

Subject/Area: Marquesas, Tuamotus, Societies

We had a fairly easy passage from the Galapagos in Sept-Oct last year.

The reason we left so late in the season is that we wanted to avoid the crowds and just take our time exploring French Polynesia! We had spent almost a year working in the Society Islands 10 yr. ago and we wanted to explore the Marquesas and Tuamotu leisurely. Having found out from different friends that it was a myth that you couldn't spend the hurricane season here, we decided to do just that! See later how much time you can stay (depending on your nationality) and how long your boat can stay!

Our passage took around 22 days with a little motorsailing at the beginning and at the end; good sailing close reaching for the first 4 days; then beam reach for a couple days and finally broad reach the rest of the way. We did use the spinnaker a lot until a gust of 35 kts ripped it apart (we fixed it later in port)! For over 4 days, we sailed under spinnaker alone with only slight adjustments of the sail to respond to slight wind direction changes!

What a delight, especially at night, to surf the waves, to let ourselves go with the wind behind effortlessly towards the Marquesas! If you saw Kevin Costner in "Waterworld" on his original trimaran, you get an idea of the beauty of it!

Time flew during this passage as we alternated between different activities: study (wx forecasting and celestial navigation), writing, Jackie's French lessons, fishing reel overhauling, watermaker cleaning, managing water, fuel and electricity reserves and sources, ... and relaxing reading books! Our unconventional watch sched. : 0800-1230 Luc on watch while Jackie sleeps; 1230-1600: lunch together, both on watch while doing small activities; 1600-2000: snack then some other activities, (even watched a movie once!); 2000-2400: dinner then Jackie goes to sleep and Luc on watch; 0000-0800 Luc sleeps and Jackie is on watch for the nite. Our bodies get used to this new rhythm and it works well for both of us because Luc cannot sleep during the day, and Jackie sleeps anytime, anywhere! The old system of short, rotating watches which tries to be fair to all ends up being hard to all of us! Sure, we couldn't do it without our 4th crewmember: Otto, the autopilot (Zoetje our 3rd crew did learn how to steer yet!); Something to eat every 4 hrs, and being well rested, keeps us alert for emergencies.

MARQUESAS

We made our landfall on **FATU HIVA** in La Baie des Vierges.

It's no problem to stay there a few days before proceeding to Hiva-Oa to clear in. That island became well known since Thor Heyerdahl spent a year on it trying (in the 30's) to live back with Nature because he understood already that Man's progress took him away from nature! We read again his great book: Fatu-Hiva - Back to Nature, enroute, which excited us to see the same sites despite the numerous critiques about his theory!

Our landing could not have been better timed! We saw the island from the distance as the sun rose, and sailed along the East coast in the early afternoon, (great view of the uninhabited side!), turned the North point, and motored (light and unstable wind here in the lee) into the wonderful setting and panorama of Hanavave bay.

The anchorage is set in a narrow valley, guarded by huge, natural rock formations on each side, which funnel down sudden gusts of strong offshore wind (up to 39kts).

You can anchor in around 20-35 ft with the bottom dropping fast to 40 then 70 ft. Check your anchor visually as there are some patches of rocks closer to shore, good sand everywhere else. The natives were welcoming to us off-season yachts, and many wanted to barter for items they want: like gun shells (22/12) to go hunting (the officials have a strict control over weapons and ammunition that forces some locals to go hunting wild pigs with their dogs to exhaust them -the pigs- and then kill them with knives at the end of long sticks! Does that technique remind us of

ancient times?), rum and beer, spear guns, fishing hooks, thick rope to tie the horses and perfume for the ladies!

We were invited with the two other boats here to the big "fete" at the church (catholic) held for St. Michel. We went to the local mass where I realized how natives were converted easily from their primitive religions: because the missionaries brought them even more magic and rituals than their own medicine man! At the big buffet dinner, our 1st taste of native dishes, eaten with the fingers, we had a chance to speak with one of the clergyman from Omoa, the capital, (15 min. by boat). His father knew Thor when he was on the island and he, himself, met Thor a few years ago when he came back during one of his later expeditions!

Dinghy landings here are quite adventurous > big swell, no dock, only a concrete ramp where you surf in and then you lift and pull your dinghy out of the water > our big 12 ft hard bottom dinghy is too heavy for this! ...

We did the hike to the waterfall of Hanavave (1 hour): little water coming down at dry season but a 200 ft fall in a very narrow gorge with a small pool where we swam amid big chevrettes (fresh water shrimps). We did go to Omoa with a local boat (3 miles by sea) to visit the bigger town. We met locals who showed us their arts and crafts for sale or trade. They make the famous 'tapas' here, and wood and stone carvings. Tapa cloth is made from tree bark and then hand painted with black paint that used to be made from plants. Each artist makes her own designs and keep making tapas of different sizes and on 3 different tree barks: breadfruit (uru), some type of berry tree (murier) and banyan. Our friends had great success trading perfumes samples and clothing for them and we had a deal for cigarettes (\$45-\$50 a carton here!).

We also met, very fortunately, a French backpacker who had lived the past 3 months on the island and who was leaving the next day for another island. He took us around the Omoa valley to show us very ancient petroglyphs and we had lunch on the river! Got plenty of fruits (caramboles, mangoes) on the way and at about 3 PM left Omoa for the 10 miles (17km!) hike back up the mountain ridges to Hanavave. Took us 4.5 hours, walking the last hour with solely the moon to show us the dirt path! What views! Fresh air, great exercise ... for me who didn't enjoy any walking in Belgium!!!

One night, we went lobster hunting with a local but we let him have the 6 tiny lobsters he got while benefiting from my strong u/w light and we let escape the only big one we got because it was a female full of eggs! (they do not understand that it is in their own interest to spare the small ones and eggs carrying ones to get bigger lobsters later!)

In Thor Heyerdal's book, he speaks of the secret lake of Vai-Po (Water of the night) where the legend speaks of an underwater tunnel to a secret chamber where the local medicine man went to die on a throne. We did find the place and explored it in free diving and scuba with a small tank! While we didn't find any tunnel (another legend!), we did find human bones that we left undisturbed!

No no-nos or mosquitoes during this dry season here, another advantage of staying this time of year!

Once a week, the island catamaran makes a round trip to Hiva Oa, so you may try taking it to go clear in if you want to stay in Fatu Hiva before going NW! Call them before to be sure, and bring all necessary documents!

At the end of our stay in the Marquesas, we came back to Omoa to teach some Padi scuba classes; see Roberto, the captain of the island ferry, for diving info. I am sure that he will gladly accompany you on a dive if you like!

HIVA-OA:

Go see the gendarmes for all entry formalities: (can also be done in Ua Pou and Nuku-Hiva)

1) The bond: *EEC are exempt from it *it's official since Nov 99!!!, *NON-EEC still have to post it but sometimes they may accept a "letter of guarantee of airfare" issued by a banking or credit card institution! Go to the Socredo bank to post your bond otherwise (no Westpack bank in Marquesas), Amex may be able to help you too if you are cardmember!

2) The visa: * French can stay as long as they want; * EEC get a 6 months automatic stay with a possible renewal later (EEC can apply for an extended stay for up to 5 yr. according to the law, but the administration will try to give you only 1 year at a time!); * NON-EEC have to get a 3 months Visa by buying a fiscal stamp of 3000 CFI (about 24\$) and post a bond (see above), they can renew for another 3 months (apply 1 month (important!) before expiration of the initial 3 months) but have to exit the territory after that.

3) "papetisation" of your boat: here is the info I got from speaking with different people without guarantee of official policy. If you visit (and do not work!) you're exempt of that tax the first 6 months of your stay. If you work here, you're supposed to pay it immediately. If you work for any type of government job (school teacher by e.g.) you cannot start working until you pay the tax; if you moonlight or work as an independent, you may avoid it for a while until you get to Papeete as long as you let them know you are coming to get in order! That famous papetisation tax is around 19% - 56% of the estimated value of your vessel. To arrive at that estimated value, you can either have a survey done (private, or by customs officials) or you can present your purchase bill or building materials bills to the tax office. Every year of age depreciate that original amount by 10% with the understanding that the taxable amount cannot get too close to nothing, no matter what! Count on 2000\$ at least! If your boat is on the dry at least 6 months per year, you can avoid paying the papetisation (if you don't work).

4) Animals on-board: you have to send a letter to the Minister of Agriculture to ask special authorization for the animal to go ashore at the end of his 6-month quarantine (time at sea counts!). You will need to send copies of current vaccinations (they accept rabies vaccine for only 1 yr. not 3 like in the US!), tattoo or micro-chip documents, special vaccination against 'Echinococcus Sp.' (you can get Drontal or Drontic by mail from Papeete), vet certificate that the animal is treated against ticks, copies of your exit stamps from the last country where the animal was allowed ashore and from your entry stamp in Fr.Pol. The Service de Developpement Rural in Nuku Hiva will graciously help you with those formalities. Then the animal has to be seen by a certified vet before getting permission to go ashore! Since there is no vet in the Marquesas at this time, you have to see the vet from Papeete who comes here once in a while! Without that certificate, the poor pet cannot be caught ashore by the gendarmes or by the customs (patrol every 3 months in the Marquesas). If you pass quickly thru the islands, it's probably not worth to go thru those troubles! (Doctor actually in charge of the admission of animals is Dr Valerie Antras (sdevrural@mail.pf)). Many boats in the past have taken their animal many times ashore until an official told them about the quarantine policy!

5) Recently, transport of fruits between the islands in the Marquesas is controlled as they start to get problems with some fruit flies! So far only Tahuata and Nuku Hiva are contaminated with the 'bad' fly!

6) Reciprocal ham license: I obtained it "on the spot" and for free at the phone administration office in town (to renew every 3 months)!

Atuona harbor: anchorage well protected behind the breakwater, but can get crowded; everybody uses a stern anchor to keep nose into the swell and to not drag because of the changing winds. Fishing dock here to tie your dinghy, fresh bread at the gas station and easy hitchhiking from here and back as this is the only gas station on the island! During the times of South swell, do not anchor closer to the beach than the end of the wall where they store the outriggers or you may end up in breaking waves.

We were lucky to meet Jean-Marie, the only taxi in town and his wife Simone who welcomed us in their family. J-M is quite a character! He described himself often as a sculptor (he is an excellent one, as you will see his wood carvings and other art pieces), taxi driver (the only one who obtained a license in South Marquesas!), fisherman (we saw the 25 lb. tunas that he brings back!) and a good singer and musician (they are a great duo). They can take you on tours in the different valleys to visit archeological sites and pick plenty of fruits on the way. The island is gorged with mangoes, lemons, coconuts, grapefruits, papayas, and much more. Jean-Marie and Simone are a new SSCA cruising station.

Prices of first necessity items are not too bad (controlled, red tags) but anything else can be expensive (2 to 4 times US prices!) so you won't regret having loaded your vessel in Panama, Galapagos, South America or California.

If you need any SS or aluminium welding or repairs, go see Lucien at the CJA, where they teach metallurgy, woodworking, and more, to adolescents. They did many good, inexpensive jobs for us!

Hanaiaapa (north coast): good protected anchorage (even in NE winds), watch out for rocks amid good sandy bottom (better to anchor in at least 45 ft to avoid snagging your anchor), petroglyphs and warm welcome from William, who welcomes cruisers with fruits since 1975 (look at his 'livre d'or' (GuestBook))

You can also visit Hanaiaapa going by the road from Atuona.

Puamau (north coast): nice anchorage where we could not go during this time of year due to NE winds! We went in an all day tour with Jean-Marie from Atuona. Saw the biggest tikis in Polynesia and got great vistas along the road that follows the peaks on the island!

TAHUATA:

Few tourists here as no airport yet! Since we got NE winds, we only checked the 3 usual anchorages on the west coast:

Hana Moe Noa bay: nice sandy beach, good sandy bottom, and nice young people ashore taking care of the property. Can get swells.

Vaitahu: gusty valley (like Hanavave), some coral heads (deep), must search for good sandy bottom (a good place is just in front of beach ramp next to church, 50 yd. out, in line w/ pirogues moorings), nice hikes to the TV antenna and ruins of the fort. The main town of the island is in this bay and is scenic from the anchorage.

Hapatoni, in fact it's better to anchor in the bay just North of it, good sandy bottom but winds and gusts coming from sea!, nice town to visit (clean, nice paepae, (ancient building site), ancient roadway).

