

**Day 22–American Samoa–Pago Pago–Tsunami Damage–Tisa’s Bar–17 Oct. 09:** The day started with partly cloudy sky, calm sea and comfortable temperature. The Amsterdam was approaching Tutuila, the largest island of American Samoa, which was silhouetted as shown in this picture.



Our goal was the harbor at the town of Pago Pago. Pago Pago Harbor is a collapsed volcanic caldera which is one of the largest natural harbors in the South Pacific. One of the abiding mysteries for tourists is the pronunciation of the name Pago Pago. On a prior visit here we were told that the name must be pronounced “Pango Pango” even though there is no “n” in Pago Pago. On this trip Captain Eversen, of the Amsterdam, pronounced the name as Pago Pago, without the “n”. In the ship’s literature we got the pronunciation “Pango Pango” was called a synonym for Pago Pago suggesting either pronunciation was okay. The local population tends to refer to the place as Pango Pango.

American Samoa is a territory of the United States and the US Dollar is the currency they use. American Samoa is the only US territory south of the equator and consists of five rugged, highly eroded volcanic islands, and two coral atolls. The land area of the territory is only 76 square miles. The population is about 60,000 with most people living on the main island of Tutuila where Pago Pago is located. Tuna fishing and canning are major industries.

About 60 miles to the west of Pago Pago are the islands of the nation of Samoa, which was formerly known as Western Samoa. The city of Apia is located in the nation of Samoa and the Amsterdam will visit there on the return trip from New Zealand to Los Angeles.

Enough on background! Here are some views of Pago Pago as we sailed into the harbor this morning. This is a view of the north side of the harbor with the community that we would visit later in the day on the tour that took us to Tisa’s Bar and Grill.



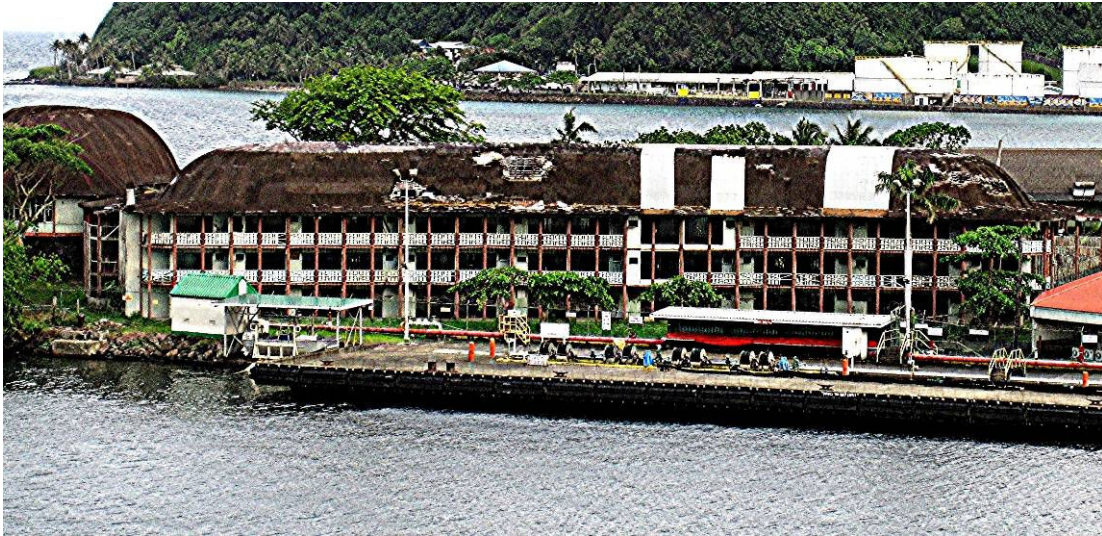
Looking to the south the magnificent peaks of the extinct volcano rim dominate the scene. The main road from the town of Pago Pago out to the International Airport hugs the water's edge.



The governor's mansion, shown on the left, is a prominent landmark in the approach to Pago Pago.



As the Pago Pago landmarks slid by we were saddened by the dilapidated look of the Old Rainmaker Hotel. We had never stayed there but apparently it was the premier resort hotel in Pago Pago many years ago. Today when we took the picture below it stood abandoned as an active hotel with gaping holes in the roof.



Finally, the dock area for the Amsterdam came into view. We had been here two years ago and the Amsterdam tied up in this same convenient location. The town of Pago Pago is on the shoreline off to the right.



We could see that there were plenty of tour buses lined up to take us around the island. There is a tradition of painting the busses all sorts of bright colors.



The government agents were waiting on the pier to check the Amsterdam's documentation so we could be cleared to leave the ship.



