

JANUARY 19TH -FIFTH DAY AT SEA - NORMAL SEAS

Seas are calm-ish and weather beautiful. We are taking it easy with nothing on the agenda. Sitting most of the day in the Explorers Lounge working on upcoming excursions to Auckland, Bay of Islands lining up transportation if we want to go on our own.

We officially crossed over into the South Pacific today.



LOBSTER BRAWL

Tonight they had a dining special, grilled lobsters. There was a long line to get to the buffet as I guess everyone loves lobster. They were mid- size. Larry and I each grabbed one along with our sides. It was the sweetest tasting lobster I've ever had. People were making pigs of themselves, going back for seconds and thirds. Even their eating habits were questionable, putting the empty shells all over the tables getting everything greasy.

We decided to go out on the back deck to get some air as it was such a nice evening. Next thing we know, one of the upper level crew members was trying to calm down a passenger out there. The passenger was very upset, telling the crew member that, he and the two women he was with, were standing patiently in the long line for lobster and this guy just butts in front of them and grabs a plate of lobster tails. He said he said something to him about it and the other guy wanted to start a fight. He said the guy was drunk and very confrontational. Who would think people would be on the verge of fist fights to get some lobster?

HUMAN SAUNA

The roof over the large center pool area is still closed. It is so hot and stuffy and now getting stinky. If anyone has been on one of these Viking ships, you know the roof that I'm talking about. I don't understand why they don't open it as the ship we went on to the Amazon River constantly had that roof open all the time and it was so nice. How these people can stay in there all day, lazing about on chaise lounges is baffling. They have a food station in there also with salads. I keep wondering how the food doesn't spoil in the heat. I asked the poor sweating bartender why they don't open the roof. He said they've been working on it. He admitted it has been unbearable.

I noticed today someone complained about it on the Viking Facebook page and that started a firestorm of comments and complaints. I think they are going to have a problem if they don't get that thing open soon. We've been hearing conflicting stories, one is, "they can't open it because of the strong winds" but I think they have a mechanical problem. We are in flat seas now and no wind so open it up!



JANUARY 20TH - FIRST SIGHT OF LAND, BORA BORA

After 5 days at sea we are finally approaching Bora Bora today. I'm so excited because I've heard it is so beautiful. It was originally called Pora Pora mai te pora meaning "created by the Gods". Then shortened to Bora Bora which means "first born". Fortunately the seas have been normal and today flat calm. I'm ready to get on some land as are the rest of the passengers. The forecast predicts rain but it is so hot I don't think we will mind.



We are supposed to arrive around 11:00 AM. We've signed up for a boat tour signed up in the morning and then in the afternoon an open-air ride to see the villages and beach views.

The sky looks overcast and not too promising. We began the process of debarkation by heading down to the Star Theater in the lower front bottom of the boat. The place is packed as everyone is there waiting for their turn to be called to get on the tenders to take them to various tours. We are reminded numerous times to please not bring food or live plants to shore to protect their fragile ecological environment,



Finally after multiple calls for tours to come to the other end of the ship, it's our turn and we have to walk now to mid-ship and go down two flights of stairs to board the floating orange pill boat. We are last to board. We maneuver our way to the very front right below the pilot which are the last free seats. Kind of felt like crawling into the innermost part of a snail shell. It's stifling hot, humid and swelly. If that is not a prescription for claustrophobia or sea sickness I don't know what is. There is no air flow on these things. Can't imagine what it would be like stuck out in sea during a real emergency with no idea when you could get out of this thing. It would be stifling.



Once ashore, we are greeted to 4 very large ukulele players and their dogs who don't seem fazed at the loud music nor all the people walking all around them. They slept, curled up like furry snails seemingly not bothered by a thing and apparently not worried about being stepped on.

We are tour number 12, and are told to follow someone in a red shirt with the stick with a Viking red #12 on it. We find him and he leads us towards the tour boats. He can't seem to find our particular boat so he just puts us on one. It's a lot cuter than the picture of the boat we saw at the on board shore orientation presentation so I was happy with that. They are cute boats with an outrigger for stability. The hull sides are painted in a Polynesian pattern.

We meet our captain for the tour and he is very friendly and welcoming as he helps us on to the boat. He is a handsome Polynesian with long brown hair, and a necklace with large beads and what looks like like fangs.

He heads towards the northern part of the lagoon and points





out various important buildings to the island like the local school and medical center. He said there is no real hospital on the island. If something serious happens they will send you by boat to Tahiti, a 2 hour ride, or if more serious, by helicopter.

The shoreline is beautiful, lush and lined with coconut palms and simple houses. He takes us to the end of the lagoon and says this is where the original Bora Bora Hotel was. It was "was"



because it was wiped out in a cyclone over 10 years ago and the famous nearby bar Bloody Mary is no longer. It was frequented by people like Marlon Brando and others and we were told to be sure and go there as it still has a lingering reputation today.



It was starting to sprinkle. There was another boat that was hanging with us. He said it was his cousin. He was a big guy with nothing more than a wrap of Polynesian fabric around his waste. They took us around the outer island of the lagoon and past the Hilton with many of the famous grass huts on poles out over the turquoise waters. Much bigger than what I imagined. By now it is a total downpour but that did not stop our guide from making a good time for all.

We were all totally soaked. I was worried about my cameras and had them in some bags. The lagoon has many sting rays and sharks (all friendly, like the Bahamas). His cousin in the boat ahead of us, pulled up to a homemade marker to tie the boat and then jumped into the water.

Immediately a couple of large stingrays came up and he was hugging them and kissing them. It was so amazing and fun to watch. The stingrays would let him pick them up and cuddle them around. Soon some sharks were coming to see the excitement. They are kind of golden in color. I'm sure he was feeding the stingrays but still it was fun to think they were like pets.



109 INCHES OF RAIN, IT'S WET HERE

Then one of the passengers on our boat, a woman traveling alone, (I've seen her several places during our travels) yelled at our guide that it was time to take us back. "This is ridiculous! We are all wet!" I was embarrassed for her bad behavior. Our guide took the insults with grace and

took us back. I don't know what it mattered as by now we were totally wet anyway. Bora Bora gets 109 inches of rain a year, what did she expect?

He brought us back to the dock and we had a couple of hours before our next excursion which was to take a ride around the island. It was nonstop pouring rain now. We huddled under the

Viking tent and explored some of the locally made products for sale, like moo moos, shell necklaces, etc. I bought a swim suit cover up and we waited and listened to the four Polynesians playing the ukulele's and singing.

Finally it was time to get on our tour "bus". It was still pouring cats and dogs. We both looked at each other wondering if we really wanted to do this. We were slopping wet, shoes soaked too. The bus was like an old school bus with wooden benches that had de-legged plastic chair seats stuck on them. Nope, not doing that. The windows were wide open and with this rain I'm not sure what you could see. So decided to skip it and head back to the boat. Guess we won't get a close up to Boa Boa. Sad.

We came back and took some hot showers to warm up. Laid our wet clothes out where we could. We finally came to the realization that nothing was going to dry in this humid environment so took everything to the laundry and put it in the dryer.

That evening before dinner the captain pulled anchor and we headed out the lagoon channel to the sea heading for Moorea.