UA HUKA:

Baie d'Hane: beach surf landing, sand and rock bottom, check anchor as gusty winds come from the sea (NE trades season), nice hiking to the nearby villages, nice people, nice hike to the tikis on the paepae in the valley, nice stone carvings (big tikis). The best wood sculptures of all the Marquesas as far as originality and choice.

Baie de Vaipae: narrow anchorage between high cliffs (can be a death trap with SE winds!), dock (water), short walk into town for provisioning, visit of the oldest and most professional museum of the Marquesas. If the Aranui cargo ship is due, it will tie to both cliffs and block you in or out of the harbor for the day.

Baie de Haavei and nearby baie Hatuana: on the West coast would logically seem a protected place, but we found the wind turned around the island and followed the coast giving us a lee

shore! But there's good sand among the corals and clear water, rolly if wind from SE, nice beaches, nice dinghy ride to Bird motu and along coast. Beautiful scenery.

Ua-Huka was fun exploring as people are really friendly and very generous with fruit! Ua Huka is much more arid than the other islands and has a very different look to it, as the brochure says, it's the wild West of the Marquesas with it's dry grasslands and dozens of wild horses and goats dotting the sky line. For the least populated and the least visited island, we found it the most sophisticated as far as things to visit. We visited the local attractions: maritime and arts museums, hiked to more paepae to see tikis and had a guided visit of the unique arboretum. Locals experiment with trees to see which ones grow well here; they have found trees suitable for local wood carving (as the native trees take too many years to grow to a suitable size; and like everywhere else, locals used most of the trees without planting new ones as if nature could keep up with the heavy chopping going on!). Amazingly to us, we saw new fruit trees bearing fruits already when only 6 months old! Much experimentation with grafts to create new species. One example of friendly people: We hitch-hiked a ride with a nice guy to mango trees on his family property where he graciously let us take as many mangoes as we liked and then leaves. A few minutes later, a lady from a nearby house (same family) comes, not to chase us but to invite us to her house and to let us know that her husband will be coming soon to help us collect mangoes! When in their house, they happily chatted with us, offering us coffee and more fruits from their garden! We were glad that we had with us some cake that Jackie made with local fruits to offer them. And natives, here, love sweets! They give the fruit to the pigs! After awhile, the husband excused himself to go get his car at the nearby property to drive us back to the anchorage later! We told them that we could easily walk or even catch a ride but they said that since we were loaded with fruits, it would be too hard! Could this story have happened to you recently??? If the wind goes into the NE, take advantage to visit Ua Huka!

NUKU-HIVA:

-Baie du Controleur: 3 different bays, 2 (Center and East) with plenty of room and good sand in 6 to 30 ft, river dinghy ride at high tide to the dock of Taipivai village (center bay). Taipivai is unimpressive as a village, but we visited it 3 times and each time we met someone new, all friendly, helpful, generous, and each time we discovered more. The trick everywhere is to look beyond the obvious. When fruits are in season, you can have all you want, just remember to ask. People do not like people to pick fruits w/o asking, as all fruits belong to someone, in the Marquesas, but if you ask, people will shower you with more than you can possibly use! From the village, you can walk along easy roads to 2 different beautiful waterfalls, each about 1 1/2-hr walk. One is on one side of the river that runs thru the village and the other is on the other. Ask villagers for directions.

Another very nice little waterfall with a great pool for swimming is a 30 min relatively easy walk following the left side of river from the beach of the left bay (west) of the 3 bays of Baie du Controleur, this bay does not offer a good anchorage, so it's best to anchor in the Bay of Taipivai and take the dink over. The only drawback about the waterfalls is the no-nos. We walked to them and swam in long sleeves and long pants! The 3rd bay, Houmi, has a good anchorage if you don't go in too close. The little community also has a fertile valley and generous inhabitants. These bay make a great get-away from the hustle and bustle and crowds of Taiohae.

-Baie de Taiohae: plenty of room, sandy bottom (15-30 ft), dock (dinghy, water, fuel), biggest town in Marquesas with big hospital, administrator's office, gendarmerie, grocery stores (altho better prices can be found in smaller towns sometimes), soon an internet-cafe, ... You won't get much luck hitch-hiking here as locals are less friendly than in all the other islands (is it the feeling of the big town?)

Art/Dance festival every 4 yr. in Dec. (went to one of the dance rehearsals on a paepae which just has been cleared up after 150 yr. when the French colonials made it illegal for the natives to go there, to stop cannibalism and inter-tribal wars. Now, like everywhere else, people here want to connect again with their cultural roots. The Festival for the New Years 2000 was a 4-day Spectacle at 3 different locations in Nuku Hiva and watching Marquesian and Polynesian dancing at restored ancient ceremonial sites was fabulous!

People think that since Nuku Hiva has the biggest town and is the administrative center, it should have the best airport and facilities...WRONG! To go from town to the airport 30 miles away, people go often by helicopter (\$70 pp one way, limited baggage), or speedboat (1 1/2 hrs in rough seas), to avoid the long and bad road! (2 1/2 hr 4-wheeling IF the road is not washed out!) If you plan on guests visiting or crew changes, you will be MUCH better off to have them fly in/out of Hiva Oa, only a 30 minute drive albeit, still on dirt road.

Did 3 scuba dives but visibility is poor. We saw one nice group of caves. The only dive center of the Marquesas is here (not Padi, neither too friendly) and you may wait for the Tuamotu's clear waters!

Filled 2 American propane tanks with butane at magasin Bigot (abt 1\$/lb.).

-Baie Taio (Daniel's bay): good protection, one of the quietest anchorage of the Marquesas, infested with no-nos!, of course, the famous waterfall, lemons, caramboles, and naturally, hospitality from Daniel and his wife (do not forget to add your passage in his guest's log!) Also remember, during the yacht season, they see hundreds of yachts, all expecting to be greeted like Capt. Cook. Maybe turn the tables and greet them and see what you can do for them...they're getting along in years and have little. Maybe help them with copra!

-Baie Marquisienne: good sand, roly, good only as a jump off point for Eiao if you're hardy enough to go there!

-Baie Anao: well protected from any swell, easy beach landing, do not anchor too close to shore as you will see the extended reefs at low tide, anchor in at least 40 ft and you'll have sand, nice 2 hours walk to baie Hatiheu, ...

EIAO:

We sailed to the uninhabited island of Eiao, the most NW island in the Marquesas. Except for the few French boats going there, we never heard any other boat making that trip. We had to leave at 3 in the morning to cover the 65 miles to make the anchorage by daylight (currents and winds are with you so you can even leave later! Only one deep bay affording an anchorage in good sandy mud (07d59'S-140d42'W) with access to the island but despite being on the leeward side, it was so roly! Cross swells would have turn crazy any monohull sailor but it was tenable (if not fun) for us on multihulls (winds were from E-NE, some N swell)! We caught fish trolling both ways (tuna, mahi-mahi); we spearfished some (watch out for ciguatera) but the constant big surge made it difficult to find a place to snorkel without bad visibility and getting smashed on the shore! The second day, we made a 'wet' landing (good luck timing the waves!!!) but we were prepared for it so no harm was done! We rinsed ourselves in the small waterfall (brown water pools!) and hiked for hours thru the scrubs, to the top of the plateau. How local hunters do the same, plus shooting wild goats and pigs is difficult to imagine! Back on the boat, it was hard to believe that we actually got above those steep cliffs to the top!

Our last day we scuba dived just outside of the bay and saw sharks, plenty of fish and best of all, we swam a long time with a dozen mantas rays that must be in mating season as they 'dive-bombed' us and let us scratch their bellies! Memorable moments that made the whole trip worth it! To sail back to Nuku-Hiva, we had to motorsail for 15 hours because we had to sail too close to the wind in big swells making us slide off course (E-NE winds, usual NW current)! Our recommendation: go with local hunters from Nuku-Hiva (you will have dozen of volunteers!) and

camp on the island for a few days! Get the wild animal and dispatch them 'sur place'! Some of our friends did it and had a great time!

UA POU:

Very scenic island offering good diving along it's western coast.

Hakahau harbor: anchorage behind a breakwater in 20 feet of good sand for 5 or 6 boats with bow and stern anchors, dock with water faucets and dinghy landing, easy walk to village. Bank, post office, small hospital, bakery, gendarmerie, and good grocery stores (best price and selection: last store in town as you go towards Hoi Hoi... The baker also delivers goods to other valleys once or twice a week and gives rides if he has space.

Anse Hakaotu (in Baie de Vaiehu): rocky beach, calmest anchorage on the west coast, 30 ft, good sandy bottom, small road leads to main road around the island, good snorkeling and scuba all along the west coast (best visibility we saw in the Marquesas!) Contact us for exact dive sites. Try hike + hitchhiking to Hohoi beach where you can find the famous 'rochers fleuris' (flowered rocks).

Go on the weekend for the best chance for a ride. The Baker also knows some interesting places not listed in guides. The hike to the next bay up the hill to the left of the harbor is also a good one.

If you have the chance to spend the "cyclone season" in the Marquesas, where the incidence of storms is almost nil, you will have a drier season, milder winds, many more fruits, less insects, and most importantly, avoid the hordes of other boats rushing their way through the most popular anchorages.

TUAMOTUS

The Tuamotu are a great archipelago that you should not miss exploring on your way to Tahiti. Called "the dangerous archipelago" a long time ago could be misleading today! With the advent of modern navigation aids like GPS, better charts and good cruising guides, it is now much easier to explore them and much safer if you use all those aids correctly! What a contrast after the Marquesas! The water is so clear and the protected, non-rolly, anchorages so numerous that it makes for much nicer cruising conditions than in the Marquesas! The inhabitants are open, friendly and generous (especially if you go in the less visited atolls, mostly the ones in the Eastern part, not spoiled yet with cruisers and tourists). If you like watersports, this is your kind of place! Excellent snorkeling and scuba in all the passes and along outside barriers, easy spear fishing, plenty of coconuts for water and meat.

Sailing thru the passes: we used the tide table method (easier than using moonrise and moonset) and it worked very well for us! We used a easy software for world tide tables and cross checked it with a copy of the French yearly tide table (we got a copy of 3 pages needed for 6 months, ask any dive center or SMA base). We found that in most atolls, you get big 'cascarets' (boiling cauldrons of water where current and opposing waves meet) sometimes up to 2 miles outside of the pass. We saw some French boats passing thru the washing machine zone and heard breakage of all kind! During incoming tide (between low water slack and high water slack) you will only find some small 'cascarets' on the inside. These are much smaller as the incoming current is not as strong as the outgoing current! Sometimes, the swell and big winds may in fact push so much water in the lagoon that you may keep getting outgoing current for a few hours instead of the incoming one you should get. The last 3 hours before the high tide slack seems to have ingoing current most often. We recommend trying to time at least the entrance into the atoll. If you do try a pass when there are large overfalls, you may be able to avoid or greatly reduce the crashing by going on the very edges of the rough water near the sides of the pass, but be careful as eddies can cause unexpected effects on steering.

Also, we have to hand it to the French, most passes and lagoons are so well marked with lighted range beacons, lateral and cardinal buoyage markers (often lighted). It's pretty amazing to find deserted atolls so well marked!

Anchorage: Often you can find a suitable place to be protected from the winds, which come mostly from the East (this season we got more NE than the supposed SE!). Also this season, there were many lows that passed south of us between the latitudes 25S-30S. This made for a lot of rotating winds. The key to the Tuamotu is being able to hide behind motus or reefs, sometimes this requires planning if, say, you're in a lagoon that's 10 or more miles across. If you want to avoid getting into a nasty or dangerous situation, you need to get weather charts, or long-range forecasts to warn you of approaching changes that aren't mentioned on the radio stations or daily forecasts that just tell you today's weather. We took a beating that just resulted in a very uncomfortable, frustrating passage that took 3 days instead of the 2 nights and one day, we planned. But that woke us up, and we made sure to get the NADI Fleetcode bulletins available thru the Ham Radio Winlink station in Australia (ZL1MA). We avoided being in the wrong place many times after that, and made our Tuamotu visit much more enjoyable.

