

A romantic sunset scene on a beach. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, golden glow that reflects on the water. A couple is walking hand-in-hand along the shoreline. The sky is a mix of orange and yellow, and the silhouettes of palm trees are visible on the right side of the frame.

Our 2018 Cook Islands Adventure

From the [Cook Islands Website](#): A net of 15 islands in the heart of the South Pacific spread over an area the size of India with a population no bigger than a small New Zealand country town, 17,000 souls. These unique and friendly Polynesians have their own language and government and enjoy a vigorous and diverse culture with significant differences between each island. Despite some 120,000 visitors a year to the capital island [Rarotonga](#) the Cooks are largely unspoiled by tourism. The capital of Rarotonga island is Avarua. The islands offer a rare opportunity for people from the cities of the world to experience a different type of vacation. There are no high-rise hotels and very little hype. Ideal for travellers seeking more than the usual clichés associated with the South Seas, each island has its unique qualities and offers the visitor a special experience.

OUR COOK ISLANDS ADVENTURE

(NOVEMBER 3 THROUGH NOVEMBER 17, 2018)



Nov 4 - Walk on the beach to get our island legs. White sands and blue starfish.

Nov 3 - Ride to Portland Airport with Charlie and at the airport.



I am not going to write much other than filler to fill out a page. One of the cool things on the island (only Rarotonga) is that dogs better have collars on. Otherwise, they are euthanized. Because of that, the dogs were really well cared for, handsome and all were friendly. We had as many as four dogs accompanying us on our walks at any one time.

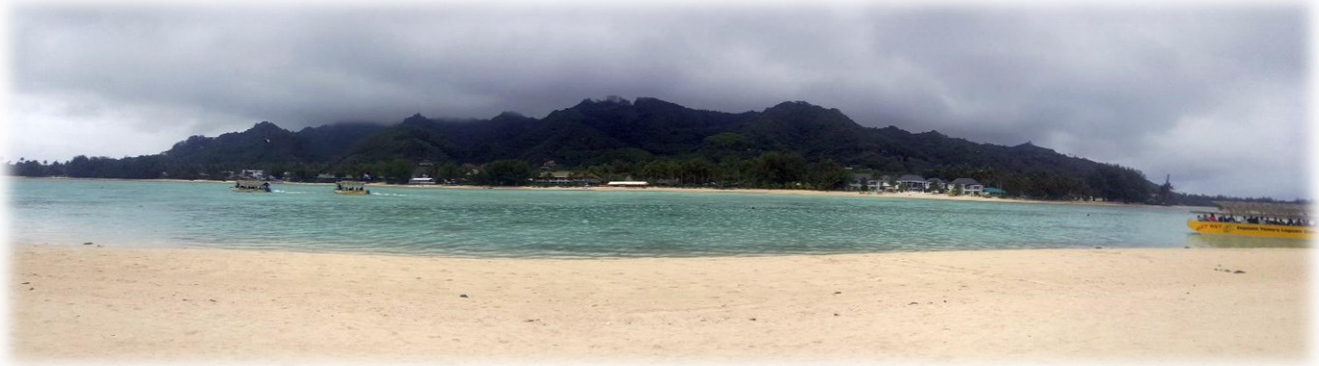


Nov 5 – Two dogs tag along with us. At first, we weren't sure what they were doing in the water, but then we realized they were "hunting" fish. We never saw them catch one. And a pretty girl joined me.



We drove to Avarua Town on the north side of the island. There was a tour ship. In the evening we sat around drinking wine and watching the hermit crabs make pretty tracks in the sand in front of our bungalow.





Nov 6 – We swam to Koromiri Island off Muri Beach. The snorkeling was not great – a lot of sea slugs. But it was still a fun adventure. Then we went to Muri Night Market for dinner. Afterwards, we sat on the beach, drank wine and dug our toes into the sand.



