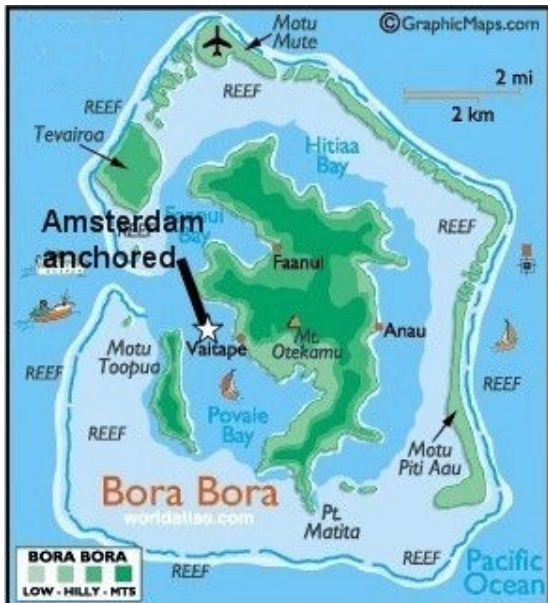


2/3/07 Day 20 – Bora Bora - **EMAIL ALERT** - First of all today we are making a request to all our friends and relatives sending us email. The ship's Internet connection speed is very slow so the backlog of email has jammed up and we only get a trickle of emails at best. Soooooooooo please don't be offended if we don't reply to your emails. Also, sending short text messages works fine but please don't send emails with megabytes of info in the body of the email or attached.

The island of Bora Bora is located in a group of islands called French Polynesia. French Polynesia is north-east of Australia as shown in the map on the right.

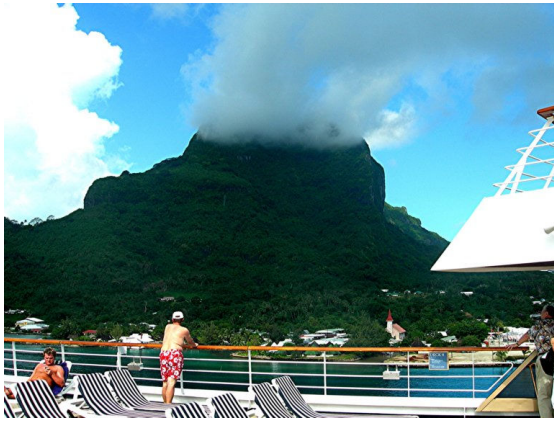


The island of Bora Bora is surrounded by a coral reef but there are openings in the reef that ships can go through to a deep harbor next to the volcanic main island and major city of Vaitape. This morning about 7am we took a pilot on board and proceeded into the harbor where we anchored. On the left is a map of Bora Bora to show where we are.

The main island within the reef is about 6 miles long and 3 miles at the widest point where the village of Vaitape is located. The dominant feature of the island is the steep volcanic peak called Mount Otekamu.



These photos, taken from the Amsterdam, show how close we were able to anchor next to the village of Viatape which lies at the base of Mt Otekama. For those who have seen the popular 1950s movie "South Pacific", this eroded, extinct volcano is shown as the mystical island of Bali Hai.



Looking out to sea, the reef that surrounds the island is visible. The airport of Bora Bora and many of the resort hotels are located on the reef.





We had a 2.5 hour tour around the island scheduled for 12 o'clock so about 10am we caught the ship's tender boat and went into the village of Viatape. Our first impression of Viatape was that it looked like a run down section of a small town in Hawaii.



We tried to get some French francs out of an ATM machine but our ATM card was rejected for some reason. As it turned out we did fine using US dollars. The exchange rate was about 100 francs per dollar. The price of gasoline was about \$5 USD per gallon. There were lots of cars and tourist activity.

Besides the usual tee shirt and tourist trinket merchandise, the display and sale of Tahitian Black Pearls and colorful wraps were dominant items for sale.





Barbara got a good photo showing that her Oak Ridge Library Card was in Bora Bora today.

When the time came for our tour we boarded a bus with about 40 other tourists and headed out with our driver and guide on the only paved road around the island.

The guide pointed out that there is a custom here of burying deceased relatives in the front yard where the grave or tomb can be watched over by the descendants. Here is an example of a two well cared for graves in someone's front yard next to the road.



Our final stop on the tour around the island was at a restaurant/bar known famously as Bloody Mary's. Apparently Bloody Mary was a popular Bora Bora lady many years ago and she chewed beetle nuts which turned her mouth red. That's where she got the name Bloody Mary. In the movie South Pacific, a lady named Bloody Mary plays a prominent role. The Bora Bora economy is



The harvesting of the white inner part of the coconut used to be a major industry in Bora Bora. The product was called copra and was used to make coconut oil for cooking, soap and other uses. Copra production is no longer a significant activity on Bora Bora but our tour bus stopped briefly so we could take pictures where some copra was drying in the sun.



still making the best of the publicity given to this area by the South Pacific film. We took a picture of a totem like figure outside the restaurant and a list of famous people who have visited the place.



A tropical rain storm swept over us just as we arrived at Bloody Mary's but we tromped through the rain anyway in order to see the place. Everyone was pretty well soaked when we got back on the bus. The weather was hot and humid plus we were all wet so we were glad that the trip back into Viatape was only a few minutes. We got off the bus, boarded our ship's tender boats and were taken back to the Amsterdam. About 6pm the ship got underway for Tahiti and the city of Papeete which we will see tomorrow.