While waiting for the ship to clear we gathered in the Explorer's Lounge with other Cruise Critic folks who had signed up for Tisa's Tour of Pago Pago. We really appreciate

Pauline and the other Cruise Critic contributors who have gone out of their way to organize the private tours of the places we visit on the cruise. The tours have been of very high quality and significantly less expensive (~50%) than the Holland American tours with similar itineraries. In this picture on the right, Pauline is giving us the word that we can go down to the pier and meet up with Tisa for the tour.



We met Tisa, the tour leader, and threaded our way through maize of buses until we found the two that Tisa had obtained for our tour.

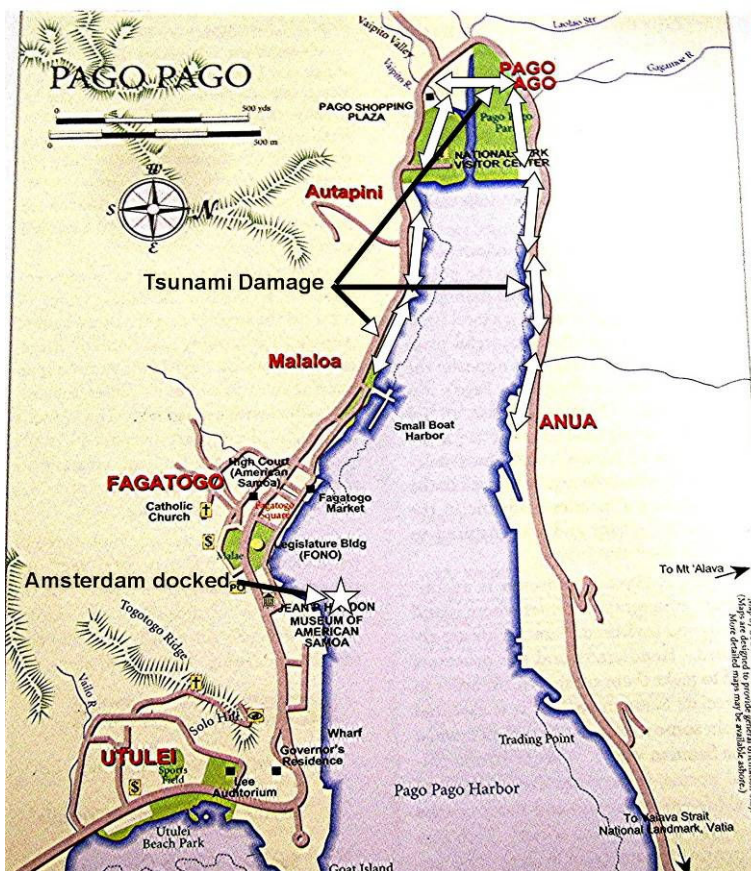
Our group completely filled two buses which were non-luxury, as shown below. However, they were plenty good enough for several hours of touring the mountains and seashore around Pago Pago.



On September 30, 2009 there was an earthquake centered on the ocean floor to the west of Pago Pago. A tsunami tidal wave was created that devastated many coastal villages on the islands of American Samoa and elsewhere. On this island 34 persons died and 2 are still missing as a result of the sea water flooding the homes and businesses close to the water. Tisa said that two of her relatives were lost in the disaster. We expected to see some remaining damage

as the tour started in the direction of the main part of Pago Pago.

Tisa explained that near the mouth of Pago Pago harbor there was relatively little damage but the tsunami seemed to crest as it approached the main part of Pago Pago at the shallow western end of the harbor. Water was 3 to 5 feet deep more than 100 yards inland from the harbor. In the three weeks since the tsunami struck there has been a lot of clean-up and a little bit of rebuilding. However, we saw more than enough devastation to give us a sense of the power carried by the tidal wave. The map on the right shows where the Amsterdam was docked and (with double ended arrows) the approximate location along the harbor where we saw the effects of the tsunami.





Below are some photos that we got from the bus window as we passed by.



In most places, at the time of our visit, the damage appeared to be primarily a result of water flooding into the buildings and ruining equipment and furniture inside. However, this home on the left was moved completely off the foundation.







