

Nine of Cups – Liberty 458 Cutter – 7’ draft
Subject Area: Tahiti - Exploring, Haul-out and Importing Parts

We arrived in Tahiti in time for the Tahiti-Moorea Sailing Rendezvous in mid-June and never left until early August. We didn't expect to like Pape'ete and Tahiti as much as we did. We've read and heard so many reports of how expensive it was, how commercial and how “it's not like it used to be”. Perhaps all those things are true, but Tahiti, in our estimation, was definitely a terrific place to visit and a welcome respite after the long passage to get there. We explored, worked, met lots of new cruising friends and generally enjoyed our time in the heart of French Polynesia.

Our house batteries were nearly useless by the time we reached Tahiti and after much discussion and research and obtaining local quotes, we decided it was easier and most economical to have some shipped to us via container ship. Additionally, we had “kissed” a bommie in Fakarava (Tuamotus) and though the damage was minor, we found after visiting the local boatyard, that a haul out in Pape'ete was quite reasonable. It would also allow us to inspect the prop which had developed some disconcerting vibration since we'd left Chile and slap on a fresh coat of bottom paint in anticipation of our visit to New Zealand.

Haul Out at TechniMarine

We chose to haul out near downtown Pape'ete at TechniMarine on Motu Uta, just inside the breakwater when entering the Passe de Pape'ete. There is another haul out facility in Port Phaeton on the south coast of Tahiti for smaller vessels which could not accommodate us and there are also haul out facilities in Raiatea which did not suit our purposes since we were coordinating our shipment arriving in Pape'ete.

Though a fairly small yard, TechniMarine offered two 70-ton Travel-Lifts® and a host of services. We visited the yard first and talked with Alain Blin, the owner/manager, who speaks excellent English. The yard itself was well kept and clean although sandblasting/sanding activities on other boats left our decks with a layer of dust. The staff was extremely helpful. There were no hidden costs or extra charges other than what we had agreed to initially and the bill was spot-on when it came time to pay. We had stainless steel welding done on site to repair a stanchion and the work was excellent. We also needed a shaft coupler which the yard could not provide, but they did give us a ride to a shop that had one that would fit after a bit of machining. The yard manager accompanied us to assist and help with translating. We could live-aboard with no extra fee and lay-days included water and electricity. Crew amenities offered included shower, token-pay washer, loaner car for trips to hardware store, etc. The yard is closed on Sat/Sun and they left us a loaner car over the weekend so we could get around. We also purchased ablative bottom paint through the yard (Devoe) at a significant discount over other paints offered at the chandleries in Tahiti (~\$150US/gallon vs. \$250). Contact information for TechniMarine is technimarine@mail.pf. Tel: (689)43.02.022 Fax: (689)43.02.21. Their website is www.technimarine.pf and provides service and pricing information. We would highly recommend their services. The total cost for the haul-out

including four extra lay-days was about \$700US. The bottom paint and stainless welding was another \$700. Note that the boatyard does NOT accept credit cards.

Importing Parts to Tahiti, French Polynesia

The process of importing goods to Tahiti for a *Yacht in Transit* was not as complicated as we would have imagined. We had a friend in the States who consolidated several shipments and purchases for us into two packages which he then shipped to a freight forwarder in Miami. We had contacted APX in advance to make all the arrangements and schedule a shipment to Pape'ete. APX will provide a quote in advance as well as a tentative schedule of shipment dates and arrivals. The shipping time for the shipment via cargo ship from the US to Pape'ete was only 10 days.

APX provides a shipment identification number to you which must be marked on all boxes and paperwork. They will hold freight in their warehouse for consolidation for 30 days free of charge. Since we were having several items shipped to a friend for consolidation first, we needed to provide APX with a Bill of Lading and an Invoice (not a proforma). You can make it up yourself or they will provide a form. We mistakenly thought that if the paperwork was included on the outside of all of the packages it would suffice, but the office and warehouse do not communicate evidently and since the office prepares the ship's manifest, it needs all paperwork sent to them directly. The battery company (highly recommended, by the way) was DC Battery Specialists in Miami. They delivered 4 Lifeline AGM batteries directly to the warehouse and did an exceptional job on follow up and follow through. Contact information: DC Battery (Oscar Niño) Tel: (305)758-5041. The shipping cost for consolidating and palletizing/shrink-wrapping the batteries and three extra boxes (nearly 200 pounds of freight) including insurance was \$358US. Contact info for APX is www.shipping-worldwide.com, which provides most of their information you need as well as instant quotes. Their telephone is (305)597-0258 or toll free (877)597-0259.

On the Tahiti end, we needed an agent to handle incoming Customs. It appears we might have been able to handle this ourselves, but in the end, rather than sift through the bureaucratic red tape and arrange delivery, we were happy we used Polynesia Yacht Services located at Marina Taina. Our shipment was late and Laurent Bernaert worked diligently to get it cleared through Customs quickly and efficiently. He then collected the shipment (including the 4 batteries!), delivered them to the dinghy dock at Marina Taina and actually loaded them into the dinghy for us. The cost for his services including the incoming processing fees was about US\$250.

Exploring Tahiti

There's much more to Tahiti than just Pape'ete and we were keen to venture outside the city to explore a bit. Car rentals are not cheap...about \$100 US/day plus the cost of gasoline (~\$5/gallon). The bus system in-town Pape'ete is quite good, but venturing outside of town is less convenient. We originally considered sharing a rental car with friends, but our stay in the boatyard over a weekend (we finished up our work late

Saturday morning!) afforded us the unexpected bonus of having a free car at our disposal and we took advantage of it.

The map view of Tahiti looks like a tilted figure eight. The island is actually separated into two parts connected by a narrow isthmus: Tahiti Nui being the larger, most developed and populated part and Tahiti Iti, the smaller. The well-maintained coastal highway around Tahiti Nui is about 114 km and a trip around the island including side trips to Tahiti Iti can easily be done in a day.

Boat work complete (hooray!), we packed a picnic lunch and left early on a Sunday morning. We had collected several brochures from the Tourist Office in downtown Pape'ete, but *Lonely Planet Tahiti* was actually our guide of choice. We traveled clockwise around the island as suggested in the guide, stopping at scenic vistas and points of interest along the way.

Highlights of our little road trip included Point Venus, Cook's observatory set up to record the transit of Venus with an impressive lighthouse, park and upscale crafts market; the Faarumi Waterfalls, a quick 20-minute trek on a well-marked path through dense forest to three separate cascades. In Taravao, the little town at the narrow isthmus separating Tahiti-Nui from Tahiti-Iti, we opted to take the northern route to visit Tautira, where we picnicked in a little park by a lovely beach. We climbed the steep, narrow, but well-maintained road to the Taravao Plateau for spectacular views of both sides of the isthmus below and a caught sight of two Tahitian gray ducks in the lagoon there. On the southeast point of Tahiti-Iti, we sat through a downpour watching surfers at Teahupoo.

Back on the main road, we headed to Musée Gaugin and though they don't have any original Gaugins, the grounds were pretty and the displays interesting. There are several "marae" (sacred sites) marked along the way and we stopped at several to take a look. We ended the day at Musée de Tahiti et ses Îles, an impressive collection of geological, historical and cultural displays of the French Polynesian islands.

For more photos and information about Tahiti and the haul out, visit our website at www.nineofcups.com.

Commodores Marcie (AA1ZM) and David Lynn (AA1ZL)