

Sunday 18th: at sea; 16° 22' south, 157° 15' west, at midday

Well, I can tell you, his veins were sticking out on his temple and neck he **was** overdoing it!! And I'd been reading about a 22-year-old Premier footballer collapsing! Do you wonder I get anxious! And I wasn't 'languid' – 'specially not when I, later, managed 40+ hula hoops without it dropping to the floor!! It was a huge improvement on yesterday.

Well, we're on Day 4 at sea, which makes us apprehensive about further stretches – like *nine* days starting next Saturday. Nick even talked of 'jumping ship' a day or two back, wondering if we could get a flight back home from Antigua! Having considered

further, laying in the sunshine, that visas etc could be an issue, that idea has been shelved. For the last few days the weather has been disappointing, one day with no sun at all, the other days where only the morning was okay. And it's been quite choppy; if you're doing a sideways grapevine in line dancing and the ship rolls that-away, you fly out of control! The St Patrick's Day prompted an International Evening last night, and how the can-can girls coped with the moving stage I don't know – and they were excellent – all four girls managed the splits and the young lad with them kicked as high as they did! This morning they emptied the swimming pool which was soaking folk a deck further up! There are talks of course; one on Gaugin today was excellent and we can visit the Gaugin Museum in Tahiti the day after tomorrow. There are no originals there, though there are two

whole galleries of them in St Petersburg where he never went. And here we are in the middle of nowhere; we have seen no ships since we left Fiji and the captain told us that there have been none on the radar for the last day or two. Even though we are 600 strong on board, that still feels quite lonely. This morning I went to the Interdenominational Eucharist for Mothering Sunday and felt a long way away from my two boys. It was a nice service and the priest read out the remarks of children on the subject of mums, not romanticised and sentimental, many of them revealing. Then we had a spectacular tea, a giant Mothers Day cake with red roses taking pride of place.

Monday Bora Bora 'Pearl of the Pacific' – one of the Leeward Islands: 16° 31' south, 151° 46' west

After the rockiest evening and night yet, we managed to get ourselves on deck by seven to enjoy the best island approach yet, as well as the blowiest though, being early morning, the skies were

overcast. The island is characterised by the beautiful Mount Pahia rising majestically behind the main port/village. Vaitape. . . . and absolutely no ghastly sixties buildings – in fact, nothing more than two storey and those are few and far between. The pilot came aboard to take us thro' the narrow Teavanui Pass into a wondrous lagoon where we now swing at anchor with Bora Bora on one side and the smaller Motu Toopua on the other, while the tenders take folk ashore.



As we were due to be off the boat at eleven, Nick's usual time for the gym, we both went there before breakfast.

Needless to say, we had it to ourselves though twenty minutes was enough for me; I left Nick with strict instruction to join me for breakfast at 0830. He joined me twenty minutes later, and after a relatively light meal we prepared to join the tender to go ashore. Disembarking from the tender, we boarded Le Truk, a lorry/bus with no windows, to travel the twenty miles around the island on the road built by Americans in WWII.

The weather was kind and on our first stop we were offered a selection of the islands wonderful fruit, and watched the women dyeing and creating patterns on the pareos. (Bora Bora's unique sarongs) We were also entertained by the local crabs (usually nocturnal); they can be tempted from their sandy holes when offered lush green leaves.

We enjoyed a delightful few hours and were impressed by the wonderful turquoise seas



and white sands. This is the haunt of the rich and the famous, and we were shown Marlon Brando's old pad, built on stilts on the waterside. Now, the tourists who are wealthy enough to afford \$800 a night, fly in, landing on the American built airstrip on Motu Mute and are transferred by boat to their resorts where rooms are built in traditional materials on stilts in the water. Finally we walked around the port, where we viewed the local crafts, wonderful shell necklaces and earrings, and even bought a pareo. We made our way back to the boat for some sun (both), gym (Nick) and hydrotherapy (me) before the Black Watch set sail for Tahiti where I'm off on a tour.



Tuesday: Tahiti: 18° 11' south, 149° 20' west

Awake at 0630, we were up on deck just before seven to savour the entry into port. Not quite as idyllic as Bora Bora, it was the better for our sighting of a school of dolphin leaping past as we entered the narrow channel through the reefs.

After an early breakfast Jackie took off on a tour of the island and Nick returned to the cabin to complete this publication of the blog before setting out to find an internet cafe to upload.

Oh, by the way; for the record, and in the interests of total candour, I **was** overdoing it. The machines in the gym are beginning to age and there are no user manuals available: I thought I had a target of 124 RPM, when in fact the target was a heart rate of 124. I was probably raising my HR to about 160 for a short time. Easy as she goes! I do not, and rarely have, exerted myself more than necessary.

