

March-27-'04

Our transit time in London was exactly measured. No hurry, neither time to waste or time to have a quick lunch. We have to get onboard our Air New Zealand flight for the first intercontinental leg of our journey.

The Boeing 747 was packed but the meals, considering it is airline food, is in one word delicious. I've been flying a number of different airlines were most of the time I simply skip the meals unless I'm really starving but certainly not this time. We had two great meals during our 11h45m flight to Los Angeles. At LAX the transfer to our next leg for Papeete went easily through US customs and quick enough.

36 hours and 7 airline meals later we finally reached our first destination on Sunday, March 28.

The Cook Islands greeting "Kia Orana" means exactly that, "may you live long." It is a unique first gesture of friendship from a special Polynesian people, renowned for their hospitality and warmth. On arrival in Avarua airport - Rarotonga, a hotel representative was waiting for us to be greeted with a fresh flower lei.



Our first impression of the **Palm Grove Resort** was pretty good. As we had requested a beach bungalow, our accommodation was very large with a decent bathroom, a kitchen with all the tableware and stuff. Literally everything was here. Microwave, toaster, coffeemachine, a large refrigerator and more. We had complimentary fresh milk, drinking water, instant coffee and tea + fresh fruit. However the nicest surprise was when we opened the screenings (to protect for mosquitos) to the huge verandah with a handy outdoor shower. No TV in our room, no airconditioning, but that is exactly how we want it to be. Who comes to paradise to watch the troubles in the Middle-East on CNN? A ceiling fan right above the bed in combination with the seabreeze, makes the bungalow nicely cool. It was never too warm inside. The view over the blue lagoon of Rarotonga is unforgettable. The construction of the bungalows are entirely made of natural materials which gives it an extra dimension to the peaceful environment.

Cook Islanders have their own Maori language and each of the populated islands a distinct dialect. It has a population of around 15,000. The Cooks has been self-governing in free association with New Zealand since 1965. By virtue of that unique relationship, all Cook Islanders hold New Zealand passports. The Cook Islands Parliamentary system is modelled on the Westminster system of Britain. The Queens Representative is Head of State. This is a delightful Pacific country where the main island of Rarotonga offers a wide range of activities. On arrival, I couldn't resist of checking out the coral gardens, located in "our frontyard" footsteps from the shore. The lagoon is shallow and safe for swimming here. Although I met about a dozen tropical fishes, I wasn't really impressed since I had expected more. Perhaps the snorkeling is better somewhere else on the island.

This afternoon, I booked a 4x4 safari tour to the interior of the island. Remember, if you have a back problem, don't participate as the drive can be really bumpy. The highlight of this trip was a short stop on top of a hill with great views of the 4 motu's (small islets) who are laying just off Muri Beach. Actually this trip wasn't really my cup of tea, but since it was impossible to book any other activity on a Sunday, we thought it is alright for today. The main attraction of Rarotonga is its beautiful lagoon.

March 29-'04

For some reason known as jetlag, I woke up at 5.00am. 36 hours of traveling without any sleep to speak of, has made me tired last night, very tired. At 8.30pm we had switched the lights off and the combination of jetlag and early sleep yesterday made us up this early now.

I decided to start the day somewhat different compared to back home. I made myself some coffee and sat outside on the verandah watching the stars, writing the first notes of this review listening to the sound of the waves not too far away from where I sat. I witnessed a great natural phenomenon - falling stars - and made a wish.



A little later, when the first rooster announced the coming up of a new day, I went for a walk on the beach while the sun started to rise. The loosy sand made a good exercise to my recently broken ankle. I was still revalidating from an accident which happened last december during my previous trip in Thailand. I would not be able to do such activities back home in the hectic world of West-Europe. I truly enjoyed the start of a new day in paradise when the darkness made way for bright sun-sparkles shining on the mirror-like calm lagoon.

We had tropical breakfast at the Palm Grove's restaurant: **The Yellow Hibiscus**. There are tropical fruits, cereals, toasts, peanutbutter and jams available included in your roomrate, but also eggs, bacon, sausages and more available at an extra cost. Good food for what you pay.

Today, I decided to make a lagoon cruise with Captain Tama. This trip includes good snorkeling and a Barbeque on a motu. The boat has a glass bottom. If you ask my personal opinion, I would rate this trip 7/10. It makes a good day out lasting about 4 hours.

The beaches are public everywhere and for different watersports, I can recommend **Muri Beach**. The best snorkeling is on **Fruits of Rarotonga** (watch out for the sign). The beauty of Rarotonga is just awesome.

An easy way of traveling around is by the local bus. There is a very simple bus system on the island. One bus runs clockwise, another anti-clockwise. Although they are scheduled to bus stops at times, you can flag them to stop at any place. Hiring a moped or a scootcar (see cruise chapter) is also a great way to circle the island. **Avarua**, the main town of Raro houses some great shops for your souvenirs or black pearls. We had a drink at **Trader Jack's** but that was just during the afternoon. We heard it is a lot of fun on friday nights. The place looks pretty cool to be at during the night with its open seaside. However, we had heard lots of good things about the famous Cook Island nights, and paid 170 New Zealand Dollar (two people) for an Island Night at the luxury Rarotongan Beach Resort. It includes a few drinks and a truly wonderful buffet. This evening is a must ! The Island Nite consists of a great show with exotic male and female dancers moving their bodies to the rythm and drums of the musicians. We were happy that we've done this tonight.

March-30-'04

A Saab 340 from Air Rarotonga flew us early today to **Aitutaki**, another gem of Cook Island's southern group. I was excited to visit this place. Actually, Aitutaki was one of the reasons why I decided to travel to Polynesia. While I had been reading lots about this island on the internet before, I was using my imagination, seeing myself swimming in the

shallow lagoon of this gem, surrounded by colorful sea-inhabitants, very far away from the hustle and bustle of the daily traffic back home.

Ask for a leftside window seat. From the air Aitutaki has to be one of the most beautiful sights in the Pacific. The aerial view is simply breathtaking. This southern paradise is made up of a triangular-shaped reef encompassing a clear, aqua lagoon in which three volcanic and twelve coral islands nestle. Once at the airport terminal (a single thatched roof on stilts), you just pick up your luggage from the push cart outside. Nobody goes inside the terminal or whatever you want to name the rain-shelter. Most of the passengers are here for a one-day lagoon cruise and will fly back to Raro with the evening flight. For these people everything is organized and a colorful bus awaits cruisers at the airport to bring them to their boat.