Nov 7 – We drove to the north side of the island to Avarua, stopped at Black Rock to check it out and take some pictures. Black Rock: Tuoro – Departure Point of Spirits. We went to the Rarotonga Brewery there and bought a pitcher. To get there we drove on the inner Road which was rather cool. It showed more of the real life of locals here on Cook Islands. After visiting Avarua for some shopping, we went to lunch at Vaiana's. We shared fish and chips and a 1.5 L picture of beer. The tartar sauce with extremely good. We then drove back and got gas at Wigmore's Superstore and the guy that pumped the gas was from Fiji. We spoke Fijian and got all excited about us being teachers and so forth. We came back to the resort and went for a short walk but then turned right around and decided to just go snorkeling right outside where we are. It was very nice! There was a wedding at the resort next door and it was very loud all night long. For dinner we had bread and crackers, cheese, peanut butter, fruit and wine.



Nov 8 - We took a flight to Aitutaki where we boarded a boat and rode about the big lagoon. It was fun, but very, very windy. We snorkeled and walked about the islands, to include One Foot Island, where we saw hundreds of hermit crabs. A couple were as big as my hand. Did you know hermit crabs climb trees? The white bird is the White Tern.



This is one of my favorite - ever - pictures of my pretty Marguerite. Uh...the picture above, not to the left 😊.



Nov 9 – A “rest” day, as if all of them weren’t rest days. We hung out at the beach house and visited the Mooring Fish Café. A great place to have a fish sandwich. We had the FOB.



Our gecko buddy – right – in our outdoor shower and a picture of our outdoor shower. Pretty cool!

Our gecko chirped every morning about 3:30 and woke us up, but it reminded us of Fiji. The roosters also started crowing about then.

Left – Evening wine.



Nov 10 – We went to Punanga Nui Market in Avarua. Had a snack and watched people, dogs and roosters.



After visiting the Market, we drove back home (yes, drove on the left side – I was a stud left-side driver). Took a picture of the front of our bungalow where we hung out nearly every night on the front porch drinking wine. Then we took a walk just down the road to Maire Nui Tropical Gardens. They are pretty and have a lot of indigenous vegetation. I got one of my best ever artsy pictures there.



Sometimes I try to get all artsy with my pictures. Or, a better way to put it is that I take a picture and when I get home, I use my picture editing software on a picture that just so happens to look artsy – has potential. Here are a couple from the Cook Islands that I like a lot. The first is just a picture of lilies in a stone bowl with a stray white flower from some other plant at the Maire Nui Tropical Gardens. The other is a requisite picture of a sunset.





The above picture is of my favorite tree on the beach. When we took a walk, if we went a long way, being old... You get the idea. Marguerite would turn her back... 😊 What's cool is that there was no one on the beach to see.



While we were in the Cook Islands, Elizabeth went to the doctor and got a picture of Charlie's baby sister or brother. I think this is at about three weeks. We call the baby Rua - Fijian for two.



Nov 11 - We had to say goodbye to Rarotonga Beach Bungalows and move to Lagoon Breeze Villas, about a ten-minute drive west. Bottom line is that we liked the Villas but loved the Bungalows. When we go back, we will try to stay at the Bungalows exclusively. So, November 11 was

say goodbye to the Bungalows...



...say hello to the Villas day.



On the night of the 11th, we went for our free dinner at the Coco Putt Ale House. The entertainment was very good. I took a few videos and they are worth watching someday. The food, on the other hand, was only okay. Also, to be called an 'Ale House' was a bit misleading. They had, perhaps, two different ales and none were on tap... 😞.



Nov 12 – We decided it was time to take our hike to The Needle on the Rarotonga Cross-Island Track. We thought, how hard can 1.5 km be? Well, it was a lot of up, but worth the hike.

