or four times a year – yet occasional visiting boaters consistently praise its natural setting:

"Beautiful" — Paul and Lisa, yacht Lorelei

"What a gorgeous place!" — Dave and Sherry, sailboat Soggy Paws

"There are quite a few islands that comprise Woleai – each one more beautiful than the next." — Dr. Rosemary, Peace Corps

We'll visit Woleai's several inhabited neighboring islets (pop. 1,000 or so) by local motorboat where the communities subsist by traditional fishing and agriculture of coconuts, bananas, breadfruit, and taro.

We'll meet the friendly Woleaians and observe them in their daily activities such as the men bringing the day's fishing catch ashore, or the women weaving the traditional thu's which are what the men wear and the lava-lava wraparound skirts which are what the women wear.

The islanders might invite us to join in their leisure activities as well, such as playing coconut carry (how many coconuts can you carry) or musical coconuts (like musical chairs but with coconuts instead).

We'll be welcomed as guests at the late-afternoon "tuba gatherings" in each village sitting around a circle imbibing the local, popular coconut-derived spiky beverage! If fortunate we will even receive "mar mar" – crown and necklaces made by women and children from fresh flowers.

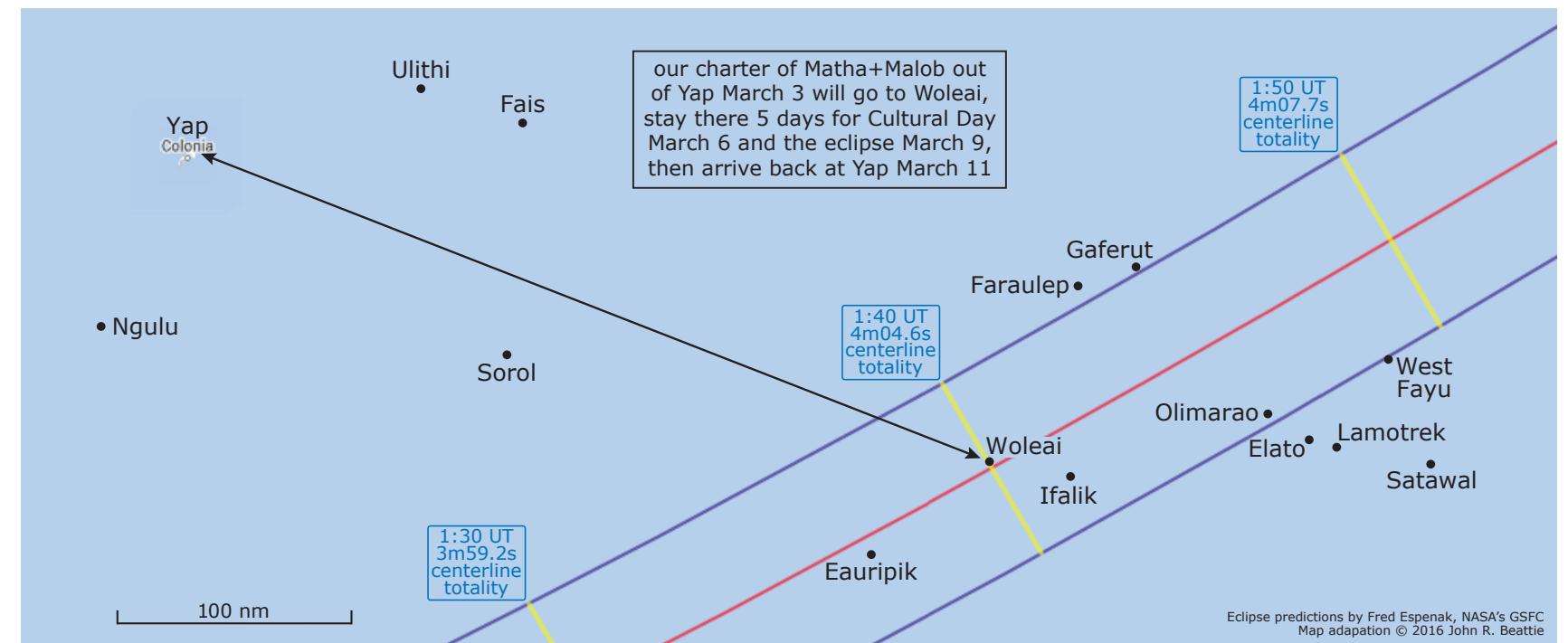
We'll be present for the annual "Woleai Cultural Day" on March 6 Sunday – in a spirit similar to Yap Days but with zero "staging for tourists" – it's by Woleaians for Woleaians, rarely witnessed by outsiders!