Ourself, we are here for three nights. Supposed to have a pick-up transfer as agreed by e-mail on booking the Rino's Beach Bungalow, our accomodation for the next three days. A big Cook Islander (forgot his name) sent us to Rino's by a bus of which we were the only passengers. This guy really is a multi-tasker. Still at the airport, he has a security tag on his chest however for no reason. I don't see anything to be happens here in paradise where the total of people at the airport is about 40. That is at peak times when a plane comes in. Our all-round guy was at the same time the island's postman. He delivered the incoming mail from Rarotonga to the addressed people who seems to knew exactly his arrival as they were waiting outside to grab their mail as we were driven through town. There are less then 2000 residents on Aitutaki. Our big guy was waved by everyone we passed on our way to Rino's bungalows. All of this happened within the moment we stepped out of the plane till the time we arrived at Rino's.

Again, we were happily surprised when we checked in at room 7. It was a very spacious bungalow built on stilts (to protect from tropical stroms) with all imaginable items and amenities. A brand new bathroom, airconditioning, big frige, microwave, etc. The bungalow has a very large verandah facing the lagoon offering great sunsets. And I mean VERY large. There are two very comfortable soft padded hammocks, a table with chairs and even an outside bed for those wishing to sleep under the stars. Top of the bill was a complimentary motobike during our stay. There were berths on the beach for our use but since we were located so close to the water with our verandah, we never took use of them. We experienced our hosts as extremely friendly and helpfull. I forgot my European-Pacific adapter for charging my cameras in Rarotonga (note: you take a limitation of luggage with you to Aitutaki) and our hosts took immediate action to find one for me.

If you want to ride a motobike, bring your driver's license. Myself, I did'nt and had to go for a examination at the Police station to profe my driver's skills. After a practical test with my moped, which exists of crossing sort of a football field, you're passed if youre still sitting on the saddle. You pay 7 NZD (4 USD) and you're offered a one-year Cook Island driver's license of which is valid for the use of a car as well. I remember when I had to go to the driver's school back home in Belgium about 25 years ago, I had the toughest time to get a license. I lost about 800 USD before I was allowed to drive a car, and it took me about two months. Here in the Cooks, it tooks me just two minutes and 4 Euro.

To take advantage of my new license and complimentary motobike, we encircled the island within less then two hours (with stops) mostle on paved roads. The ride offers sometimes spectacular lagoon-views with the biggest danger coming from the palm trees. Every now and then we noticed coconuts on the roads. A helmet is not obligated, but because of the coconuts not a bad idea. After we explored the winding road, and lots of small tracks criss-crossing the main island of Aitutaki, sometimes entirely covered by the palm trees, I don't think we had passed more then 5 vehicles other then mopeds.

March-31-'04

Today we want to please ourselves with a nice breakfast and decided to drive up to the luxury Pacific Resort. Try to imagine riding a moped under extremely low traffic while the sun is rising, on one side the turquoise colors of the lagoon and the other side the lush greenery of the mountains. An island where nobody cares what is happening in the west. I have't seen any TV and I bet only few people feel the need to have one. Our breakfast at the Pacific Resort was'nt really cheap but we were overwhelmed with food. Coffee was 4 dollars but what's expensive if it is served in a traditional coffee pressing can which holds about 5 cups.

Last night we attempted the island night at the Blue Nun which was so so compared to the two previous shows we had seen at the Samade Bar and the other back in Rarotonga. I remember the request of the singer at the end of the show asking the audience to tell the world that a place like Aitutaki exists. I understand that the commercial part of the people likes to see more visitors, but I'm not sure if I will spread the word. This is simply paradise and I hope that it will remains like this unlike Boracay in the Philippines for example. I was there first back in 1993 and again in 2000. It took only 7 years to take over tourism from former solitude.



Today we went by fast boat with Bishop Cruises to Maina Island or Honeymoon Island as it is often reffered to. Together with just two other young couples, after 30 minutes of speedy fun, Captain Wonderful dropped anchor in the middle of nowhere where the water was about waste deep. As we jumped in the lagoon, immediately we were surrounded by different kind of tropical fishes who seems to know that they will be feeded shortly. We reached **Honeymoon Island**, where the area is truly surreal with sandbars and small islets with soft sand. It's like swimming in an outside warm bath.



We headed east to **One Foot Island** after that to enjoy a delicious barbecue right on the beach. One Foot Island is fringed with low hanging palm trees and soft sand. The perfect postcard-picture. For those who want completely solitude, there is one single bungalow available to spend the night. No electricity, no people around, just you and your partner. Food is brought in by the daily excursion boat who arrives around noon. You have the beach, the shallow waters and the fantastic atmosphere entirely for your own.

A family of beautiful yellow fishes (excuse me, I'm not good in fish names) gathered around a group of giant clams in chest deep water right in front of that bungalow. There were two big and one smaller who seems to enjoy teasing with me. Each time I want to take them a picture they were hiding behind the clams.

The Aitutaki lagoon is truly the most beautiful water scene I've ever witnessed so far. I try to imagine how Captain BLigh must have wondered when he first arrived here back in 1789, sailing on the Bounty. Bligh returned to Aitutaki and it is said that he had introduced the paw-paw, which, like other varieties of tropical fruit, grow in abundance all over the island.

I can't understand why only few visitors are here. Perhaps because of it remoteness ? We travelled 36 hours from the moment we shut the door behind us when we left home tilll we checked in at our first accomodation in Rarotonga. But for Aussies and New Zealanders it's not that bad.

April-1-'04

Unfortunately, today will be our last day here in this island-paradise and since the best thing about Aitutaki is undoubtedly its lagoon, we wanna cruise her warm waters once again. There are numerous lagoon tours, which last almost an entire day. Possibly the most well-known is Air Rarotonga's day tour onboard Titi-ai-Tonga, a large double hulled vessel that cruises languidly in the lagoon. Sit down meals are served by friendly staff and after snorkeling in the lagoon, visitors are taken to One Foot Island.

Ok, this time we cruise the lagoon with the daytrippers from Raro. One big mistake I had made today. I took out my t-shirt. Later in the evening I was looking similar to a cooked lobster, sunburned all over and I can tell it hurts. I remember myself buying 60+ sunblock from the pharmacy back home. I wanted to have the best and was avoiding the supermarket stuff.