In the atolls the bottom is often sand with many coral heads that can sometimes stick up more than 15 feet from the bottom. Make sure you don't swing on any of those that may be too shallow for your draft! Often, because of turning winds, your chain may get stuck in between those coral patches. A problem we had at the beginning was that following a period of little or no wind, our chain would go down vertically and snag on some coral ... when the wind picks up again, you end up having a very steep, short chain and a lot of coral grinding your rode. To help in that situation, we made up a technique that works well: on the last 100 ft of rode we attach 3 of those big plastic buoys, that you can find beachcombing or buy from local fishermen, one every 25 ft. The buoyancy of each (about 60 lbs.) lifts our chain off the bottom enough to clear the tall coral heads so we still have a good angle of pull and elasticity.

Snorkeling and scuba in the passes: always go at incoming tide as the water will be clearer and in case of problem you will end up inside the lagoon in calmer waters and not at sea! If you go at slack water (before incoming tide) you will have little or no current at all. You will enjoy all the coral and fish life in the pass. We enjoy drift-snorkeling hanging on to the sides of our dinghy, ready to drop the anchor if we want to stay in one place. If you watch the locals, you will see that even with a good current running in the pass, you can find calmer areas or even counter currents on the edges of the passes in the shallow water.

Ciguatera poisoning:

Before eating any fish you spear; check with local fishermen about ciguatera! Every atoll, every pass and corner of a same atoll has different species that may be infected. It seems to change also from one year to another so no fixed rules here. Learn by the trial and errors of the locals! If they eat fish every day, they know the safe ones! We were told about 4 different tests some locals apply (rigor mortis, copper coin, flies and rubbing a piece on your lips) but by experience we know they are not infallible! Some test kits are on the market (Hawaii Research, California manufacturer) but those are quite expensive (2 to 4 \$ a test) and not easy to find locally. If you get a number of the following symptoms, you may suspect ciguatera: severe fatigue or heaviness in the muscles, itchy skin, nausea, or indigestion, hyper sensibility to cold temperature (seems to burn), ... Each atoll village has a nurse who can help you with medication. (Only symptomatic; there is no cure) We were given Celestene, a glucocorticoid, and Vitamins B12 and B6 to help a mild case. In very severe cases, Hawaii Research recommends intravenous courses of Mannitol.

PUKA PUKA:

We sailed by the West Point (14d48'S-138d50'W) The French sailing directions indicated a possibility to anchor on a reef plateau near the village, but we didn't see any way to anchor around the dock or anywhere!

AMANU:

Since we had little info about the pass, I heard traffic (in French) on VHF 06 and a local came out to pilot us in! It's not that difficult if you get to the entry (17d50'S-140d51'W) and stay in the center of the channel. With good light you see well the right turn you have to make at the end of the pass! A huge mooring can be picked up in front of the village or with shallow draft you may get in the natural harbor. Unless you can get into the little harbor, the mooring can get VERY rolly as you're on a lee shore w/ miles of fetch. From the village, follow the edge of the shallows, and behind 2 sand spits South of the village, you will find a very well protected and beautiful anchorage in front of a series of motus (little islands)(15-20 ft, good sand, with isolated coral heads). The outer edges of the sand spits and fringing reefs are staked: easy to see in good light.

Tautu & Hinano (the postmistress) welcomed us. Nice to visit an out-of-the-way atoll! (No stores, no bakery.)

Good spearfishing in the passes and on the isolated coral heads in the lagoon with no ciguatera reported far away from the village! (We ate some delicious groupers)

Locals says you have to go to the star shaped reef in the middle of the lagoon (17d48'S-140d46'W) before you can claim having arrived in Amanu! We did go with Tautu and family for a day picnic and snorkeling and had a great time! Nice to have a local that knows the location of the isolated reefs even if they are pretty easy to spot!

Fresh fruits we brought from the Marquesas were so appreciated here!

HAO:

We entered the pass during ingoing tide with light wind. Coordinates entrance of pass: 18d03'90S-141d00'31W.

There is a protected anchorage just inside the lagoon E of the pass where you can wait for better light before proceeding inside the lagoon or wait for the right time to go out of the pass (18d04'31S-140d59'75W). It's good sand with isolated coral heads and there is a very shallow dinghy-landing pier to go ashore and visit the point and old shooting range. There is also an anchorage on the W side of the pass.

To go to Otepa, follow markers and sketches in cruising guides, with good light it is very easy, you could even sail, as isolated reefs are easily seen and far apart.

You can anchor N of Otepa town around 18d06'S-140d54'W. Good bakery, general supplies can be found.

Don't miss a deeper incursion in the lagoon by visiting some pearl farm motus along the E side all the way to Nake, the abandoned village. Up to Tony's farm (18d15'58S-140d50'07W) it is very easy; further on you have to really pay attention for isolated coral patches and just submerged reefs and mostly underwater lines holding the pearl shells (sometimes marked by buoys, sometimes not!).

If you are set up for scuba, you may help with some pearl farm jobs in exchange of some black pearls!

We stayed a few days off Nake, in a super smooth anchorage (18d24'S-140d40'W) as it has little possible fetch except with a W wind. A few people live here from copra, fishing, and pearl farming and on Sundays, you can make the "fête"(party) with them. They were glad to show us around and to share their meal! We were perhaps the 10th boat to ever have stopped here and we enjoyed the unspoiled contact!

A new scuba center is being set up by Laurent, Padi and Cmas instructor, with great dives offered in the pass. You can anchor conveniently in front of it, as it is located just at the North edge of the village.

We visited Hao just weeks before the Military Base, which was the support base for the nuclear testing on the Mururoa atoll, was permanently shut down, along with many support facilities, such as the electric and water making plant and hospital. These are left for the territory to deal with. The life on the atoll may have drastically changed since then, since many a livelihood depended on the Military Base.

MAKEMO:

Both passes are easy with good light. The pass at the village is marked for major traffic, and never seemed dangerous during the time we were there. The West pass has a very nice protected anchorage in a little bay near a copra shed on the other side of the pass. We waited out some nasty weather there.

The anchorage in front of the village is uncomfortable to dangerous in heavy SE winds and the bottom is mostly hard with many coral heads, so you either don't hold or you wrap the anchor all around the coral.

Nice town with groceries and bread available, a hydroponics farm, infirmary, very comfortable Internet access at the post office,

See Gerard the black pearl sculptor (unique art) and shell and ivory (whale teeth) sculptor for unique souvenirs.

Easy lagoon to navigate with few and well visible coral heads (in good light naturally) Always watch for pearl farm buoys even far from shore. Some farms west of the village may chase you away.

Nice motus to anchor off about 8 nm SE of village: deserted, clear water, well protected from E-SE winds, ...

Good drift diving and spearfishing (groupers) in passes. Ciguatera-free at this time.

TAHANEA:

Very easy middle pass (entrance at 16d51'S-144d41'W), wide and deep. Of course, we timed our entrance. We saw 2 boats make a terrifying exit in the middle of the outgoing current. Good anchorage found just behind the right side of pass (10-20 ft sand with isolated coral heads, protected from N to SE).

Good snorkeling and spearfishing in all 3 passes and vicinity.

We went in the NE corner of the atoll to do some beachcombing, lobster hunting on the reefs at night (not as easy as some say!) and coconut crab ('kave') hunting, also at night (see natives for the method!)

Except for a few seasonal fishermen, the lagoon is uninhabited. We were told that all the fish were safe to eat except a certain type of grouper, which fit more the description of a red dog-toothed snapper.

FAAITE:

Easy, well marked pass. The described Outside anchorage can be uncomfortable with S. swell or with occasional W. wind and you anchor on a hard coral shelf.

Inside anchorage is not protected from East sector winds and is about ½ mile away from the village. The lagoon is reported difficult to navigate because of the numerous pearl farm stations! Pass makes an interesting drift-snorkel on an ingoing current especially past the town pier and the fish traps they call 'Parc à poissons'.

There is a dinghy pass thru the reef that brings you close to the village in protected water. If you come from the anchorage inside, come back as if you are exiting the pass and just before you reach the town pier, you'll see the sticks marking the channel on your left.

FAKARAVA:

The South pass is actually easy to negotiate and also well marked once you identify the entrance, and the right branch just after the Hotel bungalows and fish park is actually plenty deep also.

The old village at the South pass (very scenic and well maintained) is now inhabited by 2 families and a small resort. Local families also have guest cottages. This area is much more enjoyable than the North, spend some time here.

Like in all passes, you can drift snorkel or scuba dive. The anchorage N. of the resort is choppy in NE wind.

The lagoon has lots of pearl farms lines but a channel is marked with green and red lighted navigational markers: sail in straight line from one to the next one you see ahead and you should pass clear of any danger (reefs and buoys and lines). We would still do it in good sunlight and make a stop in the delightful anchorages midway along the curve in the motu line before it goes to the E.

Rotoava village in the N. has a dock, post office, limited bread, groceries and the usual town things. Also a dive center is located in the new hotel abt 3 nm S. of town.

The North pass is well marked and straightforward and very, very wide.

TOAU:

Pass Otugi is straightforward and has range beacon way in the center that you can align to make your entrance.

Good comfortable anchorage off the motu South of the pass (as the charts and guides show).

Good anchorage in the NE corner of the atoll. This atoll is intermittently inhabited giving a nice feeling of isolation. In spite of the lack of human evidence, the sharks here were the most attuned to spearfishing than at any of the other atolls, where they seemed barely interested.

Anse Amyot: 4 moorings for yachts installed by the nice family (Taupiri & Rose, their kids Stellio and the others). They invite you to go with them in their activities (spearfishing, lobstering, kave hunting and more).

Spend the evening in their bar/restaurant playing bocciball, chatting and eating local dishes. Don't forget to look at their cruiser's guest log! No timing necessary to enter or exit this cul de sac pass!

RARAKA

The pass is on the NNW side, and so is relatively calm in prevailing winds (16 05'.30/ 144 57'.50). Our arrival time was also a fortuitous time for the tides, and the light was good so we had no problem getting in. As in all the other atolls, the pass is well marked, even having range markers. The pass is relatively wide and relatively deep (at least 15ft). On the inner side of the pass, there is a small motu on the port side as you enter, and the reef with the range marker on it just breaks the surface. For the first time coming in, the surest route is to follow the range markers all the way up to that reef with the markers and then follow along the left side of the reef. One can see the deeper water in good light. Later, we saw that there is a deep enough channel branching off between the village and the small motu, or that we could have turned to port just after the small motu, and before getting to the range markers.

Keeping a good reef watch, we passed the village and found anchorage further on in front of an old seawall and some unfinished structures. (16 05'53/144 56'96) The only village in Raraka is right next to the pass, and there is a small boat "harbor" where one can take the dinghy in. The people of the village are nice, but most are quite discreet. We hardly saw any movement of people

except occasionally a boat going out to their “sector” to work copra. We were greeted at our boat by the village’s schoolteacher, her husband, and son and were invited to their house and were given fish that we watched them catch at their “fish park” at the pass. They just asked us to choose what fish we wanted then scooped them up!

Raraka is a good “beginners” atoll, because traveling through the lagoon from the village in the N to the S side following w/in a mile or two of the north and eastern motus, we encountered almost no shallow coral heads, and those that we did see were well visible from far away even when the light was not the best.

The atoll is pretty typical of the Tuamotus, and we did the typical activities of beachcombing, collecting coconuts for water and meat, getting hearts of palm (only from areas obviously overgrown and uncared for), spearfishing, reef walking, and of course, drift snorkeling thru the pass (in-going current), and a scuba dive out of the current just N of the pass. The pass was full of fish, awaiting goodies brought in on the incoming tide. The scuba dive was nice, and easy with good visibility.

We did a day-sail from Raraka, easily zooming out the pass on an out-going current, with few overfalls which were easily skirted, and arrived at KAUEHI’s SW pass about mid-afternoon, when we calculated would be minimum current. There was still a moderate (~3kt) current flowing out, but the overfalls outside were not big and again, easily skirted on the side. This pass is an easy one because it is deep, wide, very short and straight, and deep almost all the way up to the shore on each side. Perhaps that’s why there is only one lone green navigational marker halfway inside. If you need to wait outside for a favorable current, or want to dive on the outside, boats up to about 50’ could use the mooring set up by one of the big charter Cats that’s located a couple hundred yards S of the pass. Of course, this is a private mooring, so treat it w/ care, and never trust a mooring w/o looking at it with your own eyes.

