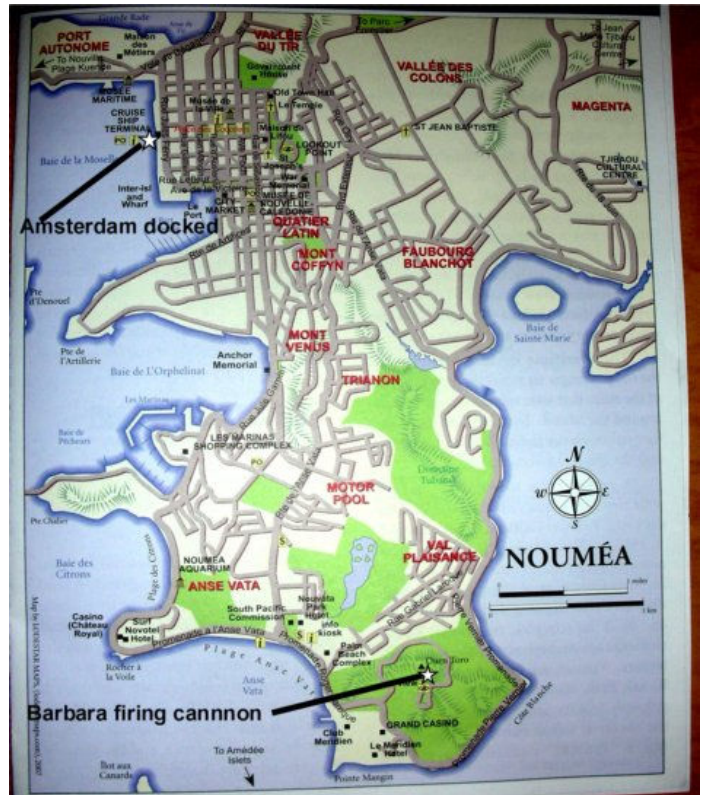


2/12/07 Day 28 – Noumea, New Caledonia – Monday: We pulled into the harbor at Noumea, New Caledonia about 7am on a sunny calm morning. The Amsterdam docked at the new Cruise Ship Terminal. Here are a couple maps of the area.



As the Amsterdam approached the harbor entrance a white parabolic type radio antennae of some kind became obvious on the west side of the harbor.

New Caledonia is a huge source of nickel for the world, just behind Russia and Canada in the mining of nickel ore. Not bad for a country only 200 miles long and 30 miles wide. After we were docked there was a large nickel ore processing plant visible on the northern edge of Noumea. The chimneys, smoke and some large buildings of the plant in the distance can be seen in this view taken from the ship.



Another cruise ship was docked near the Amsterdam.

There were also the ubiquitous shipping containers stacked up on nearby docks; a sign of thriving commerce. The shipping containers are on the dock in the background of the photo on the right, taken from the stern of the Amsterdam. Also visible, in the foreground, is the flag of France and New



Caledonia, flown from the stern of the Amsterdam as part of the maritime protocol when ships of any nation visit a foreign port.

We were pleasantly surprised by Noumea. It was a cleaner and more well kept city than the French Polynesian cities we have recently visited. The neighborhoods and vistas we saw in our brief tours were very pleasing and this city left us feeling good about the place.

First we took a brief walk for three or four blocks into the city from the ship. Barbara brought her Oak Ridge City Library card. We captured a view of the card in front of an ATM machine marked Nouvelle Calédonie as our proof of the card's visit to New Caledonia.



We started our visit with a one and a half hour tour using what they call Le Petit Train.

The rubber tired Le Petit Train, carrying about 75 people, meandered through the city streets with the horn beeping and people waving at us. The guide in the engine cab gave a running commentary about the passing scene. The sun was out, temperature just right and humidity down so the conditions

were ideal. The highlight of the tour was when we were taken to the top of a hill at Pointe Mangin, on the southern edge of city.

The US military used Noumea as headquarters for coordinating the war effort in the South Pacific during World War II. The hill at Pointe Mangin was the highest ground in the city so it served as a lookout post and was fortified with a several large cannon. The New Caledonians have preserved the cannon and turned the top of the hill into a tourist destination. While we were there the tour company handed out refreshments and pastries from ice chests. Two other bus loads of tourists, mainly cruise ship passengers, arrived so there were plenty of people milling



around taking in the sights. The view of the Noumea harbor was spectacular because of the many small islands populating the blue and azure hued water surrounding the islands. In addition, the bougainvillea shrubs were in full bloom. The scene reminded us of the view of San Diego from Point Loma on a nice day; only Noumea Bay was more beautiful than we remembered San Diego harbor. Here are some photos of what we saw:





The large cannon installed by the US military during World War II received a lot of attention from the tourists. Barbara couldn't resist pulling an imaginary trigger on this one.

We wound our way back through town, past a hospital containing some buildings remaining from the war-time military hospital. There was a memorial to US servicemen who had defended the South Pacific during World War II. The guide also jokingly pointed out another memorial to the US; a busy MacDonald's Restaurant. We passed several large up-scale apartment buildings. The guide said that a 1000 square foot apartment with a view of the harbor would cost about \$500,000 USD. She also said that most things that urban people needed had to be imported and the prices were generally three times that of similar things in France.



As the Amsterdam prepared to leave, a Polynesian dance troupe put on a show on the dock between the Cruise Ship Terminal and the Amsterdam. The ship was docked so close to the terminal that with the setting sun there was an immense shadow cast across the dock and the terminal building. In this photo, with the dock sandwiched between the terminal building and the Amsterdam, the dancers are hardly visible as passengers gather around to



get a last view before boarding the ship. Our Amsterdam neighbor, Anne Salberg, on the right also takes in the view. The ship got underway on schedule at 6pm.