

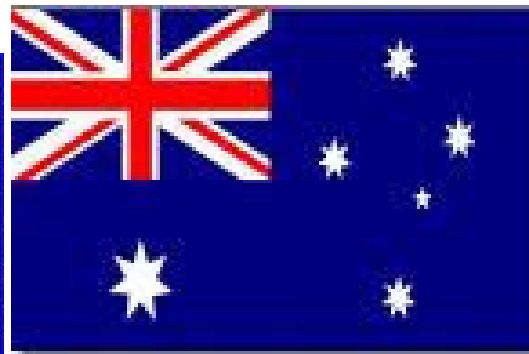
Day 54, (Second - Tuesday, 11/11/08) Apia Samoa, Southern Cross, Cultural Show

During the night the Amsterdam set our clocks back 24 hours because we had crossed the International Dateline going east. That meant that Tuesday 11 November would be repeated on board the Amsterdam. Before daybreak there was a mostly clear sky, calm sea and temperature in the high 70s. The full moon was setting in the west so Orlin went up topside to see if the Southern Cross Constellation was still visible by looking south. Unfortunately clouds on the horizon obscured the Cross.

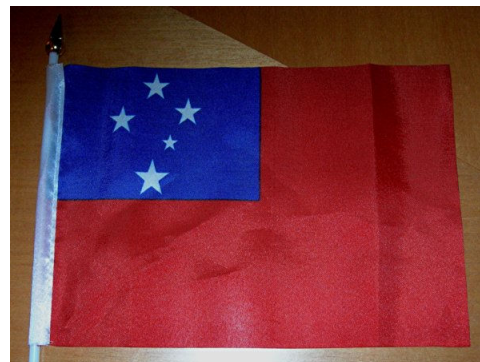
Southern Cross: The fascination with the Southern Cross Constellation is that it has great significance for navigation in the seas south of the equator. In the northern hemisphere the star Polaris, known as the North Star, is easy to see with the naked eye and very useful in finding the north direction when navigating the trackless seas. Polaris is not visible in the southern oceans to give direction and no readily visible star is located over the South Pole to indicate the southerly direction. It turns out that the Southern Cross which is visible in the southern hemisphere has been used for centuries by seamen to locate the southern direction. The rule of thumb is that if you extend the long axis of the cross down toward the horizon for a distance of 4.5 times the length of the long axis then the end of the extension will lie over the South Pole. This has been a valuable tool of navigators who depended on the stars to find their way across the oceans of the Southern Hemisphere. Because of the importance of the Southern Cross (which is also called Crux) to seafaring and navigation in the Southern Hemisphere, some nations have incorporated the Southern Cross into their National Flag. Australia and Western Samoa are two nations that come to mind. Here is how the Southern Cross looks in the sky and how it appears on the flags of those two nations.

Australian Flag Southern Cross

Night sky Southern Cross



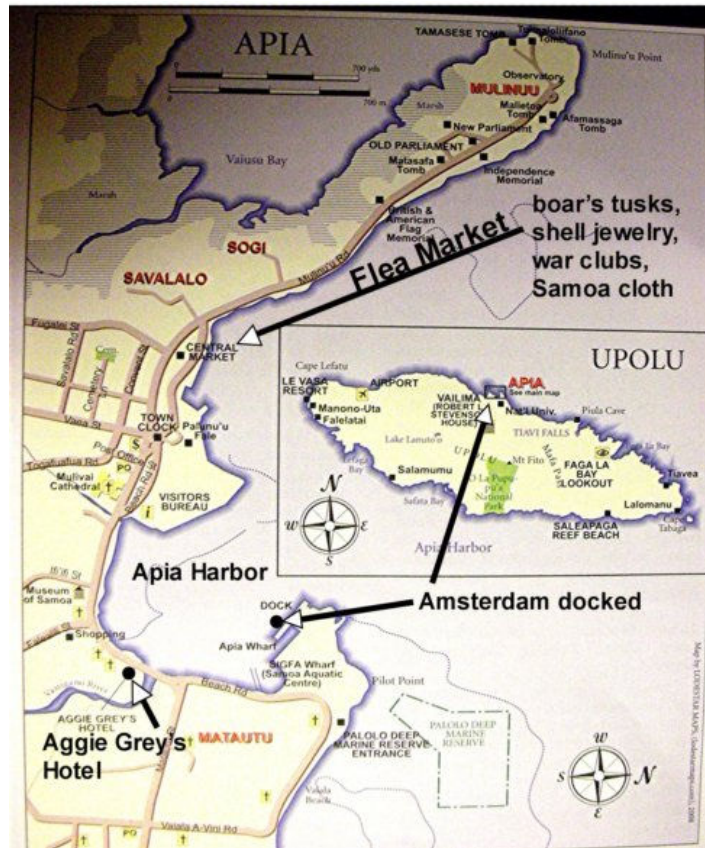
Western Samoa Flag Southern Cross



Apria, Western Samoa: Apia is the capital of the nation of Western Samoa and it is located on the island of Upolu. About 7:30am the Amsterdam began her approach to the harbor at Apia. The offshore reef near the harbor entrance was clearly visible and we were safely away from it.



