

## TAHITI

We visited Tahiti earlier this year on our last cruise, arriving on a hot and sunny Saturday. On that day last February, other large cruise liners were in port, and the shops were all open and obviously doing good trade!

This trip we docked at Papeete one day ahead of our original schedule as a result of our landing difficulties at the previous ports of call. So, it was a Sunday morning when we greeted Tahiti again, we were the only cruise ship in the harbour, the weather was not quite as hot and sunny as it was in February, and almost all of the shops and restaurants were closed.



On our last visit we spent all of our free time shopping - Alvina had set her heart on buying a black pearl necklace, unique to this part of the world. For this visit we had booked an all day excursion, travelling all the way round this island of almost paradise. Our coach departed at 9.30am, travelling through the suburbs, then climbing uphill to the highest point we could reach. From here

the town of Papeete, and its unspoilt beaches, warm blue seas and roller coaster surf waves were all laid out before us to both enjoy and also to photograph.

Next stop was at another beach, on which sat the island's sole lighthouse, built by Robert Louis Stevenson's father - so said the inscribed plaque! After this stop we travelled through lush countryside, with waterfalls adorning the valleys between the hills, colourful churches of many denominations, and many schools and colleges for the local inhabitants and their children. We stopped alongside the coast to look at some "blow holes" where sea water was pumped upwards by wave power under some rocks, which forced the water up into the air.



Soon it was time to eat, and we all enjoyed a buffet lunch at a local hotel, where the restaurant was alongside the sea, which was both pleasant and also cooling! Maybe we forgot our diet when we saw the vast array of foods we could choose from, which we enjoyed with many glasses of welcome cold water!

Our afternoon continued with a visit to a newly created botanical garden, complete with a splendid large waterfall - again, many pictures were taken here. A short visit to some local caves was our next destination, before we were taken to a museum of Tahitian life. Our drive back through the suburbs of Papeete completed our full day tour, which meant that we had driven all the way round the island coast roads.



We were dropped off by the ship, and saw little point in reboarding as we wished to wander round the town, and find somewhere to eat and drink. Yes, there are many restaurants and bars here, but almost all were closed on a Sunday. We settled for a place called The Three Brasseries whose "fare" we had sampled earlier this year. Owain ate duck in a spicy sauce, Alvina tucked into Mahi Mahi - a local fish she has eaten before, and Sheila (wife of bridge lecturer Tony - who was catching up on sleep in his cabin) ate an enormous salad dish. We chose to buy a large jug of beer, it works out cheaper that way, and as the evening progressed we were joined by many other passengers, crew members, and staff from the ship - hardly surprising when this was one of the few places open!

Back on the ship we first had to dry out - this neck of the woods is noted for its tropical storms - it is a strange sensation to be rained upon with such warm rainwater! A group of Tahitian dancers and musicians had been brought onboard to entertain us, after which we settled in a group in the Captain's Bar to reflect on the day, and also plan our next days port of call - Bora Bora.