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respectful of the local folks you encounter. Bursting into a shop and pleading, "I'm in a rush and I need a . . ." will only create animosity. You'll have a lot more luck beginning with a thoughtful "Good afternoon" and a big smile. Above all, everybody everywhere wants respect.

— latitude/aet

Marquesas to the Tuamotus: A 900-mile Bareboating Adventure

San Francisco Bay sailor Robert Moon steamed across the South Pacific in naval warships during his 20-year stint as a military officer, but he'd always dreamed of sailing there. He finally got his chance this year when he joined John Connolly and a group of sailing students from Sausalito's Modern Sailing Academy. He completed ASA's top-tier courses, Celestial Navigation and Offshore Passagemaking, along the way.

There are no bareboats based in the Marquesas and Tuamotus, but Connolly made special arrangements with Tahiti Yacht Charters to organize this series of cruises, and he expects to offer a similar program — Marquesas to Tuamotus to Society Islands — next year. The following



The waters of French Polynesia are abundant with sealife — especially around Tuamotu islands such as Toa'u.

are excerpts from Robert's report, beginning at the Marquesan Island of Nuku Hiva:

Nuku Hiva is basically a volcano with a little land around the sides of it. It took two hours to travel the 12 miles from the airport to the hotel, which was on the other side of the island. This meant basically climbing high up on the side

of the volcano, and back down the other side. Some of the views were stunning, and were totally unobstructed by guard rails. Also, there was no paving.

The view of the bay and mountains leading down to it was breathtaking. Perfection. Just what I had expected and dreamed of. Even from this high perch I could see a number of sailboats dotting the Bay. I asked myself, "Would I someday be anchored out in that Bay aboard my own boat, *Astraea*?"

A couple of days later it was time to move from the hotel to the boat. I had already met Holly, who was easily identified at the hotel as fellow crew, as I had spied her sitting by the pool reading the latest edition of *Latitude 38* — always a dead giveaway for a Bay Area sailor.

. . . Late morning of March 20 we were finally underway from Nuku Hiva to Ua Pou. This was an upwind trip and we were going into 20 knots of wind and 10-foot seas. Fortunately I don't get seasick, but three of the new crew did and were heaving over the side. All part of adventure sailing! We were off.

We arrived in Ua Pou where, as John

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promised, we were able to go pierside and get water. Non-potable water. I very quickly learned that this is standard in the South Pacific. You buy drinking water or you have a watermaker. If you are lucky, you can sometimes find hydrants a good distance from the boat where you can fill up your jerry jugs with non-potable water from local cisterns. We topped off all our water tanks, then went out to anchor. Later we dinghied ashore for dinner at a fantastic little restaurant on a hillside overlooking the harbor. It was right out of Bali Hai. The owners were French, of course, and the food worthy of a bistro on the Left Bank of Paris — only the fish was fresher and the view was better. We had three types of fish, chicken, rice and several bottles of good wine. This trip was off to a very good start.

The next day we were underway from the Marquesas, bound for Fakarava in the Tuamotus. For the next four days we organized into three groups for watches and learned how to balance watch standing, cooking, eating, sleeping and navigating. To experience the 550-mile sail

across open ocean was one of the primary reasons I had signed up for this leg of the cruise. The surprising part was how quickly we all fell into our routine and how fast the time and the miles passed.

I also learned that using my sextant, which I had mastered many years before as a young Ensign navigator on my first Navy ship, was quite a bit more challenging on a rolling 47-ft sailboat in the open ocean. Also, computing the results of the star sights was quite a bit different on the salon table of a pitching sailboat than in the much-more-stable chartroom of a warship. Lesson learned: know how to navigate by the sun and the stars, have a full set of paper charts, but invest in a high-quality GPS chart plotter and have a good waterproof handheld GPS stowed away for a backup, as well as for your ditch bag.



Hands-on sail training was an important element of Modern Sailing's inter-island circuit. ASA certifications were earned en route.

The only thing more exciting than sailing away from a harbor for an extended crossing is seeing the next harbor come into view. After four days of sailing everyone was up on deck the morning of day five to catch the first sight of Fakarava on the horizon. As we neared the island, however, there was something coming over the horizon that was unlike anything I had seen anywhere in the world in my years at sea or while sailing on the Bay. We all took turns watching this

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unusual object through the binoculars. It looked like three huge vertical poles, all the same size. Then, over the horizon came the hull and yes, there was no mistaking, it was the 289-ft *Maltese Falcon*, owned by Bay Area mogul Tom Perkins. As we made our way into the harbor the famous yacht passed close by and anchored out, some distance away from the harbor.

As it was early in the season, there were no other sailboats in Fakarava other than *Maltese Falcon*, so we were actually able to go pierside in the little village. After four days at sea it was an unexpected treat to tie up and to be able to step off onto the shore. The dreaded no-no's (bugs) did not materialize, nor did any mosquitoes, so we remained at the pier for the two nights of our stay.

Fakarava is not a large established harbor like Nuku Hiva. We were berthed in a tiny little village of Rotoava with one small grocery store, one incredibly beautiful little open-air restaurant, and one nice *pension* that also had a fixed menu dinner. This was my first experience on a motu (islet) with only a small



ALL PHOTOS ROBERT MOON

At Rangaroa the crew enjoyed a splendid lunch on the beach, featuring several types of fresh-caught fish.

village and it was wonderful. The people were all friendly, like everywhere in French Polynesia. However, there were few supplies to be had, and everything was outrageously expensive. Another lesson learned: When sailing in French

Polynesia, bring money. Lots of it.