After getting in, we headed to the protected SE corner, seeing practically no reefs until we got close to the motus and shallows near the anchorage area. We anchored in less than 30’ over pure white sand, and put our usual 3 floats on our chain to hold it up to pass over any scattered coral heads that could snag it if we swing. There we met, for the first time, Commodores Jim and Vicky, and crew Dillon on “Firebird”. We’d become e-mail pals through www.NOONSITE.com when they contacted Luc to ask about longterm visas for French Polynesia, after reading Luc’s update on the site. Following the advice, they got their requested 8-month visa granted. We kept in touch throughout their voyage, until this momentous day when our waypoints finally merged! They zoomed over in their annex, invited us on board their magnificent 82’ aluminum ketch, and treated us like charter guests to a wonderful dinner to thank us for all the help and advice. Is that the SSCA spirit, or what?? After “Firebird” left, we explored the lagoon a little more, hopping our way up the east side to the village of Tearavero. This leg requires more vigilance to skirt the coral heads and shoals and the myriad of pearl farm buoys as you get close to the village. The large church is a prominent feature, and deceives one into thinking the village is much bigger than it is. We learned from the mayor that ciguatera is a big problem there since the building of the airstrip. We had speared a grouper that in all the other atolls was ok, but when we told him, he said, better throw it away. The only fish the villagers were eating were fish caught outside the lagoon. There looks to be a very protected anchorage in a bay on the N side of the village. We were able to get some bread by waking up the storekeeper from her siesta, and getting a few loaves that they keep stored in the freezer. Don’t expect much in the way of supplies unless the boat is due.

From the village, we followed the navigational markers to the pass. Having found out about the mooring outside, plus the fact that there was no wind, we decided to exit the pass and stay the night there. That way we could take off for Fakarava anytime without worrying about currents and tides.

What an eerie feeling to be moored in 70' of water and have the reef just beside us. Believe me you, we checked the state of the mooring thoroughly! We took the opportunity of the calm to do a night dive in that clear water. Although the mooring is not really close to the pass, we had a good current, so stayed close to the bottom and went against it. Good dive, but didn't see any lobsters! After coming back, we saw fishing boats with spotlights, and found out they were catching fish for the villagers to eat, since ciguatera plagues the lagoon fish.

After one more day of no wind, and some more diving, we had a nice sail to FAKARAVA's South Pass. Even tho we'd been there before and were fooled the first time finding the entrance, it still wasn't evident where the pass was until we were right in front of it (approx: 16 31'.5/145 27'.5) because it enters at an angle, and there are few overfalls even with a good outgoing current. Be careful if you are approaching from the east, because, there are a couple dive buoys quite a ways from the pass entrance that we just about ran over. The pass is so protected and calm looking that we didn't realize the strength of the current until we were passed Sonny's resort, and tried to take the right channel that's a short cut to the anchorage, and found out that we weren't making any headway at all for minutes. Luc didn't dare push our tired 20 yr old engine any more, so we had to crab our way over to the marked main channel, and there, ever so slowly made it to where we could turn around the channel marker into the anchorage! (16 30'.3/145 27'.3) As we've written before, this anchorage is bouncy in SE trades, and the sand patches between coral heads are small. This is where our chain/buoy system is especially valuable.

Next morning at first light, "Aventura Trois" came in and anchored next to us. For the first time, we got to meet Gwenda and Jimmy Cornell, after 2 yrs or so of e-mail correspondence when Luc became a www.noonsite.com regional editor for French Polynesia. Jimmy is definitely a fast-trak "cruiser", with his speaking engagements, and other schedule commitments, he's more often burning up the nautical miles, than wandering among the coconut palms. We did get to spend about a week together making our way from S to N Fakarava. They left a day ahead of us to squally boisterous sailing (I think Jimmy loves it!) and we left the next day exiting the north pass a few hours before dark, and had cloudy skies, and 25+ winds, which died down some for the rest of the trip into Tahiti.

APATAKI:

SW pass is tricky but not bad if you time it right and have good light! The two passes of Apataki are unusual in that they seem to be rough with overfalls on the ingoing tide. The SW pass was worse on the ingoing current than the outgoing!

The little harbor mentioned in Charlie's Charts exists but has a narrow entrance so we didn't chance it with our 25ft beam and we are not sure about depth! Also you have to turn at a 90-deg. angle from the current in the pass so it may be tricky maneuvering! Otherwise, there is no safe anchorage near the village in prevailing winds.

Calm anchorage in 25ft. of coral sand close to the pearl farms in the SE corner of the lagoon. We anchored in front of Alfred's pearl farm (15d 33'S-146d14'W). The whole family welcomes you so warmly! They truly enjoy meeting travelers and you will be able to learn plenty about all their activities (black pearls, copra, fishing, vanilla cultivation, egg farming and more. We truly had a great time with this welcoming family! Fill their guest log!

Easy lagoon to sail across pass to pass or even diagonally with few reefs easily avoided with good light! As always, keep an eye out for pearl farm buoys even in the middle of the lagoon.

The NW anchorage about 1.5 nm from the NW pass is calm in NE winds but roly in E winds and dangerous in S winds (because of the long fetch) as an US sailboat found out this season. You can dive on this 34-ft wreck in 40 ft of water in the indicated anchorage. Look for a coral formation

on shore that looks like an anvil or ask local fishermen. And watch the weather so as to not suffer the same fate!

MAKATEA:

Hoping to break up the trip a little, and see a place almost no yachts ever see, we stood off Makatea in the night, for 6 hours under bare poles with a light wind, and drifted no more than 0.3 mi.! But only to find no suitable anchorage as it's too deep to anchor, even close to the old phosphate pier! We heard of a small sailboat with 1 ft draft that docked in the small boat harbor there ... but he couldn't stay there very long because of surge. So, it was with regrets that we couldn't land to visit the small community on the East side.

TIKEHAU:

Very nice atoll with few businesses and not too much going on. The only pass, on the west side, Tuheiava, is very easy to negotiate when entering at slack water or with moderate current. (15 00'S/ 148 17' W) You won't see the range markers until you are already well into the pass, so be sure to stay outside and go somewhat north of the pass, as the mid-line angles more from north to east than straight across. The depth looks shallow on the inside, but stay in center with good light and you will see your way. Right after the pass, you can find a small anchorage off the small village N of the pass, turning only after well clearing the fish "parks" on your left. Can be surgy in strong E-SE, but is a good anchorage in N-NE winds.

A marked (and lighted!) channel leads you SSE to the main settlement where you have a anchorage next to the town pier. It can be quite choppy in strong NE winds so, in that case, you can anchor 3 miles away in the lee of a small sand bank at a deserted pearl farm (15 05'S/ 148 13'W). The village, Tuherahera (15 06S, 148 14W) was one of the cleanest, and most neatly kept we have so far visited. The local population is making an effort to keep it nice, let's hope more places emulate them! If you want bread, you may need to wait til the sole baker gets back from his coprah plantation!

It's nice atoll to visit, smaller than Rangiroa and with few tourists of any kind. You can find plenty of suitable anchorages:

Pearl Beach Hotel: The navigation markers end at this exclusive resort, the only luxury hotel so far on the atoll, the setting is idyllic, featuring all the classic scenery of a South Pacific atoll in one small corner. The vibrant contrasting colors of white sand, green coconut palms, gray thatched roofs, pink reefs, and every blue of water from inch-deep green to turquoise, to bright blue to royal blue in the deep drop-offs are the precious jewels that the guests pay BIG money to enjoy for a fleeting few days. And we LIVE here as long as we like! There is a dive center at the hotel that will also take non-guests to dive outside the pass. We did a dive featuring a vertical crevice that turns into a chimney at 50 m. that re-opens into the blue at 70m. Of course, the dive center limits the divers according to their skill level. The hotel does not chase away yachts, as does the Kia Ora Sauvage in Rangiroa, nor does it encourage us to visit or eat at the restaurant, as it is so remote, that all provisioning is carefully calculated and ordered from Papeete and brought from the cargo boat at the town pier in small boats.

Three and a quarter miles from the hotel towards the east, there is a long reef that extends out from the end of the motu (15 04.6S, 148 09.2W) that can give you protection from east winds. You can recognize the motu as you get close to the area as it is very compactly forested w/ tall palms. Check out the snorkeling on the windward side of this long reef, and if you're lucky, you may be rewarded if you take along your spear. The people say that all of the reef fish are ciguatera free in Tikehau. We ate the groupers they call Kito (a brown-gray mottled pattern) and had no problems. We were given a huge black jack caught by local fisherman, and we cautiously

ate just a few bites the first day with no tingling or fatigue, and we ate the rest (fillet only, no ribs or collar) fresh, frozen and canned and had no problems.

We had heard from the locals that there was a shipwrecked Frenchman in the south of the atoll, and sure enough, about 2/3rds to the end of the lagoon, we saw a boat on the beach. We anchored close by (15 03S, 148 05W) and decided to have lunch before going out to see this sailor, but in no time, we saw he had his dinghy in the water and was motoring to us. We thought, "This poor man, he must be starving out here!" So we made extra food. He gave us a big hello then excused himself because he thought we were the trimaran of his friends. We asked him aboard and offered him lunch and were astounded when he said "Oh thank you so much, but I have just had a huge brunch of leg of lamb!" And then he told us his amazing tale. Sailing his small boat w/o motor in the night, he was fighting a strong SE and kept getting perilously closer and closer to the reef when suddenly a swell sucked up his little craft and "wham" he was on the plateau of the reef. He got himself safely out and to the dry for the night, and in the morning was smiling because he was saying to himself, "What a lucky person I am!" He was saying that, not because he had survived, but because of the location where the boat had been thrown on to the reef! His boat has no keel, and a draft of only 18", and by the "luck of the Gods" landed on the reef plateau in front of a channel of water that separates one motu from another (an "oa")....he had only to get his boat into this little "river" and he could float his boat to the lagoon inside! And so began an 8-month endeavor! This unassuming, modest man, begged no help, demanded no aid, but single handedly carried his balast, bar by bar 600 meters to the lagoon edge, spent, 4 months breaking a path thru the coral, then cut coconut trees and used them to roll his boat to the Oa, then using the fortunes of weather and high tides, pulled his boat the beach at the edge of the lagoon, and started the repairs! This man represented a lesson to all of us: he was content! He lived each day at a time, he was going to fix his boat, he had gained the friendship, and admiration of the locals, and he apologized when he served us coffee, that he had only instant, for a Frenchman, a real cause for regret!

At the very E end there is a pearl farm/gardens run by a Chinese Christian sect. They will give tours and you may be able to buy or trade for organic vegetables. It's good to see how they have made the land productive. We anchored in front of some very pretty oas...you can find clear, warm water pools to relax in, or cross the motu and see Rangiroa across the way. (15 00'S, 148 03'W) From the last anchorage you can see a motu inside the lagoon, this they call Bird Motu, where there are tons of nesting birds, in the trees, this time. We made a quick day-stop then from there, headed on a direct line for the pass. The path was free of reefs on a bearing of 248 T from the bird motu until about the last 2 miles where you need good light to see the easily avoidable reefs and to make a dog leg to the left to avoid a large shoal area just in front of the pass. It's marked in places by sticks. We glided right out the pass on a light outgoing tide easily staying to the side of the small overfalls caused by the current.

RANGIROA:

This famous Tuamotu atoll is most known for it's excellent diving! Despite being the most 'touristy', this atoll deserves a visit! The clear water is phenomenal! We recommend entering via Avatoru pass, as the few times we did look at both passes (at almost the same time) it was much calmer than the Tiputa pass. Both passes are wide and deep enough. Try to time it to go in or out at slack or ingoing current to have less current against you and calmer seas.

The anchorage off the Kia Ora hotel (14 58S, 147 38W) is quite protected (even in Maramu SE winds, if you can tuck in enough). Depths between 15 and 50 feet, good sand with scattered coral heads (watch out for chain wrapping! See our suggestion in Jan O1 letter). Can be dangerous if a strong South wind is forecast; boats broke chains or windlasses because their chain was in coral, and short-scoped. Easy access ashore in the little harbor on the west side of Tiputa pass. The

road goes from that harbor all the way to Avatoru village, where you can provision and look at the beautifully decorated church (mother of pearl shells).

One store is located just off the Kia Ora anchorage: you can dinghy ashore and get your bread and basic provisioning. Or conditions permitting, dinghy across the pass to Tiputa Village markets. The main activity here around the passes is the scuba diving (world famous). You can snorkel or scuba dive at the Aquarium (small motu inside Tiputa pass on the lagoon side), tie your dinghy to one of the numerous moorings placed by tour operators – (please respect their right to use their mooring when they need it!). It's a perfect place for inexperienced divers.

