Dear Travelers:

In 2017, we invite you to explore one of the greatest mysteries of the 20th Century on this Voyage in Search of Amelia Earhart! This will be our second voyage to Nikumaroro. Our voyage in 2015 was a resounding success and we hope you can join us in 2017!

We developed this trip in association with TIGHAR, an organization which has been searching for Amelia Earhart for the last 25 years.

The 2017 trip will be a first opportunity for you and other new team members to explore Nikumaroro. It will also be an opportunity for 2015 travelers to return with us and continue to investigate the mysteries in the Colonial Village, the Camp Zero site, the Seven Site, and more!

Our 2017 trip will again begin with flights from Los Angeles to Fiji where we will have a hearty welcome and introduction to the trip.

The next day, we will board our ship and head to Rotuma Island, a cultural jewel just a day’s sail north of Fiji. We relish the opportunity to meet our friends on Rotuma again!

We’ll then continue our 1,000 mile journey to Nikumaroro (formerly Gardner Island) where TIGHAR believes Amelia Earhart’s plane landed (see the brief summary of evidence in this brochure).

We’ll be traveling to one of the most remote parts of the Pacific Ocean—the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) where Nikumaroro is found. It is the largest marine sanctuary in the world and has untouched coral reefs.

We’ll have lectures on what we know about Amelia Earhart’s disappearance, and what TIGHAR’s research suggests has happened. We will also learn about Pacific Ocean coral reefs, oceanography, island ecology, and the cultural heritage of the people of Melanesia and Polynesia.

At Nikumaroro, we will divide into teams (with TIGHAR and Betchart leaders) to explore the island, lagoon, and reef edge. There will be opportunities for swimming, snorkeling, kayaking, and scuba diving at Niku.

Teams will boat and walk to the main sites identified on past TIGHAR research expeditions. One focus will be exploring a location at the Seven Site where our 2015 fieldwork, combined with TIGHAR’s previous research, suggests might be the spot where Amelia Earhart died.
The voyage will give you amazing insights into the vast amount of work TIGHAR and our travelers in 2015 have done In Search of Amelia Earhart. And who knows, we may find missing pieces of the puzzle about Amelia Earhart’s disappearance!

We hope you will join us!

Margaret

Margaret M. Betchart
President, Betchart Expeditions Inc.
For AAAS Travels, Sigma Xi Expeditions, TIGHAR & The Planetary Society

LEADERSHIP

Leading this expedition will be Bob Nansen and Dr. Tom King. Bob is a biologist, and has led expeditions from Fiji to Alaska, Greenland to Antarctica for Betchart, including co-leading the Amelia Earhart Expedition in 2015.

Dr. Tom King serves as project archaeologist for the Amelia Earhart Project, sponsored by the International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery (TIGHAR). He has a PhD in anthropology from the University of California, Riverside, and has extensive archaeological field experience in California and Micronesia. He was an archaeologist for the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and head of archaeological surveys at three universities. He is returning to Nikumaroro for the 11th time.

Bob and Tom look forward to continuing to explore the mystery of Amelia Earhart with you in 2017.

ITINERARY

Days 1/3 Los Angeles to Nadi, Fiji
Expedition members depart Los Angeles on a nonstop Fiji Air flight to Nadi (“Nandi”). Cross the International Date Line en route. On the morning of Day 3, arrive and transfer to our Hotel. Enjoy a welcome lunch and introductory lecture on Amelia Earhart. Meet your expedition leaders and the experts from TIGHAR. This evening, gather for a festive dinner and traditional Fijian fire walking.

Day 4 Cultural Overview & Board M/V Reef Endeavour
This morning, enjoy a breakfast buffet and lecture on the cultures of the South Pacific with a special focus on the distinctive cultures on our voyage. Transfer to Denarau Harbor and Village for last minute purchases before we board M/V Reef Endeavour. We will then sail for Rotuma.

Day 5 At Sea En Route to Rotuma (320 nautical miles)
Today, we will have a day at sea, an ideal time to continue our lectures on the disappearance of Amelia Earhart. During our voyage, we will also have lectures on island ecology, oceanography, impact of sea level rise, and the southern sky. There will be a special briefing today on Rotuma, a small island (13 km x 4 km) which is a shield volcano with multiple cones, one reaching 260 m at Mount Suwelhol. It is surrounded by coral reef and has a distinctive population of Polynesian descent.

