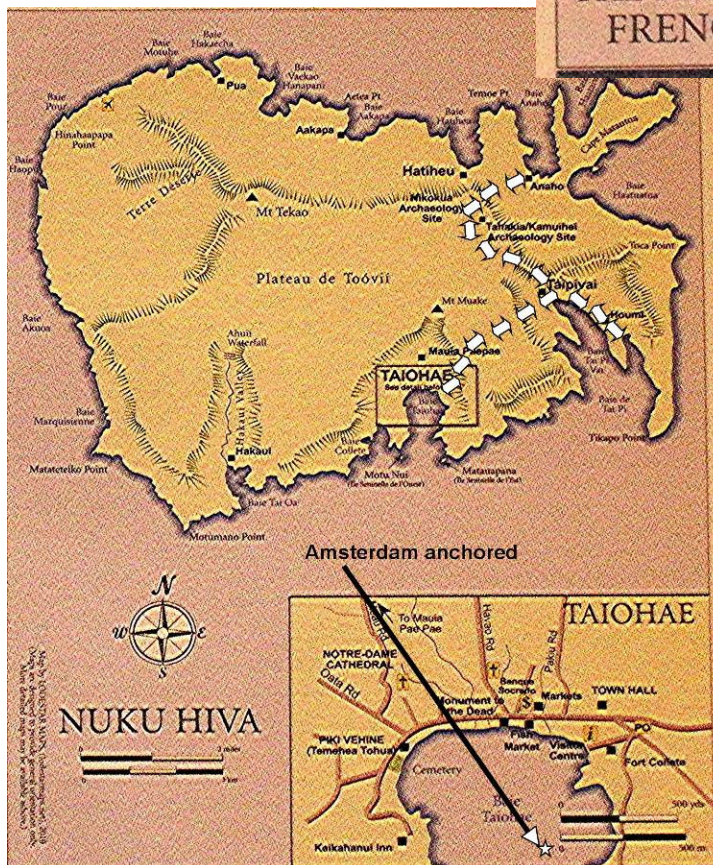
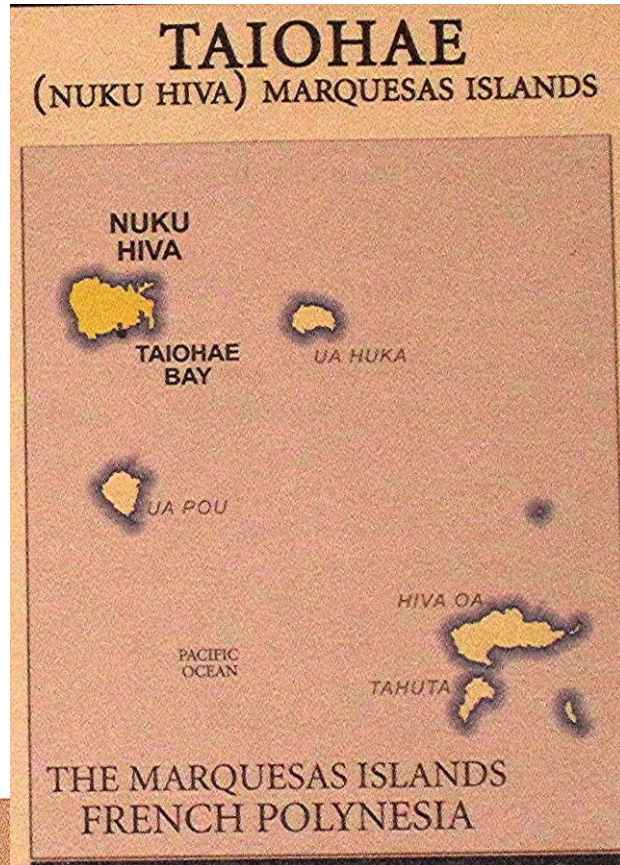


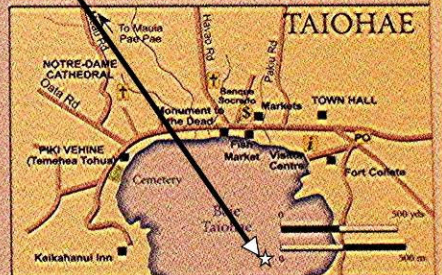
**188-Day 12–Nuku Hiva, Marquesas Islands-Road Trip to Hatiheu -7 Oct 09:** The day started with intermittent sunshine and rain showers. The sea was calm as we approached the harbor of Taiohae on Nuku Hiva Island. This remote island of about 30,000 population is host to about 25 cruise ships each year which is not a lot. We were looking forward to the stop in Nuku Hiva not only because it promised to be a beautiful place to see but because not many people have the opportunity to visit here. The map on the right shows where Nuku Hiva is located in the cluster of the Marquesas Islands.