WELCOME TO THE RAROTONGA CROSS-ISLAND TRACK

Map from "A Guide to Rarotonga's Cross-Island Track" by Gerald McCormack and Judith Kurile

Scale: 400m, 300m, 200m, 100m

Track Sections:

- Avatiu Road section: 2.5 km (45 min)
- Avatiu track section: 1.5 km (1 hr 15 min)
- Pāpua Track section: 1.7 km (1 hr 30 min)
- Pāpua Rd section: 1.3 km (30 min)

Safety:

- A good level of fitness is needed to walk this track.
- Wear walking or running shoes. No Jandals.
- Take drinking water, mosquito repellent, sunscreen and rainwear.
- Watch out for centipedes which can bite and paper wasps which sting.
- Take note of track duration. Tell people where you are going and what time you expect to return.
- If it has been raining, the track can become very slippery.
- Please make every effort to stay on the track to minimise damage to the forest.
- For safety, please follow the orange track markers.
- The streams are water catchment areas used for drinking water. Please do not swim in them, wash your hands or use them as a toilet.

Track information:

- These tracks are all on private land so please respect this and take care with litter on the track. Do not remove fruit or vegetables. Take all your rubbish with you or use the rubbish bins at each end of the track.
- Protect all native plants and wildlife.
- Take nothing but photographs and leave nothing but footprints.

Further information:

- Environmental Service Phone: 682 21256
- To report any safety hazards or emergencies call 999
- Cell phone coverage at the Needle Lookout

Additional text:

- Tramping in the mountains of Rarotonga can offer some magnificent views from the mountain peaks, lots of enjoyable walking through native bush and adventures involving stream crossings and steep slopes. However, the landscape can also offer some difficult, and sometimes, treacherous climbing conditions so care needs to be taken when setting out on a walk. This track is walked by many people and is relatively straight forward. If you are considering walking on any of the other tracks on Rarotonga please contact the Environment Service before starting out. It is recommended that you use a local guide as they can understand the local conditions and can give advice and a cultural perspective on the flora and fauna.
- Rarotonga is a special place. While walking on this track, please respect the delicate natural, cultural and historical attributes of this island.



Pa Teuruaa is a tourism legend in the Cook Islands, mostly for his pioneering eco-tourism venture Pa's Treks that has challenged and delighted thousands of international travelers on Rarotonga's rugged cross-island track for thirty-three years.

We were greeted by the guard pig. There was a bit of flat but that soon became a root-laced fern, tree and bush-covered jungle. Green and beautiful. Lots of butterflies.





I am not sure we would have made it to the top if it had not been for our guide roosters. Two roosters – one on the lower side of the hill and one near the top – walked along with us much of the way. Should we have paid them?



Rod made it to the tip with help from a well-placed chain. Marguerite admired the view from the base of the Needle.





View from the base of The Needle. You could see both north and south coasts from here.



More of the interior above. Lady Finger bananas and beautiful butterflies.



And after our hike, we went to Avarua for a thick milkshake.





And then we made our way home to a beautiful sunset and just as beautiful moonrise.

Nov 13 - Snorkeling and a trip to Charlie's for happy hour. Strawberry Daiquiri for Marguerite and the standard beer for Rod.





Nov 14, 15 and 16 – Rod got sick, so the 14th was a down day for us. We took a walk on the beach and took pictures. Snorkeled and met new dogs on the beach. A nice (except for getting sick) last three days.

