

Divided Sky - Tahiti and Moorea

Posted: July 25, 2013

With 22 nautical miles to go on a heading on 222 degrees magnetic, Tahiti finally emerged from under the morning cloud cover and simultaneously began showing a strong return on our radar screen. Kenny G was playing clarinet on Tahiti radio as we practised our French by confirming the local time on FM107.3, and altering the ship's clock to -10 hours GMT, 30 minutes earlier than the Marquesas Islands, which like Adelaide, had a crazy ½ hour time zone difference from its country's capital.

The day was picture perfect. The sky was deep blue, dotted with trade wind clouds. The sea gently nudged us forward towards Point Venus – a destination with so many delightful historical connotations, including the Harrison's proposal and acceptance of marriage almost exactly 18 years ago.

By mid-afternoon Divided Sky was at anchor over the crystal clear water and black sand of Matavai Bay where Captains Cook (1769 and 1777), Bligh

(1788) and Wallis (1767) had all anchored. The water was flat calm and by dinner time the temperature was comfortable for cooking. Neither of these pleasures had been enjoyed since Grenada. A still night under the sweeping loom of the Point Venus Lighthouse (designed by Robert Louis Stevenson's father) meant a good, solid sleep for both of us.

Saturday morning found Divided Sky and her tender to be the turning marks of the Outrigger races off of Point Venus. A most enjoyable day was spent watching the races close-up and photographing the paddling efforts, especially when one of the pirogues (va'a in Tahitian) cut off another by squeezing as close as possible to our dinghy.

The Society Islands are unusual in that tides are not moon dictated.

Because the islands are situated at an amphidromic point, high tide occurs at noon and midnight every day. There is very little tidal range, but the currents in reef passes can run up to 8 knots.

The first two weeks in Tahiti were focused on boat chores and reprovisioning, as company was arriving. Gill and Bob Hogarth (owners of a Halberg-Rassey 34' at the RSAYS), were flying into Papeete at 2330 on 1 July. Dinghy, luggage, Colin and the Hogarths successfully located anchored DS in the moonlight, where Jeanne waited with leis and a welcoming smile.

The Hogarth's three week visit seemed to vanish in an instant. Between sightseeing in Papeete at the Market, churches and Pearl Museum; snorkelling; hiking; enjoying several anchorages in both Tahiti and Moorea; attending the fabulous Heiva Festival Polynesian cultural events; touring Tahiti-Iti by car; watching the Outrigger Racing; and solving the world's problems over many Happy Hours and lingering meals, the time sped past. Three of the highlights were: 1. Attending an outstanding evening of traditional Tahitian Singing and Dancing concluding with a performance by an extraordinary troupe of 250+ beautifully costumed dancers – hips moving in unison to the drumbeat; 2. Snorkelling with manta rays and black tipped reef sharks; and 3. Hiking 10kms to the Belvedere Lookout on Moorea from where jagged mountain peaks, turquoise reefs, plus both Cook's Bay and Opunohu Bays were visible.

After reprovisioning delightful French wines at the Duty Free wholesalers in Papeete, we headed west towards Huahini, Tahaa and Bora Bora, the Leeward Islands of the Society Islands.