The Amsterdam dropped anchor in the harbor about 7am and tender boats were put into the water to carry passengers ashore.

This map of Nuku Hiva, on the right,



shows where Taiohae Bay is located on Nuku Hiva and the inset shows where the Amsterdam was anchored in the harbor. Also shown by the white arrows is the ~18 mile round trip path of the driving tour we took later in the day.





As expected the scenery around the harbor of Nuku Hiva was beautiful. Here are a few shots of what we saw.

On the right is shown the tender boat landing and buildings that make up part of the tourist and visitor's center of Nuku Hiva. The rugged mountains covered with thick vegetation form a wonderful backdrop for the scene.



We had signed up for a Nuku Hiva tour many months ago via the Cruise Critic message board and Karen (KweenKaren). Our tour of the island called "4X4 travel with Claude Pau" started early because it was about 7 hours long (~18 miles round trip) and we had to be back on the ship by 4:30pm. When we are using tender boats to get ashore there can be long waits for space on a boat. Because of the need for our tour to start early, Karen had made special arrangements for the Cruise Director, Bruce, to lead her group down to the tender boat loading platform as soon as the ship was cleared for passengers to go ashore. We were



cleared to go ashore about 8am and we were happy to see that Bruce (in the center) showed up immediately and led about 25 of us down to the tender boat platform. It seems that HAL and the Amsterdam staff are bending over backward to make sure we are happy travelers.



Several tour groups loaded onto the tender and our boat headed for shore. The fellow driving our boat, the coxswain, was smartly dressed in a fresh white uniform. While the sailors are always appropriately dressed, today's coxswain seemed better dressed than usual, perhaps part of the "keep the passengers happy" policy.

We were soon deposited on the boat landing where this lady shown below was handing out flowers to everyone.



There was a visitor's center with a stone Tiki carving in the courtyard, probably representing a family with a mother and a couple children.



Nearby was an attractive display of fruit.





A separate building contained the displays of crafts shown below.



Here Jeff's experienced eye was checking out an elaborate boar's tusk necklace.



Prices were relatively high with the bottom range of \$20 to \$40 USD so it was not a shopper's paradise.

Karen soon gathered her group in the parking lot and we met Claude Pau who was this rather salty looking character with an Australian accent shown below with a blue baseball cap.





The group was divided up into eight different 4X4 vehicles with 3 or four people per vehicle. Shown below is Karen directing traffic.

We teamed up with Rosemary and Bob (ROZO'SBEAU) in Elaina's wine colored Land Rover.