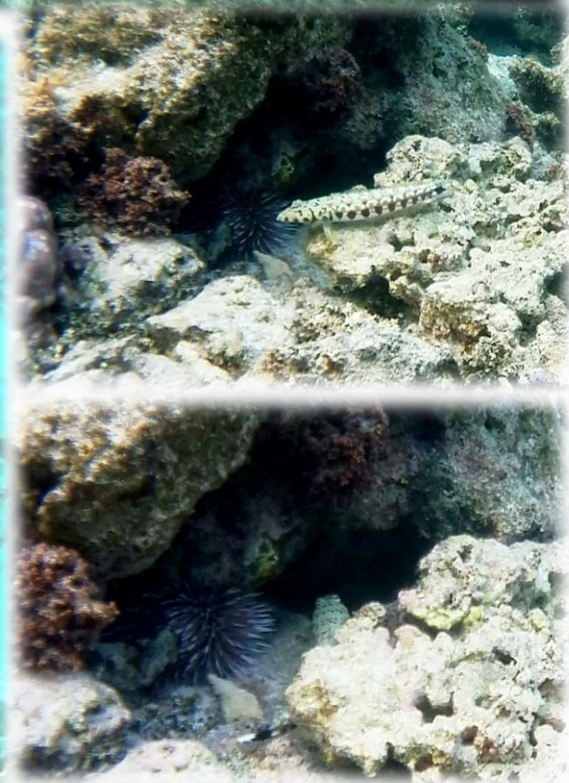


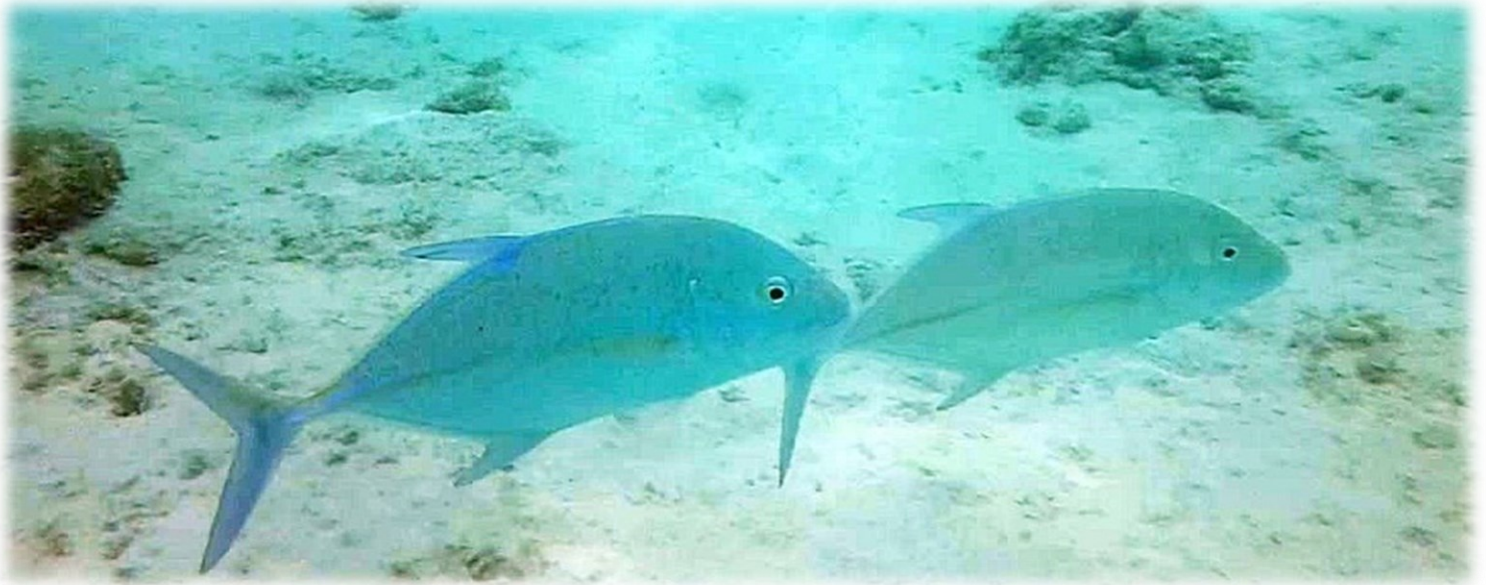
Of course, we went snorkeling. I took videos. Here are some of my favorite frames.













And so, the way all trips do, our trip to the Cook Islands came to an end. It was a wonderful, colorful, peaceful and relaxing trip. We took several hundred pictures, many videos and a million memories. We left our footprints in the sand to be washed away by the next tide. But we will be back – god willing and the creek don't rise – to make new footprints.