Apart from that, sailing with Paradise Tours, cruising the lagoon again, was perfectly ok. The crew had been very entertaining and again we had a perfect day in paradise.

April-2-'04

We have to say goodbye to the very kind and symphatic owner of Rino's Beach Bungalows. Upon returning my complimentary motobike, Rino did'nt want me to refill it, although that was the agreement 3 days ago when I checked in.

I will always remember the smiling faces of the people of Aitutaki. After being here just three days, we felt a bit like being part of them. Just the way all Cook Islanders do, we were waved wherever we drove with our motobike. They raised their hands to us as if we lived on the island and knew one another for years. The policeman who gave me the driver's license. We had met him twice again after that and waved to us. The young lady who picked us up twice for island nights, she was part of one of the dance groups, she also ran a catering business to provide the organizers of Island Nights with buffets for their visitors. we got to know one another too.

Back in Raro for our last day in the Cooks, we took the clockwise bus to Avarua. The ride is fun while the driver is it all. He's interacting with the passengers and all of a sudden he stopped where he should'nt. There were two big women sitting alongside the road chatting. "Hi gals, can I help you with something?" Hilarity on the bus and we continued our trip. Then he turned his head inside the bus, asking if someone was willing to take over from him to drive the bus.

Tonight we fly to our next destination Papeete where we will arrive after midnight. After checking in our luggage at Avarua airport there was one single announcement. "Mr. Torremans, please contact the check in counter" I tried to make it back through carry-on luggage checkpoint but was stopped by an official telling me to wait for the officer who would come to look after me himself. Because I had collected some gorgeous shells earlier today on Muri Beach and in front of our bungalow, I thought this would be the problem. I had seen the signboard in the arrival/departure hall warning passengers for carry out food, plants, animals AND shells. As I could'nt think any other reason than that why I would being hold, I prepared myself for a big fine already. I was waiting long 20 minutes before the official arrived. Somewhat every possible scenario was spinning in my mind for the offence. Finally a well-build guy in a official costume appeared on the scene informed us that we were upgraded to business class. VIVA AIR NEW ZEALAND ! The flight went to quick. We had to kill 5 hours at Faa airport in Tahiti before we could continue to our destination: Moorea.

This must be the shortest flight in the world. Between take off and landing at Moorea takes just 7 minutes. There's no room for an in flight attendant since we flew with a twin otter who operates 40 times daily between Tahiti and Moorea or vice-versa. Our first impression with Moorea was expensive, no... very expensive. On arrival we were looking for transportation to our resort. We were told there's no other way then riding a taxi which will cost us 38 USD. Most people who travelled here had used a travel agency and showed their 5 dollar transport voucher. I wanted to call to the Intercontinental Beachcomber asking them how to get there. They simply replied to take a taxi. The company who brought travellers to their accommodation didn't want to sell us a 5 USD transport voucher as this was not allowed according to Moorea regulations. We ended up taking a 38 USD taxi after we paid 15 USD for a telephone card to be able to call the IC Beachcomber to request a pick up transfer of which they refused. Nobody wanted to call them for us. First impressions are always the most important. That is what I have learned when I had to study about commercialism and Marketing. Well, that does make sense because after that incident, you look things through black glasses first. Bottom line: We booked the Intercontinental Beachcomber over the internet directly to the resort and paid 1200 USD for 4 nights in an overwater bungalow without breakfast. For such accommodation, the least I would expect is to have a pick up transfer, whether or not to be paid. No resort rep.'s or anybody to give decent information was at the airport. Still in the airport, we felt for several reasons that we didn't made the right decision by choosing the Beachcomber.

Our overwater bungalow was located above 2 to 3 meters depth of clear water. That didn't suits our convenience for swimming. The decoration and furnishing however is super deluxe and not a bad word about that. The room is very spacious with a separate bedroom nicely decorated with local woods and fabrics. The bathroom is just fabulous. A large bathtub with floor to ceiling mirror over its full length + double sinks nicely build in marble tables. A separate shower and separate toilet behind a lockable door completes the bathroom. The living room was equiped with a nice sofa + relax chair, a coffee table and big desk. There's a minibar and tv of which you can turn 180° for your convenience to watch either from the bed or living room. The verandah over the water was the place of which we spent most after the bedroom. We had breakfast on the verandah each day. The Moorea Beachcomber is a nice plush resort for those who has money to spent. There are weekly dinner shows at 78\$ per person which we didn't attempted. Instead we had dinner outside each night. Not that it makes you save a lot of money but we wanted to try it out. We had heard good things about Les Tipaniers, so we took their complimentary pick up to have dinner there. Vricine had a coconut cocktail, I had 1/2 liter wine. We took green salad and Poisson Cru a la Tahitienne for appetizer and both had Mahi Mahi, fish with any choice of French fries, rice or bread. For the two of us we paid 65 USD which was great in comparison to the IC Beachcomber. The food was very delicious and served on clean cotton decked tables. One less note is that we had to wait quite a while to be served but we knew that our watches were switched to island time. We had a great dinner and wanna return immediately next time.

The IC Beachcomber is settled in a well maintained garden with the OWB's (Overwater Bungalows) built on man made motus. Vricine went in the water and came out less then 30 seconds later with a serious cut in her foot. Don't go swimming without reef shoes or at least some protective footwear. The bottom has coral everywhere.

April-04-'04

Today we were up to some nautical fun and action. Therefore we decided to go for the Aquablue dive in the morning. To describe this funny thing best, you must use your imagination when explorers used to dive with metal helmets, lead attached to their bodies to keep underwater. This excursion does actually the same. You walk down a ladder from the boat while a heavy helmet is lifted over your head just before you go underneath the surface. When the funny yellow helmet is lowered over your head, a pipeline provides oxygen and you're ready to walk the bottom of the sea, 5 meters under the surface between corals, surrounded by permanent residents. This is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience not to be missed and offers super photo opportunities (see Moorea photo gallery).