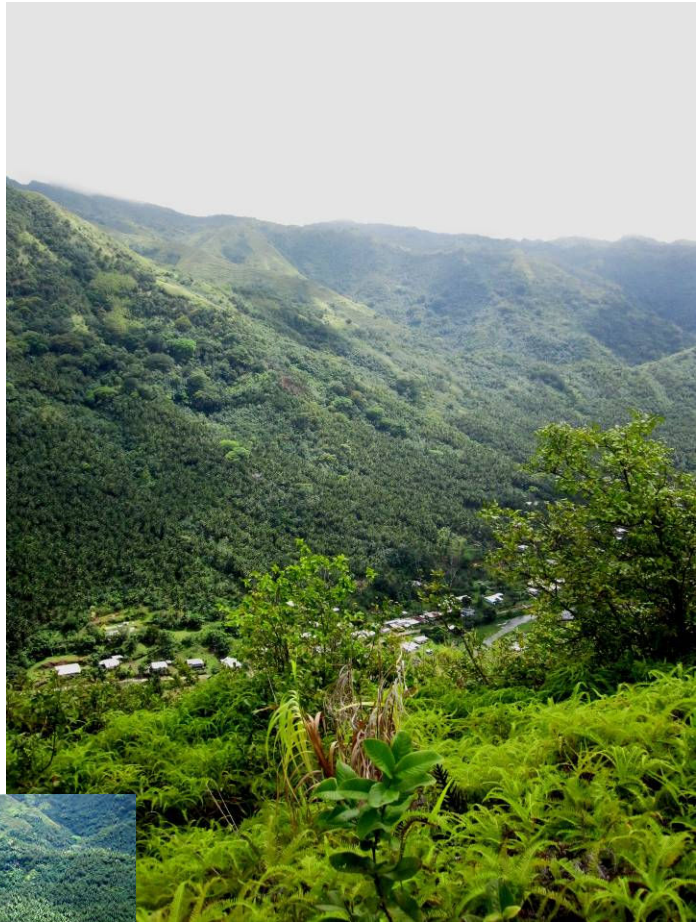


The road we took initially was well paved with concrete and wound around tight corners up the mountain to where we could get a picturesque view of the harbor with the Amsterdam at anchor as shown on the left.



We followed the route as shown by the white arrows in the map of Nuku Hiva discussed above. After the steep climb out of Taiohae and up the mountain formed by an extinct volcano there was a short interval of relatively flat land and then we headed downhill. We stopped at a clearing where we could get a good view of the village, Taipival, as shown in this picture on the right.

The Bougainville shrubs were blooming nicely so we got some pictures of them.



Our caravan of cars was quite impressive parked along the road at this stop.



The drivers of the cars typically did not speak a useful amount of English, and that was a downside. However, they were expert at safely negotiating the narrow winding roads and that was an overriding plus. Between stops we were occupied with taking pictures of the passing countryside. At each stop, Richard, who spoke fluent English and was very knowledgeable, described the scenes we saw and answered questions. In this picture on the right, Richard is describing how Nuku Hiva played a part in the life of the author, Herman Melville, (Moby Dick, Typee, Omoo) when he lived with the Typee tribe 1841. There is a monument to Herman Melville in the town of Taiohae where we landed this morning.



Richard is obviously a very accomplished fellow. He said that during filming of a “Survivors” TV show in 2001 on Nuku Hiva he was in charge of picking out locations for the shooting of different scenes. He was later invited to visit the US as part of promotion of the show.



On the subject of negotiating the island roads, shown below are some photos of our caravan as it climbed up and down the tortuous roads of Nuku Hiva. This picture taken through the windshield shows some rocks that the passing rainstorm recently caused to tumble onto the roadway.

Here were some more rocks that could have gotten in the way.





At one point we forded a creek that was flowing rapidly over the roadway as shown in these pictures.



In addition to the winding nature of the road there were unpaved portions that were really bumpy. In fact, one particularly ferocious stretch of road caused one of Barbara's contact lenses to pop out. We kept it in a bottle of water until we were safely back on the Amsterdam.

All the rigors of the road tour were well worth it because of the wonderful scenery and cultural sites that we were able to see.

For example, there were waterfalls like these, popping out of the jungle covered mountainsides.







In addition, we stopped at a couple archaeological sites known as Tahakia, Kamuihei and Nikokua. At these locations ancient Marquesan tribes had built stone platforms that were sacred and used by the priesthood for worship of the gods.

Here are some photos of these large flat stone structures that were buried in the jungle.





There was this beautiful large banyan tree at one of the sites.





Richard took us across this log bridge to a place that was used as a stadium for cultural and sporting events. Making our way across the bridge just added to the excitement we all got from the roadway experience.



The stadium consisted of a flat grassy area surrounded by stone walls and places provided for people to sit. It was no Roman Coliseum but they were built on the order of a thousand years ago and represented a great investment of labor and technology for those ancient people. We got this photo of the stadium as shown left.



At several locations around the area were Tiki carvings, such as the one shown on the right, representing gods and symbols that were important for the ancient religions and customs.

Some archaeologists think it was people from the Marquesas Islands that set out in canoes and eventually discovered remote places like Easter Island and Hawaii where they continued their custom of sculpting the large stone Tikis.

Tattoos are an important part of the Polynesian culture. Even children may be adorned with special tattoos that identify them with their family or some social group. Our guide, Richard, told us about the cultural importance of tattoos. He then mentioned that he had tattoos.

