

2/4/07 Day 21 – Tahiti – Sunday -
 We approached the island of Tahiti and moved into the harbor at the major city, Papeete, about 7am. The ship was tied up at a pier so we didn't have to take tender boats in to town. Here is a map of the city of Papeete and the island of Tahiti.



Tahiti and the previous island of Bora Bora are part of French Polynesia. The language of French Polynesia is French but in the tourist shops and tours that we took there was no problem using English. The French franc is the official currency with an exchange rate of about \$1USD worth 100 francs but US dollars are freely used in all the tourist shops. So far on the cruise, the shops we have visited have either not taken our VISA credit card or set a minimum purchase for use of the card so that we didn't want to use it.



As we approached Papeete it was obvious that this was a much larger city than the village of Viatape in Bora Bora.

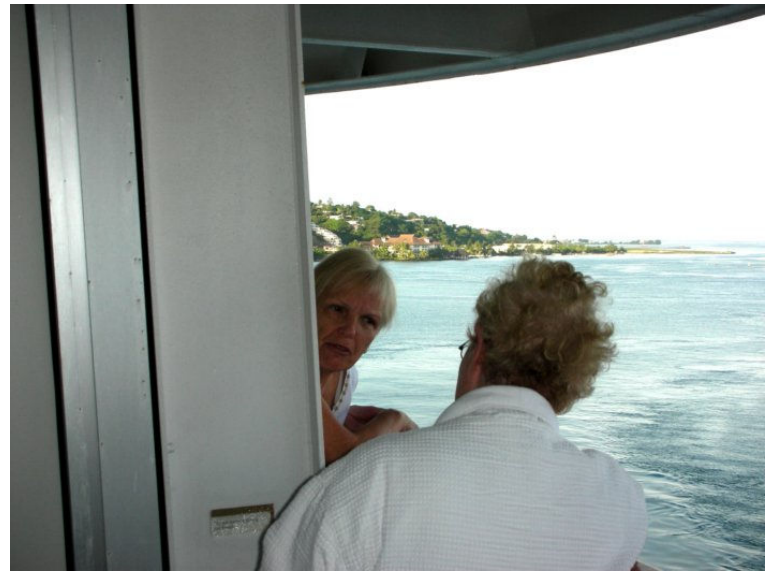
The breakwater at Papeete Harbor.





A view of the southern part of Papeete next to the harbor.

Barbara and our neighbor, Trudy, discussing the upcoming day around the divider between our verandahs with Papeete in the background.



The weather was sunny, warm, and humid as we made our first trip off the ship and into Papeete. We met our dinner table mates, Roy and Gayle, on the pier already returning from a shopping trip.



It was a short pleasant walk from the pier along the Blvd Pomare to the Market where all kinds of food and other products were displayed. It was Sunday so many of the shops were closed but enough were open to make it interesting. One advantage of our visit on Sunday



was that the car traffic was not nearly as heavy as on a weekday.

On the right a slow shopping day in an area off of Blvd Pomare on this Sunday morning.



Barbara soaking up the sights and sounds of the busy Market in Papeete. We found a doll for Emily but that was about all.



We checked out the price of Tahitian Black Pearl jewelry at several stores. This store had a sculpture of a giant oyster with a black pearl within it.

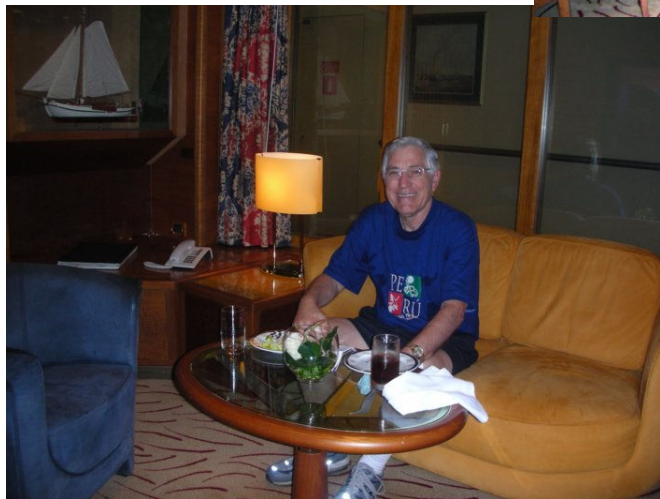
One necklace with at least 50 black and white pearls caught Barbara's eye. The price was \$15,000 USD. The good news was that cruise ship passengers got an \$1100 USD discount today to encourage purchases by the passengers of three cruise ships tied up at the piers. In spite of this good deal we passed up the opportunity and moved on. Several other single Tahitian pearl pendants with about 0.25 inch diameter were for sale in the price range of \$400 to \$500 USD but we also passed them up. We wandered back toward the ship and visited the Tahitian Visitor's Center in the park near where the ship was docked. This was a busy place with a native band and singers, free posters of Tahiti, and handicraft items for sale.