Quick notes from the field – Cook Islands, 2018

(Notes taken by using dictation. With minimal editing, only to make it readable-ish)

Our trip started with a ride to the Portland Airport at 9. Charlie, Kevin, and Elizabeth took us to the airport. Marguerite and I got to sit with Charlie in the backseat. Our flight left at noon from Portland and we arrived in Los Angeles about 4. We sat around in the loss Angeles Airport until about 11:45 p.m. And then caught our plane. When we found out where we were going to pick up our plane, we had to go down to the common area to get on board. And then we had to take a bus to where the plane was. It was all rather weird. And we didn't get to ride on the plane that we were supposed to be on which was sort of a bummer because it was supposed to be a very good plane. When we got on the plane and took off, we all started falling asleep and then they woke us up to feed us. That was a little bit weird. They made us set our seats up and so forth to eat, which was also a little weird. But we made it and talked to a nice person who sat beside us named Bonnie. She is an artist that illustrates a bunch of stuff to include children's books and stuff for National Geographic. We arrived at the airport in the Cook Islands at about 6 a.m. We slept very well and Marguerite did have an episode but it was not a seizure type of thing but she just got a little bit sick but took a Dramamine and was fine. We were picked up at the airport and took a bus ride to our stop here at the Rarotonga Beach Bungalows.

We decided not to get internet service because we don't want to. And there's no reason to get it. We went snorkeling yesterday and it was really pretty out there and the water was crystal clear.

My cold still bothers me and I have a pretty nasty cough but all in all I am getting better. We plan on going to the Muri night market tonight and maybe walking out to a couple of the small Isles that are just out of out from Muri a little bit. We will eat lunch or dinner there and hang out at the market. Yesterday I drove on the left side of the road and feel reasonably comfortable that I can continue to do that, especially since this is a pretty easy place to drive on the left. Don't put me in the middle of downtown Paris and expect me to do the same thing. But wait, Paris drives on the right side so maybe I could do it. Don't put me in the middle of downtown Auckland Zealand and expect me to do it.

We went on our adventure snorkeling to one that the small islands across from Muri. It was pretty cool and it was very shallow. It was low tide and you could probably just about walk across but we snorkeled. There were about a million sea cucumbers and we had to watch out when we sat in the sand so that we didn't sit on one and squish it.

Back to yesterday. Yesterday, we took a walk on the beach and then we got a car and then we drove on the left side clockwise all the way around the island. The only bad part is that I can't understand how the blinker works so I grabbed the wrong side of the blinker thing and turn on the windshield wipers. Other than that, it is not too bad. We drove to Avarua and walked around downtown. We went to the Museum of Culture and the library there which is one building. I didn't see a library but that's part of the name. It was an interesting thing and we are glad we did it. Rod got really tired and we had to stop and have a little brake somewhere which was not bad. I forgot its name. We had beer and fish and chips. Last night we went to Charlie's. It was a lot of fun and a good place to eat and drink. We talked to a couple from New Zealand named Jim and Rebecca. We chatted a very long time. That was fun and they had a good little band there as well which was a one-man band but was still good.

On Wednesday the 7th we drove to the north side of the island to Avarua, stopped at Black Rock to check it out and take some pictures. We might go swimming there. We went to the brewery there and bought a pitcher. To get there we drove on the inner Road which was rather cool. It showed more of the real life of locals here on the Cook Islands. After going to the brewery, we went to the pharmacy and got me some cough medicine and then went to Foodland and bought some booze. We also bought pilot crackers like we had in Fiji. They were very good. We went to lunch at Ariana's. That is not spelled correctly but I took a picture of the sign. That was fun because it was right on the beach. We shared fish and chips and a 1.5 L picture of beer. The tartar sauce with extremely good. We then drove back and got gas at Wigmore's Superstore and the guy that pumped the gas was from Fiji. We spoke Fijian and got all excited about us being a teacher and so forth. We came back to the resort and went for a short walk but then turned right around and decided to just go

snorkeling right outside where we are. It was very nice! There was a wedding at the resort next door and it was very loud all night long. For dinner we just had bread and crackers, cheese, peanut butter, fruit and wine.