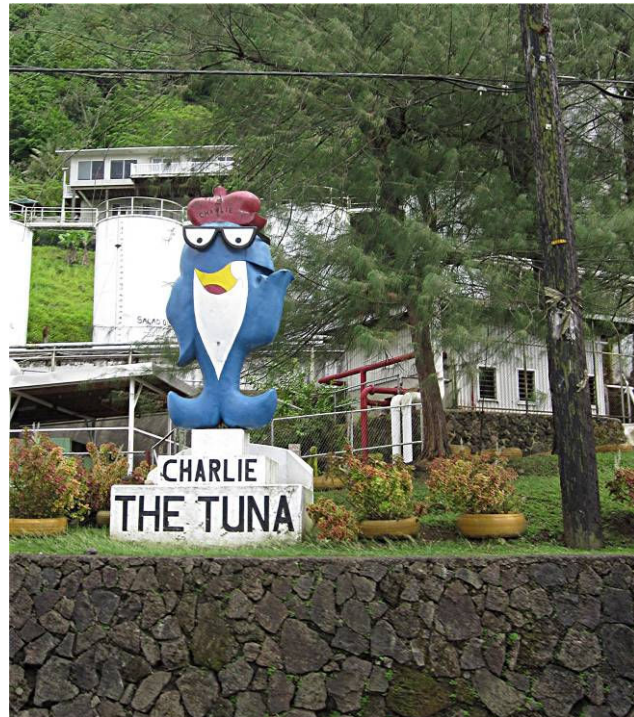
It appeared that all the appliances and furniture in this house, on the left, were piled in the yard.

We saw several boats, like this one,

washed up on the shore. Income from tuna fishing took a serious hit because of boat damage during the tsunami.



Fortunately, the Charlie the Tuna canning factory, which is a major employer in the area, was not put out of business by the tsunami. However, Tisa said that the community electric power plant was out of commission and electric power was being provided by portable generators brought in by the US military.



It appeared that the worst of the damage had been cleaned up and we were seeing the aftermath, with people calmly considering their options for the future. Much more extensive damage took place in some of the villages on the exposed western shores of American Samoa but we did not see that part of the island.



As an aid to understanding the day's events, the highlights of our tour are outlined on the map of the island of Tutuila shown on the left.

We first drove around the western end of Pago Pago Harbor where we saw the tsunami damage. Then our bus climbed the steep hill out of the harbor area to the high point of Afono Pass.

At Afono Pass the bus stopped and we were able to get a photo of the entire Pago Pago Harbor below. The Amsterdam can be seen docked on the opposite shore just to the right of the

middle of the photo. The main part of Pago Pago town is on the far right hand side of the harbor.





Tisa posed with Barbara for a quick photograph at Afono Pass.

Tisa is the embodiment of a hard working entrepreneur. She runs the tour company and actually conducts the tours herself while also running the Tisa's Barefoot Bar and Grill and working in the local radio station.



Our next stop was in the National Park and not far from Afono Pass. This was where a permanent colony of

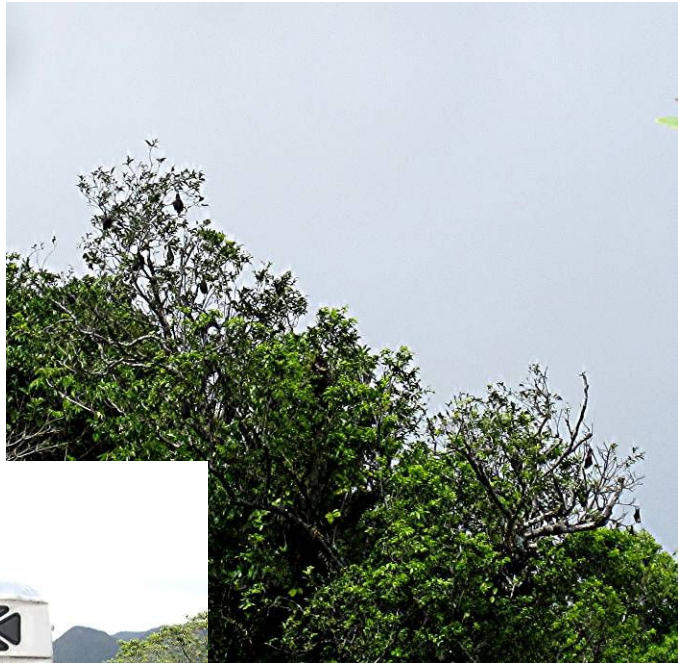


fruit bats lives. Fruit bats are large flying mammals about the size of a 3 or 4 month old kitten. Here, on the left, is a picture of a fruit bat that was provided at the roadside parking place.



Some of the bats were flying about but we were not successful in getting a picture. However, we got this photo of several of them hanging from the limbs of a far off tree, as shown silhouetted on the right.

Russell and Evelyn (Ev), whom we have met through Cruise Critic were on the tour with us. They got



several good pictures of the flying fruit bats. Russell and Ev, shown on the left are going to share a few of their photos with us.