This afternoon, we want to continue our nautical day with fun right on the surface. An about two hours trip with a Catajet, drive it by your own, without license on the Moorea lagoon makes another great trip. These fun little machines with 25CV outboards, where you will sit side by side with your partner is easily to ride after a short introduction. You just follow the guide's Catajet who knows the nice places. First we speed-up to Opunohu Bay, made famous by Captain Cook himself who came here long before I did. Opunohu Bay is a real spectacular place. No wonder it was used as a location for the movie "The Bounty". Next, we made a snorkeling stop to discover the lagoon's marvels: colored fishes and swimming with the stingrays. We even fed sharks in shallow waters. This trip got a 10/10 rating and I want to do it over again and again. After we returned with the Catajet, I was a bit tired because of handling the Catajet over the waves. Ready for a beer, we sat down in the restaurant where the Catajet Company is based at. The Hibiscus hotel offered us a free large beer coz we were so enthusiastic about this trip. I told the owners that I would spread the word on board the Tahitian Princess later. They gave me a handful of brochures and told us that our next ride would be free if we could bring some more people from the ship.

Tonight, we decided to have dinner outside again. We choosed for Alfredo's. Wrong bet. Over 100 dollars for 2 normal dinners on plastic chairs. Later we were told that Alfredo's has the dirtiest kitchen on the island. We could'nt see that to confirm, but the toilets were very dirty indeed. However, we saw a funny incident there. Just next to our table sat a guy drinking a glass of wine. His table was located halfway under the edge of a roof while all of a sudden a 5-inch lizard fell off. Believe it or not, right into his glass of wine. I still see the man's eyes and speechless face. Apart from that, what could happen anywhere, I admit, we noticed a few cockroaches.

April-05-'04

Today I took 4x4 inland tour with Alber Tours. I had read good comments on this company so I choosed them. I had been calling their office 1 day ahead to book the trip and was told that the price was 3500 CFP (about 35 USD). Other participants (2 couples and another single lady) paid exactly the same although they had used different ways to book it. One went directly to their office, another booked through the resort. When the trip was finished, Tom our driver-guide wanted to charge us 4000 CFP per person. Of course I refused to pay this since it was not the agreement. I tried to explain him that we all booked the trip for 3500 CFP. He did'nt gave up until I told him to call his head office and ask. It is not because of the 5 dollars difference but just the principle. The Moorea tour wasn't my cup of tea anyway. They stop at Tom's nephew which is a classy black pearl store. I can strongly advice to rent a moped, which is a lot more fun and you'll pay 4500 CFP for 8 hours. The 4x4 brings you to Belvedere viewpoint but is also easily accesible by moped since the road is paved until the lookout. Bring heaps of strong mosquito repellent if you wanna do the 4x4. You can discover Tahitian gardenia, many varieties of hibiscus, paper flower, red ginger, flamingo flower, red torch ginger, golden trumpet, orchid and so on... Also the coconut groves are numerous. Inland, you will see pineapple plantations, grapefruit vanilla, taro and tiare plantations

April-06-'04

As I had been reading good comments of **Maco's Motu picnic tour** as well, I decided to go today with him for a lagoon trip. Yes, indeed we had lots of fun. Maco and his wife, together with their dog are the hosts for a fun-filled day. Maco himself is a large well built guy who makes you start laughing upon first sight.

First stop on our boat tour is something really adventurous. Maco tightened a rope between corals where snorkelers could hold themselves due to high current. After Maco had thrown some fishmeat overboard, about half a dozen Black Tip sharks showed up. People enjoyed feeding them just a few footsteps away. It sounds a bit scary but Black Tip sharks are quiet safe, although not 100% (see Bora Bora section).



After our 7-minute flight back to Papeete which is perhaps the shortest flight in the world, we took a taxi direct to the pier where the Tahitian Princess was docked. This gorgeous vessel, fully booked for this cruise, will be our home for the next ten days.

We had booked an outside cabin and were very happy with it. Many staterooms on the Tahitian Princess are with balconies, but ourselves we thought we would be ok with a large window. Conveniently located mid-ship, Our room

#4022 was nicely decorated and had enough space for the two of us. There's enough storage to hang all our clothes and stuff, so we could put our suitcases underneath the bed. A very large mirror made the room even feel more spacious than it actually was. We had a sofa and nighttables on either side of the double bed. Further, there is a desk with another large mirror from table to ceiling which came in very useful. It had two ac plug-ins. There's an electronic safe which is big enough to hold two large cameras + wallets and stuff. The bathroom was rather small but we didn't expect a larger one on a cruise ship in this cabin-category. However, it was very nice installed with enough shelves and storage to put away all our sundries and toiletries. The shower had Gröhe temperature controllable cranes.

The multi-channel TV gives permanent activity information plus has different channels where one can watch the latest movies. The only item we missed in our cabin was a small refrigerator. I use medicine which has to be stored cold so I had to send it to the galley's refrigerators, I had to call room service 3 to 4 times a day to get them delivered which they did very promptly each time I called them.

Apart from the missing refrigerator, we felt very comfortable in our well installed cabin. Although the temperature is adjustable, we didn't touch it as it was always nice and perfectly cool in our stateroom. I had read comments from people who found the bed a bit hard. We did not have any problem with that.

The pooldeck was equipped with a nice swimming pool with a hot jacuzzi attached on either side. For some people, the pool might have been a bit too deep with its 5'7".

The Tahitian Princess had several bars to choose from, nice for predinner drinks and a great way to meet new friends is for example the Casino-bar. Sheila plays the tunes on the piano. Another ideal place for before or after dinner drinks is the Club Bar, located right next to the dining room.

As I'm not a gambler, I didn't make it to the Casino but it looks like a popular place to American fellow passengers. The ship also houses a fitness area equipped with nice

work-out machines and Spa. The library is a must-see. Its decoration is very English and you feel like you're back in the 20's.

April-08-'04

Until 5 pm the ship remain in Papeete which comes in handy for late arrivals. I had done a pre-booking through the internet from home with **Tahiti Safari Explorers** for a 4x4 half-day trip. After I confirmed my arrival in Papeete with them, they picked me up right at the pier. I had done 4x4 trips in Rarotonga and in Moorea before and found this one the best. Tahiti's interior is rich in flora with high waterfalls and valleys but also rich in mosquitoes. At one of the waterfalls, we could take a natural shower under the cascading cool water. In my opinion, a half day tour should be enough, it gives time to do a bit of shopping in the afternoon at **Le Marche**, a popular indoor market, great for souvenirs, black pearls or T-shirts. The market and the city centre is just a two-minute stroll away from the ship.

At 5 pm, Captain Mariano Manfuso, his Officers, Staff and Crew wishes everyone a enjoyable cruise. Minutes later, Papeete disappears slowly until it is gone behind the horizon. We will set a northeasterly course towards the Island of Huahine where the Tahitian Princess is expected to arrive at 8.00am tomorrow.