Experienced divers should do the drift diving in the pass with one of the local dive operators for more safety and fun. Tiputa Pass especially, can have some wild conditions (counter currents, overfalls, whirlpools) As dive instructors, and former live-aboard dive boat operators, we saw that local knowledge of the pass was essential to exciting diving in safety. We had contacts with all the dive centers and dove with most. We recommend the following:

The Six Passengers: located in the Tiputa pass anchorage east of the Kia Ora, professional & congenial staff the6passengers@mail.pf. With several boats and dive guides, they can set up groups according to experience.

Very good organization, briefings, and good equipment.

Top Dive: newest center, located just west of Kia Ora, professional & congenial staff (Eric & Stephane), The advantage of the 10-dive package is ability to use any of the discounted dives also at their Moorea & Bora centers! info@topdive.com. Top equipment, thorough briefing with diagram of site.

Rangiroa Paradise: Located just before the pier, older center & equipment, nice people, lower prices, more for Europeans & experienced old-school divers paradive@mail.pf.

Blue Dolphin: in the Kia Ora Hotel, cater to hotel guests mainly and cruisers only if space available, mixed gas & rebreather classes

Ray Manta club: we had poor rapport with them, difficult to contact, located in Avatoru, the oldest center but perhaps a "has-been"? Were unable to set up a dive with them.

Dream Dive: looks like it would close down soon, no compressor, no boat, did subcontract with other centers.

For a private dive guide on your boat, contact Atelier Corinne <jjagog@mail.pf> For a daily fee, he will guide you thru Rangiroa and other islands of French Polynesia, as he does from time to time on megayachts.

The dives?? Dolphins, Manta rays, all type of sharks, Napoleon wrasse, turtles, maybe a marlin or swordfish, and tons of fish in a swirling current is what you may expect. Do not miss!

If you didn't visit a black pearl farm: you should visit the Gauguin's Pearl. It is a school and thus can show you all year long all the phases of the black pearl industry. The tour is free.

<phcab@mail.pf>

Now, if you have more time, you can sail everywhere in the lagoon if you use changing winds to your advantage. It's essential to have good weather bulletins, and forecasts. (as anywhere in the Tuamotus). We sailed and anchored in about 10 places in the lagoon, getting wx forecast daily to try to anticipate which side would be sheltered. We went in whatever direction the sailing was best, tacking comfortable tacks, and then went in close to shore found a good depth, a good, large-as-possible sand patch, and anchored, explored, and spent the night. In general, the lagoon is relatively free of hazards; the reefs are easily seen in good light. There are some especially good spots, which we'll describe:

Sable Rose (Pink Sands): (15 16'S, 147 14'W) this anchorage is a classic, located in the SE corner of the atoll, you anchor in good sand facing the bank of pink sand that has emerged from the sandy shallows all around. You can carefully motor, paddle, then tow your dinghy as close as you can to 2 small forested motus, with tons of birds "nesting" (just laying the egg in the sand or

coral rubble). From the same anchorage you can take the dinghy thru oas to the very SE corner and beach comb after crossing the wide motu. Some great pools in the shallows of the plateau. In the NE corner you'll see the only habitations in the area. (15 14S, 147 15W) There is one family living here year-round, Papa and Mama "Marama", and daughter, Leivana. Believe it or not, they make necklaces from shells mined out of the ground, not just from the sea. This labor intensive activity is a family tradition, and we could never guess the work involved to get, and prepare these tiny yellow, orange, and rose-colored shells. These people are so welcoming and love to see people. Take your bug juice tho, there are no-nos.

Old village with cistern: (15 18S, 147 28W)

Sand bank, with great snorkelling on the coral heads, colors like aquarium. (15 13.1S, 147 40.2W)

Super Oas : (15 14.1S, 147 42.5W) Can take the dinghy up the little "jungle river" oa and it connects into the big oa. The water in the oas are crystal clear, super snorkeling. Walk toward the outer reef and pass through fantastic Maketea formations (fossilized coral) eroded into jagged gothic castle-like apparitions, like something out of an Edgar Allen Poe tale. The razor-sharp edges form a kind of deadly lace, as you delicately wend your way to the reef as if running the gauntlet! And between, the "moats" of crystal water create mini waterfalls and blue pools as the surging waves push their way thru from the large flat plateau of the barrier reef. The pink color of the reef is surprising and beautiful. There are white/pink sand beaches to the east as you continue following the reef. And more great oas.

From the Super Oas to the Lagon Bleu, the waters are shallow 12ft-30ft, and you have to be more attentive to dodge reefs, but we had the best trolling on this leg, bagging 2 nice blue speckled Jacks, that the locals told us were ciguatera free.

Lagon Bleu: Must have perfect wx to go here otherwise 40 mi of fetch from an E wind can be a killer. We had the chance so we HAD to see it. This is a tourist attraction, and many day boats stay til 2PM or so. After, you have the place to yourselves. There is dinghy access to one of the picnic motus, but the lagoon itself is closed off by sand...in effect, a lagoon w/in a lagoon. If you had kayak or windsurfer, you could explore, otherwise, you see it better in an aerial photo on a postcard.

Rangiroa is worthy of all the hype it gets. The waters are crystalline, diving exciting, exploring easy and varied, scenery, a living photo. We think it's worth more than just a quick stop over. Hope this letter tempts you.

And remember to let the local businesses that you patronize know that you are a cruiser, so they realize our impact on the local economy! Each of us gives an image of cruisers to the local population! We are truly ambassadors for future cruisers passing thru!

PS: 2 months after getting back to Tahiti, the shipwrecked sailor from Tikehau sailed into the anchorage on his little boat, and offered us a bottle of whiskey, for the tools we gave him!!

SOCIETY ISLANDS

TAHITI

Few boats cruise around Tahiti, but you can find plenty of nice and protected anchorages around the island and it's 'presqu'ile'(peninsula).

Pointe Venus anchorage: well protected and convenient if you come from the Tuamotus and you may not get in Papeete before nightfall. Still you need good light to enter the small pass and to approach the beach. We had a really calm night in this historical anchorage.

Yacht Club of Arue: on the inside of the lagoon, you can go to the protected yacht club of Arue, where you may be lucky to rent a mooring or get a space to the dock. Prices are good but spaces are scarce since this is not a commercial marina but a yacht club. Good security, fuel dock, bar/restaurant, dinghy dock, showers, washing machine, mail, fax, ... The moorage area is

exposed to the Easterly winds when they wrap around the N. point of Tahiti and accelerate along the coast. There are plenty of channel markers to follow if approaching from north or south, but a good bow watch is still recommended.

Port of Papeete docks: med-mooring to the wall, right in the center of town. Not cheap, dirty and choppy waters, security risks and noisy place doesn't make it one of our recommended places! The anchorage area is a little better if you really must be in the center of town, but there are fees and you must run a long stern line ashore. Heard reports of wakes from the ferries reeking havoc among the yachts there.

Maeva Beach hotel anchorage: being on the NW corner of the island, the anchorage is a lot more protected. The water is cleaner, the setting nice looking and just a short distance away from the rickety dinghy dock; you find trash disposal bins, and phone booths next to the bus stop to Papeete. The buses (called "trucks") run 24h and cost about 1\$ for the 15 min ride to center of Papeete. For 2 years now, some hotel owners have tried to evict all boats from the anchorage but the Association of the Sailboats of Polynesia, formed by a group of local boat owners, has fought it in court successfully so far! A donation of 20\$ is well appreciated to help with legal expenses for this on-going battle! Older guides may speak about moorings and facilities in this area at \$40/mo. but there are no longer any facilities, except garbage (paid by the Assoc.), and moorings are private. The dock at the Maeva Beach Hotel can be used for dinghies, but please keep the front clear and put a good strong stern anchor to keep the dink from drifting under the dock.

Taina Marina: if you insist on being at a Marina, but there can be surge from passing boats or a strong S or SW swell. Fuel dock, water, no laundromat. Many yachts anchor in the shallows just out from the marina where there is good sand and clear water. You can leave your dink at the Marina, where there are security guards. You maybe charged a fee, and the "trucks" do not have 24hr. service here.

Marcia Davock's guide is excellent describing the circumnavigation of Tahiti. A must if you plan to spent some time in the Society Islands! A few recommended anchorages: Maraa bay (pk 28) (pk=km marker on the main road)> nice visiting the Maraa cave where you can take a swim and have a walk in the nice surroundings. Ataiti bay (pk 49) > visit the small waterfall, don't miss a relaxing bath in the natural spring water baths, inland of the main road toward Papeete, and make the great hike to Lake Vaihiria. The hike to the lake is about 10 miles, you can also walk further (another 2 miles) to the tunnel going to the top of the mountain separating both sides of the island. If you continue for another 10 miles (?) you reach a campground and further you rejoin the road on the East side. The 4x4 tours often take this route as an excursion over the mountain.

Taravao: Port Phaeton could accommodate lots of crafts; it is probably the best place to weather any cyclone in French Polynesia. The marina/ yard was taken over recently by Nautisport (the big ship chandler in Papeete) and they seem to run a clean operation. Prices here and in the 2 yards of Raiatea are surprisingly similar to those in the Caribbean (while most other items are so much more expensive here!) and more and more cruisers leave their boats here while they return home for a few months! Since the boat can stay up to 12 months in any 2 yr. without being taxed while people themselves can only stay 2 times 3 months (2x6 months for EEC), when you come back from home, you can start another 2x3 months if you like! Taravao is the second town on Tahiti after Papeete so you can find a lot here (supermarkets,...). Nice hikes on the plateau or on both sides of Tahiti Iiti (take those bicycles out!).

Luc worked 5 months as driver/tour guide on the island so this is his recommended tour of the island that you can do either by renting a car (more expensive unless you share with other cruisers, watch out to not miss the sites!) or by booking a tour with Tahiti Nui Travel (advantage to have the comments of an a knowledgeable guide but could be in a big group! > booking desk at Sofitel Maeva Beach hotel or at Centre Vaima in town). Go clockwise if you start after 8:30 am (traffic jams in town will be over). You drive through Papeete, take avenue Prince Hinoi to go out

of town. 1. Point of view of the Taharaa > 2. Pointe Venus: lighthouse, Cook's landing, see Sonia for the best choice of pareu and other Polynesian souvenirs > 3. Trou du souffleur (Blowhole) > 4. The 3 cascades (waterfalls): beautiful valley and one easy and scenic waterfall to access + two waterfalls nice to swim in (take path going to the left after the bridge) > 5. If you drive, it is worth to go at the Belvedere on the peninsula to get a great view of both sides of the island and to see a different landscape. You can visit the milk and cheese farm on your way up (they sell great cheese starter making kits!) > 6. Musee Gauguin (if you like the French painter) and Jardin Botanique > 7. If you didn't take a pic-nique, check the restaurant snack Motu Ovini between the Gauguin museum & the botanical garden. > 8. Grotte de Maraa (swim where Gauguin swam) > 9. Distillerie Avatea: visit the oldest distillery on the island and sample their excellent liquors made with fresh fruits of the island (26 to 100 proofs! Watch out if you drive!) > 10. Marae Arahurahu to see a well restored ancient site > 11. Museum of Tahiti & her islands, turn left just after the Tamanu shopping center (not to be missed! You can easily spend half a day if you read everything)

Some of the sports activities on the island:

water-ski: see the Ski Nautique Club at the Maeva anchorage

scuba diving: see Aquatica dive center at the Beachcomber hotel

4x4 safari tours: see Tahiti Safari Expedition (42 14 15) or Patrick Adventure (83 29 29)

Local businesses that may be useful:

Tamanu oil producer (skin care) > Tahiti Kamanu Oil (53 46 75) howan.yen@mail.pf

Solar panels, wind generators, fridges, pumps, regulators, ... > Soler Energie (43 02 00) soler@mail.pf

Sail repairs > Tiki Voile, located at Maeva anchorage (42 85 48) tikivoile@mail.pf

Ship chandlers > Nautisport (50 59 59) and Sin Tung Hing Marine (45 05 15)

Machining, turning, milling, prop shaft & bearings > Poly Industries (43 28 40) polstrie@mail.pf

Diesel engine repairs and parts > Dieselec (42 25 76) dieselec@mail.pf

Internet-cafe (cheapest) > Galaxie Games (42 63 63) galaxie@mail.pf

Pharmacy (will find equivalent medicines to your foreign medicines) > Pharmacie du Port (42 00 69)

Rigging repairs & fabrication + sail repairs > Api Marine (Gilles 77 92 45)

Tohatsu parts & oil, sparkplugs > Marcel Vanfau (43 80 62)

Manufacturer & repairs of spear guns > Pacific Sub Tahiti (41 28 45) pac.sub.tahiti@mail.pf

Air Marine wind generators, aluminum boats, solar panels > Chanson Imports (42 57 40)

Marine Insurance agent > Poe-ma Insurances (45 00 96) poema@mail.pf

Marine woodworking projects, spray painting, refrigeration repairs > Christian Fuller (48 36 01) cfuller@mail.pf

Bookstore with marine charts & guides > La Boutique Klima (42 00 63) klima@mail.pf

Hamburgers, locally made beer & spirits, local food gifts ... > Ariki Boutique (54 48 42) jones@mail.pf

Optical and Sun glasses > Optique Gimond (42 82 95) or Europtique (45 08 08)

Marine surveyor > Jean Pellissier (42 54 34) jean.pellissier@mail.pf

Airborne Express > Airborne Express Tahiti (50 90 54)

Batteries (marine, deep cycle, golf cart) > PSA (42 47 22) gdpsa@mail.pf

Laundry services > Blanchisserie laorana (53 24 54 –pick-up services)

After our 2-month visit in the Western Tuamotus, we are back in Tahiti. Here is the update to our last letter about Tahiti.

