

1/29/13 - Day 24 – Bora Bora Island: The Amsterdam arrived outside the reef of Bora Bora Island about 7am this morning. Captain Mercer had made a titillating announcement last evening that photographers might want to be on deck when the Amsterdam “shoots the reef” into the harbor of Bora Bora. On previous visits to Bora Bora we had not heard reference to any special scene while entering the harbor through the reef so this morning we were on hand with our trusty camera to record this occasion. There were about 50 other hearty souls on deck with cameras ready. For those of us visualizing the Amsterdam “shooting the reef” like a kayak shooting the rapids of a raging river, we were to be disappointed. Although the opening in the reef was very narrow, as marked

by the two buoys in the picture on the right, the scene was very placid as the Amsterdam glided through the calm waters. Nearby to the right and left were partially exposed reefs



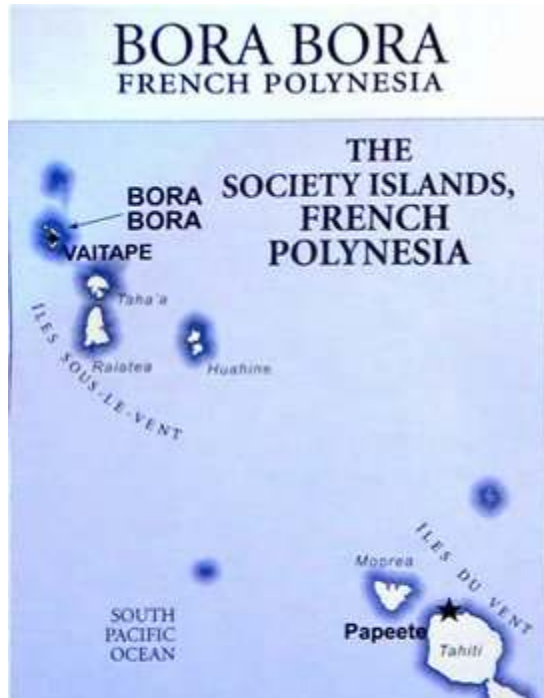
outlined by occasional breaking waves, as shown below, but the buoys marking the safe channel clearly kept us out of harms way.



Oh well – this was not very exciting but it got us up nice and early and we were able to get some pictures of beautiful Bora Bora as the Amsterdam entered the harbor. Shown below are a couple pictures of harbor shoreline facilities and the village of Vaitape with imposing Mount Otemanu in the background.



Bora Bora Island is located about 125 miles northwest of Tahiti as shown on the map on the right.



A coral reef surrounds the island and encloses a large lagoon that is three times as large as the land portion of the island located in the middle of the lagoon. A map of Bora Bora showing the location of important geographic, government, and commercial sites is shown below.



The administrative center for the island is the village of Vaitape which is located near the opening in the reef (Teavanui Pass) that we eased through this morning. About 8am the Amsterdam anchored in the harbor between Vaitape and the Bora Bora Lagoon Resort. Since we were anchored and not tied to a dock we would have to take tender boats in to the landing at Vaitape. About 9am we joined our friends Roy and Gayle and caught a tender boat for the short ride to the landing. In Vaitape there was a permanent souvenir vendor market area that we browsed through briefly. Then we decided to go on a private tour around the island. Roy and Gayle were more interested in exploring Vaitape and the nearby area so we parted ways for the day and checked out several of the local tour vendors lined up along the dock.

We talked to Manuel who was offering a 3 hour "Round the Island" tour in the back of a 4x4 Land Rover for \$30 per person. We had survived yesterday's 4x4 tour in Moorea so we decided to take this one. Building on the successful "short leg challenge" technique employed yesterday, Barbara immediately negotiated a free upgrade to riding in the cab with Manuel, shown with his Land Rover on the right.



There were 4 couples from the Amsterdam who eventually signed up with Manuel for the tour. With Barbara up front and the other 7 of us in the back we had Manuel go over the itinerary again and then we were off.

Leaving Vaitape we followed the road that hugs the lagoon shore, as shown on the map above. We took a clockwise course around the island. The temperature was warm but there was plenty of breeze through the truck so we were comfortable. Manuel called out the sites of interest as we passed them. Barbara was busy taking pictures from her vantage point in the cab.

These two Protestant churches were pointed out.



We saw a gas station but there was gas prices were not posted. We were told that regular gas sells for \$1.50 per liter which would be about \$6 USD per gallon as we found yesterday on Moorea.



We turned off the main road briefly and drove through a residential area on a road that was concrete rather than asphalt. The need for concrete was evident shortly as we had to ford a small river that was flowing across the road.