Today, the 8th of November we did a trip to Aitutaki. We got up at 5:45 and we're picked up at 7, taken to the airport and boarded the plane.

We went on a Lagoon cruise and stopped at four Islands or was that three islands? The last island we went to was called One Foot Island and has a very cool story about it. We went snorkeling and saw a giant clam. And a bunch of fish. Lunch was awesome. It was very windy and was supposed to have rained but it really didn't very much. Snorkeling was okay but the wind made very big waves and sometimes choked even we super good snorkeling guys 😊. We got on the plane at 5 and arrived back here at our place at 6. We are both tired and do not have a car tomorrow so might just hang out around here because it is supposed to rain. Oh yeah, one of the coolest things that we saw today was a bunch of hermit crabs which is not so exciting in itself but they were climbing trees and they were huge. I have pictures. When I say huge, there was one that was about the size of two of my hands folded together into a fist or I guess you could say double fisted. Speaking of double fisted, I think I'll go get another beer. And also help Marguerite make dinner.

Today is the 9th of November. After all the activities of yesterday being at Aitutaki and so forth we slept in for almost 10 hours. We took a long walk this morning nearly three miles on the beach. We then went to get a car and will have it for the rest of the time we're here. We ate at Mooring Fish Café and it was quite good. We shared a mahi sandwich which is called a FOB which means fresh off the boat, we think. We split a milkshake as well. We came back and I don't think either one of us fell asleep but we lay in bed for a while and read books. Rod then took a 1-hour snorkeling journey in front of the bungalows while Marguerite read her book on the beach. Rod saw about a thousand fish swim around him at one point. That was really cool and then he saw a couple of hundred fish streaking at him from straight ahead. They were white and rather sleek. It was all cool. Also saw some very green and brilliant green Coral. We are sitting here having a glass of wine, it is about 4:30 and we are pondering what to do next.

We decided to go next door and have pizza. Well, we actually got pizza to go and it is quite good. In fact, Marguerite could only eat one piece it was so thick with stuff and I of course finished it off. No, really, I ate only two and a half pieces. We have half of it left. Goodnight.

It is 5:15 p.m. On November 10th. Today is our last full day at our first place at the beach bungalows. Tomorrow we are going to Lagoon Breeze villas. Today we got up fairly early and drove to Avarua. We went to the Panaga Nui Market. It was fun and we bought a necklace for Marguerite out of shell - 10 bucks. We walked around the market and bought a scone and a fruit smoothie thing. It was good and then we bought papaya and bananas. The prices are far better at the market than they are in the stores. We then drove to the trailhead of the Cross-Island Hike. We are going to do that someday soon. We also signed up for a turtle adventure on Tuesday. We then went shopping for booze and crackers and cheese at Foodland. We drove back and took a little rest and then took a long walk on the beach this time going east. It was a very warm sunny day. We took a walk to the Botanical Gardens near us and that was very pretty. Well worth the \$5 per person donation. We are now sitting on the porch enjoying happy hour. Marguerite wants to invite our neighbors but I'm too lazy and don't want to talk. We got some Victoria bitter and that is pretty good stuff. I think I will get that the rest of the time we are here when buying beer.

This evening we went down on the beach and sat there for a while and had a glass of wine. It was a beautiful evening. After we finished our wine, we took a walk to the east for about a half a mile or so and turned around. We were hoping to see the green flash but clouds got in the way and we didn't. But it was still a gorgeous evening and the wind has died down and it is just tranquil out there. Quite gorgeous.