By 8:30 the Amsterdam was tied up at the dock and we were cleared to go ashore. The map on the right shows the island of Upolu and where we were docked in Apia.



The commercial part of Apia is located in a narrow strip of buildings that encircle the harbor. We got our first view of Apia as the Amsterdam was maneuvering toward the dock.

Looking to the west we could see a large building with a large brown inverted-bowl-like structure on the roof. Later we learned that the building houses the Visitor's Bureau. The odd tile roofed structure on the building represented the thatched roof long house that is used as a meeting place in traditional native villages.



Looking more to the east along the harbor we got the view as shown below. The large building on the left is the Aggie Grey's Hotel. The hotel is named for the former owner who



was the inspiration for the character "Bloody Mary" in the 1950s musical "South Pacific".

The dock where the ship tied up had a neatly arranged group of vendors' tents and in front a welcoming troupe of greeters playing Polynesian music and performing traditional native dances.



The former home of the classic author Robert Louis Stevenson is maintained as a tourist site in the hills above Apia. We did not take the tour that was offered to visit that site. Instead we decided to just walk along the harbor to the flea market that was located on the western side of the harbor (~5 miles round trip) as shown in the map above.

After leaving the ship our first encounter was with the vendors who were set up in the tents on the dock. We also ran in to Lyle and Marjorie (70+) who were returning from a walk into town. They recommended a stop at the Aggie Grey's Hotel and gave us directions on how to get onto the walkway around the harbor.



In leaving the dock area we had to work our way through a horde of taxi drivers asking if we wanted to take tours of the area or just to ride into town. We declined all offers and were pleasantly surprised when these men were not as aggressive and persistent as we had experienced in Bali. While we were in Noumea a few days ago we commented to our guide, Ian, about the fact that our contact with local taxi drivers and merchants was much more pleasant than when we were in Bali, Indonesia. Ian offered one possible explanation for the difference between Bali and Noumea. He said that in Noumea there was a social support network in the government structure that kept people from starving while in Bali, the Indonesian government is poor and there is no social network to such families. In our experience today, cultural differences probably play a role but perhaps a social network exists in Western Samoa to help these taxi drivers avoid the desperate efforts to get our business that we saw in Bali. We thoroughly enjoyed all the contact we had with the local Samoan people of Apia. They had smiles on their faces and looked to be at peace with the world. The shop keepers were attentive to our interests but didn't have the desperate and disturbing approach that we found in Bali.

We walked from the docks toward the center of

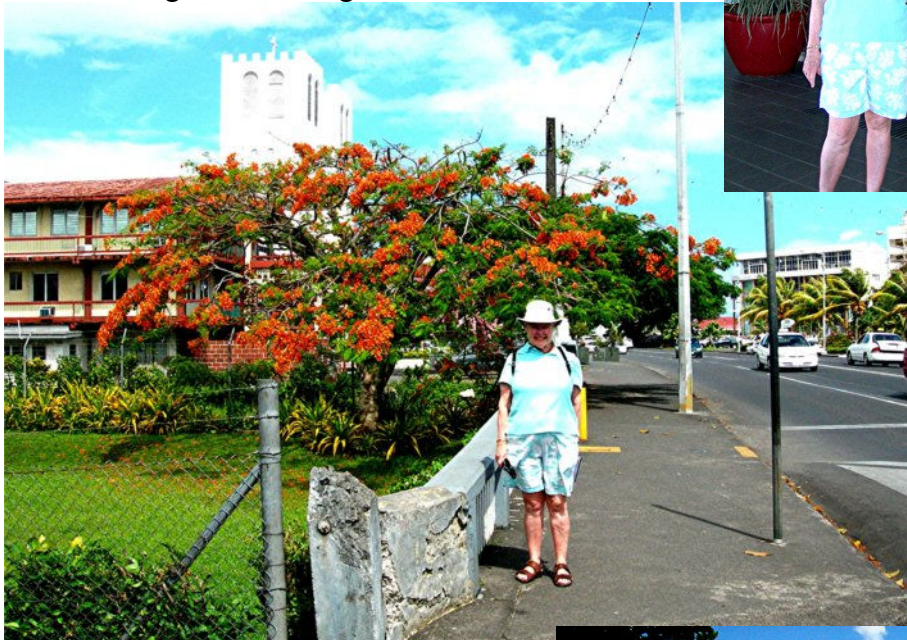


town along the main street along the harbor. The Pula trees, shown above and on the left have beautiful shape and also provided welcome shade on this hot day.

We soon came to the Aggie Grey's Hotel and went in to check it out. It appeared to be a sedate and comfortable hotel and one we would probably use if we were staying in the area. There were no obvious connections made to the famous "Bloody Mary" that was mentioned in some of the tourist literature we had read.



We continued on down the street and came across a beautiful flowering tree. We saw several of these trees around the town and we were glad that we had visited during their flowering season.