Day 6 Rotuma Island to Nikumaroro (680 nautical miles)
We will arrive this morning at Rotuma Island. According to oral history, the first inhabitants came to Rotuma from Samoa. Later, other islanders came from Tonga and Kiribati (“Kiribass”). Captain Edwards of the HMS Pandora was the first European to sight the island in 1791 when he landed in search of sailors from the mutiny on the Bounty. It became a favorite stop of whaling ships and in the 1840’s missionaries arrived. The majority of Rotumans now live elsewhere in Fiji, while the 2,500 who live on Rotuma maintain a traditional life. We will explore the island this morning and depart at mid-day for Nikumaroro.

NIKUMARORO ISLAND (Gardner Island)
Amelia Earhart Possible Landing Site 1937

Art Carty, Margaret Betchart & Tom King at Nikumaroro, 2015
**Days 7/8  At Sea En Route to Nikumaroro**

Today, our lecture program will continue on the Amelia Earhart mystery and past work on TIGHAR Amelia research expeditions. We will show the video from the 2015 expedition and will prepare for our visit to Nikumaroro. We will divide into teams for our visit to Nikumaroro, each with a TIGHAR or Betchart team leader. There will be a briefing on the Nikumaroro Island visit, and we will review how we will proceed. Some teams will explore land-based island sites. Others can swim, snorkel, or kayak. Scuba diving is an option for those interested (added cost).

**Day 9  Nikumaroro Island**

We will arrive at Nikumaroro and circumnavigate the island—a great introduction to the island, joined by dolphins, boobies, and fairy terns. We will see the wreck of the SS Norwich City, which went aground in 1929, and the place where TIGHAR hypothesizes that Amelia Earhart landed. To the south is the 1939-63 government station and village, where TIGHAR has found airplane parts. Farther southeast are Aukaraime and Ameriki, a U.S. long range navigation (LORAN) station during World War II.

**Days 10/16  Nikumaroro Island**

For the next seven days, we will explore the major sites on Nikumaroro where research has found what may be evidence of Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan having landed here. We will visit the sites with our team leaders and will have an opportunity to see if we can find anything pertinent to their being here. We will transfer to the island by the tenders, landing on slippery, wave-washed uplifted coral. We will then walk to the sites which can be very hot. Everyone will carry bottles of water and some days lunch.

Swimming, snorkeling, and kayaking will be possible, and diving is an option. All participants must follow their team leaders’ guidelines, including identifying the location of any discovery by GPS, and photographing any findings in situ. Any discoveries are the property of the Kiribati government and are not to be taken by team members. Site visits may include:

- **The “7” Site** where 1940 British records indicate a discovery of a cranium and a total of 13 bones. (The “7” Site is a natural clearing in the Scaevola frutescens bushes which resembles the numeral “7.”) The bones were shipped to Suva in 1940. Archaeological study by TIGHAR occurred there in 2001, 2007, 2010, and 2015 and has produced data suggestive of visitor(s) from the 1930’s, including cosmetic bottles, a small ointment pot, a zipper, and the mirror from a compact.
• The Bivouac Site where in October 1937, British colonial officers Harry Maude and Eric Bevington saw signs of someone’s “overnight bivouac.” This is where parts of a woman’s shoe and man’s shoe were found by TIGHAR in 1991. The woman’s shoe was identified as a “Blucher-style oxford” dating to the 1930’s (a style Amelia wore on her flight).

• The Colonial Village Site was settled in 1939-40 and abandoned in 1963. TIGHAR and 2015 participants have recovered dozens of fragments of aircraft structure from the deserted village, used to make handicrafts, combs, etc. Many of the aluminum pieces are consistent with a Lockheed Electra like Earhart’s.

• The Nutiran Shore where the SS Norwich City was grounded in 1929. A photograph taken by colonial officer Eric Bevington in 1937 shows an anomaly on the edge of the island’s north-western reef that very much looks like an Electra’s landing gear.

