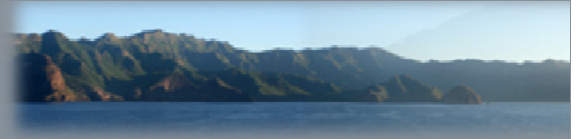


**Friday 23rd March: 8° 56' south, 140° 06' west:
Nuku Hiva, Marquesas Islands**



Tonight just after sunset I sat in the Jacuzzi on Deck 9, having done 15 minutes of hydrotherapy exercise and watched Nuku Hiva fast disappearing to the north and Niva Oa disappearing in the south. This is the last landfall we shall see for nine whole days and was the first group of islands not protected by a coral reef; consequently no turquoise blue seas but a brief encounter with a couple of dolphins. The island looked formidable initially as the sun rose starboard and then we saw the folds of the mountains and then the green vegetation. We sailed

directly into Taiohae Bay and dropped anchor, an hour before our scheduled arrival time. After breakfast we took the tender ashore.

It was more challenging for the crew getting us on and off; in spite of the still, warm day there was a real swell and there were three crew to help each person safely from the ship's ladder and onto the boat. We were greeted by drummers and women in grass skirts who, banged sticks together and called out a song-like 'haloa' greeting and presented us all with sweet smelling gardenia, their children at their feet imitating them. Every one of the tenders were greeted in a similar fashion so they must have been exhausted by midday. We wandered along the shore slowly as it was extremely hot and humid. As the business of getting ashore and back took quite a while we retraced our footsteps as we had to return to the boat for an early lunch before our excursion, disappointed that we had not found the cathedral. We were enchanted by what we thought was a wonderful laburnum in full flower, both flowers and leaves two or three times as big. Later, a gardener friend who travelled with us thought it might have been wisteria. However, the final consensus was laburnum or, at least, laburnum family.



In the afternoon we took Car No18 – a four wheel drive, sharing it with David and Margaret, in convoy with twenty other similar vehicles, on an excursion around this lovely island.

Shades of new Zealand as we climbed up out of Taihae on crazy hairpins, where we stopped to admire the view south to Niva Oa and The Black Watch below us in the bay, matchbox size (see header on previous page). Onwards we went to look down on Taipivai Bay, just beautiful! On the uplands,



we visited Paeke where there are some archaeological remains, along with newer buildings, built in the traditional style with beautiful wood and stone tikis(carvings). It is here that the Marquesans from the six

inhabited islands come periodically for their arts festival. We drove on to visit Taipivai, the most fertile of valleys, where Herman Melville once stayed. I was surprised to see the number of horses (and the odd foal) running free and where there were homes, there were also chicken with an equal number of cockerel. Finally we visited the very lovely cathedral (local style and local materials) with its beautifully warm red/brown wooden roof (inside) and doors. The talent of the native sculptors was put to good effect in the Stations of the Cross, and in an especially wonderful Polynesian Madonna and Child in a rich satiny wood.

