

What Really Happened Kris Kremers and Lisanne Froon?

Six Years Later, Questions Go Unanswered

"In natural beauty, biodiversity and dazzling landscapes, Panama is incomparable," reads an excerpt from VisitPanama.com, the country's official tourism website. It's undeniable, you don't have to go far to find someone gushing about its tropical delights, but its lush rainforests are not without peril. The mysteries surrounding the disappearances of hikers Kris Kremers and Lisanne Froon are a stark reminder that one should always travel with caution.

Kremers, 21, and Froon, 22, were Dutch friends and roommates in Amersfoort, where they had grown up. Both had just finished their studies, Froon in Applied Sciences and Kremers specializing in art education. For six months, the two saved up working in a cafe and booked a trip to Panama to learn Spanish and do something significant.

Volunteer Work Gone Wrong

On March 14, 2014, the two arrived in Boquete, Panama, planning to volunteer with local communities to help children while also booking time to relax. Unfortunately, it turned out they had arrived too early for the program. An ominous diary entry from Kremers about the experience noted that it was "rude" and "not friendly at all."

The diary entry also mentions their plans to get ahold of the headteacher the next day, but unfortunately, the cruel hand of fate would interfere.

The Last Dog Walk

Despite their disappointment, the two were determined to see as much of Boquete as possible, hiring a local guide to show them around on August 2.

But the day before their guided tour was supposed to start, the two decided to trek out on their own, exploring the areas near the base of the active Baru volcano. Noted for being a relatively easy hike, the two followed the Pianista trail close to 11 a.m. with nothing more than a lone backpack.

Blue, a local dog in the small village, followed the two young travelers.

Blue Comes Home, Alone

The last person to report encountering the two hikers was the local innkeeper, who told them to take a taxi back into town after their hike. People grew suspicious when Blue returned home alone hours later.

The next day, the community decided to contact the local authorities shortly after the girls missed their appointment with their travel guide. Back home, both of their families grew concerned when the girls didn't call to check-in. Their social media accounts had also gone silent.

On the third day of the disappearance, April 3, authorities conducted aerial and foot searches of Boquete's forests.

The Backpack

With the girl's parents growing more frantic and searching for them turning up nothing, the case quickly went cold. It wasn't until ten weeks after the girls set about their fateful hike that a local found a backpack in the forest.

The backpack was determined to be Lisaanne's, still in good condition. Inside, authorities uncovered two bras, sunglasses, money, Froon's passport, a water bottle - and, most significantly, the girls' cell phones and a camera.

The 911 Calls

The cell phones were the first lead the cops had, but they also provided a confounding timeline that only led to more questions. For nearly ten days after the two vanished, the phones remained active. They called both 112, the Netherlands' emergency number, as well as 911.

The calls began only a few hours after the hike began, and only one connected due to poor reception. Even then, it only lasted two seconds.

After the failed calls, the phones remained on for a while. Kremer's phone was locked, showing multiple attempts to log in with the wrong PIN. It was last active on April 11 before dying, leading authorities to believe at least one of the girls was still alive at that time.

Their Camera

The camera had more than 100 pictures stored. They started innocently enough, the standard tourist fare - but the tone quickly darkened.

Around the time the emergency calls began, a picture shows Kremers with a look of grave concern. Then the photos appeared to be a series of random objects – a stick with a bit of plastic stuck to it, shots of foliage, all taken between the hours of 1 and 4 a.m.

While we'll never know for sure, some authorities theorize the girls were trying to photograph markers that could help them find their way back. However, there is the distinct possibility that the pictures were taken by someone else, someone involved with their disappearance.

At the request of Froon's family, most of the pictures were never publicly released, with some of them reportedly showing the girls in rough shape. However, some pictures leaked to both Panama and Dutch news outlets.

The latter outlet showed a photo focusing on the back of one of the girls' heads, believed to be Kremers. There is some blood in her hair, and it appears to be around some injury.

Their Belongings

After the backpack was found, authorities led their search near the Rio Culebra (Serpent River) near the village of Alto Romero. This was further than the girls planned to hike, but with that area exhausted, the belief was the girls had gotten lost.

Sure enough, authorities found more evidence the girls had indeed been there: Kremer's clothes were neatly zipped and folded, just about the water-level, about a half-mile from where the backpack turned up. Interestingly, their clothing was found on the opposite side of the river where the pictures were taken. It was almost as if someone had left them there to be found.

Two Months Later, A Tragic Discovery

It was only June that the case took its darkest turn. Searchers turned up a shoe with a foot very much inside that was later identified as Froon's.

Investigators would uncover more skull fragments and some of Kremer's skin. The bodies were in pieces, strewn along the river, with much of their remains missing. Some of the bones appeared to have been bleached. They were most certainly dead, but there was no evidence suggesting how it had happened.

A Controversial Ruling

One year later, Panamanian authorities ruled the two girl's deaths an accident. They believed the girls had fallen from a great height, which they claimed explained the injuries.

The girls' families and the press immediately criticized the ruling. They believe it discounted too much, including the fact that someone saw two unidentified Dutchmen with the women before

their hike. Additionally, DNA samples found on the backpack were never even tested by authorities.

Too Many Questions

The girls' disappearance, and the circumstances surrounding it, linger on in mystery. According to locals, the hike is too easy to get lost on. Some have pointed to a cover-up; others have claimed lousy police work. Regardless, with Panama desperate to ensure its tourists' safety, the disappearance of Lisa Froom and Kris Kremers serves as a cautionary tale to all travelers.