Some typical homes along this road are shown here. These were modest homes but they appeared to be well maintained. They were surrounded by verdant tropical growth and some had spectacular views. Manuel said the price of these homes would be on the order of \$70,000 USD.



We got back onto the asphalt pavement of the main road and continued our drive around the island. We stopped briefly at some large stones beside the road, as shown on the right. Manuel said on this spot in ancient times the Polynesians practiced human sacrifice.



A short way further we stopped at a roadside shop where souvenirs, colorful hand dyed cloth, and some food items were for sale.



A dress hanging at the front of the store had been dyed a beautiful combination of colors with the outline of leaves and names of islands. At the back of the store the process used to imprint these images on the cloth could be seen. Apparently, dye was applied and then

the cloth was placed in the sun with natural leaves blocking out the sun's rays. The different level of exposure to the sun resulted in the pattern imprinted on the cloth. The rather primitive set up for this printing technique is shown in the picture on the right.



This was an interesting sample of local craft work but after 15 minutes we had seen all we wanted so we climbed back into the truck and Manuel drove on.

The reef that forms a ring around the lagoon is made up of small islands called “motu”. On the map above the airport can be seen on Motu Mute. From our location on the Bora Bora coastal road we could see Motu Mute but not much of the airport operation.



At this point on the road around the island were some nice looking homes built out over the lagoon and up on the hillside, across the road from the lagoon.



Manuel said that these were 1 and 2 bedroom rental units for the tourist industry and they rented for about \$1800 USD per month.

At one point Manuel pulled over and grabbed a handful of leaves off of a tree growing beside the road. We then drove on a short way to a spot where there were many small holes in

the sand of the shoulder of the road. He tossed the leaves down among the holes. Immediately some small land crabs came out of the holes and started to eat the leaves.



Along the road we saw several homes which had concrete or stone tombs and simple graves in the front yard. This is a custom around the islands and on the right is a picture of one of the tombs with a protective cover over it.



Looking about a mile across the lagoon toward the motus we could see several of the well known resorts on Bora Bora. The “over the water” bungalows at the resorts



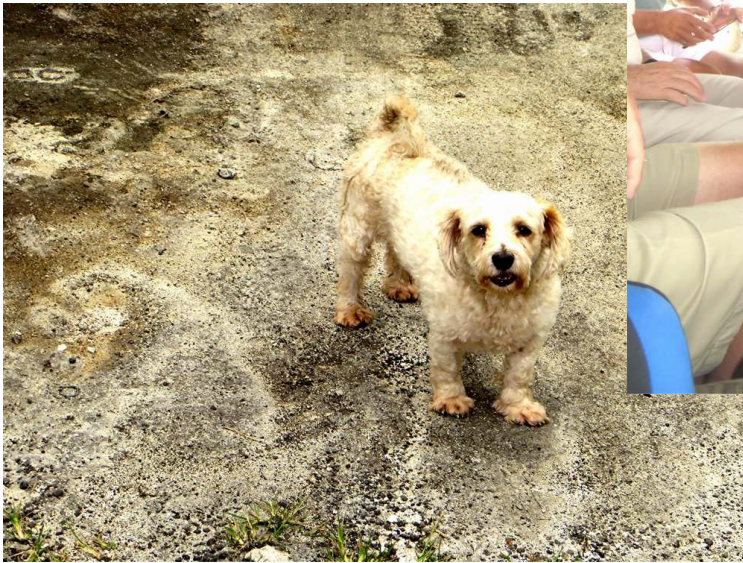
are built on stilts over the lagoon as shown in the picture below. These were typical of what we saw at the locations of the St. Regis Resort, Four Seasons Resort and the Inter Continental Spa. Manuel said the rooms at these resorts rent for \$1000 to \$10,000 per day depending on the resort and level of luxury desired.

Along the shoreline of the main island of Bora Bora there were spots of pure beauty that we stopped to enjoy.



After each foray out of the truck there was always the “repacking” of us tourists in the back. We had become pretty well acquainted by this time and it made for a happy crowd.

Manuel stopped in front of one nice looking house and said this was the home of his



grandparents. A small dog came out barking and Manuel called it “GiGi”. Manuel and GiGi chit-chatted for a minute and then we moved on.

The next stop on our tour was Bloody Mary’s. The fame of this bistro is built around the colorful character, Bloody Mary, in the Broadway musical called “South Pacific”. The Bloody Mary’s on Bora Bora has become a “must see” for tourists visiting the islands.

We piled out of our 4x4 and tramped into Bloody Mary’s. It was decorated like a scene out of a classical South Sea movie set, featuring a high thatched roof ceiling and thatched roof over the busy bar.