Today is November 12th, 2018. We are at Lagoon breeze villas and moved here yesterday from the beach bungalows. Yesterday, we settled in here after a long farewell at the bungalows. We will miss everyone there, especially Lucky. The folks here are very nice and we are having a fine stay. The continental breakfast is extremely good. We both appreciate the fruit and we might actually have too much fruit but we will try to figure out how to eat it. Yesterday we went snorkeling across from the Fruits of Rarotonga and it was a good snorkeling trip. We still like directly out from the beach bungalows the best. But I think all we need to do is

just go deeper during high tide and it will be great. We saw bigger fish yesterday than we have seen at any other time. Of course, at Aitutaki we saw the giant fish which was really cool. We went to the Ale House for dinner last night and there was a live band. It was really good and a lot of fun. We met a lot of folks from Lagoon Breeze villas. Today, we hiked to the Needle from the north because the road from the south which is closest to us is closed. I, Rod, went all the way to the end of the trail halfway up the needle. There are chains and ropes to help pull yourself along. That was cool and we got a lot of nice pictures. The hike was very humid and we sweat a lot and it was very steep and the roots of the trees were good to help us climb up the hill sides. They were like stairs. When we got back it was great to swim in the pool that they have here at the villas. That is something else that the bungalows don't have. We talked to a guy named Kent from New Zealand for a long time. After we took a little rest, we went to the beach across from the villas here but it was low tide so we didn't get a lot of good snorkeling in although I used Marguerite's camera for videoing and it is the best as long as I can get it to work. It is better than mine. The tide was too low for real good snorkeling so we will try tomorrow after we go for our turtle cruise. We are going to a restaurant called Vaima tonight. We think it has free internet and if it does, we will text the kids that we are doing fine.

Today is the 13th of November. This morning we woke up at 5:45, got ready by eating a quick little breakfast of fruit and scones and then went to Muri and met the folks for the turtle snorkeling trip. We saw several Turtles and used scooters, underwater scooters, to get us out to the Turtles. It was a lot of fun. We also saw a shark and a lion fish which is extremely dangerous if you touch it. The shark was just a white tip shark that is very lazy. Rod was able to dive very deep with many of the turtles, fish and other goodies. While some folks saw some swimming rays, Marguerite and I didn't see any.

We got back in time to have the continental breakfast. Marguerite took a shower and I opted not to and we took a walk on the beach to the Aurora beach. We will go snorkeling out that way later. We then came home and took a nap since we got up so early and Marguerite is lazy ☺. We are getting ready to have grilled cheese sandwiches for lunch and then we are probably going to go snorkeling somewhere and then after that we are going to go to Charlie's for happy hour. Indeed, we went snorkeling. We went off of the Aurora Beach and had to swim out about a hundred meters. We then got to the coral and saw a lot of cool fish and took some videos that are pretty neat. We saw one really cool fish that was a blue black and it swam with a fin on top and one on bottom undulating in the same in motion in time together and it was probably a foot by a foot. It was a square fish. We stayed in the water for about an hour and maybe just a little bit longer. It was a real good snorkeling trip. We then took showers to knock off the salt water. We had a glass of wine and are now at Charlie's where Marguerite has a mixed berry daiquiri and I have beer, as is my way. It is happy hour at Charlie's and we do believe that Charlie's might be our favorite place to come to that we have visited so far. Perhaps, for obvious reasons.

Last night after Charlie's, we had a glass of wine down on the beach and watched the sunset. The Sun was behind a bunch of clouds but it was still beautiful. We came home and I got sick and had diarrhea for five or 6 hours. Marguerite thinks it was the burger I had at Charlie's but I was feeling a little off before that and think that it could have been the water that I have been drinking. We have been advised not to drink the water unless you boil it although it is filtered. Perhaps I have just been having too good of a time ☺.

November 10th, 2018. We woke up early enough to get breakfast and we'll be taking a walk at high tide soon. I mean, low tide. We will see how my tummy is but so far so good. Getting sick like that sort of takes the wind out of your sails. I haven't been that sick for a long time. Perhaps it was Montezuma's Revenge?