• The Reef surrounding the Island where we hope to deploy an ROV that will project images in real time to the ship as it scans the reef face.

• Diving the Reef Edge to look for airplane parts, fish, and coral. This isolated atoll remains one of the earth’s truly pristine environments.

The fringing reef is home to thousands of species of corals and invertebrates, and hundreds of species of fish, all within a few feet of a snorkeler or scuba diver.

There will be a daily recap late in the day, and the goals for the next day established. We will wrap up our projects on Niku on Day 16, and depart late in the day for Futuna Island.

Days 17/18  At sea en route to Futuna Island

We will have a couple of days at sea en route to Futuna Island for lectures, rest, working on notes, and evaluation of the Niku visit. Highlights en route will include Crossing the International Date Line and enjoying videos and photos of the 2017 voyage! Lectures will include a fascinating discussion of how Amelia Earhart artifacts are analyzed, plus the mystery of the Fiji bones.
On board ship enjoy the kava ceremony and music with the ship’s crew!

**Days 19/20  Futuna Island to Nadi**

We will arrive in Futuna this morning, and explore this volcanic island which is part of a French overseas collectivity with Wallis Island. We will disembark in the protected channel between Futuna and Alofi, which are part of the Hoorn Islands. These islands were discovered by Europeans Willem Schouten and Jacob Le Maire during their famous circumnavigation of the globe with the ship *Eendracht* in 1616. They were greeted graciously by the local kings, who prepared a feast and kava ceremony. They were probably the first Europeans to ever witness this event! The islands are ruled by two kings and are dotted with Catholic churches. We will enjoy our exploration and meet the local people! Then depart for Nadi the afternoon of Day 19. We sail all day on Day 20 (355 nautical miles).

**Day 21  Arrive Nadi; Nadi to USA this evening**

Arrive Nadi on the morning of Day 21 and disembark. Visit Kula Eco-Park to see wildlife endemic to Fiji and enjoy a barbecue. Transfer to the Nadi Airport for your flight back to Los Angeles. Arrive Los Angeles the same day. Take connecting flights home.

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**Please Mail To:**  Amelia Earhart 2017  Betchart Expeditions Inc.  17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014-5435
Explore One of the Greatest Mysteries of the 20th Century!  
In Search of Amelia Earhart  
June 21–July 11, 2017

**Costs & Conditions**

**Expedition Fee:** Is based on twin share per person (depending on cabin category) plus group air fare of approximately $1,695 including tax with Fiji Air from Los Angeles to Nadi, Fiji, round trip.

- Lounge Deck C ........................................... $ 8,995
- Upper Deck B ...........................................  $ 9,895
- Top Deck A Standard Cabins ......................... $10,895
- Top Deck Suites ........................................ $12,995

**Single Rate:** Is 150% of the per person rate (Suites are 200%).

**Expedition Fee Includes:** Group transfers in Nadi; hotel in Nadi; 4 meals a day; firewalking in Nadi; transportation by ship from June 24–July 11; accommodations based on twin share in comfortable cabins with private bath; meals and activities as described; leadership and lecture program; administration.

**Expedition Fee Does Not Include:** International air fare (quoted separately); independent transfers; tips on board ship; optional scuba diving (extra cost); alcoholic beverages, snacks, sodas, bottled water, laundry, phone, tax, passport, travel insurance, or other personal expenses.

**What to Expect:** This is an expedition in the true sense for the travel enthusiast who would like to explore one of the 20th Century’s greatest mysteries—the disappearance of Amelia Earhart! We will sail from Fiji north 1000 nautical miles via Rotuma to Nikumaroro (Gardner Island) in the Phoenix Islands Protected Area in the mid-Pacific, one of the most remote archipelagos and finest marine reserves in the world, plus to the French collective of Futuna.

We will travel at a speed of 10 to 10.5 knots on board a comfortable passenger ship with 65 cabins. We will have a lecture program about the search for Amelia Earhart, marine biology, the southern skies, and other topics, with excellent meals and camaraderie on board ship.