Then on our last day at Woleai before leaving, on March 9 Wednesday, as a bonus in case you've ever wanted to see one: we'll observe a 4-minute total solar eclipse! We can't wait to see what the islanders will think of this magnificent phenomenon – will they do special dances and chants to "save" our daytime star from its seeming demise? There will be some amateur astronomers with us to explain the event in detail and provide filters, etc. for viewing.

2016
Feb 27 to
Mar 13



F.V. Mathawalyap+Malob
Our transportation from Yap to Woleai will be on board F.V. Mathawalyap ("Matha"), provided by the Yap Fishing Authority accommodating 11 participants; also its slightly smaller sister vessel F.V. Malob which can take 7 passengers.





The annual Yap Days comprising dancing and colorful ceremonial pageantry and cultural skits and arts and crafts and decorations of every variety will take place February 29 Monday and March 1 Tuesday. Paraphrasing a local description:

Yap Days are the most colorful days of the year with traditional dances, crafts, competitions and demonstrations in ceremonial dress. It's a celebration, and a cultural preservation ceremony, that welcomes visitors to Yap, encouraging them to participate, learn about Yap, meet the people, and take photographs. Demonstrations include traditional attire, canoe building, rope making, net tying, and bamboo raft making as well as grass skirt, kafar, basket and fan weaving. In two days you can learn a lot about Yap culture, history, people, and the famous stone money. You can eat and drink local food, take plenty of photos, and buy traditional craft souvenirs.

Here's what the program looked like last year (2015 March 1-2):

March 1st, 2015 1st Day

A. OPENING CEREMONY: 9:00 am (Introduction by Masters of Ceremony)

- Conch Shell blowing to officially open Yap Day 2015
- Municipal Parade
 - Paramount Chief Recognition
 - Historical Billboard Presentation
- Police Presentation of colors & National Anthem
- Local Blessing
- Traditional Carriage of Stone Money, Betelnut & Coconut Presentation
- Local Currency Display
- MC's Opening Remarks
- Tiyor / Tam (TAMIL): Welcoming Remark by Chief of Tamil
- Remark by Council of Plung
- Remark by Chairman of the Yap Day Committee
- Remark by Governor of Yap State



B. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DOE): 11:30 am (Statement of Program and Activities)

- Raft Making
- Copra Husking
- Kinji Weaving
- Nipa weaving
- Sogom making
- Ball weaving
- Juggling
- Basket (Fanol) weaving
- Stick balancing



C. DANCE PERFORMANCE: 12:00 pm

- Tam (Teb) & Meeru Women's Sitting Dance (Tangin ea Mae)

D. MARINE RESOURCES/YAP FISHING AUTHORITY: 1:00 pm

- Essay Award prizes
- Drawing contest

E. DANCE PERFORMANCE: 1:30 pm

- Rumung Municipality, Women's Sitting Dance (Sirowa Samu)

F. MUNICIPAL RELAY: 2:30 pm

- Municipal teams (4 individuals, male and female)
- Climbing Betelnut Tree
- Weaving Basket
- Hopping Copra (5 pieces)
- Mil Garup +



