

RANGIROA

Well, here we are anchored off Rangiroa, the largest of the Tuamotus islands, and the second largest atoll in the world. This is an unscheduled stop, and very welcome it is too. We feel sorry for the passengers who embarked at Fiji for this leg of the cruise. With torrential rain, heavy swells and the inability of the ship's tender boats to get passengers safely on shore, it must have been very disappointing for them.



However, today is a magical day, a totally unexpected stop at a beautiful desert island. The crew are the first to disembark, as they have to carry over to the island enough food and drink to satisfy all passengers needs. They transport barbecues, burgers, chicken portions, spare ribs, sausages, various salads, rolls, fruit, cakes and pastries, and also a variety of drinks and ice ashore.

The ships tenders drop us off at a jetty where we walk along a paved road for 1 ½ miles towards the private beach that we have hired for the day. There are very few buildings, and those that we see are very nice bungalow style buildings with ornate verandas. We pass coconut groves, wild coastline with large breakers out to sea and beaches made of dried coral.



The weather is hot and windy on this, the windward side of the island, and becomes hotter and calmer as we turn into the road leading down to "our" beach for the day. Members of staff have already barbecued the food, and there is a wide selection on offer. Waiters walk up and down the beach serving drinks with ice, and we are even provided with beach towels.

After lunch we spend some time swimming in the warm turquoise water, and watching the many colourful fish darting in and out of the coral. If we stand still in the water next to a coral outcrop we can see the wildlife easily without even using a snorkel. There is a great deal of interest in a Stingray which appears in the shallow water, and we are amazed at the length of its tail in relation to the rest of its body.



A sudden tropical storm sends many of the passengers back to the ship, but the hardy amongst us stay in the water. After all we can't get any wetter! Half an hour later the sun reappears and we spend the rest of the day soaking up the afternoon sun and drinking a few ciders from the bar.

Eventually we take the last tender back to the ship, and within 20 minutes the anchor is taken up and we are off again to our next port of call, Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Islands. There is a deck party planned for tonight, but we are not sure whether we will be awake when it starts at 10 pm! It has been a very tiring but truly wonderful day.

