

Travel

Night time paddleboarding is a balancing act,
Richard Moore reports

AS regular visitors to Muri Lagoon on Rarotonga, my cameras and I have often focused on paddle-boarding folk.

There they are, looking like they are standing on water with nary a problem in the world.

It seems such a fabulously serene way to move around on the azure waters of the lagoon that it has been on the bucket list for quite some time.

So when the opportunity arose to give it a go, well, it was very hard to pass up. So how much sunblock am I going to need? None? Oh... it's night paddle-boarding... with coloured lights under the boards... okay.

In fact it was more than okay and my good lady and I eagerly looked forward to our after-dark paddle-about with Arika Adventures in Muri.

We arrived near one of the channels out of the lagoon on a warm evening. It was still light so we were trained up in how to adjust the length of your paddle to suit your height, the proper way to paddle and how to kneel then stand.

Sounded easy in theory and so we tied the boards on to our legs and our group, together with three shepherds, proceeded to paddle — sitting down — across the narrow channel to a nearby island.

In the lee of that motu we then began to stand on our boards. Some people didn't make it to straightening their legs, others took to it like ducks to water. Dry ducks, it should be said.

To be fair there were slight ripples in the waters but that was no consolation as my legs, which operate very well on land, began to get the wobbles.

Shakily I went up, wibbly-wobbled, and then did what all silly old photographers do — I started to arrange my camera gear. It possibly wasn't the most sensible thing I have ever done on a floating moveable platform but my nearest shepherd, the singer Kura Happ, was mightily impressed by my mental quickness as I gracefully arced backwards into the water with a resounding cry.

"Motherpusbuckets," could be heard around the lagoon, to be followed immediately by an almighty SPLOOOSH.

I'm sure it set off tsunami sirens in Hawaii and left a couple of trevally unexpectedly up in the fronds of a shoreline coconut palm but, thankfully, the water was nice and warm.

People were now starting to turn on their lights — reds, blues, greens — and back on board my paddleboard I made another attempt to do the wobbly stand.



NIGHT RIDERS

PLUNGE: Singer and paddleboarding guide Kura Happ finds amusement in another's lagoon plunge.



GETTING READY: Adjusting the length of oars before heading out.

Kura was there beside me — well, out of splash distance anyway — and told me to come forward further on the board, rise slowly with knees bent and use my paddle to help me balance.

I stood with a certain amount of pleasure and with my adviser nearby began to get the rhythm of the process.

A knocking-of-the-knees rhythm, but a beat nonetheless. I even managed to take some photos. It felt like I had cracked it and five minutes later I was cruising along rather nicely when a very well-meaning fellow decided to stop in front of my board to get a photo of me.

Don't stop I said, out of the way, momentum is good, slowing is bad.

"Motherpusbuckets!" SPLOOOSH.

Ah well, we'll give it another go but by then we had moved out of the shadow of the island and the waves were chopping up a little.

My third attempt at stand-up paddleboarding also ended up in the drink. That's enough, I thought, and sat down and had a wonderful evening just paddling around on a super night in paradise. And one of the beauties of doing the stand-up boards is that it is so relaxed you don't mind falling off. It's just part of the fun.

Whoever came up with the idea of attaching coloured lights on to the boards deserves a medal as they look



PADDLING: Paddling out to the motu near Muri Beach.

amazing.

Everyone had a great time, including those who thanked me for teaching them a new word.

One of the highlights of the night was back in the island's lee lying down on the board in the darkness and looking up at the sky. Absolutely magical! Thank you Arika Adventures for a wonderful experience.

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