We will learn why, where, and how the TIGHAR + Fiji Princess 2015 group have searched for Amelia on Nikumaroro Island, and how we may help further research in our time in Nikumaroro. We will disembark in groups to explore the island and red edge. It will be hot and there will be long walks in full sun to reach some sites. The tender navigates a narrow channel cut in the coral where you will disembark. Stepping onto the coral can be slippery and challenging (we'll give you a walking stick, but you should be sure footed). There will be scuba diving, snorkeling, and swimming opportunities. We will investigate sites on the island to look for artifacts which might provide more clues about Amelia’s possible presence on the island. Typically it will be hot mid-day (80’s to 100’s). We’ll be there during the dry season, so little rainfall is expected, mainly lots of sunshine.

**M/V Reef Endeavour:** Has 65 staterooms and cabins with private facilities, a freshwater swimming pool, two jacuzzis, and mini-gym. There are a 40-passenger glass-bottomed boat plus snorkeling and dive tenders with a Fijian crew. Also two lounges and a bar on Deck C, a small library on Deck B, and bar/lounge on the Sun Deck.

**Air Fare & Airline Ticketing:** Group flights from Los Angeles are on Fiji Air. Please contact Marisa for flight information. Add-on fares to LAX on American Airlines are available. AIR FARES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

**Reservations, Deposits & Payments:**

To reserve a space, please contact Marisa, Betchart Expeditions Inc.

- **Phone** (800) 252-4910 (USA)
- **or** (408) 252-4910 (International)
- **Fax** (408) 252-1444
- **Email:** Marisa@betchartexpeditions.com

Final payment is due 180 days before departure (December 16, 2016).

**Cancellations & Refunds:** The initial deposit is refundable up to 180 days before departure, less a handling fee of $250 per person. There is no refund for any cancellation within 180 days of departure. Trip cancellation insurance will be offered. No refunds are made for unused services.

**Responsibility:** Betchart Expeditions Inc., the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Sigma Xi, the Scientific Research Society, The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery (TIGHAR), and The Planetary Society act only as agents for the passenger with respect to transportation and hotels, and exercise every care possible. However, we can assume no liability for injury, damage, delay, loss, accident or irregularity in connection with the services of any airline, ship, motorcoach, or other conveyance used in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Operation of the ship is solely the responsibility of Captain Cook Cruises. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, weather, sickness, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, acts of God, or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to substitute another leader of similar expertise or to reserve the right to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case the entire payment will be refunded with no further obligation on our part. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour. No refund will be made for the unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The price of the program is based on current tariffs and rates, and is subject to change. Any tariffs, exchange rate, or fuel increases will be passed here.

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Photos courtesy of Janis Carty, Margaret Betchart & Dawn Johnson.

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Exploring Amelia Earhart’s Disappearance
By Tom King, Senior Archaeologist
(The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery) [TIGHAR]

Amelia Earhart and her navigator, Fred Noonan, disappeared over the Pacific in 1937. What happened to them?

There are three main hypotheses—that is, educated guesses that can be tested through research and exploration:

1. They crashed at sea;
2. They were captured by the Japanese military and died; or
3. They landed on Nikumaroro, an uninhabited coral atoll in what is now the Republic of Kiribati.

For over 25 years, The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery (TIGHAR) has been testing the Nikumaroro Hypothesis. We’ve made ten trips to “Niku,” as we call it, to do surveys. We’ve inspected other islands, and done historical work in Fiji, Funafuti, England, and other parts of the world. We’ve done research in oceanography, meteorology, radio science, chemistry, forensic anthropology, and other disciplines. We’ve studied everything from 1930s cosmetics to the behavior of coconut crabs. We think we have a good idea what happened to Earhart and Noonan, though we don’t know for sure.