April-09-'04

Virtually untouched by any signs of tourism until very recently, **Huahine**, pronounced who-a-hee-nee by locals, remains a perfect refuge for those seeking peace and solitude. The slow-paced life on Huahine provides a stark contrast to the hustle and bustle yesterday in Papeete.

Huahine is actually made up of two separate islands, Huahine Nui or "Great Huahine" to the north and Huahine Iti or "Little Huahine" to the south. The two halves are connected by a narrow bridge. Known as **The Garden island** for its lush foliage and verdant tropical landscapes, the island is also blessed with an abundance of long, white beaches and palm-fringed motus (little offshore islands). Fishing and agriculture, including vanilla, coffee, taro, breadfruit, mango, papaya, and bananas are the lifeblood of the island's economy.

Also today I had pre-booked a trip by e-mail from the convenience of my chair back in Belgium. **Marc's picnic in the water** Together with fellow Cruise Critic members we climbed aboard a traditional outrigger canoe which can hold twelve people + our funny Tahitian Captain. From the lagoon you can enjoy a splendid panoramic island view while we circled the island of Huahine Iti. The absolute highlight of the day is the Motu picnic in the water. While the staff is preparing a barbecue, the Nautical Band plays the ukelele and drums to entertain the guests, enjoying complimentary big bottles of Hinano right in the shallow waters of the lagoon. Absolutely marvelous and unforgettable. Marc and his staff does a great job. Wishing the day never ended, it was finished way too quick. This was fun at its highest grade. 10/10 tour rating ! There were two other canoes from Marc's company which makes it a nice bunch of party people all together.



I have posted several pictures about this trip at the Huahine photogallery.

April-10-'04

As the Tahitian Princess will continue today its southwesterly track towards the Island of Rarotonga, we will remain out of sight of land throughout the day. Being a rather smaller ship with its 670 passengers, a number of people got seasick. Apart from this, the cruise staff seems to be worried about the Norwalk virus, also known as the "24 hour stomach bug". It has caused many outbreaks particularly in North America and Europe. Whilst the majority of these outbreaks occur ashore, a small number of cruise ships have been similarly affected.

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have confirmed these outbreaks have largely been caused by this virus, now officially classified as Norovirus.

Princess Cruises had installed sanitation dispensers at restaurant entrances and requested to all passengers to sanitize their hands before entering. Passengers who showed symptoms of being seasick, were called by the ship's doctor himself to hold a questionnaire. Anyone who reported seasick was kept an eye on as it could be signs of the Norovirus rather than seasickness.

Dramamine, wristbandages and ginger tablets easily found its way to the sick passengers. Good for the boutique on board, sad for the affected people.

Anyway, tonight was the first formal night. People dressed up and had their formal picture taken by any of the professional photographers on board. Although 20 USD for a digital picture isn't cheap, this business is still popular and runs well.

Not a bad word about the dining room with their attentive staff and glorious food. However no midnight buffet was available on this ship. To myself, that doesn't bother because the food in the dining room was delicious, plentiful, and I had late seating anyway.

I had taken only once breakfast inside the dining room which was the first day. There's a lot more variety available at the Panorama Buffet and how often can you enjoy breakfast with a mild seabreeze while overlooking the South Pacific Ocean. It truly has something



in it. We enjoyed having our breakfast at the Panorama buffet which has outside tables and plenty of space inside.

There's a whole range of choice at the buffet which was also a great place to have lunch.

The only problem at breakfast were boiled eggs. All styles are cooked on the spot except for boiled eggs which are normally not available. I said *normally* because I was lucky to become a close friend with Chris, the Filipino chief-cook at the Panorama buffet of which he made an exception to me each time I requested boiled eggs. I noticed other

people requested too but were kindly refused. That was the only service which could have been better. I don't think it is difficult to boil 4-minute eggs in advance and put them at the buffet. In addition to the large lunch buffet with again many food to choose from, a daily themed buffet was served at this time too. Japanese, Polynesian, Italian, ... I'm a Sushi lover but this buffet was the only one which rather disappointed me. Perhaps because after 3 days I was used to being spoiled already.

A tradition at sea, afternoon tea was served too + the daily icecream bar which opened up in the afternoon. At the bistro, pizzas were available too during lunch which lasts until 3.30pm !

April-11-'04

Happy Easter from Rarotonga - Cook Islands. We were here at the beginning of our vacation (see Cook Islands review) and knew the good places for snorkeling. We had done the main activities such as the Motu picnic and the 4x4 that time, so today we were up for something different and decided to rent a **Scootcar**. That is a funny small three-wheeler with two smaller balancing wheels at the back. This 2-seater is a nice way to get around the island, specially today when most Cook Islanders are home for Easter and traffic is low.



I had become my Cook Island driver's license with succes in Aitutaki last week and could use it again today. That was if I had'nt lost it somewhere in our cabin. I might have dropped it accidentally in the waste bin as it looks no different to an ordinary note. Normally, I had to go again to the local Police station here in Raro to get myself another driver's license but the owner of Raro Rentals allowed me to hire the scootcar without it. After all it was Easter and the cops would be at one or another mass or with their relatives.

As there is'nt much traffic on the island during regular days, now on Easter Sunday, the island's single circular road seems to be entirely reservated for ourself and few other cruise ship passenger who rented a moped or something too. That was great for those people without a Cook Island license ! (note: I found my Cook Island license back again, once back home in Belgium)

The snorkeling in Rarotonga is at its best at **Fruits of Rarotonga** so that's where I drove Silly Willy (we named our funcar like that) to this place. Get a free map when you rent a vehicle and you'll fid this place somewhere halfway the circle when you departed somewhere near the wharf (or Avarua). Bunches of fishes can be spotted in the shallow waters of the lagoon. All kinds. About a dozen unidentified (I'm not a specialist in this field) blue sea creatures, 30 to 40 centimeters in length were teasing me all the time. Each time I got my disposal underwater camera ready, they were gone. Great fun of which I could enjoy myself in this warm water for hours.

A bit further down the road is a long soft-sanded stretch of beach with 4 lovely motus in front of it. You can easily wade to one of it. Not much of snorkeling right here at **Muri Beach** but with the clear blue lagoon, there is a good range of water sports to suit all ages. You can choose from skimming the lagoon on a windsurfer, kayaking, lagoon boat trips, scuba diving, deep-sea fishing, reef watching in a glass 'submarine', or just swimming and sunbathing.

