

## Divided Sky - Tonga

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Nineteen days after leaving Bora Bora, we arrived safely and happily at Neiafu, Vava'u, Tonga, one of our favourite worldwide cruising destinations. You probably thought we'd cover the 1350 nautical miles more quickly, but we had perfect conditions to make three unexpected stops on route from Bora Bora: Maupiti, Mopelia and Niue. We were thrilled to have had this opportunity for the first time, as the passes on the first two are heart-stopping and the third is an open roadstead - - all requiring perfect conditions for stopping.

Maupiti was a mini-Bora Bora, with gorgeous water colours on the fringing reef, manta rays in the lagoons, and whales outside of the awesome pass through the reef. Once again we celebrated Colin's birthday in an exotic location, as fellow cruisers brought over a chocolate cake for the occasion. Mopelia was a 4 mile circular coral atoll. Its 60' wide pass was marked only by two sticks and two floating buoys and had a continuous outflowing current of up to 12 knots (we had only 4 ½ knots). Here we enjoyed the company of the 13 (mostly women) copra coop workers who collected coconuts to be dried and sold for cosmetic oils.

At Niue the ocean surge was often so strong that when venturing ashore, yachties had to raise dinghies out of the water onto the wharf, and then move them on a trolley (we called the "spatula") to one of the designated "Yacht Tender" parking places on the quay!

Col missed Father's Day this year. As we approached Sunday, 1 September we also approached the International Date Line. Just as the clock was ticking towards midnight, the day shifted ahead, so that 2359-0001 local time moved us from Saturday to Monday.

Tonga provided several weeks of much needed R&R in between Tongan Feasts, Beach BBQs, Happy Hours, and shows ashore. We finally had time to catch up with cruisers who we only said a quick hello to from Panama onwards.

The anchorages in Vava'u were lovely. One very special day we loaded aboard Divided Sky six fellow cruisers for snorkelling in difficult to reach places, including the famous Mariner's Cave, which required a dive into the dark abyss to enter the hidden cave.

Normal maintenance and a few fix-it jobs were completed before a short stop in Ha'apai (the central island group of Tonga) to do a bit of genealogy searching for a friend with Wesleyan Missionary ancestry. We were then ready to push off to Noumea, New Caledonia. Australia was just over the horizon!

Jeanne and Colin Harrison



