

Nine of Cups – Liberty 458 Cutter – 7' draft

Subject Area: Tahiti-Moorea Sailing Rendezvous (June 19-21, 2009)

The Tahiti-Moorea Sailing Rendezvous in its 4th year, is an annual 3-day event aimed at giving a Polynesian welcome to cruising sailors while celebrating their successful Pacific ocean crossing. Jointly sponsored by the Papeete Port Authority (Port Autonome de Papeete), the Tahiti Tourism Board, the Tahiti Yacht Club and several other commercial partners including Polynesia Yacht Services and Latitude 38, the event gives arriving “Puddle Jumpers” the opportunity to join with their fellow cruisers in discovering what Tahiti has to offer with special emphasis on the richness of the Polynesian culture and the hospitality of its people.

Primarily through the efforts of Michel Alcon of the Tahiti Yacht Club, registered Puddle Jumpers this year were exempt from the French Polynesian bond upon entry, a huge benefit for non-EU participants. Though *Nine of Cups* departed from southern Chile and not the traditional Pacific crossing embarkation points (Central America or Ecuador), we still registered and found the Gendarmerie in the less visited Iles Gambier well aware of the Puddle Jumper bond exemption and in possession of “la liste” of exempt boats, making our check-in and visa extension absolutely painless.

Quite honestly, we are not usually rally participants, but because of the successful efforts put forth by so many people to insure an easy and convenient entry into French Polynesia, we decided to head to Tahiti in time for the Rendezvous and we're thrilled that we did.

The first day of the rally included formal registration under tents erected for the purpose on the wharf not far from the yacht quay. There was no cost whatsoever for participants other than optional meals which were offered in Moorea. One night's free docking at the downtown marina was offered by the Port Authority and check-in was a breeze. Dancers, singers, live music and craft demonstrations took place throughout the afternoon. Local vendors manned tables offering everything from pearls to marine services. We were even able to obtain our NZ Yacht Entry packet from the super-friendly NZ booth. We were greeted at the evening cocktail party with fresh flower leis and while sipping wine and munching hors d'oeuvres, the Mayor of Papeete and several other dignitaries welcomed us warmly.

Nearly 40 boats left Pape'ete on a beautiful, but windless morning, bound for Moorea, about 18nm away. We were greeted Polynesian style in Opunohu Bay by outriggers with Tahitians in colorful traditional dress. The anchorage was in crystal-clear turquoise water beside a white sand beach that became the setting for the rest of the rally festivities. More dancing, singing and welcome drinks along with local craftsmen displaying their wares on the beach completed the afternoon with an optional dinner later at the local Hilton.

The next morning we all gathered on the beach to compete in traditional Polynesian games including outrigger canoe races (manned by four cruisers and two “professionals”), fruit relays, stone lifting and coconut husking. A pre-arranged lunch buffet was offered on the beach and the day ended with more dancing, singing and an awards ceremony.

We were extremely impressed by the organization of the rally and the generosity of the Tahitian/Moorean people in providing us with such a lavish and beautiful welcome. We highly recommend that SSCA members who are making the Pacific crossing next season, register with the Puddle Jumpers and consider participating in the rally. In a word, it was “merveilleux”. For more information, visit www.pacificpuddlejump.com which also includes a downloadable Yachtsmen's Guide to French Polynesia.

Commodores Marcie & David Lynn / Nine of Cups