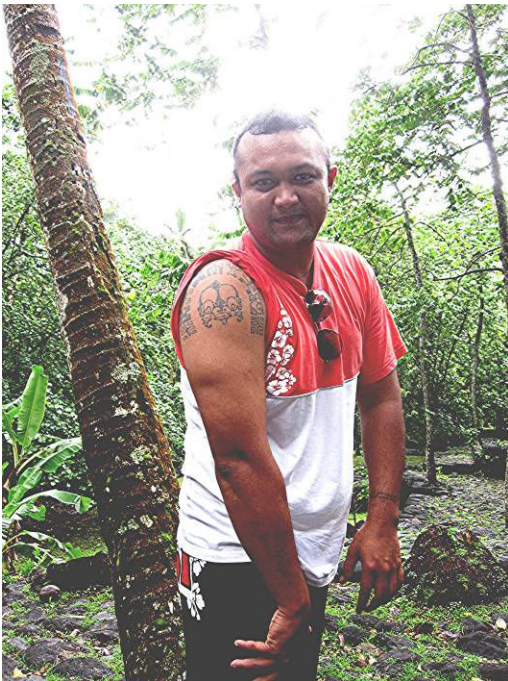
Barbara along with several of the other ladies immediately began coaxing him to expose his tattoos for all to see. He reluctantly rolled up his shirtsleeve and

proceeded to explain the meaning of the tattoos he had on his well muscled arm.

There were a few risqué quips from the ladies about the meaning of Richard's tattoos.

Richard feigned surprise at the questions in view of the fact that husbands were present. Such a naughty (but fun) group!

After the visit to the archeological sites it was time to drive to the village of Hatiheu where lunch was being prepared at Yvonne's Restaurant.





The village of Hatiheu is on the northern coast of Nuku Hiva at the end of a protective inlet. At the entrance to Hatiheu is this pretty little church that is built with the traditional double steeples.



The most striking feature of Hatiheu is a ridge of lava that dominates the western side of the town. Here is a picture of the magnificent pinnacles from the road in front of Yvonne's Restaurant.

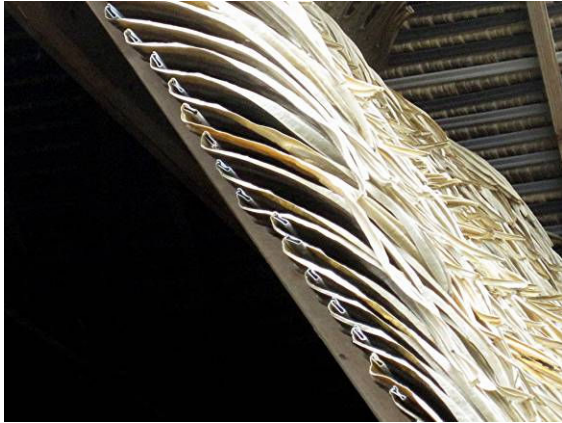
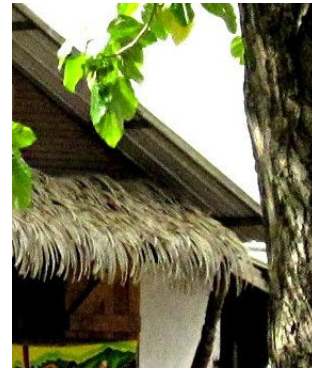


When we arrived at Yvonne's Restaurant we could smell something wonderful cooking in the kitchen but it was not quite ready to serve. While waiting for lunch, we wandered around the area and took some pictures of the local scene. Right off, we spotted this relaxed "Dog of Nuku Hiva".





There was a brief rain shower when we arrived at the restaurant and the fact that no water dripped through the palm frond roof was impressive. The palm fronds looked like the ones shown on the roof in this photo on the right. Closer inspection of the “palm fronds” and a fortuitous cross section view explained the good performance. The palm fronds are extremely good replicas of the real thing



but they are made of plastic. Similar to artificial flowers nowadays, it's hard to tell artificial from real palm fronds. A nearby porch roof offered a cross section view of the palm frond roof and it turned out to be successive rows of inter-layered plastic palm fronds as shown in this picture on the left. This seemed like a good use of our petroleum reserves if you want to stay dry in a torrential downpour.

There was a grade school nearby and some children playing. This little girl seemed interested in us but was bashful. We finally coaxed her into a little conversation and got this picture.