Here’s our evidence in a very small nutshell:

• Earhart and Noonan were headed for Howland Island, on the equator north of Niku. To judge from the strength of their radio signals, they got close. The last universally accepted radio message from them said they were flying on a course of 157-337 degrees. That course, plotted through the neighborhood of Howland Island, also passes close to Niku.
• After they disappeared, over 100 radio messages were received at stations around the Pacific that were logged as possible messages from her. When the U.S. Navy failed to find her, the messages were dismissed as hoaxes, but TIGHAR’s research suggests that at least half of them weren’t.
• About three months after they disappeared, a British team exploring Niku for possible settlement saw debris suggesting someone’s “bivouac,” but didn’t make anything of it.
• In a photo one of the British team took of the island’s northern reef, there’s an odd image off in one corner, caught by accident. Forensic imaging experts say it looks like an airplane’s landing gear.
• Deep on the reef face below where that possible landing gear was in 1937 (it’s gone now), side-scan sonar and robotic imaging have revealed what may be evidence of the lost Electra.
• A settlement was established on the island in 1939; it lasted till 1963. The settlers—from Kiribati and Tuvalu—found and used airplane parts; they have stories about this, and we’ve recovered fragments of aircraft aluminum in the ruins of their village.
• In 1940, they found human bones—thirteen of them, near the south end of the island, associated with the remains of a man’s shoe, a woman’s shoe, a sextant box, and a few other artifacts. Sent to Fiji, the bones were identified by a medical doctor as those of a European or mixed-race man. The bones and artifacts were lost, but we have the doctor’s notes and measurements. Forensic anthropologists examined the data and concluded—with caveats—that the bones suggest a European woman of Earhart’s stature.
• We’re pretty sure we’ve located the site where the bones were found, and we’ve excavated part of it. We’ve found the remains of campfires with bird, fish, and turtle bones, clam shells, plus:
  — The remains of a woman’s compact dating to the 1930s;
  — A jar, also from the 1930s, that apparently contained a mercury-based cosmetic used to lighten freckles;
  — Other cosmetic bottles from the 1930s; and
  — Two bottles that were apparently left sitting upright in the fire, perhaps in an effort to boil water—there is no fresh water on the island except what can be caught during rain squalls.

Here’s what we think happened:

• Unable to find Howland Island, Earhart and Noonan flew south along that 157-337 degree line, and found Niku. The tide at the time was a low “neap” tide—the lowest point in a multi-day tidal cycle. So the broad shelf running out to the reef edge had little or no water on it. They landed safely.
• Over the next few days, they camped nearby and visited the plane when the tide was low enough and it wasn’t unbearably hot, sending radio signals whenever they could.
• Over the next several days the high tides got higher, and finally at the “flood” stage the plane floated over the edge of the reef, leaving one landing gear stuck in a hole.
• When U.S. Navy pilots from the battleship Colorado flew over the island seven days after Earhart and Noonan disappeared, the plane was gone, and wherever they were, Earhart and Noonan were not spotted.
• Earhart and/or Noonan (probably Earhart, we think) explored the island and wound up camping and living off the land at the south end, surviving there for some days or even weeks, but eventually dying, probably of thirst.

That’s what we think happened, but we don’t know it’s what happened; it’s our hypothesis, and we’re planning more work—in cooperation with Betchart Expeditions, to test it further.

But what about the other hypotheses?

The one that many people believe, because it’s the simplest, is that Earhart and Noonan never found any island, crashed into the ocean, and sank. But this doesn’t account for the radio messages and the various things found on Niku.

The other popular hypothesis is that Earhart and Noonan flew into the Japanese occupied islands of Micronesia—most likely the Marshall Islands—and there were captured and either were executed or died of disease. Many, many stories have been told in support of this idea and while they might be true, they also might not be; no one has produced hard evidence.

We prefer a simpler one—they couldn’t find Howland, they did find Nikumaroro, they landed there, and they died. That’s the one we’ll keep investigating until we either prove it correct or decide that we’re wrong.

For further information on the Nikumaroro hypothesis and TIGHAR’s work, visit tighar.org, or see:
Thirteen Bones (a novel) by Tom King (2009)
For further information on the “crashed and sank” hypothesis, visit http://elgenlong.com/earhart/crash-and-sank.html or see:
Amelia Earhart: the Mystery Solved, by Elgen and Marie Long (2009)
For further information on the “Japanese capture” hypothesis, visit http://earharttruth.com/ or see:
Amelia Earhart: the Truth at Last, by Mike Campbell (2012)
(All the above books are available from Amazon.com and other booksellers)