G. DANCE PERFORMANCES: 3:00 pm

- Rull (Milie) Bamboo Dance

H. CULTURAL SKIT PERFORMANCE: 3:30 pm

- Rumung Women's Sitting Dance (Gal Malai)

I. DANCE PERFORMANCES: 4:30 pm

- Tiyor/Tam (TAMIL)

J. DANCE PERFORMANCES (Night time by firelight): 5:30 pm

- (MC Statement of activities)

- Conch Shell/Secure of Local Currency

- Tamil (Bugol) Women's Sitting Dance (Kan Tay)

- Tamil (Teb) Men's Standing Dance (Avalang)

- Tamil (Teb) Men's Standing Dance (Night time by firelight)



On-going demonstrations of traditional techniques and activities (2 days)

First and Second Day:

Begin 10:30 am – 12:30 noon and 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm

Yap Historical Preservation Office (HPO):

1. Tuba cutting/tasting and demonstration
2. Rope making presentation
3. Tying technique presentation
4. Local fishing net making and repairing presentation
5. Grass Skirt Making
6. Fish Trap making
7. Nipa/Palm leaf weaving

Yap Traditional Navigation Society (TNS)

Demonstrations of canoe carving and traditional navigation

Tamil Nutrition Committee:

Presentation on varieties of local cooking (Bugol village)

Yap Women's Association (YWA)

1. Handicraft making presentation
2. Leis making presentation
3. Coconut oil making Presentation

J. DANCE PERFORMANCE:

- Rumung Men's Standing Dance (Gaidibung)
- Tamil Men's Standing Dance (Yawur)

END OF YAP DAY 2015: 8:30 pm



March 2nd, 2015 2nd Day

A. OPENING CEREMONY: 9:30 am

- MC's Opening Remarks

B. AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES: 10:00 am

- Statement of Activity

- Awards of Local Crops and Produce

C. DANCE PERFORMANCE: 11:00 am

- Tamil (Dechmuri) Women's Sitting Dance (Sudai)

D. CULTURAL ACTIVITIES: 12:00 pm

- Skit Performance depicting local attire & tattoos & exchange of traditional currency

E. DANCE PERFORMANCE: 1:00 pm

- Gagl Women's Sitting Dance

F. LOG PULLING DEMONSTRATION: 1:30 pm

G. DANCE PERFORMANCES: 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm

- Rull Men's Sitting Dance
- Rumung Women's Sitting Dance (Kan Tay)
- Tamil (Maag) Bamboo Dance (Yibung)

H. DANCE AWARDS & CLOSING REMARKS of Yap Day 2015: 5:00 pm

- Conch Shell/Secure of Local Currency

I. DANCE PERFORMANCES: 6:30 pm

- Rumung Men's Standing Dance (Gaidibung)

- Tamil Men's Standing Dance (Yawur)

END OF YAP DAY 2015: 8:30 pm

Then on March 6 Sunday after our outbound trip, we'll attend Woleai Cultural Day which will have its own unique appeal in that it is completely "not geared for show to outsiders", it's by and for the islanders themselves with visitors welcome but, some years few or no visitors in attendance so, this is going to be truly a special privilege for us to witness.

Note that Woleaians are fully aware of "western culture" and quite a few have lived abroad for long periods, but are consciously, earnestly seeking to preserve traditional Micronesian culture and way of life in their home islands so it's truly an exotic and "unspoiled" destination, the classic "remote atoll" which gets very few "tourists" because it has no air links to the outside world.



Surprisingly, now Woleai does have a small generating station providing electricity 24/7 and, since early 2014, "slow, but usable" internet including wi-fi...also an air-conditioned dispensary and a general store and a high school where you can stop in at the main office facility → so, as a visitor to Woleai you need not feel entirely cut off from "civilization"...and don't forget bureaucrats with clipboards, yes there will be a couple of those too, to greet us upon arrival thereby truly assuring everyone we can feel right at home! :)



PLANNED ITINERARY – subject to revision

27 FEB: Sat. Arrive Yap, check in at hotel or homestay. Next day at leisure.

29 FEB: Mon. Today is the first day of the annual Yap Day festivities including an opening ceremony and parade.

01 MAR: Tues. The Yap Day festivities continue for a second and concluding day of colorful cultural dance performances and demonstrations of local skills. Our next day is at leisure and preparing for our departure to Woleai atoll.

