

March 13, 2012: To Beautiful Bora Bora



Northeastern Bora Bora, Four Seasons left side lagoon, airport just off photo to the right.

During the night the fair skies of the prior day were replaced by clouds and rain. Gusting winds rattled the nearby palms and pelted our cottage. The wind subsided, but rain continued as we packed and went to breakfast amongst mooching mynas. After the usual luggage weighing ritual, we donned our rain ponchos and carted our gear to the lobby to await transport to the airport. No one noticed as Royal rearranged his poncho for a better fit.

We gathered our bags and headed to the entry arch to await our ride to the airport. In a few minutes a full sized bus with “Albert’s Tours” on the side pulled up and loaded bags and passengers. We settled into our seats as Hotel Kaveka disappeared around the bend. I sat forward to make room for my back pack, then heard Wanda exclaim, “Royal, where is your backpack?” She had noticed him sitting fully back in his seat. It was back at the hotel resting quietly in the lobby. Royal had taken it off to straighten out his rain poncho and somehow we all failed to notice it sitting there as we marched like lemmings towards the bus stop.



Royal walked forward to ask the driver to turn around, but it was not to be, for the bus was already behind schedule. He told Royal not to worry, that he could call a taxi to take him to the airport after he had retrieved his back pack. Sure, if it was still there, we all thought silently.

The driver pulled out his cell phone and then began speaking a mixture of Tahitian and French; a conversation that

we could not follow. He pulled the bus into the Moorea Pearl Resort, the last stop on the way to the airport, and Royal disembarked on his mission to be seen again we knew not when. After about 5 minutes, the driver tried to leave the circular hotel drive, but a small car parked on the edge of the drive blocked his way. With outside observers directing him, he pulled within inches of clearing the vehicle, but had to stop. Then, after a few more minutes, a distraught young man jumped into his car and hustled it out of harm's way. In the meantime, Royal had disappeared from the scene.

We arrived at the airport with about 45 minutes to spare, still wondering of our wayward ward. As we gathered our bags from the bus someone wondered aloud when we might see Royal again, and if he would make the flight. In answer to our question, Royal appeared with a bright, "Were you looking for me?" Back pack in hand, he arrived just after the bus. The driver had not only called a taxi, but had instructed him to pick up the backpack and bring it to the hotel where Royal had exited. They very nearly beat us to the airport. We all decided that the good ole U.S. could learn a few things from so-called developing countries.

Raindrops sweat from the gray clouds as we boarded the plane on time and headed to the end of the runway. Notably, the pilot stood on the brakes as the engines revved to full power to avoid using up runway as the engines spooled up. The plane shuddered and rocked, roaring to go, then lurched forward as the brakes were released. We sank back into seats from the acceleration; the airplane quickly gained flying speed then rotated upward into the sky just before the opposite end of the runway. Seconds later nothing but water and air lay below our retracting landing gears.





The plane turned northward, then towards the west as islands and ocean vanished beneath the clouds. Half an hour later, glimpses of ocean appeared. Later, the appearance of the islands of Raitea and Taha'a ringed by a single lagoon signaled the approach to Bora Bora. Rough waves yielded to the coral reef surrounding turquoise water within the lagoon of Bora Bora. We passed the very short appearing runway, then turned to final approach. On touchdown

the engines roared with reverse thrust and brakes worked to slow our speed. Halfway down the runway the engines quieted and the deceleration slowed. We were down safe and sound as the airplane coasted to the turnaround point at the opposite end of the runway.

We taxied to the wooden terminal where a boat dock rather than parking lot awaited departing passengers. With water seemingly on all sides, we gathered our bags, then boarded the Bora Bora ferry to Vaitape. Other liners to luxury resorts departed first with their high priced passengers eager to escape their primitive surroundings. The ferry casually cruised the broad lagoon around the peninsula extending from the foot of the great mountain of Otemanu which lay hidden amongst the clouds. In the distance Motu Tapu appeared, rousing memories of our first visit and the delightful picnic we had enjoyed there.

Around the peninsula Vaitape came into view and soon we were again on land, loading into Le Truck for our ride to Rohotu Fare. Rustic roads passed basic living quarters along the foot of the mountain. Boats lay at anchor here and there in the bay, and groups of outriggers paddled vigorously through the waters, always at top speed, never leisurely. Le Truck stopped abruptly at the base of a steep, rutted road. This was it.

A four-wheel drive vehicle rambled down the slope, and we were greeted by Nir, the owner of Rohotu Fare. He drove Fairy and Wanda up to the hill, but Royal and I wanted to walk and take in the scenery. Primitive beauty surrounded the homes and lodge that were engulfed in greenery and flowers of many colors. The entrance to the lodge resembled a jungle path through a veritable botanical garden of trees and brush with bright blooms. The cement walkway was studded with native rock with embedded murals scattered here and there. Along the path water from a fountain trickled down a lovely Greek goddess carved from pink marble. Other carvings and tikis guarded the way. Then in the middle of the path, the





trail parted around a great carved basalt stone with a grinning face baring its gleaming teeth and eyes made of mother-of-pearl, and a small tan tiki huddled at the back of its mouth.

Nir guided us through the bungalows which rested on stilts on the down side of the mountain. The rear balcony overlooked a canopy of trees and vines, and we listened in wonder

as he described several of the plants. An ancient, lichen-spotted stone tiki watched over the bungalow from the perimeter of the balcony.