For dinner last night we had leftovers. We set outside and then Ben and Belinda came over and we had wine and beer. We chatted with them until the mosquitoes drove them away. It was a good night and my stomach was much better. We took a long walk on the beach yesterday afternoon at Fruits of Rarotonga. We actually parked at a place that was just a little bit west of that. But we walked by it and way down the beach all the way to Muri and we could see the small Island.

It is now Thursday and we got up this morning and went to breakfast and talked for a very long time with Ken and Karen. We enjoy talking with them because they do a lot of things that we do. They also have their grandchild and their daughter here. Their son in law is a professional cricket player. We are now at Trader

Jack's and we are eating fish and chips. I think the fish is the best I've ever had. We both agreed that Trader Jack's is our favorite restaurant except for perhaps Charlie's?

We went snorkeling for the last time on this trip. We went out from the dive shop on Aurora Beach. We saw fish and stuff and I tried to take videos and got mad. I'm going to get a GoPro for sure! So that means we need to come back to take pictures of the fish. We also walked almost to Muri yesterday. It was a big long walk.

Today is the 16th. We took a very long walk this morning for an hour and a half on the beach. It was nice. We returned the car and have been reading and hanging out at the hotel all day long. We are now at the Castaway Restaurant waiting for our food. It is a nice restaurant and we're going to share fish and chips which we have had a lot of this trip. We're being picked up at 8:40 this evening and taken to the airport. We walked for a half hour to get here at the restaurant but it looks like it's worth it since it is right on the beach and we have taken some nice pictures and should get a beautiful sunset. That is very nice for our last evening here.

The Legend of One Foot Island.

Long ago, one of the chiefs of Aitutaki, seeing that there was not enough food for his people, created a fishing reserve to protect the resources of the lagoon. In this area, no one was allowed to fish at any time. By doing this, the chief was making sure the lagoon was not over-fished and his people would always have enough food to eat.

Nga was a simple fisherman. He respected the wishes of his chief but his family was hungry. Surely, a few fish for his family would not be too much? The village was preparing for a big dance festival, so Nga made a plan with his son Taongo. While the rest of the villagers were busy dancing and partying, they would slip, unnoticed, into the lagoon and paddle to the reserve where fish were still plentiful.

The journey was long as it was hard to navigate in the dark. When they reached the reserve both father and son were tired but they knew they had to catch as many fish as they could and return to the mainland.

The sun began to rise and back on the main island one of the villagers coming home late from the festival spotted the silhouette of an outrigger vaka in the reserve. He ran and told the chief who was outraged that anyone had dared to disobey his orders. "Send a war party to capture whoever is fishing in the reserve!" he shouted, and the warriors of the village swiftly launched their vaka's.

Nga spotted the war party in the distance and knew they would never escape in time. "Paddle to Tapuaetui!" he instructed his son, and they made their way as fast as they could to shore. Nga told Taongo to run to the center of the motu, which he did. Nga also ran to the center of the motu but he was careful to step in his son's footprints as he did. Soon the sounds of the warriors could be heard on the shore. Nga lifted his son high into the arms of a bandana tree, where he could hide. "Do not come down until dark," he whispered and continued running to the other side of the motu.

Taongo watched from the safety of the tree as the warriors, covered in tattoos and carrying long spears, came running by, following the footprints from the beach. They passed right underneath him and kept running to the other side of the motu. He watched them lead his father back, at spear point, demanding to know if anyone else was with him. "No, it was just me," said Nga, and the warriors believed him because they only saw one set of foot prints.

After the sun set, Taongo climbed down from the tree and paddled his father's vaka back home. His mother couldn't believe her eyes. Her husband had been killed for breaking the chief's law and she thought her son was also dead. Taongo told her the story of how his father had saved him. In time, the story spread, as stories do, and soon, and forever after, Motu Tapuaetai was known as "One Foot Island".