

Divided Sky - Leeward Islands - French Polynesia

Posted: August 12, 2013

Leeward Islands - French Polynesia

A boisterous overnight sail from Moorea landed us at Huahine mid-morning, where we easily entered the pass through the fringing reef and navigated our way down the west edge of the island to a lovely sheltered area called Avea Bay. Our goal was to be anchored on Saturday in time to book a waterfront table at Chez Tara for their Sunday Buffet (ma'a Tahiti of traditional Tahitian food). All proceeded as planned.

On Sunday we ventured ashore by dinghy around 1130 a.m. to observe the preparation of the feast as tuna, breadfruit and yams were removed from the earth oven and their banana leaf wrappers. The rustic waterfront restaurant (looking out over turquoise water towards Divided Sky) was fully booked with locals and tourists alike. With background ukulele music, patrons indulged in fabulous serves of fish, pork, chicken, yams,

taro, breadfruit and various other local fruits and vegetables. A most

unusual sight was a serving plate of limp, purple, cooked bananas, which required a second glance to identify. All items on the buffet were enjoyed and went down well with accompanying Pina Colodas. Best items included the poisson cru, roasted pork and the tapioca pudding dessert, which appeared on Col's plate(s) at least twice.

At Huahine, we also called into the main town of Fare, where we found a good grocery store, with more French wine for ship stores. Divided Sky had a lovely anchoring spot where surfing was easily viewed from our cockpit.

A comfortable day sail downwind put us at the pass into the large figure eight reef which encloses both Tahaa and Raiatea. We spent 5 days at a well-protected bay on Tahaa as the weather turned from one extreme to the other and then back again. On a flat calm morning, Col was out with the camera for some fabulous early morning shots of Haamene Bay.

Next, at Raiatea we secured a swing mooring at the Apooiti Marina, the base for most charter yacht companies. From here we were able to walk to the airport to hire a car for touring around the island. Most interesting at Raiatea was the important Marae Taputaputea (traditional temple), which was the centre of spiritual power in Polynesia, where important ceremonies included participants from all of French Polynesia, the Cook Islands and New Zealand. Whilst at Raiatea we were also to secure fuel and water alongside a town fuel dock - a rarity in most of the Pacific, outside of Papeete.

After a very bouncy anchor-watch night on the western reef of Tahaa (the predicted 18-20k wind turned up to 40k in gusts), we opted for a quick sail at first light to Bora Bora and the protection of the Bora Bora Yacht Club mooring basin. The Leeward Islands of French Polynesia generally had very deep anchorages (60-100 feet), so the security of a good mooring was

very comforting. The Yacht Club also provided our first hot showers

(excluding our solar showers), since we couldn't remember when – perhaps 5 months previously in Panama? Also, for the first time since Galapagos, laundry was not done by hand, but by free, modern washing machines at the Yacht Club. However, Col spent the following 2 hours on "peg watch" as the gusty winds tried to extricate our clothes and sheets from the lines.

The must-do items in Bora Bora included lunch at Bloody Mary's Restaurant and sunset drinks at the Bora Bora Yacht Club. We had only a short stay here, but it was most enjoyable. A good weather and wind forecast persuaded us to prepare for the next 1300 mile sail to Tonga. See you there!

Jeanne and Colin Harrison

Yacht Divided Sky