Pointe Venus anchorage: in our Tahiti letter we said there was a "small pass" which is not correct. It's wide open but you have to be really careful when you round the point to go far South enough

before you head for the coast and start to go up North towards the anchorage (not to do at night if you don't know the place!)

Maeva Beach hotel anchorage: the AVP (Association of the Sailboats of Polynesia) is now more alive with different happenings thru out the year: nautical fleamarket in July, cyclone awareness conference last December) and a planned gathering with Jimmy Cornell mid-May at the Arue Yacht Club.

Taina Marina: new docks have been added

Quai of Papeete: has been expanded and can accommodate mega yachts

Tahiti Iti: there's a new marina on the West coast built by the community, in Nov. 02 the toilette/showers were being finished.

Expanded bus service: now you can more easily visit the NE coast and S to Taravao except Sat/Sun.

More activities on the island:

Surfing: go with the Tura'i Mataare surfing school, see Olivier 41 91 37 / 77 27 69 (inexpensive, free pick-up)

New scuba diving center Deep Star, see Bernard (20 yrs exp) 70 55 55 (20% www.Noonsite cruiser's discount)

Harrison Smith botanical garden re-opened: when you tour the island, next to Gauguin museum
Museum of Tahiti & her Islands: a must! Look for road just before Tamanu commercial center, between big bridge over the Punaruu river and hotel Le Meridien.

Local businesses that may be useful:

Electrician > see Raoul (74 78 27)

Therapeutic Massage > Rikardo (73 18 18) will come to you or has massage salon in town. Unkink after those boat projects.

Laundry services: Blanchisserie laorana (new owner- very accommodating) (85 43 71) free pick-up

Marine equipment imported from Europe/USA > see Alain at the Maeva Beach anchorage (72 33 07)

Bosun of Tahiti: splices, knots & moorings > see Patrice (73 50 53)

Money exchange > MG Finances at cruiseship dock , best rates in town! (43 22 77)

Internet access: Tiki Soft Cafe in town (open late)

Internet access & photocopies: ABC diffusion , rue Cook (close to Paofai hospital) (45 29 29)

Outboard & inboard repairs: Taina Plaisance, see Eric at workshop in Marina Taina (77 43 66)

Honda distributor: Honda Generation Pol (next to Mamao hospital) < hondagene@mail.pf >

All ni-cad, nimh, and small batteries + 12/24v light bulbs > Tahiti Piles & Lumieres (43 83 70) rue Cook

Black pearls quality proven with X-ray! > Pearly Shell – in street opposite cruiseship dock, high-end quality, prices start at \$300 (see Evelyne, our friend and ask for the same discount as us!)

Panoramic view restaurant > Le Belvedere (42 73 44) free shuttle, reasonable prices, great for groups!

Yacht broker > Tahiti Yacht Broker, Daniel (79 81 24)

Lowest car rental rates > Tahiti Auto Center (54 33 33)

Marine consultant surveyor > Bernard Baudry (77 19 15)

Fedex/Marama Express > from/to outer islands – from/to int'l (45 36 45) globalac@mail.pf

Telectronique > anything to do with electronics, sales & repairs (50 52 21) telec@tahiti.net

MOOREA

So close and so different from Tahiti! You can find anchorages all around the island (weather dependant, of course, but here are the ones we liked the best.

Pointe Tipae (SE point): nice clear water (10') in the middle of the channel. Access thru the easy pass Teruaupu. We did the whole West coast by dinghy (up to Club Med).

Hotel la Ora (ENE corner): nice clear water (6' to 20'), 2 anchors recommended as winds often change direction radically, can be uncomfortable in strong Easterlies.

Cooks Bay: poor visibility of water inside the bay, we elected to anchor outside of the bay in the NE corner; clear water (10') on the plateau between the channel along the coast towards the Bali Hai hotel and the outside reef. Can have a swell at an angle to the current coming from the reef!

Opunohu bay: better water inside the bay but we choose again to anchor behind the outside reef along the channel leading to Cooks Bay (just before it gets too shallow to pass but by dinghy).

Little swell here.

Club Med anchorage: next to the Club's boats moorings, there is space for few boats. Nice motus to visit nearby.

Activities:

- ride your bike around the island in a day (40 miles) or by scooter > Tehotu Location 56 52 96 in Vaiare or Cook's bay or by car > Europcar 56 34 00
- hike or hitchhike to the Belvedere (Point of View) for views of Cooks and Opunohu bays
- hike across the island , recommend start at Vaiare and end up at Cooks Bay
- visit the waterfalls near the town of Afareiaitu, about an hr's walk to each from the main road
- visit the Kellum garden in Opunohu bay –mornings only- (56 18 52)
- visit the fruit juice factory, or the agricultural school,
- scuba with a local dive center (reefs, shark feeding, rays, ...) > Bathy's Club at Beachcomber Hotel or Top Dive/Must in Cook's bay or Moorea Fun Dive (56 40 38)
- interaction with dolphins > Dolphin Quest (55 19 48) at the Beachcomber Hotel
- snorkel along shallow reefs just about anywhere
- internet-cafe outside of Cook's bay > Maria Tapas
- massage > Drive Life Massage (Edith 56 35 26) or Massage Traditionnel (Isabelle 73 93 46)
- Polynesian authentic dinner show > Tiki Village theatre (55 02 50) – shuttle
- Lunch or dinner at some of the good local restaurants : in Cook's bay > Restaurant Honu Iti > Alfredo's restaurant > Restaurant Snack Caprice des Iles > Chez Michele > Snack L'Ananas Bleu / on West coast > Painapo Beach (Chez Ron)
- Shopping for pearls > Pai Moana Pearls (56 21 04 -free limousine!) or Atelier Bijoux Piru (56 21 96 – will mount your pearls)
- The Lonely Planet Guide has more ideas and more details

Boat repairs:

- diesel and outboard repairs, alternator, starter & genset repairs : see Francois 79 91 45 (will come on your boat, speaks English and Spanish)
- welding of steel, SS and aluminum : see Hubert 79 99 52
- marine carpenter: see Baudu 73 93 46

11 years after having worked here as sports directors on Windsong, a 440ft sailing cruise ship, we are now back in the Leeward Islands but this time on our own vessel! Things for sure have changed: more development and more people BUT the islands are still worth visiting for their beauty and for the nice people you will meet. Prices for most things are lower than 11 years ago and availability is much better! Knowing in advance what you can do in all the islands will let you better plan your (short) time thru the islands! A bike or scooter on board is a plus, as the roads are mostly asphalted now, it is a excellent way to tour the islands. We bought 2 mini-scooters in Papeete and it makes it so easy to explore at our own leisure. These scooters weigh about 38 lbs,

drive at 20 mph and the 1.5liter tank of gas lasts over 40 miles! You can buy them here (contact us for more info)

HUAHINE:

Having unusual S winds during our approach from Moorea, we choose to make our landfall to the East side of the island, entering passe Farerea. That's the pass the cruiseships take to enter & anchor in Maroe bay so it's no problem entering. We decided to go anchor in the crystalline and shallow waters next to Motu Muri Mahora. There's plenty of white sandy bottom in less than 20 ft of aqua blue water. It's well protected from the E and W by the motu and the island, N and S you have more fetch but the reefs keep it from getting bad. The people we met on the motu were very nice and you can get cantaloupes from the growers direct. There's a ferry boat that transports people and melons that let us use their dock on the mainland, a easy place to go ashore to explore. There's also a concrete fisherman's dock further North with water faucets that sometimes worked..

When the wx switched back to normal, we motorsailed to the other side of the island via the N and anchored in Fare, the main town. We anchored just after entering passe Avamoa, in front of the old abandoned Bali Hai hotel. You can find good sand (except very close to the beach) and reasonable depth in front of the old hotel and the villas just to the right as you look toward the beach. There are a few deep isolated coral heads, so you may want to buoy your chain. Just on the edge of town, you have a visitor's dock (where you can leave your dinghy), the main cargo dock in front of town and the fishing dock (where you can get non-potable water (and sediment if it has rained)).

In Fare, the following businesses can be useful:

Ao Api- New World, internet – cafe with all parallel services, you can even hook up your own laptop!

Pension Guynette: nice terrace bar/snack (the only one open on Sun!) with ex-yachtie Marty (US) who is a mine of local info!

Quad Evasion: exploring the island on 4 wheeled all-terrain vehicles

Huahinematic: great laundry services with a smile!

Huahine Nautique: tour of the island in jet-ski and other lagoon trips by outrigger

Europcar and Huahine Locations to rent a car or scooter

Snack Restaurant Tiare Tipanier: nice inexpensive touristic menu, walking distance from dock. The supermarket across from the cargo dock has fresh bread twice daily and is the largest on the island with a good selection of items.

We then sailed down the west coast, inside the lagoon, with fluky winds due to the bays and mountains, to the bay of Avea where you have nice anchorages either on the shallow bank or in about 40-50 feet in front of Pension Mauarii (internet facilities and dive center) or the Relais Mahana (the best table on the island according to the natives). There is also a car rental facility here, but no food stores.

On our way back North we anchored in front of Mt Teapaa where an old millionaire's exclusive resort lay abandoned. The bungalows were made in the trees and a beautiful vegetation was abundant. Alas, they could not make a viable business so nothing was fixed up after a hurricane ruined it! It's been bought by another American who thinks he can do better, so for the moment, you can visit the beach area, but not venture up into the higher areas.

You can anchor in several of the bays of Huahine, but from what we saw on our scooter tour, most of them are relatively deep all the way in, and you end up anchoring in a tight area with shallow, hard reef shelf all around. You can also get accelerated wind gusts sweeping off the mountains. If you like snorkeling, and you didn't get to enjoy enough of the Tuamotus, you can anchor out of the channels in beautiful, clear waters less than 20 ft all along the West coast. Go in good sun

and as always, monitor the weather for wind shifts, and enjoy the snorkeling on the coral heads and reefs inside the lagoon.

Huahine is a good place to take a tour or rent a car, especially if you visit only a few anchorages, because there are some interesting sites (the Marae at the N end, the ancient stone fish traps, etc) and good vistas all around the island. It is small, but touring around the fiord-like bays and crossing the bridge connecting the two lobes of Huahine make it varied and interesting.

On approaching Huahine coming in from Tahiti or Moorea, be VERY careful of the southern reefs of Huahine, and plan to navigate well away from it. This area is notorious and even the natives hesitate to negotiate this area because of treacherous currents and frequent large southerly swells. This last sailing season, a large yacht was swept up unexpectedly and thrown up on the reef in this area. They thought they were well off the reef, but got caught up in a series of swell and waves. The boat was towed off the reef from the interior of the lagoon and taken to the boatyard with a huge amount of effort.

RAIATEA:

What changes since 1990! The waterfront is now looking like so many in the Caribbean, ready for cruise ship passengers. Both marinas are overbooked between local residents and the numerous fleets of charter sailboats. Don't expect to make any advance reservations as they manage day by day! No wonderful anchorages located out of Uturoa. A few possibilities are outside Marina-d'en-ville (hard, corally bottom & exposed), next to Airport Control tower (shallow, sand but small anchorage and long dinghy ride to shore as you cannot go thru the runway!), outside of Marina d'Apooti (deep, corally bottom), outside the 2 boatyards (deep, far from town). There seems to be sometimes space available at the private marina of the Chantier Naval des Iles S/Vent (VHF 72, ph: 66 10 10 or raiatea.marine@mail.pf). You can tie up for a few hours for fueling or provisioning at the town quay at the Mobile fuel dock or just beside it.