03 MAR: Thurs. Early morning boarding of our exclusively chartered vessels F.V. Mathawalyap and F.V. Malob for a scheduled 6:00am departure.

04 MAR: Fri. Arrive Woleai by 6:00pm after our 367 nautical miles journey requiring 36 hours i.e. only one night on board at sea.

05 MAR: Sat. Free day on beautiful Woleai atoll, with Falealop main islet as our base. Some in our group may live on board Matha and Malob while others camp on shore in mini-tents they bring with them. There will be local foods available including coconuts, breadfruit, bananas, taro, and fresh fish.

06 MAR: Sun. Annual Woleai Cultural Day festivities.

07 MAR: Mon. 08 MAR: Tue. Two more free days, during which time there will be opportunities to visit some of the other islets including inhabited Tagaulap, Saliap, Wottegai, and Falalis as well as go swimming and snorkeling. We will become acquainted with some of the Woleaians learning about their culture and traditions, and also looking forward to Wednesday's total solar eclipse with our amateur astronomers who will be with us and who will be describing the eclipse to us and to the Woleaians and explaining how to observe it safely and enjoyably with special solar filters provided for the partial stages. We will explore and consider options for our preferred viewing locations for Eclipse Day.

09 MAR: Wed. ECLIPSE DAY – the moon's first "bite" of the sun, known as first contact, will occur at 10:10am.

Total solar eclipse 11:38am-11:42am.

After totality concludes, we'll celebrate with our newfound Woleaians friends.

10 MAR: Thur. Early morning boarding of Matha and Malob for a scheduled 6:00am departure.

11 MAR: Fri. Scheduled arrival time back into Yap at 6:00pm.

12 MAR: Sat. Begin your journey home, or extend your stay in this delightful area for optional activities such as a customized trip from Yap to Ulithi atoll for fishing, snorkeling, turtle-watching, experiencing island culture, etc. – can include excursions to seldom-visited sister islets Mogmog, Asor, and Fassarai – inquire.

Yap is part of the Federated States of Micronesia which are a fascinating destination offering unspoiled natural beauty, swimming, snorkeling, and scuba diving in pristine azure blue waters and friendly locals with distinct Micronesian cultures. There are also a wealth of WW II relics in this region, including quite a few on Woleai itself, as well as wreck diving opportunities, for those interested in the history of the great battles of that period. If you have the time before or after our Woleai adventure we would encourage you to extend the duration of your visit to Micronesia to enjoy more of these experiences. We will be happy to assist with suggestions and arrange any optional activities you would like...remember, you may not have a chance to return to this far-off part of the globe very easily in the future so take full advantage of the opportunity while you are there!

PRICING (not including international airfare or optional extra programs)

While we are in transit on board our vessels you'll sleep either in an enclosed sailor's-type cabin if you choose Priority booking – 4 places available on Matha and 2 on Malob – or on deck if you choose Economy booking – 7 places available on Matha and 5 on Malob – you can bring along your own pad or air mattress and/or sheet/pillow etc. for added comfort.

UPDATE MATHAWALYAP IS NOW SOLD OUT

BUT PLACES REMAIN ON BOARD MALOB

US\$7495 per person Priority booking, sailor's-type cabin accommodation, two places available

US\$4495 per person Economy booking, deck "accommodation", four places remaining

Group discount available for Malob if you have 6 persons who would like to book together.

To sign up and/or for more information contact Tim Todd at T.E.I. Tours, tei@teiglobal.com, +1 925-825-6104, <http://www.teiglobal.com>.