

1/31/07 Day 17 – Pitcairn Island: Today when we got up we were able to see Pitcairn Island on the horizon. The ocean was the most beautiful blue and has been that color since Easter Island four days ago.

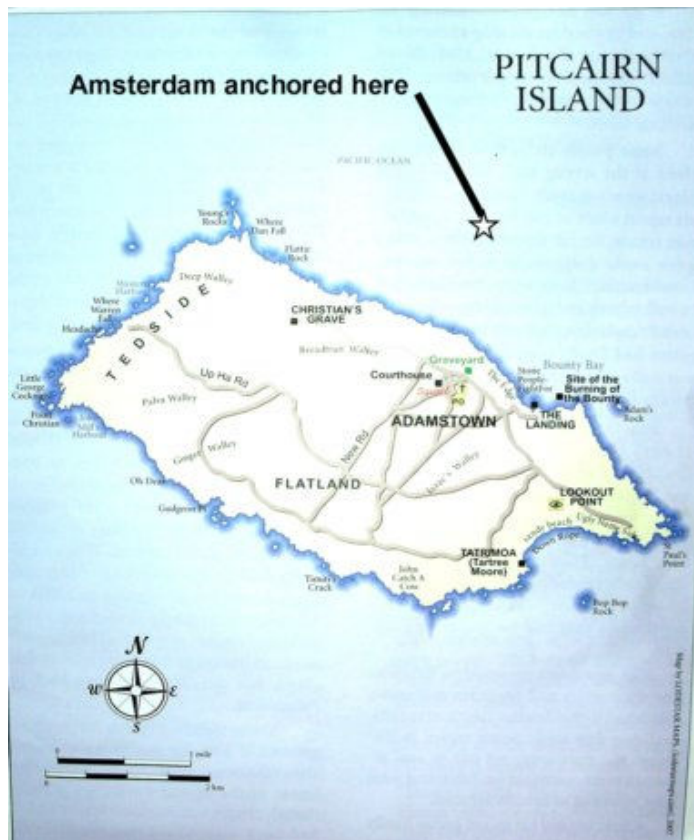
At 8am we anchored about one mile off Pitcairn Island. This is a small island where Fletcher Christian and other mutineers brought the British ship HMS Bounty in 1790 after casting Captain Bligh and some other crew members adrift in an open boat. Fletcher Christian and the others stayed on the island and the population grew to a maximum of 233 in 1937 but



now the population stands at about 45. Pitcairn Island is a UK territory and is apparently administered by way of New Zealand. A map showing the layout of the island and location of the only town, called Adamstown, is shown below.

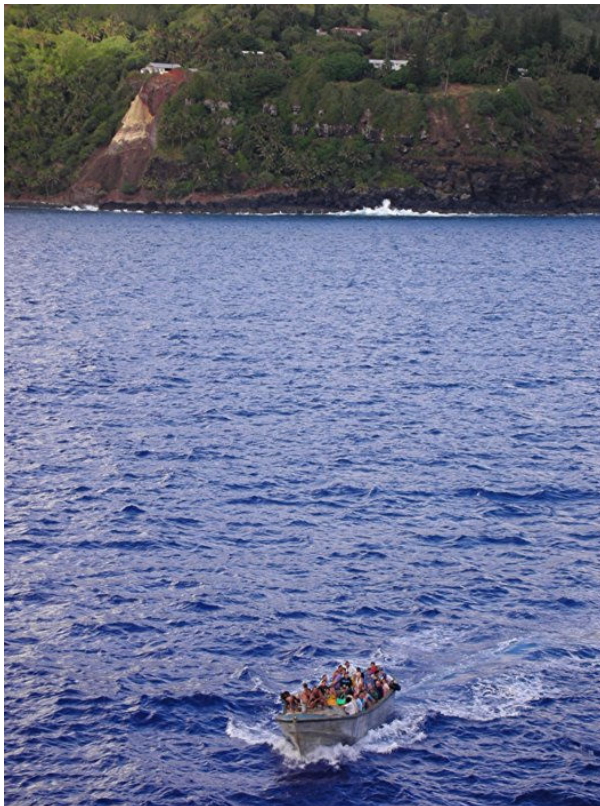
Here are some factoids about Pitcairn included in a BBC article emailed to us by our friend, Ben Foley.

The island is two miles long and one mile wide,
Pitcairners speak mix of English and Tahitian,
Electricity available 10 hours a day,
No paved roads and transport by all-terrain motorbikes,
Co-operative store open three times a week,
Holidays are taken on uninhabited Oeno,
Arrowroot, sweet potatoes and yams among crops,
Temperatures between 19C and 25C,
Police officer backed by two British police,
Six person jail available for 30 adults on the island,
Seventh Day Adventist church.



Ben, always the entrepreneur, had ulterior motives for sending the BBC article. The article contained details about the conclusion of an unfortunate legal saga. For over two years the island has been the scene of a salacious sex and child molestation scandal. Six people (about 20 percent of the adult population) were found guilty in the affair. Articles about the scandal appeared in BBC News in Sept. 2004 titled *"A Rock and a Hard Place"* & *"Pitcairn islanders lose appeal"* October 30, 2006. In 2006 Steve Christian and his son, Randy, among four others, were found guilty of repeating various sex crimes in prior years. Ben was hoping that during our visit to Pitcairn Island we could get him photos of Steve Christian and Randy, both of whom claim to be direct descendants of Bounty mutineer leader Fletcher Christian. Perhaps even get autographs from each. This was an attempt on Ben's part to gather collectable items that might sell for serious coin to collectors on E-Bay. Fortunately the Amsterdam decided not to let us go ashore so there was no need to test our personal integrity regarding participation in Ben's shocking and opportunistic suggestion.