Our table mates, George and Judy were also on the tour and George took this photo of us showing the beautiful shoreline of America Samoa below us.





We climbed back into the bus and proceeded on to the shoreline of the National Park.

This photo gives some notion of the tortuous road we took.



The road through the National Park took us along the shoreline and a residential area. Some damage from the tsunami of September 30 was visible but it was not as extensive as the damage in Pago Pago.

This home shown on the right had apparently suffered some flooding but the structure looked okay. The damaged furniture and appliances were drying in the front yard.



A happier scene was provided by these children playing under a large tree.





A nearby elementary school, shown on the left, had been protected from the tidal wave by a seawall and appeared to be undamaged. Since this was a Saturday no children were in School.

The coastline of the National Park was a series of lagoons and very pretty. The most

beautiful scene we saw was a formation called Cock's Comb jutting out into the sea, as shown on the right.



The bus then retraced the road over Afono Pass and down to Pago Pago Harbor. At the intersection with the road around the harbor the bus turned left and followed the coastline around to Alega Beach where Tisa's Barefoot Bar and Grill was located. We stopped at the Bar and Grill for lunch which was included in the \$50 per person cost of the tour. There was snorkeling possible in the reef that lined the shore at Alega Beach. The view of Tisa's Bar and Grill is shown on the right. From the outside, Tisa's place looked like a bit of a dive. However, once inside we were pleasantly surprised to find the ambiance was just right for kicking back and enjoying a couple hours of chit chat with other people on the tour.





The bar and serving area looked like a classical weather-beaten South Sea Island beach hang-out. The staff was friendly and the drinks were nice and cold. The bar was a popular place with an interesting collection of decorations hanging on the back wall, as shown on the right.

The ceiling was festooned with flags from everywhere, lending an international flare to the humble surroundings.



To Orlin's amazement there was even the flag of the state of Oregon, where he was born. What a nice surprise!



More importantly, they served a local beer called Vaillima that was reasonably priced and just what was needed after a morning of touring the island. Here, on the left, Ev gives her energetic (but highly misleading) evaluation of the brew.



Fortunately, our friend from Canada was just kidding around and nobody had to go thirsty this afternoon.

As we waited for the meal to be served we took some pictures around the place. Here below are Left to Right, Bonnie, Mike, Dennis and Barbara. Poor Bob got cut out by the amateur photographer and only his arm shows. Nice arm though.



A few people strolled on the beach and watched the hermit crabs scurrying from rock to rock.







However, most of us just stayed in the shade, close to the kitchen and the bar.

In spite of all the activity around him “The Dog of Samoa” was in his normal relaxed state, as shown below.





The simple meal of barbequed chicken and salad was served in grand South Sea Island style on fresh banana tree leaves, as shown on the right.



We even managed to get this slightly goofy picture of the two of us enjoying our lunch at Tisa's Barefoot Bar and Grill in Pago Pago.





As usual, the time to leave rolled around too soon, but we needed to get back to the Amsterdam before she sailed away without us. Tisa (and we assume her bouncer) bid us a fond farewell.



It took about 30 minutes for our bus to wind its way back around Pago Pago Harbor to where the Amsterdam was docked. In a last minute stroke of luck we spied the Pago Pago Harbor sign that was perfect for Barbara's library card photo. Unfortunately, some local ruffian had defaced the sign a little bit with paint but this still seemed like a good opportunity.





The souvenir booths had been strategically set up so that we had to walk through them to get to the ship.

Barbara's shopping list included some decorative tapa cloth to use as a wall hanging. After a relatively short time she was able to find several good pieces of cloth at two different vendors. She extracted her usual tribute of a photograph with the artist in each case, as shown below.



We carried our booty on to the Amsterdam and got ourselves ready for sail away.



About 5pm the Amsterdam took in the lines holder her to the pier and we slowly glided out of the harbor. The temperature was just right and our spirits were high as we said goodbye to Pago Pago. We poured a glass of wine and enjoyed the verandah as the harbor scene passed before us. Our next door neighbor, Carol, happened to be out on her verandah also so we shared a glass of wine in the spirit of the occasion.



The Flower Pot formation just outside the harbor is a time honored landmark for ships coming and going from Pago Pago. We snapped this picture of the lonely sentinel as we said goodbye to American Samoa and Pago Pago.



Tomorrow will be a day at sea as we make our way to Suva in the island nation of Fiji. In one of those quirks of international travel in the Pacific Ocean we will be suddenly gaining 24 hours as we cross the International Dateline tomorrow morning. As a consequence, there will be no Sunday, 18 October this week on the Amsterdam. We'll deal with that tomorrow.