The scenery, however, was unbelievable, the food at the one restaurant good, and the snorkeling was fantastic. The coral formations were breathtaking. Two days here were *not* enough. Already, I was deciding that yes, I think I do want to come back here with my own boat.

After two days in Fakarava we were underway for Toa'u, a totally different kind of visit because Toa'u is a deserted motu. It was also very small with very tight navigation inside the pass. I was the navigator going in, and it was hairy! Very narrow channel within the lagoon. However, thanks to an accurate GPS and two-minute fixes, we made it and anchored off a totally deserted beach. After a short dinghy ride to shore and more great snorkeling it was time to have a nice meal and some good French wine, while watching the sunset over the motu. Lesson learned: When anchored off of a beautiful island in the South Pacific, the only place to sleep is topside.

Early the next morning Holly and I decided to do some exploring ashore.

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The island was classic South Pacific with curving sand beaches, palm trees and lots of crabs and other beach wildlife. There was one old deserted hut, but no other sign of human existence. We walked down the beach and decided to cross over to the ocean side. As we were crossing through the jungle we were walking along this tidal pool and suddenly about 100 yards ahead, on the other side of the narrow pool, we saw two huge wild boars! I would guess they would tip the scales at 1,000 pounds each. And one had tusks! We stopped, they stopped, and we stared at each other across this little stream. My thought was "how fast can I climb a palm tree?" Fortunately, the boars chose flight over fight and walked away into the jungle.

We crossed over to the ocean side and I was exploring some of the lava formations when I heard Holly scream. The daughter of a Navy Seal, she is normally fearless. She snorkels all over the world, including the Great Barrier Reef, and she laughs at sharks. Apparently, however, she had startled a 4-foot eel which

was lounging in a tidal pool when she walked up on it. Unlike the wild boars, the eel chased Holly over the rocks on the beach for about 20 feet! She was running and screaming! Afterwards we were both almost rolling on the sand laughing.

Too soon we were back on the boat and underway for Apahaki, a nearby island that has a small fishing village. As we neared the pass there she was again, *Maltese Falcon*, anchored just inside the pass. We altered course to pass close aboard and wave to the crew.

We had an incredible time leaving Tao'u. The seas in the pass were about 15 feet with five-second intervals. It was like riding one of those mechanical bulls one sees in the movies. Incredible! I was at the helm and we all just held on for



In French Polynesian waters, making a landfall is always a spectacular experience. The easterly trades result in sweet sailing.

dear life and prayed that the diesel gods would keep our engine running until we got out into the ocean. Even John, who has been sailing professionally for 40 years, said it was one of the roughest passes he had ever sailed through. It was awesome! I was totally stoked. Interestingly, I felt no fear, just sheer joy, total exhilaration. We were holding on for dear life! Lesson learned: My Cheoy Lee 41

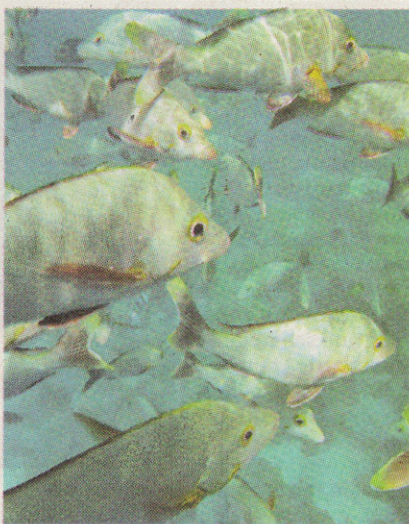
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and I can do this.

We were making eight knots toward Apahaki when the *Maltese Falcon* started coming up astern of us. We watched as she unfurled row after row of her sails without a soul on deck. Soon she was in full sail and passing us at something like 20 knots. It was one of the most beautiful sights I had ever seen.

Apahaki was another amazing island. It had a small village with a small store, but no water. We were able to go alongside the small pier. Most of these villages have a pier for the supply ships to come in. Otherwise they could not exist.

We had lost our gas tank for the dinghy during our wild bronco ride out of Tao'u. So Holly and I paddled the dinghy out into the reefs to do some snorkeling. We found out later, though, that the best snorkeling was right along the pier where the boat was moored. It was Holly's birthday, so John and I found this little *pension* and arranged a big dinner for all of us, including a chocolate birthday cake. The owner, whose name was Friday (no kidding), really did it up for us. We had raw fish, grilled fish, chicken, rice,



ROBERT MOON

Sadly, some popular chartering venues are over-fished, but sealife is prolific in French Polynesian waters.

we brought our own wine, and we had "chocolate gâteau" for dessert. Friday even had his wife carry the cake out and he accompanied it singing *Happy Birthday* while strumming his guitar.

On March 29 we departed Apataki and did a fantastic overnight sail to

Rangarora. We had 20+ knots of wind and sailed at 8 knots most of the night. I had the 0400-0800 watch and was able to view the sunrise on my final day of sailing. It was, to my good fortune, a fantastic sunrise. By late morning on March 30 it was time for the rest of the crew and me to bid goodbye to John and await our flights back to the real world.

... Thanks to this two weeks of sailing in the South Pacific, most of my questions about a future cruising adventure on my own boat are now answered. Most importantly, yes, it will be worth it to make a lifestyle change, retire, and sail *Astraea* to the South Pacific, and perhaps all the way around the world.

After this much-too-short taste of cruising in the South Pacific my plans are to retire in time to make the Baja Ha-Ha in 2009 and the Puddle Jump to French Polynesia in 2010. After that I'll go where the winds take me. Thanks to John and my two weeks and 900 miles of South Pacific sailing, I am confident that my boat and I are up to the challenge, and we can do it safely and have fun.

— robert moon