As mentioned above, we were not able to go ashore on Pitcairn Island. The tourist facilities there are just too meager to allow a large cruise ship to dump passengers on the local population. Instead, a significant number of the 45 people who live on Pitcairn came out by boat to the ship and came aboard to give us a chance to buy Pitcairn souvenirs.

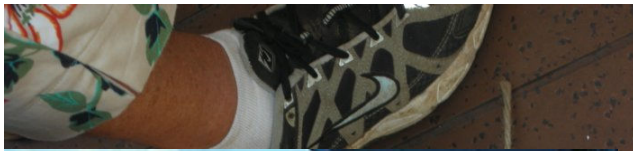


In this view the houses in the village of Adamstown can be seen above the cliffs of Pitcairn Island. Bounty Bay, from which the boatload of vendors came, lies just below the village at the base of the cliffs. After more than 200 years the wreck of the Bounty is reported to still be visible underwater in Bounty Bay. The wreck was discovered in 1957 by National Geographic explorer Luis Marden

The Pitcairn natives set up shop next to the pool on Deck 8 and a feeding frenzy of eager passengers developed around the tables heaped with items such as shirts, carvings, baskets and postcards.



We braved the crowd just long enough to buy the items we had put on our list. We bought some shirts from Tom Christian. Presumably a descendant of the original Fletcher Christian. Here's a shot of the tag on his bag of shirts just to verify the source.



Here we are showing off our new Pitcairn Island tee shirts. Note the now familiar shape of Pitcairn Island in the background.

About 11am the announcement was made that the Pitcairn Island sale was coming to an end. The vendors put their remaining stuff back in the bags and got back into their boat. One of the Pitcairn vendors told a fellow passenger that about 10 cruise ships stop by here each year. The ships come primarily in January and February. We had the feeling that the vendors did quite well with the visit of the Amsterdam.

The ship pulled up the anchor and got underway about noon. We cruised around the southern tip of the island and headed west to our next port, Bora Bora.

Although the visit of the Pitcairn Islanders was a long awaited event, another highlight of the day was cocktails and dinner in the King's Room at the invitation of Fekko Ebbens the Hotel Manager for the Amsterdam. We had cocktails along with about 18 other guests in the Explorer's lounge. Several of the ship's officers joined us for the occasion.

We had an enjoyable conversation with Jeroen van der Kolk, the Second Electrical Officer. At the risk of talking shop Orlin told him about the lighted digital clock we brought from home gaining time since we boarded the Amsterdam. Jeroen explained that frequency of the ship's AC electricity varies more than most municipality power supplies and can cause digital clocks to run faster or slower than normal. Barbara commented later that in addition to being technically competent, it sure doesn't hurt that the Amsterdam officers are conversationalists and good looking.



Two of our regular table mates, Roy and Gayle, sat at one end of the table

After cocktails we were all led in to the King's Room which is adjacent to the La Fontaine main dining room. Once we were all gathered in the King's Room a group picture was taken by the ship's photographer.

The dining table was elegant with three beautiful bouquets of fresh flowers and multiple small candles spread across the expansive white table cloth.





Our other table mates, Bob and Esther sat across from us.



We sat next to the Hotel Manager, Fekko Ebbens, on our right with Joy and Larry from Florida on our left. (On Feb. 14 Joy was subjected to medical evacuation by helicopter.)

Fekko gave a brief welcoming speech. He included a little bragging about the dishes used for the dinner. They were of an unusual artistic design, made by a Spanish company, and the individual pieces lived up to his description. Then the marvelous 6 course meal began. Although the setting and dress of the attendants was most formal, there was a relaxed mood about the occasion and all the guests seemed to enjoy getting to know the person next to them. In conversation, Barbara found out that Fekko has been with Holland America for 42 years and he serves exclusively on World Cruises. She was happy to learn that he was aware of the blog we are writing about the World Cruise. He said two of the Pitcairn people who came on board today needed dental work which was performed by the ship's dentist on a complimentary basis. One of the suffering dental patients was the big fellow dressed as a pirate. He had a skull and crossbones tee shirt, ears heavily decorated with silver rings, and a colorful bandana around his head. The dentist pulled his sore tooth. The Pirate was a popular person with the passengers up on deck and concealed any pain quite well. Joy and Jerry on Orlin's left are Florida residents with a love of sailing. Their sail boat took a serious hit from a hurricane but they replaced it and are back on the water.

Each course of the meal was placed in front of us and then described with measured poetic cadence by an attendant dressed in an elegant red jacket. The courses of the meal were so well presented that we took a few pictures as follows:



This appetizer was called a Prawn Tower.



This tenderloin of beef was the main course.



The meal was concluded with this blue dessert plate of chocolate and fruit.

At the end of the dinner Fekko introduced the Chefs and serving staff that lined up and smiled as we all showed our appreciation.

A nice closing touch was the announcement that each of us would receive the menu for the meal signed by Fekko and also the silver napkin ring, engraved with "ms Amsterdam GWV 2007". The whole event was planned and carried out with such finesse that we could not have had a better evening.