Barbara also got a chance to photograph her Oak Ridge Library Card in a new location. Her yellow library card is hard to see in this picture but it is there.

The Visitor's Center was a great find. We sampled coconut water with a straw right out of a coconut shell and picked up a couple posters for Tahiti. Barbara also found some pretty shell necklaces for about \$10 USD each. Quite a come down from our Tahitian Pearl browsing.



After the Visitor's Center we headed back to the Amsterdam where we had lunch in the Neptune Lounge. The photo on the right shows the Neptune Lounge serving area. Agus on the left and Rollie at his desk on the right.



The Neptune Lounge is a great place to go for a snack. Usually there is someone there that you know so there is never a lack of conversation.

In the afternoon we took an organized tour of Tahitian Cultural Sites. Yesterday we had a tour bus in Bora Bora that was pretty much bare bones with no air conditioning and rain coming in through open windows. Since it was hot and humid today we were happy to see that today's tour bus was air conditioned. We met Geraldo our tour guide. He was a good humored, quick witted guy who also appeared to have a good depth of knowledge about Tahitian Culture and the displays at the sites we would visit. We drove south of Papeete about five miles and stopped at the



first tour site which was the Museum of Tahiti and her Islands. The following photos were taken at the museum.

In the photo on the right Geraldo is showing us a large stone with ancient designs carved into the surface. Similar artifacts have been found throughout Polynesia and the progress of the Polynesians from Asia to Easter Island can be traced by these stones that were left by the natives.



The Polynesians were expert at boat building and navigation at sea. The Museum had an extensive display of small and large boats made over the last few centuries. Here on the left are some small outrigger type canoes.

They also had a large open boat on display. This one was too large to be made by hollowing out a single tree. It was made up of many wooden planks sewn together with twine made from the fibers that can be found on the trunks of palm trees. The cracks between the individual planks were filled in with some sort of packing to make the whole boat waterproof. These boats were used for whale hunting and carrying cargo from one island to another. The boat was displayed in the museum on steel supports. Wood ribs on the inside gave the boat its shape.



On the left is a close up photo of the boat planking held together by the twine made from fiber taken from the trunk of a palm tree.

After touring the Museum of Tahiti and her Islands we got back on the bus and drove two or three miles to a display of Polynesian carvings and temples called Marae. The Polynesians carved stone images, called Tikis, to honor important people in their communities. The Tiki



shown on the right with Geraldo was carved about 600 years ago to honor a woman leader.

The above photo shows a reconstructed Marae temple. Only the highest ranking priests and political leaders could go inside the low walls where important decisions about tribe activity were made.

Here Geraldo tells us about the Noni nut that is grown on several of the islands around Tahiti. The nut is squeezed to produce a juice that is packaged and sold as a health food, Noni Juice. Geraldo said it is a growing industry on the islands. Geraldo said



it has a terrible odor and taste but he takes it regularly to keep himself very

healthy. He mixes it with grape juice to make it taste better. Several people in the tour group were aware of Noni Juice.



Here is a picture of a Noni nut. It resembled an English walnut with husk.



After the tour of the Marae area we got back into the bus and returned to the ship. It was nice to go back into our air conditioned hallway leading to our cabin. The hallway is so long that walking portions of it several times a day makes up a significant part of our exercise program. Here's the view from one end of the hallway.

Later, at dinner, the wait staff was dressed in Polynesian print shirts and the head waiter wore a grass skirt.



Here Barbara hams it up with Zain, our head waiter who is wearing a grass skirt.