We were among the first of our group to enter the place. With a sly look on his face, Manuel grabbed us and we were quickly ushered into the men's rest room.

Fortunately, there were no current users as Manuel proudly showed us the stainless steel urinal, shown on the right. Above the bright stainless steel and nearly hidden by the bamboo background was hanging the famous and ribald handle for the chain pull used to flush the urinal.

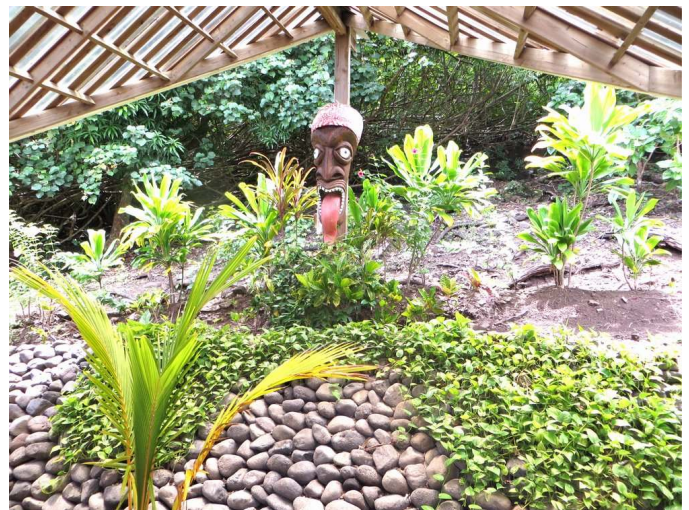
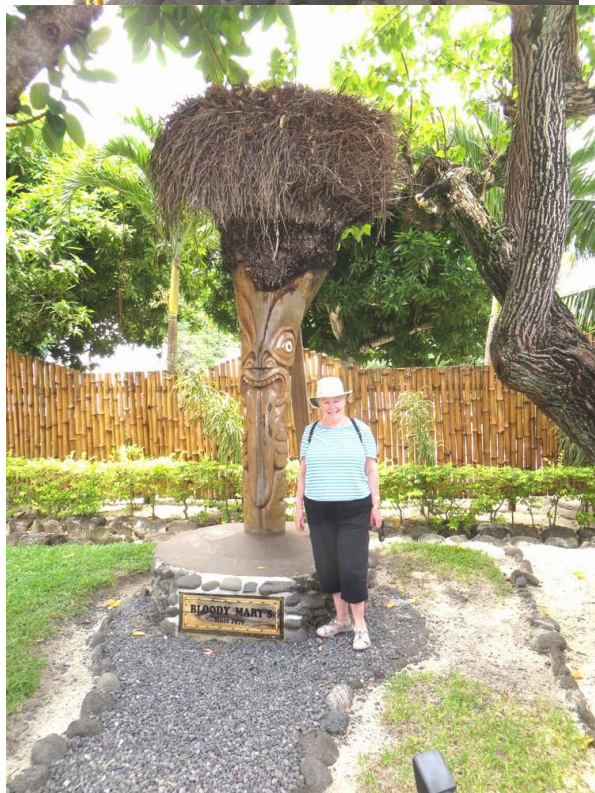


Barbara, suddenly realizing she was standing in the men's room, rushed out. But now her interest in the lady's room was peaked



because of stories we had heard about the lavish accommodations there. As might be expected, the lady's room fixtures were much less shocking and she got this picture of the spring water fed lavatory sink made of volcanic stone, as shown on the left.

There were other iconic scenes around Bloody Mary's and we busied ourselves getting a few pictures.



Eventually Manuel rounded us up and we were loaded for the final leg of the tour back into the village of Vaitape.



Back in Vaitape at the tender landing there was a large sign showing a map of Bora Bora. We took advantage of this opportunity to document the visit of Barbara's library card to this idyllic tropical island.



We then caught one of the tender boats and returned to the Amsterdam. While riding in the tender we were surprised when one of the local guys in a small outrigger canoe came alongside and paddling feverishly he was able to match the speed of the tender and then magically “catch the wave” from the bow of the tender. Without effort then he coasted along with us until we had to slow down to make the landing on the ship. It was a great demonstration of skill and looked like a lot of fun.

Later there was a great increase in the number of outriggers out to catch the waves from the tenders. We were able to get a photograph of the show. It looked sort of like a mother duck with a lot of little ducks trailing behind.



The Amsterdam pulled up the anchor and left Bora Bora harbor about 6pm. We were eating dinner at the time and got a great view of the island out the back window of the dinning room. This was a wonderful way to end our visit to Bora Bora.



The Amsterdam now turned southwest and headed for the island of Rorotonga in the Cook Island Group. We will be at sea for a day and then visit Rorotonga.