

# Travel

## ISLAND CRUISING



By Richard Moore

**F**OR a one-stop introduction to the Cook Islands, it is hard to go past taking a trip out on to the azure waters of Muri Lagoon aboard one of Captain Tama's glass-bottomed boats.

Captain Tama's Lagoon Cruises are a really enjoyable half-day trip for visitors, or for expats living on Rarotonga.

The reason is you get a taste of what the Cooks are about... snorkelling, good food and being entertained — local style.

The experience begins with a 30-minute boat ride out from Muri heading down to the waters off Fruits of Rarotonga.

On the way you are told about the lagoon and the places you pass, all done very tongue in cheek by the crew members. There's singing, jokes, more singing and many more jokes.

It is light-hearted fare designed for everyone to have a good time.

At the appointed spot you don masks and fins and slip over the side of the vessel into the warm waters of the lagoon.

Visitors love the warm waters and the brightly coloured fish, although on occasion you do hear a muffled scream at the size of the trevally mooching about the boats looking for a feed.

Then you get to visit a couple of old-timers in the area — really big moray eels. And when I say big, one of them is massive.

From there the engines are restarted and we head off back to the motu across from Captain Tama's headquarters in Muri Central.

When we first went on an expedition it was just Captain Tama's,



but they have been joined by Koka Lagoon Cruises and we are told not to use their tables or loos.

On the white sands of Koromiri Island we grab a drink and then sit down to get our instructions for lunch — basically it's women and children first and whatever they leave the guys get. Although there was no worry of running out of food as the tables were



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Who doesn't want to look up at people in a boat?; The post-lunch show features lessons on coconut husking and making coconut cream; and several "lucky" tourists get hauled out to be the pareu manikins.

filled with plenty of salads — green and potato — and the barbecued fish topped it off nicely.

The crew's show is a hoot with lots of funny moments and you get to see how to husk coconuts, open them, scrape the flesh out to squeeze for coconut crème and even the way to climb a coconut palm. Then there was the pareu demonstration where

victims are chosen from the audience to act as manikins as they guys show how to dress up using the very versatile local version of a sarong.

After that you get about half an hour to chill before being called back on board for the quick trip back to Tama HQ. We've done the cruise twice and have enjoyed it both times. Our overseas guests loved it.

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