

March 27, 2012: Return to Nuku Hiva and Ua Pou



Restful sleep yielded to the morning as fingers of twilight poked through the windows and pried our eyes wide open. The boat lay alongside dock as workers busily moved cargo on and off the ship in the now-familiar port of Taiohae, Nuku Hiva. Near the center of the bay the huge cruise ship Rotterdam lay at anchor as well. It was capable of holding more than 10 times the number of passengers than our modest freighter, and for a while we worried that all those “tourists” were invading our private paradise. How dare they?

We made our way between the orange cones that separated passengers from freight and waited for about 30 seconds for Le Truck to take us to the village. Others headed up the road to towards the shore, so we started walking as well. The trail just up from the beach looked too inviting, so we ignored Le Truck as it passed by and walked the trail through the trees by the shore. In the distance we noted the tenders from the Rotterdam racing for shore, certain to beat us to the market area. No point in hurrying.

We passed church and cemetery, a home with a horse that appeared tethered, and a tennis court below a low hill that at different times had been the location of American and French forts, and the local jail. It was referred to by Robert Lewis Stevenson as “Calaboose Hill.” We rounded the rise and joined the main highway that led to the familiar market and visitors center of Taiohae. In the distance we could see dozens of vehicles ready to haul away the competition to



who knows where, and we breathed a sigh of relief when we realized that the market, though busy, was not overwhelmed with “those people.”

When we arrived, we could tell little difference between the “Rotters” and our gang. We all looked, dressed, and acted about the same. Finally, however, we discovered a notable difference that saved our sinking egos. At the first store we entered we found two lovely shirts

with island motif that were just what we had been looking for. The clerk produced a calculator to convert our currency, then looked very relieved when we produced local currency instead of the U.S. dollar. Perhaps we scored some points with the locals, or maybe not, but it made us feel just a tiny bit superior to “those tourists.”

Next Fairy found a lady whose purses she had so admired on the first visit here and began inspecting her wares in earnest. The lovely cloth purses either had a zipper with single compartment, or drawstring with four inner compartments. When drawn shut, four ears folded outward from the bag with beautiful color contrast; some having turtle, dolphin, other tattoo designs. We purchased six of the lovely items, some for gifts, and a couple for Fairy. Then the designer and maker of the artful purses happily posed for a photo with Fairy.

We marveled at other items in the market, including ukuleles that were for sale. One had 10 strings doubled up to increase the sound, while the others had the usual four strings and one had a hollow coconut for the sounding box.

Rain pelted the market for several minutes, then ceased, and we left the shelter to meander back to the boat. We rounded “Calaboose Hill,” passed by the tennis courts, and casually ambled beside the beach. The showers that dampened the roadway had moved to the middle of the bay and painted a low rainbow that arched over boats anchored in the bay.



I stopped to take a photo when Fairy shouted, “Howard, watch out!” A few dozen yards away the no-longer tethered horse we had seen earlier was running full speed, snorting and whinnying, straight at us. We hurried back out of its way and it clippity-clopped on by and disappeared



down the road. Without time to be startled, I turned again towards the beach to photograph the rainbow, and after two shots it vanished as quickly as the horse had appeared.

Three scruffy dogs appeared from under a rail fence and approached cautiously with heads down and tails wagging. They sniffed our outreached hands and seemed to enjoy a few pats on the head, but probably would have preferred

food. Again the horse appeared trotting down the road and the dogs took off in hot pursuit. They ran towards the hill by the market, then returned lickety-split in our direction, and then turned and disappeared into the trees by the lot where we had first seen the horse. “Perhaps that’s why they are all so skinny”, Fairy commented after watching the whole affair.

We continued down the road past the cemetery, where I stopped again to take a few more photos of the gleaming white monuments on green grounds with mountains rising behind. A large gap near the top of one ridge revealed blue and white patches of sky beyond. Then we continued on to the boat for a lazy time relaxing and a quiet dinner as the boat traveled from Nuku Hiva to Ua Pou and maneuvered into the dock at Hakahau.



Alas, it was a school day and no children swam into the waters to ride the bow hawser as it rose and fell to the water in the bay. Cranes swung about and winches whined as the crew hustled cargo from boat to shore and back. We took a more casual attitude and were content to watch the activity from deck side rather than going to shore.

When the boat finally departed Hakahau, we went to the star deck to watch Ua Pou pass by, clouds brushing the top of its volcanic peaks while its green slopes yielded to broken brown cliffs by the sea. As it diminished into the distance we knew it was time to prepare for our departure. We wondered if or when we might again walk along the beaches, valleys and mountains of Te Henua Enana, the “Land of Men,” or the Marquesas, as the islands are known by some.

Photo Gallery



At Taiohae



Taiohae Bay and Calaboose Hill



Cemetery at Taiohae



Aranui 3 at Taiohae dock



Clouds, caves and pinnacles of Ua Pou



Cave by sea at Ua Pou



Airport at Ua Pou



Hakahetau, Ua Pou



Sulking sentinels at Ua Pou



Land's end at the Land of Men— Ua Pou, Te Fenua Enata