A few businesses you may need:

Gilles Triboulat, marine surveyor & naval storage (66 28 47)

Alunox Marine: ss, aluminium welding & fabrication (66 46 30)

Tahina Automotive Parts & Service (66 22 28) close to airport

Hemisphere Sub: Padi dive center, filling station, ... located at marina Apooti

Te Mara Nui Plongee: dive center located marina of Uturoa

Phenix internet cafe (quartier Tahina, between Uturoa & airport) (66 20 66)

Bleu des Iles laundry service (quartier Tahina): free pick-up & delivery (66 29 64)

Supermarket Champion: on the waterfront of Uturoa

Andre'Topspot: outrigger lagoon tours (79 22 03)

Europcar (66 34 06) & Location Motutapu (66 33 09): car rentals

Jeep Safari Raiatea: 4x4 tours (66 15 73)

Le Napoli Italian restaurant (66 10 77) free pick-up from marinas or boatyards or town.

We finally hauled out (after 3 ½ years!) at Raiatea Carenage Services (VHF 68 or 66 22 96 or raiateacarenage@mail.pf) on their slipway. For us, on a multihull, it was the least stressful haul-out on the boat (and on us!) we ever got! They have also a travel lift. Dominique, the yard mgr, and his crew were nice, competent and helpful. Now, things go better and faster generally when you bring your materials and do the job yourself, but that's true anywhere! Many boats stay there on the hard during the cyclone season while the owners fly back home. Next to this boatyard, you find the equally well run Chantier Naval des Iles S/Vent (see contacts above) where they have a hydraulic trailer (with the advantage to not to have to loosen the standing rigging). Both yards provide a lot of specialized works (painting, mechanical work, refrigeration, welding, wood & epoxy repairs, ...). We think Raiatea offers more relaxed and more cruiser friendly boatyards than Papeete! The Haul

and lay-day costs for us as a multihull were very reasonable compared even to many yards in the Caribbean.

We circumnavigated the island counterclockwise and used the following anchorages:

West coast: anchored on the barrier reef side of the channel in less than 10 ft over beautiful white sand in the area between the boatyards & pass Rautoanui. Did drift snorkel the pass. You have to go on the outside from that pass till 2 passes South before you can circumnavigate inside the barrier reefs. We reentered thru passe Toamaro and anchored in Baie Vaiaau (55 ft, mud). We dragged the next morning (30-35 kts gusts) so we decided not to chance it and looked a long time to find a suitable anchorage, we finally found a place on the barrier reef side, across the channel from the school at 16d51'615S-151d29'205W (sand, 10 ft, clear of coral heads)

South Coast: anchored on the West side of motu Naonao (sand, 10 ft). Beautiful snorkeling over the coral heads that line the drop-off between deep and shallow water. Also snorkeled and SCUBAed NaoNao Pass on the side closest to the motu. Be sure the current is entering before you go. While at this anchorage, we had a few days of high winds and rainstorms from the Sand SE, but the reef kept the water smooth and our anchors held well in the good sand; however, we did help one boat that anchored too close to the motu, and got pushed up on shallow sand when the wind suddenly went W following a strong rain squall.

SE Coast: anchored on the sand bank in 6 to 10ft off some distance away from Ilot Oatara.

East Coast: took a mooring in Faaroa bay. You can get 1st night free mooring in front of Stardust Yacht Charter, see Pierre Liron, the mgr. Possibilities to get water and connect to internet, or eat at a restaurant.. You can also anchor off Ile Iriru, a communal motu near the pass closest to Faaroa Bay.(settled wx only). Another little known bay, but very well protected anchorage is baie Vairahi. You will find less than 50ft in the south part, in front of the beach, away from the 3 moored French boats. You will find 2 dinghy docks to go ashore and may enjoy a visit to a nice young couple of artists, Alain & Celine, who make silver custom jewelry with all sea materials (coral, shells, black pearls, ...) Look for a sign on the road "Atelier du Margouia". The Kaoha Nui Ranch is nearby with it's horseback riding for beginners & advanced, hiking & trekking to waterfalls & restaurant. Another nice anchorage is in Baie Tepua, off pass Teavapiti (convenient when arriving or going to Huahine). Take one of the 3 free moorings of Pension Tepua (Watch out for the large coral patch on the way to the most in-land mooring) and have a nice lunch or dinner at this charming pension, run by Joe & Guylaine.

A footnote on Raiatea, we were surprised to find that there are local residents and businesses that are quite cool towards "people on sailboats". There are many residents that are convinced that we come in and break the coral with our anchors, and throw trash into the lagoon. This sentiment is not exclusive to Raiatea only; we heard comments on many of the Society Islands. Of course, people do not differentiate between the cruisers, the bareboat charterers, and the floating wrecks of those who came to stay and can barely pay the marina fees. What it means is that we, as SSCAers must go out of our way to prove that there are those who do leave a clean wake. We ask permission, we do not go to the luxury hotel docks to showers and start to wash the laundry in buckets or walk past the swimming pool with our smelly garbage bags, or leave our dinghies on the dock where the excursion boats need to tie up to take passengers, or run over and cut the mooring upon leaving. These are actual complaints we heard. It's not always easy to know where we can land or dump garbage or take water, but we can at least make a trip ashore first to find out.

TAHAA:

Barely 2 miles away from Raiatea, here lies calm Tahaa. This is the most undeveloped of all the islands in the area. It had the least amount of paved roads, altho, there are roads covering almost all the island. There are no large supermarkets, but basics can be found. We will also circumnavigate (you can stay inside the lagoon the whole way!) counterclockwise. In our old and

excellent cruising guide (by Marcia Davock), she calls Tahaa, the deepwater bays. Today, we could add 'with moorings available all around the island'! Many local businesses decided to install free moorings for customers close to their shore to attract charter boats and us the cruisers (most monitor VHF 68). As long as you patronize their business they will let you stay. So if you like to get a drink, a meal or buy some arts&crafts, you will have many moorings to choose of instead of anchoring in those deep waters. Caveat: there are no regulations on how to install moorings around any of the islands, some are very well made and inspected regularly, others are not...if you stay in bad conditions either check the mooring yourself or get info about the suitability of the mooring.

South Coast: Baie Apu: pretty deep water all around (100 ft) but you can pick a mooring from Marina Iiti. They have a restaurant, water, internet access & laundry services. Pension Api (restaurant & inexpensive take out) between Pointe Tutava and the village of Vaitoare plans to have a few moorings soon. Opposite that village, you have also the famous "trou de la pieuvre" cave diving site (only for experienced divers – see local dive operators).

SE side: Baie Haamene. At the head of the bay, you can anchor in 25 ft (would consider this as a possible hurricane hole?!). We anchored also on the sand bank in front of Ile Mahaea (pass Toahoti) for a motu view and the snorkeling in the pass. There is a huge and complex fish trap in the pass near Ile Mahaea and it is very impressive to snorkel next to it and see the hundreds of fish milling around unable to find the exit. 10 yrs ago we did an exciting drift dive in this pass with a dive center.

NE side. You can anchor or pick up a mooring in front of the new "Yacht Club Atara" (ilot Atara) opened by friendly Giuliano, who was also making the round of anchorages in the morning offering fresh bread and pastries.

N coast: The channel is now marked to pass North of the reefs between the village of Hipu and Patio.

During the time we were there, the winds were strong and we could not anchor near the chain of motus to the N of Tahaa, but we heard and read in our guide that there are nice shallow water anchorages, and good snorkeling in several locations.

NW coast: You can anchor off the new hotel at Ilot Tautau (can be choppy and you have to anchor a long way off the motu because shallow depth) or you can pick up the mooring in front of Pension "Au Phil du temps" (family cooking, 4x4, bikes).

SW corner: pick a mooring at restaurant "chez Louise" very nice Tahitian couple with excellent seafood. Hurepiti bay: This bay can be quite windy with gusts funneling in from Haameme bay! A few moorings are available (one off the "Shark Dive" dive center, run by very nice people: Bertil and his Russian wife 'Mirafiora'!, two further, belonging to Vanilla Tours).

BORA BORA:

Only one straightforward pass leads inside the lagoon. If you proceed NE, once entered, you will get to the famous Bora Bora Yacht Club (under new management since Nov 01). Free use of moorings, dock, showers. Garbage disposal and more for clients of the bar/restaurant. The local disco nearby may entertain you all night on your boat on WE! Further South, you will get the main town of Vaitape, the moorings off the famous "Bloody Mary" bar/restaurant and all the way South, the nice crystal water anchorage SE of the Hotel Bora Bora. It is not possible to round Point Matira so you will have to tour the island clockwise to get to the East coast.

Topua island: beautiful anchorage West of it or off the newest hotel in the South (you can go around).

Airport anchorage: keep East of the channel leading to the airport jetty where the shuttle boat go back and forth. Nice sandy bottom, 20 till 2 feet deep, can be a little choppy if strong Easterlies.

Nice eyeball navigation (also well marked with cardinal & lateral markers) around the North of Bora island to reach the Eastern part of the lagoon. Good shallow, sandy anchorage just South of the Meridien and Lagoonarium. Close-by, at 8am they perform a manta rays feeding show.

MAUPITI

If you want to visit a small island in the 'before tourism' Societies, then come to this beautiful island protected completely by reefs and motus. The pass, despite rumors of being risky and difficult, is in fact easier than it looks when you have the right wx conditions. So be patient and enjoy more of Bora Bora until the wx is right! That means: swell of no more than 1.5m from the SW, S or SE; also no SE winds of more than 20 knots! The pass is narrow at the entrance, < 100ft, and has a controlling depth of more than 10 ft, and the current is always out-going, but can be light, <3kts, or strong, up to 6 kts, depending upon tide and swell conditions. Contact the captain of the Maupiti Express by VHF 16 to get local info. This ferry goes 3x/wk to Maupiti.

It's true that if unfavorable wx conditions develop once you are inside, you may have to wait for the pass to be practicable again ... but we know of worse places to be stuck! Especially in a well protected anchorage!

We met Georges and Claude, a retired French couple. He used to work in the yachting world so they are very friendly with cruisers. They make local arts & craft with what they find in the sea ... and prices are more than reasonable! Ui and Simone, a local couple, runs the Maupiti Loisirs (67 80 95) guesthouse. They rent bicycles, and you can have a local dinner at their place (what a view and what a nice BBQ meal). Simone happily, speaks English and Ui takes people on an island tour (the only one truly circumnavigating the island) in his shade covered boat where you roam everywhere around the lagoon and where you stop ashore to visit many attractions: motus with snorkeling, marae, petroglyphs, snack, lizard grotto. All that at a very affordable price!

If you hike, you will enjoy the 60-90 min walk to the top of the highest point of view. Take the wide cement staircase opposite of Snack Taronia in town just north of the post office. From the old broken down guesthouse go up to the antenna relay and then follow the trail (red paint markers on rocks). What beautiful views of all the lagoon colors! We had our lunch there, on top of Maupiti.

Don't forget your camera!

You can also walk all around the island in about 3 hours or you can bike around and relax at the beautiful white silky sandy beach on the N side.

Order your bread the day before, at the bakery next to the main dock, as those will be your last French baguettes until New Caledonia! Small stores sell canned goods and vegetables. Get locally grown watermelons, papayas, mangoes, lemons and bananas from the growers, ask around.

MOPELIA:

The perfect place to end a cruise in French Polynesia. If you regret not having spent more time in the Tuamotus, this is your chance to experience another atoll! An average of only 13 peoples lives in this remote atoll 125 nm West of Bora Bora.

