# TX9W

# Dxpedition to Marquesas Is

# April 2026

**By Craig Boyer – W5CCP**

Jeff, K5WE and I, Craig, W5CCP began planning this trip in July 2025. After our trip to The Austral Islands in April 2024 (TX7W), we thought that another trip to French Polynesia, specifically The Marquesas Islands, would not only be fun but challenging as well……. And we were familiar with the routine of a large number of bags thru Tahiti and onward via Air Tahiti. We try to choose countries high on the DXCC Most Wanted list to visit and the Marquesas was listed as #65. While there had been a number of DXpeditions operate from there, it remained high on the list. The 14 man team, TX7N, had been there in early 2025, but the need from Europe was still high.

After our trip to TX7W, Jeff and I decided that the next trip would require us to bring more operators! At TX7W, we discovered that we could use more help installing antennas and operating. Also, our focus at OKDXA recently has been to encourage more young operators. So we began recruiting some help for this trip. At the same time, we wanted to have a more successful low band operation.

Our specific DXpedition goals were to 1) move the Marquesas a little lower down the Most Wanted List, 2) give more Europeans a chance for a contact with the Marquesas, 3) introduce some younger or inexperienced DXpeditioners from OKDXA to real time operating from a remote location, and 4) to make a respectable number of contacts on the low bands.

We were fortunate to recruit Bob Hensey, K4VBM and Jeremy Conkling, N5TEA – both members of OKDXA, both serious DXers, but lacking DXpedition experience. To address our low band goals, we recruited one of the best low band guys in the business, Dave Jorgensen, WD5COV. Dave was excited to go as he wanted to test the viability of airplane travel with his Top Band Express Twin 80/160m vertical, that he had designed. He had used this antenna on the Clipperton DXpedition (TX5S) in 2024 but had never carried it on an airplane.

TX9W Team at Hiva Oa Airport

The Oklahoma contingent had decided to depart together from Tulsa, OK. on the morning of April 18, Saturday. Since it was an early flight, we spent the night at Jeff's house, planning to wake up at 3:30 am and head to the airport. At 1:30 am, Jeff woke me up to tell me that he needed to go the Emergency Room. He had an urgent medical problem that needed to be diagnosed and treated. So his wife took him to the Hospital and the rest of us headed to the Tulsa Airport with all the luggage, including Jeff's with the hope that he would join us soon.

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A Note from the Team Leader - I became ill late in the evening and spent the night before our scheduled departure in the Emergency Room and the next day in the hospital. The doctors would not allow me to travel, so I stayed home and tried to help out as a pilot and remote help desk support via phone/text/email. I was very disappointed that I couldn't go. I had put a lot of work and energy into this trip. The team overcame numerous technical and operational problems and poor propagation conditions. Some good results were achieved on 160/80/60 meters, which is always difficult from the Marquesas Islands. An emphasis was made on putting Europeans in the log, since the need for FO/M was greater in Europe. Tnx for the QSOs. CU from the next one...73 de Jeff - K5WE

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Dave joined us at our layover in Denver and we flew on to San Francisco and then Tahiti, arriving around 8pm local time at the Fa'aa airport. At this point, the 4 of us were carrying 21 pieces of luggage! Didier, F6BCW, had arranged some help for us at the airport to store the bags overnight and give us a ride to the Airport Hotel. We left on Sunday morning, April 19, for Hiva O'a, Marquesas. At this point, we were convinced that Jeff, K5WE, would be joining us in a few days.

We arrived in Hiva O'a (I had the best tuna sandwich of my life on the Air Tahiti flight!) and Didier and the folks from Pension Kanahau were there to meet us and our 21 bags of luggage. Upon arriving, we immediately started erecting antennas. I focused on the BuddiHex because of its' ease of installation and fired it up on FT8 while we focused on installing the 30 and 40m verticals and the second HexBeam. In total we had 7 antennas that were all installed over the next few days. We secured permission to install the Top Band Express on some adjoining land which gave a little more but barely enough space!

Top Band Express

I installed the StarLink Mini on the roof of the dining area and immediately had strong wifi . We were encouraged. We began our operation and started logging to ClubLog Livestream. It appeared to work for a while, then we noticed that it seemed to be dropping some callsigns. We switched from MSHV to WSJT-X to no avail – we had a serious problem. Reluctantly, after an animated team meeting, we decided to forgo using Livestream and Bob, K4VBM, began uploading the logs to ClubLog at 12:00pm local and at 00:00 local, two uploads per day. Bob proved to be an incredible resource with his background in IT. He was a great trouble shooter, fixing many software issues. Since Jeff wasn't present, Bob picked up the mantle of IT Guru and served us well throughout the entire trip!

