



SCOTTSDALE TOURS

SURPRISING SAMOA 2008

We were set to depart good old NZ and head for warmer climes just as that first snowy southerly came blasting up the country. Fortunately as we picked up our passengers, we were one step ahead of it. That is until we reached the airport. Once again our trip was delayed by the airlines. Third time this year. We were due to fly out with Air New Zealand at 4pm but due to a fault with the aircraft's radio, we were off loaded and had to wait for another plane to be brought over from the hanger. Once we were aboard our second aircraft, we had to sit and wait for the thunder



storm to pass over so that the ground crew could unload our first plane and put our luggage on the second plane. Apparently they are not allowed to work around an aircraft during a storm, which is understandable. Anyway we finally got airborne at around 8.30pm, subsequently arriving in Samoa around 4am that same morning as we crossed the date line.

We opted to take our free day that first day so we could catch up on some sleep and ease into our holiday. It poured down with rain the first day but the next day was glorious. Contrary to our NZ News weather forecasts, it does not rain every day in Samoa.

We joined forces with Sala and Claudine of My Samoa Tours and they took us ticky touring all over both islands and did a wonderful job, so did their drivers, Junior and Gavin.

We stayed on the main island of Upolu for the first 4 nights at Hotel Kitano in Apia. The staff looked after us very well and we dined in style. We were treated to a first class 'Fia Fia' or floor show with island music, dancing and spectacular displays of fire dancing. It was lovely to be immersed in the culture and ambience of island life. We spent our free days exploring the markets and meeting the friendly local people. Ross even took the opportunity to



go scuba diving on the reef. Best dive he'd ever done he reckons. It was a hair raising trip back though as their boat was caught in a storm, but they arrived back safe and sound.

We took the ferry across to Savaii and spent two nights right on the beach at the Vaisala Hotel. The owners and staff treated us like royalty and even put on some excellent home grown entertainment both nights. We shared the hotel with dignitaries from parliament the first night.



Paradise Beach was fabulous, we stopped here for lunch. This is the beach where the movie 'Return to Paradise' was filmed back in 1953 with Cary Grant. We popped in and out of several flash resorts on the islands to have a look around but felt we had the better deal staying in the local hotels where we met and enjoyed the real people of Samoa. They are so friendly and helpful and they made our trip all the more enjoyable.

I guess one of the highlights of the trip would have to be the blow holes on the Savaii coast line, they have to be seen to be believed. The lava flows are also something you really can't comprehend until you are standing on them and appreciating the expanse of this destruction. It was amazing to see people living on this lava rock with little or no vegetation.



Puni would have to have been the most entertaining character we met. He was born in New Zealand and we are not sure how old he was before he went to live in Samoa but he is well established and literally 'lives off the land'. He grows what he eats and also grows his own herbs and medicine. He taught us the value of the humble coconut and showed us how to crack it open and how to get the milk out of the white flesh of the coconut. Very interesting and very delicious.



We had a wonderful time just relaxing and soaking up the tropical island ambience and enjoying the beautiful sights around the islands. The beaches are just gorgeous with their fale's dotted along the coast. Reluctantly we eventually had to head out to the airport and catch our flight home. It was awful having to don warm clothing at the airport while we were still in such warm temperatures. Fortunately though the weather was not as cold as we were expecting once we arrived back in Auckland. Thank you everyone for another fabulous trip, we look forward to traveling with you again.



Ross & Susy