Rarotonga has become a popular location for weddings and honeymoons. Wedding packages designed to suit each couple are available from a number of operators on the island. The golden beach of uninhabited Koromiri islet here in Muri Lagoon is the most popular location for weddings. Young coconuts saplings planted by each newly wed couple line the beach and are testimony to the islet's popularity.

There is a single hut with a bed and most remarkable thing I noticed was a english styled toilet placed in the open air without any form of wall or shield, but just between a few palm trees, facing the lagoon and Rarotonga across. Tell me where else you can sit on the toilet, overlooking a lagoon.

Together with Bob and Kathy we took our lunch at popular and famous Sails restaurant at Muri Beach. The motu is about 200 metres away - it appears to almost float in the lagoon. We could take our shoes off and walk right down eight steps and bury our toes in the powder white sand, or wade in the warm sea. This is Sails, surely one of the most beautiful places in the Pacific to dine (or lunch in our case).

April-12-'04

Another full day at sea heading back north-east towards Raiatea, French Polynesia. Weather forecast today: partly cloudy but no showers to speak of. When I woke up this morning the sky had all colours but blue. It was the first day where rain was really pouring down from the sky. However in the afternoon it cleared up and there was the sun again. I had spent most of the day outside (under the cover) at the pool to do some people-watching while the world goes by at sea. There are daily activities organised by the cruise staff to keep you entertained but I'm not really the type of a guy who enjoys "Walk-a-mile", "Pathway to Yoga", "Name that Tune" or "Napkin folding". I really regret that **Spice** didn't play longer as he's a real cool reggae and other Caribbean songs performer.

This night the All Star Passenger lip sync show was great fun at the Tahitian Lounge and was a good variety to the other nights at the disco where there was usually just myself and few other night owls.

April-13-'04

Considered the most beautiful of all the Society Islands by Polynesian past and present, even outsiders admit that there is an undeniable mystique that hangs over **Raiatea**. The allied kingdoms of Polynesia journeyed by canoe, sometimes covering great distances, to hold tribal meetings and ceremonies at Marae Taputapuatea in Opoa on the south-east side of the island.

At one time, even human sacrifices were performed here. In 1969, thousands of human skulls were excavated from the site. Legend also has it that Oro, the God of war and fertility was born, atop Mount Temahani, on the northern end of Raiatea.

Raiatea is the second largest island in French Polynesia. Most of the island's population is centered around the busy port town of Uturoa, the second largest port in French Polynesia after Papeete. The rest of the island is quiet by comparison and only lightly populated.



If Raiatea is quiet, **Tahaa** is quieter still. Small pearl farms dot the warm, clear waters of Tahaa.

I had a pre-booking with Bruno's l'Excursion blueu (www.tahaa.net) together with Bob and Kathy from Canada, Kevin and Jill from New York, a French couple and some other Cruise Critic people. His outrigger was waiting for us prompt on time.

Bruno himself and Lanie, his great Polynesian assistant did everything to please us. After a short stop at a pearl- and vanilla farm, we headed further first to the Lagoonarium, later to a picturesque motu to enjoy a delicious fish barbeque and some beaching. It was here that I tried for the first time the famous Polynesian breadfruit served in a banana leave. My compliments goes to the cook of this very yummy barbeque.

The absolute highlight of the day had yet to come this afternoon at the Coral Gardens of Tahaa. Here we went drift-snorkeling in a bay, about two to three meters deep. Drift snorkeling is in fact easy. You just lay flat with your mask underwater and let yourself float forward with the current of the lagoon. Here at Coral Gardens, I was amazed to see such a lot of beautiful corals of different shapes, sizes and colors in really crystal clear waters populated with fishes of all kinds. Bunches of sea creatures, all kind of shapes and colors playing between a wonder world of magnificent corals in absolutely unbeatable visibility. It really is like swimming in a natural aquarium. Unforgettable and truly worth

every cent. I had not enough disposal underwater camera's with me but included in your trip fare, Bruno is taking digital underwater pictures of which he will password-protect post on-line, so when you're back home, it is possible to download them from his website after he has sent you your personal access password.

His pictures are stunning. Away from the hordes of fellow cruise passengers, the 110 USD trip is great value, considering it is an entire day of fun in the sun with a great lunch and free digital images of your unforgettable day.

Tonight, we remain in dock at Raiatea until 6.00am tomorrow morning when we will be heading towards Bora Bora.

What supposed to be a great tropical night at poolside literally fell in the water as mother nature was'nt with us. The **Children of Raiatea** show of 5.15pm at the Cabaret Lounge was just lovely to see this little cuties shaking their hips to the rythms at the age of 4.

The next Polynesian Dance Show, programmed on pooldeck was cancelled because of the rain which just started when the first performer made is way on stage. Instead the whole organisation moved to the Tahitian Lounge, normally spacious enough during disco-nights but for this event it was a wrong choice. Way too small to acommodate all passengers. Right after the great performance of the local dancers, Le Maitre D'hotel Cianluigi Cisotto was creating a cascading Champagne waterfall where people could have their picture taken. We had big fun at the Tahitian Lounge untill the place closed it doors.

April-14-'04

For many there are few places, if any, in the world whose natural beauty surpasses **Bora Bora**. Here nature painted a perfect masterpiece of deep green volcanic peaks egded by a ribbon of reef and magnificent white-sand beaches.

For years I had been dreaming to visit at least once in my life this tropical gem. Finally today, I could see for myself why so many had praised this island.

Approaching the lagoon of Bora Bora by cruise ship is truly spectacular. Go up on observation deck to witness the changing blue colors of the waters as you pass through Rade De Vaitape where the ship will go at anchor in Baie De Povai. The island is almost entirely encircled by a string of small motus where most of the luxurious resorts are nestled on palm-fringed beaches.

Since I had been planning this day in detail, I was hoping to do a flightseeing tour by helicopter overlooking this phenomenal island. Unfortunately I could not find three more participants to share the flight with.

Princess Cruises sold sunset cruises on a big catamaran for 99 USD a head. Still at home, I e-mailed "Taravana" to join them for a similar cruise for just 82 USD. I remember that I got a reply by them that I should call them once I had arrived on the island to confirm the trip. There would be no problem to join the catamaran sunset tour with them. Ok, I phoned Taravana Cruises and was answered that there were just the two of us so far, while the agreement was that we could join their boat together with hotel guests where the Taravana was in charge for. They would leave me a message to our stateroom before 5.00pm to confirm wether they had more people. We did'nt trusted Taravana Cruises while we were absolutely looking forward to do this sunset cruise in paradise on a sail catamaran.