Our main room held a canopy bed with lacy mosquito netting held back by tassels. Graceful nudes and pictures decorated the room. Beyond the bed a doorway led outside to the kitchen, bathroom and shower, covered by a thatch awning and guarded by a wooden wall from the outside. Our shower had no roof overhead of the statue of a lovely dark maiden holding a vessel from which poured our water. A dark boulder under the awning held our towels and wash cloths. We felt like Swiss Family Robinson.

Nir narrated the tour of the area and told of his adventures in finding this part of the world in which to live. We listened attentively and wished for more when the discourse ended. Later he took us to town where we purchased food and water, then we settled in for the rest of the day.



We dined on baguettes, cheese (some of it smelly) and bananas and the most delicious inedible-appearing fruit I have ever tasted, the ramboutan.

This red, spiky-haired fruit the size of an egg resembles more of a cocklebur than food. We were introduced to it by the daughter of Ron Hall, whom Fairy and Wanda

had met the day earlier. When she gave me the fruit and insisted I try it, I watched her expression for the slightest hint of a practical joke as I bit into the spiny rind. To my surprise it

split in half and a most delicious sweetness like I had never tasted burst forth. With the hull cracked, I took it out of the mouth, split it fully apart and pulled out the pale white fruit which was consumed by carefully chewing and sucking it off the pit. Any juice in the hull was also carefully collected and consumed. The discarded hulls piled up like oyster shells as we kept trying "just one more."

The evening slowly faded into sunset and Venus and Jupiter brightened the sky before clouds covered the scene. Geckos chirped in the background while we lowered the mosquito netting and settled in to sleep. Like the mighty Jupiter by the lovely Venus, I felt like a king lying beside my goddess of love.

More Views of Rohotu Fare

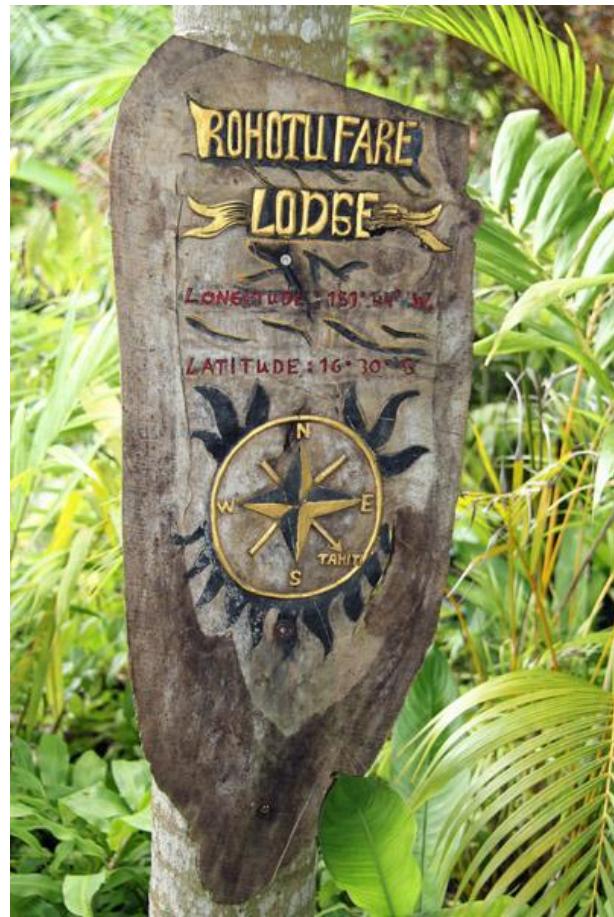


Top of the drive, entrance to Rohotu Fare is beyond the bushes near the center of the photo.



Along the entrance paths to Rohotu Fare



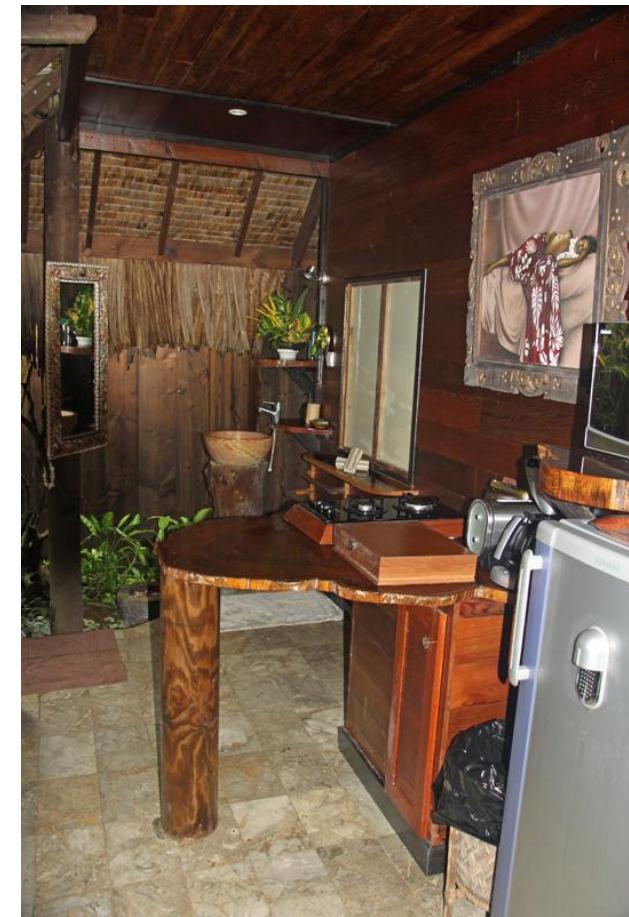


The Bedroom





The Shower



The kitchen

The Balcony