During our road trip through the mountains we were constantly in groves of coconut trees and you could see distant hill sides were covered with coconut palms. Harvesting of the coconut



to obtain copra is a major industry of Nuku Hiva. The copra is used from many things but primarily cosmetic and soap products. The abundance of coconuts was obvious in the number that had washed up on the beach in front of the restaurant, as shown on the left.



Another plant that can be found on the island is the cashew tree. We had never seen cashew nuts growing, and frankly we thought they were dug from the ground like peanuts. Well, another benefit of international travel came through when we saw a cashew tree and some of the low hanging nuts, as shown in this picture on the right. **Elsie, you need one of these in your back yard!**



Finally it was time to eat and we took our places at a long table in the open air dining room.





The food was brought in by ladies carrying trays of woven palm leaves (real ones). Each tray was loaded down with grilled fish, fried breadfruit, and shrimp. Shown below is a picture of the sumptuous feast greeted us hungry travelers.



We were pleased to finally have a chance to eat breadfruit. In the picture of the tray above it is the food that looks like yellow cauliflower in the upper left corner of the tray. It had a mild taste and texture like cornbread.

After the main meal came dessert which consisted of fresh mangoes, bananas and oranges. This was just right!



We left Yvonne's Restaurant well fed and ready for the return trip to Taiohae Harbor and Amsterdam.



We retraced our route back over the mountains and past the village of Taipivai where Herman Melville lived. Along the way we passed this truck loaded with trees.



During our visit in Nuku Hiva we got the impression from what we saw that the population here has a comfortable but not extravagant life. The cars and houses appeared to be fairly new and well kept. Prices of goods offered to tourists were far from desperation “give away”.

We didn't see any gas stations but we always want to know the price of gasoline because that is a standard that most people can put into the context of their own life. According to one of the drivers on our tour, the price of gasoline on Nuku Hiva is about 145 Marquesas Francs (XPF) per liter. At the current exchange rate of 82.57 XPF per 1 USD that works out to \$1.75 USD per liter or about \$7 USD per gallon. The roads weren't exactly crowded with cars but there were a fair number running around so it appeared that the local economy was able to bear up under that relatively high price of gasoline.

We stopped at a local beach near the village of Houmi. It was a beautiful clean beach, with gentle waves coming in and the scene was idyllic. Here is a picture of the beach at Houmi on the right.







Our table mates on the Amsterdam, George and Judy, were on the road tour with us and we were able to get their picture while at the Houmi Beach.

Here we are with our reliable Land Rover transportation ready to get on board for the last leg of the journey back to the Amsterdam.



We made our way back over the mountain into Taiohae where we stopped briefly at a

Cathedral. The Cathedral architectural style reflected the Polynesian influence, as shown in these pictures.





Here, St Peter is depicted in native Polynesian garb with a key and a net full of fish at the entrance to the Cathedral.



The Cathedral stonework provided a convenient place for Barbara's library card to make an entrance just to prove that it had made it to Nuku Hiva.





From the Cathedral it was a short drive to the boat landing where we could catch the tender back to the Amsterdam.

Earlier Claude Pau had surprised our organizer, Karen, by saying that because of the falling value of the US dollar he would have to charge \$160 USD per person for the all-day tour with lunch. She objected to this last minute price increase and Claude relented, charging us only the agreed upon \$135 USD per person. The tour operator had trustfully put off collection of the tour price until the end. We all lined up and paid him before saying our goodbyes and heading for the ship's tenders.

We got back on board the Amsterdam after a brief 15 minute boat ride. We enjoyed the luxury of a shower and got ourselves ready for dinner.

At 8pm we went down to the Queen's Lounge where one of our favorite entertainment teams in San Diego back in the 1960's was entertaining tonight. Mickey Finn and his wife Cathy Reilly Finn put on a great show with Mickey playing the piano and Cathy on the banjo. The current Mickey was married to a different performer back in the 1960's and the night club was named for that wife's name of Mickey. Since that time there has been closure of the night club, 30 years as a Las Vegas act, remarriage and the start of a new entertainment team 10 years ago. All this activity hadn't diminished the lively entertainment that they provided. We thoroughly enjoyed their performance. We got this picture of the two of them early in the show.



Tomorrow will be a day at sea. It will be good to rest up from the jostling we got on our exciting Huku Niva road trip today.