The town clock is a local icon so we took this picture to mark the occasion of our visit.



We finally came to the Central Market which had been called a Flea Market in some of the literature we read on the Amsterdam. We were expecting to find a lot of local craftwork for sale and we were not disappointed. The one story building takes up most of a city block and is filled with well laid out vendors' stalls where their goods are displayed. Here is a picture to give an idea of what the stalls looked like. The atmosphere was orderly and there was obvious friendship and cooperation between some of the vendors.



In a recent call home to Oak Ridge, Scott had requested we get a boar's tusk necklace for him in case we happened to run across one. We had picked one up for decoration purposes in Suva, Fiji but we thought we would get another one for Scott if the chance arose.



Barbara focused her professional shopping skills on shell jewelry and Polynesian patterned cloth and seemed to enjoy foisting on Orlin the job of getting another boar's tusk necklace. After several amateurish attempts at bargaining among different shops there was success as shown in this picture on the left where Orlin holds the tusks while the shop keeper holds the money. In view of the big smile on the lady's face there is little doubt about who got the best deal.

Meanwhile Barbara had been busy doing her shopping and was successful in finding some nice shell earrings made by, Tony, the son of the lady shop keeper. As usual, by the time the purchase was actually made Barbara and the lady had shared their life stories and were the best of buddies. We got this picture which Barbara plans to email back to "Tony's Originals" in Apia, Samoa.



With our shopping completed we headed back to the ship by the same way we had come. This time when we passed by the Visitor's Bureau we stopped to get the obligatory picture of Barbara's Oak Ridge Library card to show "Where in the World" she has taken the poor thing today.

In the background is a building with the shape of the native long house. This building in Apia has wood shingles to simulate the thatch roof that might be found in a Samoan village. It was this shape that was captured in the brown tile roofed structure on top of the Visitors' Bureau building shown in the picture shown earlier of the western end of town.



Cultural Show: We walked back to the ship and enjoyed cooling down in the air conditioned comfort of the Amsterdam. At 2pm there was a show in the Queen's Lounge put on by the Island Gospel Culture Group 2008. About 50 of the cast and support people had come on the Amsterdam earlier in the day to prepare for the show. A large number of the cast were children probably 10 to 15 years old. They reminded us of our grandchildren, Andrew and Emily, who have participated in Church and Community Theater productions. The performance by the children today in dance and dramatic acting was of a Samoan legend depicting the tragic love story of a girl, Sina, and a most faithful (but very ugly) eel whom she eventually rejected. The eel gets killed and his head is buried. The eel's dying promise to Sina is kept when a coconut tree grows from the head. A scene from the play is shown below.



The story goes on to relate how the coconut is such an important part of Samoan life. It provides food, shells for tools and utensils around the house, fiber for twine and wood for structures. In addition, the story points out that when you look at the end of a coconut you can see the face of the eel in the triangle of indentations. When a Samoan drinks the milk from a coconut out of one of the indentations it is an act of kissing the faithful eel that Sina rejected.

The performance was very well done with several parts requiring the children to have memorized significant passages. At the conclusion the audience gave them a standing ovation.



The Cruise Director, Bruce Scudder, then came on stage and introduced Priscilla Davidson, the Island Gospel dance/drama tutor. Bruce complimented Priscilla and the cast on such a marvelous presentation. He then gave her a check from Holland America for \$1500 US as a donation to the work of The Island Gospel Dancers. Priscilla was most thankful. We were all happy about the Amsterdam making this contribution to an organization that is preserving the Samoan culture and working with the young people in such a competent way.

The cast then lined up so we could photograph them. There was the horseplay of "rabbit ears" going on just like in photos of kids back home. Whoever is standing behind the unsuspecting boy on the upper right side got the rabbit ears just right.



These charming young ladies stayed behind for a few more photos.



The Amsterdam got underway about 4pm and we cruised out of the harbor. We had been underway for about an hour and still in sight of the higher mountains in Samoa when the captain came on the public address system. He said that the bridge watch had spotted a small sport

fishing boat dead in the water and displaying a red flag which indicated an emergency. The fishing boat did not respond to radio inquiry so, in accordance with maritime protocol, the Amsterdam was turning around and going back to see if we could help the people on the boat. Everyone grabbed their cameras and headed for open decks to have a look. We stopped about one half mile from the boat and the Amsterdam lowered one of its tenders into the water. The tender went to the little fishing boat but as it approached the people on the boat waved off our tender and started their engines. They first drove away at a fairly high speed then turned and came back close to the Amsterdam, obviously not disabled.

Here are a couple pictures our table mate, Bob, got when the boat approached the Amsterdam. There were a couple flags flying with a reddish color and that is what got the attention of the bridge watch.



The Amsterdam tender returned to our ship, was hoisted aboard, and we headed off again towards Hawaii.

Later, during dinner, the captain came on the public address system and explained what had happened in the false alarm. Anyway, the Amsterdam had done its duty in a suspected emergency and some local sport fishermen would have an exciting story to tell tonight.