Our initial plan was to use MSHV exclusively on FT8 but since some team members were more familiar with WSJT-X we decided to go forward with both WSJT-X and MSHV for the rest of the trip. After that initial struggle with FT8, Murphy came and visited and stayed for a while! We had an abundance of problems. We had interactivity issues and found it was almost impossible to run two stations on CW at the same time. We used ICE filters, combination filters and triplexers from VA6AM, and stubs to no avail……. We changed our operating plan to accommodate this issue. Didier operated mostly CW and changed his operating schedule accordingly. On a side note, Didier was an incredible resource of information. He masterfully organized the transport of luggage on Air Tahiti both to and from the island and made a large part of the CW QSOs. He is a superior CW op. His experiences in operating from this location proved very valuable.

We experienced some strange problems including stray RF likely emanating from Didier's amplifier and station which was located in the corner of the operating room. We discovered later that equipment that was plugged into the same line voltage source as Didier's experienced problems. We fought power surges, loss of line power, etc. It was all very frustrating as it slowed our QSO rate very dramatically. By the end of the trip we had equipment problems or complete failure with the following equipment: two (2) – Elecraft K3S had lost their KIO port, making them usable only on SSB, one PowerWerx 12v PS, the only Elecraft KPA500 would not power on (interlock and fuse block issues we later discovered), and Didier's RF power HVLA1K3 amplifier became unusable and had to be taken offline with a multitude of issues.



On top of equipment and software issues to sort out, we experienced what can only be described as terrible propagation and solar maladies. The sun cursed us with two different CME's and low sunspots. Of course we knew in advance that conditions would not be ideal, but we were all surprised at how bad propagation would be!

So that's a detailed description of most of our problems…….. but it was a fabulous trip ! Here's what went right:

On a brighter note, Dave's Top Band Express performed actually better than expected and allowed us to complete almost 300 contacts on 160m even though the 160m season ended months before. We reached and exceeded our goal on 80 and 160 and completed the highest number of 160m QSOs since TX7M made 729 in 2011.

As operations progressed, our new dxpeditioners learned to run contest style SSB and FT8. They were coached well and by the end of the trip, no one could say that they were 'newbies' any longer. I am proud of their contribution to the team. Jeremy was instrumental in getting all the antennas up as well as being the main 'muscle' on the team. His commitment to the team goal of working lots of Europeans was evident especially when running FT8. The fact that we used WSJT-X in DXpedition mode meant we had to 'fill the

queue' with calls. Our FT8 operators like Jeremy attempted to fill that queue with European calls when possible, bypassing JA's in particular to give the EU stations a preference. We still worked a ton of JA's! This decision enhanced the EU operators chances of a contact with us – especially some of the lower powered stations. Attention was also given to Northern Europe, where the low band need and 10/12 meters was very high. Our friend Tom, LA9GX, helped coordinate and effectively became our Northern European pilot….. Thanks Tom! I mentioned Bob's contribution to our IT needs already but he also showed, as did Jeremy, a great 'can do' attitude towards any activity he attempted. Bob was already a good SSB op because of all his Field Day and contest experience. Our goal of teaching and training some of our more inexperienced OKDXA club members and participants was achieved. Thank you Bob K4VBM and Jeremy N5TEA…… we couldn't have done it without you.

On the ClubLog Most Needed DXCC list, the Marquesas were listed as #63 worldwide and #43 for Europe before our trip. The new Most Needed List shows them as #65 worldwide and #49 for Europe, not a huge difference but a 6 point change for Europe. We didn't move the needle as much as we had hoped, but we did impact European totals.

Craig - W5CCP

Band/Mode breakdown

| Band | CW | FT8 | SSB | FT4 | Total | Total % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 160 | 3 | 285 | 0 | 0 | 288 | 1.1% |
| 80 | 114 | 915 | 0 | 0 | 1029 | 3.9% |
| 60 | 0 | 201 | 0 | 0 | 201 | 0.8% |
| 40 | 331 | 3438 | 189 | 0 | 3958 | 14.8% |
| 30 | 890 | 3484 | 0 | 0 | 4374 | 16.4% |
| 20 | 817 | 4064 | 423 | 0 | 5304 | 19.9% |
| 17 | 711 | 2271 | 412 | 0 | 3394 | 12.7% |
| 15 | 957 | 2534 | 881 | 0 | 4372 | 16.4% |
| 12 | 569 | 982 | 193 | 249 | 1993 | 7.5% |
| 10 | 335 | 1145 | 75 | 201 | 1756 | 6.6% |
| 6 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0.0% |
| Totals: | | | | | | |
| | 4727 | 19324 | 2173 | 450 | 26674 | |

We ended up running a lot more digital modes than we initially planned, but the decision was made to put QSOs in the logs, and with the lousy conditions, I believe it was the correct decision. After the first 7 days, a request was received from some Europeans to please run more FT8 in order to give some of the smaller 'little pistols' a chance for a new one. On the last 2 or 3 days of the DXpedition, conditions improved slightly and we were able to run FT4 for a few hours till the band (10/12) died.