Do not book this tour with Princess Cruises. You're always better off to wait till the arrival at port. In Vaitape, the small port where the ships tenders arrive, there are a handfull of local tour operators + a small visitors center. We found another catamaran who offered a



sunset cruise for just 60 USD ! Of course we booked this right away. That was probably the best decision we had done today. We saw 2 huge catamarans departing packed with passengers from the Tahitian Princess who had paid 99 USD while we boarded our smaller sail catamaran. The boat was very romantic while we had to share the space on board with just another couple (also cruise ship passengers). This couple had exactly the same story as we had. They also had mailed Taravana, called them on arrival and got

the same answer.

Now we had the exquisite luxury to be on board a very nice catamaran where nobody obstructed the magnificent views to take excellent pictures. What a deal for 60 USD. The owners of the boat, a couple who had also their son on board did everything to make us feel comfortable and during the actual sunset, we were offered a complimentary glass of champagne. A very romantic evening in paradise and a perfect way to end the first day in beautiful Bora Bora.

April-15-'04

What makes Bora Bora so beautiful is the combination of sand-fringed motus sitting along the outer reef, the multi-hued lagoon, and the balsaltic tombstone known as **Mount Otemanu** towering over it all. Our second day here in Bora Bora, together with other Cruise Critic members who we had met on line at this cruise forum, we had chartered **Shark's Boy** outrigger for some fun in the famous BB lagoon. Spending 4 hours for just 55 USD with Shark's Boy is again a muc better deal to a similar trip offered on board the Tahitian Princess. Add a more personal touch with just 10 people on board and the reason of our choice is easily understood.



The first Shark's Boy action was referring to the company's name. A rope was tightened between two corals so that snorkelers could hold on to avoid being drifted towards the sharks because of the current.

Yes, we were into some shark feeding, not from the safety of the boat, but right in the safety of the lagoon ! Sounds a bit scary and hell yes it was. While floating on the water, fighting against the strong current we were holding the rope, Shark's Boy threw some meat overboard in front of us to attract the Black Tip Sharks. It really is some kind of

an experience I have to admit.

It was after the feeding, back on board that Mr. Sharky showed his upper leg, marked by a huge shark's bite, a curve-shaped mark with deeper body marks where our lovely fish left his tees. His assistant was attacked in his foot as well. It is said that Black Tip sharks are safe for human.

After this new experience, we snorkeled a bit further to the amazing coral gardens of Bora Bora. Although not as impressive as those in Tahaa, we spotted a huge brown Moray eel partly hiding under a coral as they usually do. The eel with a thickness of about 12 centimeters sometimes showed us his sharp tees. Hundreds of other seacreatures can be seen at the coral gardens too. We were given meat to feed the fishes ourselves who pleasantly come to take it out of your hand.

I had always wondered why we did'nt attracted the sharks anymore with this meet, since they were out of sight, but just all the other more friendly looking inhabitants of the lagoon. There were stingrays and bunches of yellow, green, blue and other colorful fishes of all shapes again.

Everyone on our boat had yet another memorable day. We sailed across the island nearby luxury resorts as the Pearl Beach, Sofitel, Sheraton or the -still under construction- Ritz Carlton where once finished you can spend the night for just 3000 USD a day. No, I did'nt accidentally add another zero.

No visit to Bora Bora would be completed without a visit to Bloody Mary's, a famous restaurant-bar. Outside next to the entrance is the wall of fame with the names of all the celebrities who were here before you came. Rowan Atkinson (Mr. Bean), Harrison Ford, Marlon Brando (who owns an entire island to himself in Polynesia) are just to name a few who tried the Bloody Mary's served here. They are the strongest I ever had, but delicious.

April-16-'04

Our last day in paradise. We had stayed 4 nights on beautiful Moorea (see chapter 2 of this report) and had therefor enjoyed all major trips and activities this island had to offer. Today, I was up into something different and was looking to rent a moped to explore the island at the convenience of just being by myself. This morning, I had breakfast on the outside deck of the cruise ship while it was anchored in Opunohu Bay. The view is truly unforgettable and spectacular wherever you look. Having breakfast here are moments I won't forget easily.

Ok, I paid 50 dollars for a well running comfortable automatic motobike for the entire day. If you wanna hire one, be sure to go ashore with the first tender as there are just a few available right there at the pier. I had rented mine with Albert Tours, a well known company on Moorea who owns a number of different travel related companies. You can circle the island of Moorea in about one hour and a half (without stops) but if you're limited on time, the most beautiful sights are on the north side of the island where the ship is at anchor.

Opunohu- and Cooks Bay are worth to be viewed from an upwinding paved road. Look for Belvedere look-out. I drove my way to the Sofitel first, that is on the north-east side of the island (take a free map). Just walk inside the resort and nobody seems to care that you come here as a visitor. The Sofitel is a great place to take a morning swim on the sand-bottomed beach. The resort offers also great photo possibilities of its overwater bungalows as you can see here.

Refreshed from the swim, my second stop was at the Sheraton, perhaps the best area for snorkeling right off the beach.

Again, nobody seems to bother my appearance at the property. Other notable stops I had made includes Les Tipaniers hotel, where I took my lunch overlooking the lagoon, the Hibiscus hotel, the Belvedere viewpoint plus a few photo stops during my ride around both bays. The best view is right above the Sofitel where you can see the amazing colors of Moorea lagoon.

A fun day again, different from all the watersport activities I had done the past three weeks. When you go ashore in Moorea there's a small open air market, selling T-shirts, Pareo's, handmade jewelry and other nick-nacks.

To finalize this great cruise, together with Cruise Critic members and other new friends, we enjoyed a great farewell party on deck this evening.

Tahitian Princess Cruise

- sailing of April 7, 2004 -

We had travelled completely to the other side of the planet to join this cruise. There has never been a dull moment during the 10 days on board this magnificent vessel and actually we regretted that we didn't book a back to back cruise which would not only have been 21 fun days on board the Tahitian Princess but also saved us heaps of \$\$\$ as well.