The pass is scarrier in the cruising guide than in reality. It is well marked and in good light, easy to see the way in. Entrance coordinates are 16 46'92S – 153 58'67W. Since it is situated on the NW side of the lagoon, you do not want to come with Westerly winds or heavy NW swells, but in regular trade wind conditions, it's protected. Best time to enter is variable. We were told to enter around mid-day by one cruiser, and at first light by another cruiser, but upon observation, the least current changed time of day during the three weeks we were there, so we suspect that there is a tidal influence that changes each day like in the Tuamotus. We did not verify this with a tide table, but the variation we saw seemed to bear this out. Like the Tuamotus, strong wind and swell that brings more water into the lagoon will also increase the perpetually outgoing current. The pass is

narrow but plenty wide enough for our 25 ft wide trimaran! It is deep enough for at least 10-ft draft. After the narrow channel marked by the white posts, head for the big red/orange buoy and leave it just on your port. From here, you can sail straight to the 2 white roofed houses you see in the NE corner of the lagoon on the long motu. (the village, in the older guides). Anchor anywhere along that long, long motu. The present community is now located at the Southern end.

We got lucky to meet 2 very nice families: Kalami, Sophie and sons Kami & 2 little ones, and Frankie, Monique and their son Vetea. Since they do not get supplies here often (boat comes here once a month), we, like many cruisers, brought them fruits, vegetables, bread and more from Maupiti. They invited us to real feasts where we ate excellent poisson-cru, lobsters, pig and "sea" chicken (ask those guys about it). It's very nice if cruisers help locals repair anything broken at the time: outboards, gensets, boats, in exchange for their generous welcome.

We went lobstering one night, we snorkeled in the pass (drift) and outside on the remains of the famous Sea Sadler, German privateer, wrecked there at the end of WWI. We also visited the bird motu. Got heart of palms, coconut water and coconut meat. Kalami even taught us how to fish the little known, but highly prized, varo!

The lagoon is fairly small so the fetch is not too long. We anchored overnight at the bird motu with only light chop. There, near the reef, we released a small female lobster with eggs that was given us. We try to tell them not to take small or female w/ eggs, but sadly, it doesn't sink in.

Here are the newest updates on services that cater to yacht people and help keep the Noonsite web pages alive, and/or whom we or others have had good experiences:

Extra notes about French Polynesia in general:

Europcar now offers special discounts (say you saw them at www.Noonsite.Com) if you rent cars from them in different islands so it may be a way to save on multiple locations. Contact their representative in Bora (67 70 15 / 67 70 03 europcarborabox@mail.pf)

The biggest ship chandler will ship anything in stock to any of the islands. Contact Francois in Tahiti. (50 59 59 <FJounot@tahiti-sport.pf>)

If you plan to make many dives in Fr.Pol. consider the Blue Nui Dive Centers. They have dive centers located in all the Pearl Beach Resorts: in Manihi & Tikehau (Tuamotus) and Tahaa & Bora Bora (Societies). They offer special multiple dive cards with special discounts for Noonsite cruisers. You can make your dives in any of the 4 dive centers (67 79 07 / 79 22 72

boraborablenui@mail.pf) PADI & CMAS affiliated.

Tuamotus:

Fakarava: good scuba operation in Rotoava: see Jean-Claude at Te Ava Nui Fakarava (98 42 50 / 79 69 50

jlapeyre@netcourrier.com). This atoll becomes the second most developed after Rangiroa: improved roads, a new hotel.... But we are still far from Hawaii or the Caribbean!

The Societies:

Tahiti:

The center of French Polynesia! Papeete, the big town, offers the attractions of cities all over. You can find pretty much anything if you know where to look! Selection is good and prices are lower than in the outer islands. Check Carrefour, Champion and Hyper-U for provisioning. First necessities are subsidised, and equivalent or cheaper than stateside prices. Generally speaking, you can often find a much cheaper equivalent of many products if you really scan the prices. Of course, if you really have to have truffles and "fois gras".....

You can have repaired many things that break on your boat! Many specialists here! See Francois, the manager of Nautisport (see above) for local knowledge or Gilles at Appi Yachting (42 18 10 apiyachting@mail.pf).

If you need boat parts that you cannot get locally, ask Alain on the boat "Rai atea" (72 33 07 VHF CH 67 & 16

info@moanarooa.com) or Michel on the boat "Teva III" (74 10 02 fqyb@sailmail.com), both anchored at the Maeva Beach/Marina Taina area in Tahiti. They both order from Europe, USA and NZ. Michel has some anchors and chain in stock but it's always better to order asap since it takes some time for the stuff to arrive.

If you order things from outside, the most reliable shipper in our experience has been FedEx. They are very efficient, fast and pleasant. If you contact them in advance, they will hold your package until you arrive or forward it to you in the outer-islands. If there is an airport where you are, chances are they will get it to you the next day! (45 36 45 / 42 19 19 globalac@mail.pf)

As boat in transit, you can get things duty-free but you mostly will have to pay a customs agent anyway to get it thru customs! Inform yourself before. For considerable purchases, you might negotiate duty-free prices from local marine dealers. In some cases, it is more advantageous to buy locally!

Electronic components, computer parts and communication equipment can be found at Telelectronics, close to the Mc Donald in downtown Papeete (50 52 21 telec@tahiti.net)

Desjardins, the Icom dealer: many cruisers reported bad experiences so beware!

For sales and service of marine diesel engines, turbines, gensets, watermakers, propeller shafts, alternators, inverters, filters (oil, gas, air), thermal & sound insulation, professional fishing gear, winches and more > see Sopom just before the bridge of Motu Uta (43 91 15 / 42 99 69 sopom@mail.pf)

A good bosun to splice any kind of lines, see Patrice Convert (73 50 53 convert@mail.pf)

Tahiti Nui Travel at centre Vaima in Papeete can book any flights (intl and local), they also do island tours in A/C mini-vans (54 02 00 sales@tahitiniutravel.pf)

An alternative to change money at the bank, see MG Finance Change in the tourism office shack in front of the cruiseship dock. Surprisingly competitive rates!

Black pearls: beware of inferior pearls for over inflated prices! For gem quality, fair prices, honesty & truly pleasant people, we have had great experiences with Pearly Shell situated opposite the cruiseship dock. They're one of the only to give free X-ray of any pearl they have to guarantee the thickness of the coating! See Guy, the owner or Evelyne & Lilia. Do not hesitate to mention noonsite, and Luc, to get a discount!

For personal well-being while cruising to self-healing thru simple, fast & efficient methods. Energetic equilibrium guided meditations, relaxing massage, creative visualization, positive thinking.

Workshop will teach you natural techniques to use yourself to achieve energetic equilibrium, see Jocelyne at Harmonie Tahiti (26 28 66 / 23 56 03 harmonie.tahiti@mail.pf)

Some cruisers had also good experiences to practice or learn surfing with the Surf Tura'i Mataare Surfing School (41 91 37 / 77 27 69 surfschool@mail.pf)

Moorea:

We discovered a good welder for aluminum, steel or SS, contact Eimeo at 56 24 57 / 56 18 08 / 74 16 12, he is also a carpenter.

For beautiful arts & crafts, check out Dany Creation (56 45 96 - free pick up) and Woody's (400m from Hotel Beachcomber - 56 37 00 woodyho@mail.pf)

Good Italian meals at the cruiser-friendly Alfredo in Cook's bay (56 17 71 / VHF ch 69 chrismar@mail.pf) Free transportation for dinner from anywhere on the island, live entertainment some evenings.

Crave good pizza?, call Allo Pizza (56 18 22 bobandval@mail.pf)

Another dive center to check out: Scubapiti (56 20 38 / 78 03 52 scubapitidaniel@mail.pf)

Walk underwater with an authentic hard hat! See Aquablue at the BCB (56 53 53 / 73 24 40 aquablue_pf@hotmail.com)

Huahine:

From Fare dinghy pier, plenty of things are in walking distance:

Good local food right at the water edge, the Restaurant Te-Marara. The friendly owners have been in business for 28 years! Restaurant Les Tipaniers, 100 yards from the pier has good and inexpensive daily menu (68 80 52 / tiare.tipanier@mail.pf)

You can rent a bike from Huahine Lagoon , right next to dinghy pier. The owner is also an expert surfer!

Island tours at Pension Enite (68 82 37)

Check the beautiful anchorage on the SW side, baie Avea. You can have a good meal, internet access and participate in different watersports at Pension Mauarii (68 86 49 <vetea@mail.pf>)

Very cruiser-friendly.

Tahaa:

Marina Iiti is a convenient stop in the channel between Tahaa and Raiatea. Philippe the owner/manager is an ex-yachtie and 10 moorings are free for customers. Excellent food has gotten a lot of thumbs up from many cruisers this last season. (65 61 01 / VHF CH68

marinaiti@mail.pf)

Take an interesting island tour by boat with Bruno himself - Tahaa Pearl Tour (66 10 90 <tpt@mail.pf>) or in 4x4 with Vai Poe tours (65 60 83 <v.p@mail.pf>).

Blue Nui Dive center at the Pearl Beach hotel (see note above)

Raiatea:

Both yards have a lot going for them! Chantier des ISLV (66 10 10 / VHF 72

raiatea.marine@mail.pf) has good workmanship, clean washroom and internet access at cost for customers. Make sure you ask them before using one of the numerous moorings in the anchorage in front of the yard. Raiatea Carenage (66 22 96 / VHF 68 raiateacarenage@mail.pf) is good for DIY. Dominique also fills butane tanks by gravity. Both yards have very competitive prices compared with the US or Caribbean! They have travel lifts and trailer or railway. Good place also to store your boat on the dry when returning home. Some yachts had a good experience getting things shipped to the yards, others, a nightmare. We think follow-up, and being informed before is essential.

The Sunset Beach Motel, conveniently close to the yards is a good and inexpensive guesthouse to stay at while your boat is worked on in the yard (66 33 47 <sunsetbeach@mail.pf>).

An American expatriate living here over 25 yrs, specialized in anthropology, gives very interesting tours. Contact Bill, past Commodore of the Honolulu Yacht Club, at Almost Paradise Tours (66 23 64).

On the East side just when you enter the lagoon thru pass Teavapiti, you will find Pension Tepua with free moorings and a very nice French couple running this gem of a guesthouse. Meals are excellent, pool & internet access for customers. A nice place to relax. (66 33 00 pension-tepua@mail.pf) Also very close to the pass with good snorkeling and scuba.

Scuba diving in that pass and everywhere around the island with Floriane from Te Mara Nui Dive center (66 11 88 / 72 60 19 <temaranui@mail.pf>)

Bora Bora:

The famous Bora Bora Yacht Club (67 70 69 <bbyc@mail.pf>) and Bloody Mary's Restaurant (67 72 86 <bmary@mail.pf>) are 2 hangouts of cruisers since more than 25 years! BBYC: 25 sturdy moorings, 1500 cfp/nite or free if you have dinner once in 3 days / BMR 6 free moorings for customers. Peter, the manager of the BBYC is a nice guy once you pass the first contact. Both places have water & garbage disposal (not during dinnertime, pls). Laundry machine at the BBYC. Another good restaurant is the Bamboo House (67 76 24 <bamboohouse@mail.pf>)

L'appetisserie (close to center of town) is still the only internet access; price is a bit high but we heard from one user, connection was much faster than most. Zani is very friendly to cruisers and helps in many ways!

For any kind of refrigeration or electrical problem, contact SAV Bora Froid service (74 50 37 <yannick68@mail.pf>)

If you want a private scuba instructor or if you need a professional diver for any reason, contact Ben at Diveasy (79 22 55 / 67 69 36)

For scuba see Anne at the Bora Bora Diving (67 71 84 / 67 74 83 / VHF 08 <boradiving@mail.pf>) and Aquasafari for traditional scuba or undersea walk (see Anne)

Snorkel all around the island or in the interesting Lagoonarium where you swim in the middle of sharks, turtles and colorful fishes (67 71 34 <lagonarium@mail.pf>)

The original shark feeding of Bora Bora. Contact Sharkboy (67 60 93 / 78 27 42 <sharkboy@mail.pf>)

Want to see the underwater beauties of Bora without getting wet: take an inexpensive tour in the famous Aquascope (67 61 92 / 78 27 92 <aquascopebora@mail.pf>)

A tour of the lagoon by jet ski? Beach toys for young kids ... see Matira Jet Tours (77 63 63 <bborajet@mail.pf>)

A famous French artist has established himself on the South side. Alain Despert exposes his work in his studio. (60 48 15 <despertborabora@mail.pf>)

Last chance to buy quality black pearls: see Nycos on the town square (60 58 20 <nycos@mail.pf>) (know personally cruisers who were very pleased), or Paradise Pearls in the galleria with L'appetisserie (67 61 76 <info@paradise-pearls.com>)

July 2000 – March 2003

Luc & Jackie on s/v Sloepmouche