Just in case you thought that DXpeditioning is all fun and games and a part time vacation, our new DXpeditioners will tell you emphatically that it is not! Our location, while beautiful, had limited space for optimal antenna placement. We experienced high noise levels on the low bands, power surges, power outages, roach-like insects the size of small birds, high heat and humidity, equipment breakdowns, poor radio conditions, fatigue, and the high cost of transporting ourselves and 21 bags of gear to a remote location. On top of that, our Team Leader was at home in the hospital, which reduced our already small team down to just 5 operators, and only 3 with prior experience.

So why did we go to such a difficult location? Team goals:

1) To put the Marquesas in as many logbooks as possible
2) To focus on Europe, including Northern Europe and the 'little pistols' who needed Marquesas
3) To continue to develop new DXpeditioners and give them a chance to participate
4) And lastly, to evaluate and use the Top Band Express with the intent of making difficult low band contacts

And through all our difficulties and problems, we accomplished all our Team Goals –

Hope you worked us! And if it was difficult for you, thanks for hanging in there.

We had a blast, and remember, if it was easy, everyone would do it….hi

Craig – W5CCP / TX9W

PS - Jeremy, N5TEA will never forget our trip!


# TX9W Low Band Story – By Dave Jorgensen WD5COV

When I was invited to join the TX9W DXpedition slated for mid-April 2026, I knew this late in the low band season conditions would be poor. When I designed the Top Band Express 160 and the Express Twin 80/60 verticals, my goals were to build an antenna which could travel via airplane, set up quickly and raise the verticals by a single person, and most of all have the antenna perform very well. Having used these antennas on Clipperton Island TX5S in 2024 proved the antenna performance, but everything traveled by boat. This DXpedition proved they can easily travel by plane. Each vertical and the falling derrick raising system were packed in three ski bags and under the required weight allowance. One additional suitcase held hinged base plates, radial plates, and insulated vertical plates.

**Dave - WD5COV**

Once we arrived at Hive Oa, we looked for a suitable location to erect the vertical. As it turned out, the only suitable location was behind our guest house on a narrow strip of ground but owned by another resident of the Island. Our host Tanya contacted this person and the next day we had permission

to use this ground. This strip of ground was about 6 meters wide but 30 meters long. It was located on the side of a cliff with limited space for guys and radials. With the help of Jeremy N5TEA, we had the antenna ready to go up in about 2 hours' time. With the falling derrick system, the vertical goes up in seconds. After adjusting the guys and laying out some radials we were ready for our sunset at 0300Z.

We suffered a CME and the K index was high, but we tried the first night anyway. The vertical SWR was 1.18:1 without any adjustment. Just after 0400Z with the team huddled around, we made our first QSO. Ironically it was with my hometown friend Fred NO5Z in New Mexico. Just two days before I left for the DXpedition I climbed Fred's tower to erect his 160 antenna which had broken the year before. That was a memorable QSO.

For the next six nights I would man the 160 meter station from 0300Z until 1400Z. The second night conditions improved and worked about 50 North American stations and 6 South America stations. The next morning after 4 hours sleep, I put up the Express Twin 80/60 vertical. From the third night on, we ran on both 80 and 160 meters with even better results. At 0500Z Western Europe was heard for the first time on 160. We put six EU stations in the log. Something I thought might be impossible. After running the North America greyline, it was fun watching PSK reporter and seeing the flags light up near the greyline. Soon the VK's were coming in followed by a good JA opening. About 45 stations in Asia were in the log including BY, RA0, and YB. Our last night on 160, we worked about 8 more EU stations, 2 in Africa and another good JA opening with about 40 more Asia in the log.

In total we made 288 QSO's on 160 meters in 16 countries. The Top Band Express performed far better than my expectations.

Our 80-meter operation was also productive. Conditions slowly improved and we were happy to log 86 EU stations, and over 500 stations in Asia. We had a good balance worldwide. Craig W5CCP and Didier F6BCW did the vast majority of our 80 meter contacts while Jeremy N5TEA focused his time working EU on 40 meters. The last night, I switched over the Express Twin for 60-meter operation and Bob K4VBM took the helm. He had a blast whittling down the pile-up!

Continent By Band

| Band | 160 | 80 | 60 |
|---|---|---|---|
| AF | 2 | 10 | 5 |
| AN | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| AS | 85 | 508 | 0 |
| EU | 14 | 86 | 58 |
| NA | 166 | 365 | 120 |
| OC | 15 | 35 | 7 |
| SA | 6 | 25 | 11 |
| Totals | 288 | 1029 | 201 |

**Express Twin 80/60 Vertical**