We've been flying to Rarotonga and further to Aitutaki in the Cook Islands at an extra flight fare of app. 800usd (incl. Papeete-Moorea-Papeete) + 4 nights in the Moorea Beachcomber overwater bungalow which has cost us 750 USD per person again. That is WITHOUT any meal while on the ship all the food is inclusive. Add all the meals + the accommodation in the Cook Islands (6 nights) and we far exceed over the 10-day cruise fare in an outside cabin. 1 simple breakfast at the Beachcomber in Moorea digs a 30\$ (per person) hole in our budget already.

Compare this to the wealth of food, taking outside on deck the cruise ship with magnificent views of Opunohu Bay and the choice is easily made.



The ship's food is great and full of variation. I bought myself a 25 USD soft drink sticker to put on my Princess credit card which is your electronic cabin key at the same time. 25 USD for unlimited soft drinks during the entire cruise + a free Coca Cola cooling bottle is a good deal if you drink an average of 3 soda's a day or more. However, you'll have fountain soft drinks, no cans.

Alternatively to the dining room, for an additional fee of 15 usd, you can dine at **The Steakhouse**. We didn't visit it, so

I can't justice the place but according our tablemates, it is worth the 15\$. Also available for an additional 20\$ is **La Trattoria Sabatini's** of which we had diner one time. All I can say about this restaurant is: Include at least one night diner there! The food is absolutely fabulous. I bet that you can't finish everything. The atmosphere at Sabatini's is great too. No rushes or noise in comparison to the dining room where waiters and busboys have to rush to serve all on time. This makes a great place for a special occasion. Quiet, intimate and very personal.

I was a nightly visitor to the **Tahitian Lounge** which is far from busy. Usually it operates as a disco from about 11.00pm till 2.00am. As I experienced on other ships, also here, 50% of the disco-visitors are officers or cruise staff who are after some adventure with single female passengers. I saw officers 60+ of age dancing like teenagers -an awful sight- but funny. The nightly shows are held at the **Cabaret Lounge**. 4 shows were done by the Tahitian Singers and dancers. It is great to see a show but don't waste your time to the three others unless you're bored. In my opinion the three other shows by the Tahitian dancers and singers are quite similar but has different costumes and songs. I repeat: That is just my opinion.

Other shows includes music and laughter with comedian Bayne Bacon or Greg Moreland.

Spice, the duo performing Caribbean music at pooldeck was great. I don't understand why they played just one hour at a time. In the **Princess Patter**, a sort of daily newspaper which shows the activities and shows of the day, was announced that they perform during sail away between 5.00 and 6.00pm. They started playing at 5.30 one time. I think a sail away party at poolside could have much more fun, thus more consumers if this great duo would perform from 4.00 - 6.00pm.

While in Raiatea, don't miss the **Children of Raiatea** show on board the ship. They performed at 5.15pm while at the same time Princess Cruises has the "great idea" to offer excursions at 56\$ for a similar Polynesian show ashore. That is another thing I could'nt understand. The same night at 10.15pm a great Polynesian show performed by local dancers and musicians was programmed Poolside, followed by a champagne waterfall. Unfortunately just minutes before they should start, the rain pored down from the sky, making it impossible to be done outside.

The whole organization has to be moved quickly to the Tahitian Lounge which is too small to accommodate the audience. Pity.

If Princess Cruises would organize more outdoor festivities under the Polynesian stars, could be so much more fun than the empty disco. The nights are warm and tropical here and offer great opportunities for pooldeck parties "Caribbean style". I understand that some passengers want to sleep early and the noise could be a problem, but until midnight should be ok I would think.

The **Casino Bar** seems to be a good place to meet new friends or just to relax with a cocktail, listening to the voice of Sheila Taylor performing on piano. The ship is truly beautifully decorated throughout with a unique well-stocked library, a Titanic-a-like staircase where you can have your formal picture taken. Although 20 dollar for a picture isn't really cheap, I have to say that the 3 photographers did a great job. We had 5 underwater cameras of which 1 of them was developed in Rarotonga and 4 at the ship's **Photo Gallery**. I don't know if it is coincidence but the 4 disposal cameras developed on board came out much better. The Photo Gallery is well equipped and has all types of digital memory cards for sale plus some more essentials. You can have your pictures being digitalized and put on CD-rom.



During this fantastic voyage we had met a number of nice people from different corners in the world. Cruise Critic members for example: Kathy and Bob from Canada, you have been very kind and fun to travel with. Thank you for the group picture! Lani and Henry from Hawaii, Dan and Julie, Dough and Nadine, Brice and family, ... All of you were super to travel with. We had a fantastic table of eight. A international bunch of fun people from San Jose, CA and Robert and his wife from United Kingdom. We truly enjoyed your company.

Would I do this cruise again ? Yes, but twice !

Princess Cruises offered transport from the pier in Papeete to Faa airport for 25\$ per person. Don't do it. There are taxis available day and night right at the ship's pier. We paid a trip to airport 25 usd for the taxi (the two of us) at midnight. On our way to the ship at the beginning of the cruise, we had the same driver (coincidence) bringing us from the airport to the ship for just 15\$ but that was daytime. The taxi is actually a van and can hold about 8 passengers, which means that for 3 dollar a head you can do the ride at night (sharing 8).

Arriving back in the hectic world of our western lifestyle in Los Angeles was like a cold shower. We had a 3-night stopover in L.A., and decided to stay at Venice Beach. The first thing we did on arrival was buying a sweater for each of us. I had been here before at the very same place back in 92. That was in july. Ladies were roller skating in their bikinis showing their beautiful bodyparts. Now in april, the boardwalk was windy and ladies wore sweaters.

Anyway we did a great city tour of LA the other day while our last day was spent at Universal Studios Hollywood.

What a trip! Now we're back in Belgium...loaded with lifetime memories, stocked with about 700 pictures and 90 minutes of video, life is set again to western style, duties and climate.

Paradise really exists. We have seen it, however way too short.....

We booked the entire trip, flights, hotels, excursions and cruise through the internet without meeting a single person visually. Everything went perfect and would do it the

same way immediately again next time. Previous to the bookings, I had literally viewed thousands of webpages, read forums at [Cruise Critic](#), [Tahiti Explorer](#), [Lonely Planet](#) and a number of other sources. These sites are a huge source of great information. Their forums are the best and highly recommended if you are considering to go to a similar trip.

Of course you can contact me by e-mail if you like to know something additional.

Thank you very much for reading this report -check back sometimes.
I'm planning on my next trip....