

## **Ile des Pins, New Caledonia – Day 53 Nov. 19:**

We woke to a bright sunny morning with the Amsterdam moving slowly between small islands that slid by on each side of us. About 7am the ship dropped anchor near the island known as “Ile des Pins” which translates from French to English with the meaning “Island of the Pines”.

Preparations began for taking passengers ashore. The tender boats were lowered over the side of the ship, as shown on the right.

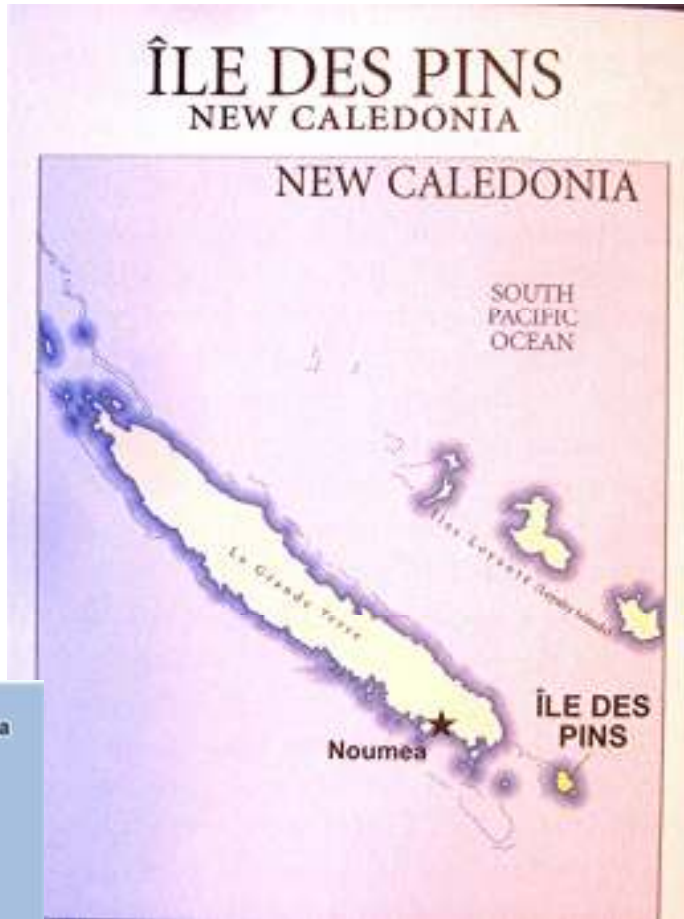


Looking around at the beautiful colors of the ocean around us and the bright strips of white sand beaches we could see on the little islands around us gave a hint that this was going to be a day for enjoying the scenery and lifestyle that Ile des Pins had to offer. The tall Norfolk pine trees that give the place its name and the beaches are evident in the picture below.



As soon as possible we boarded one of the tender boats and road ashore with other passengers eager to see what this place had to offer.

The location of Ile des Pins at the southern tip of the New Caledonian chain of islands is indicated by the map on the right.



The map of the island shown below locates the Bay of Kuto where we were taken by our tender boats.

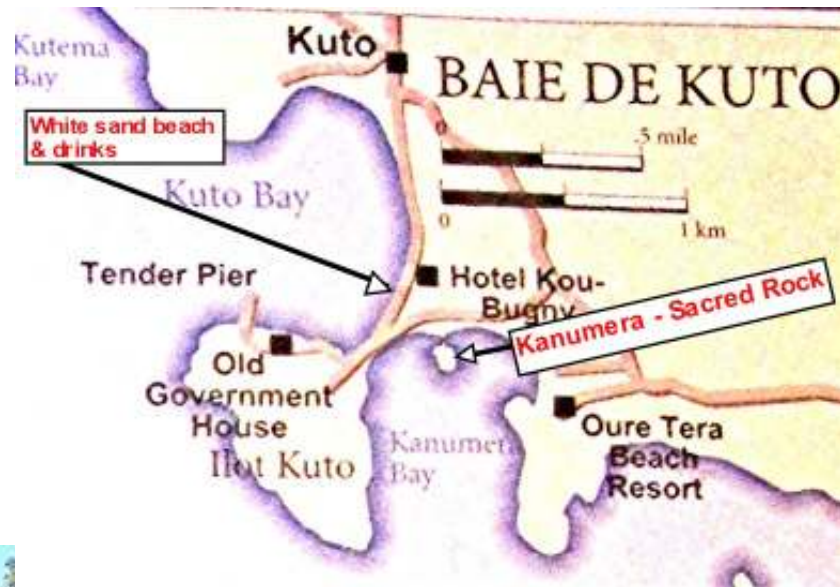


Our tender boat tied up at the sturdy looking Tender Boat Pier and we tramped ashore with the other passengers,



The map on the right shows the location of the Tender Pier in Kuto Bay and the general layout of the local area that we would explore today.

At the head of the tender boat pier was an open area where a local band had set up and some children were performing a native dance.



This was a special show put on just for us Amsterdam passengers and we appreciated it. The island is a vacation destination for Australians and other people across Southeast Asia so the music and dance team are probably regulars when group entertainment is on the agenda.



The greeters at the pier even had little floral wreaths woven out of palm leaves that they gave out. Barbara put hers on her hat as can be seen in the picture of her at the first boutique booth we came to.

We wandered and poked around several vendor booths in the community of Kuto near the tender pier.



This “Dog of Kuto” shown on the left was performing his duty of guarding the boutique. He seemed to have no worries and fit in with the theme we had picked for this day.

At one of the shops we came across a nice colorful sign that looked like the perfect

backdrop for documenting the arrival of Barbara’s library card in Ile des Pins, as shown on the right.



The temperature was just right with a very light breeze so we just enjoyed sauntering along the paved one-lane road that led north around the Bay of Kuto. Louise, with her French speaking skill, had arranged a local tour among Cruise Critic folks and there were taxi drivers offering tours on the pier but we had decided to make this a walking visit. Our friends, Bob and Esther, had been here once before and they told us that the trees were one of the most beautiful things to see on the island. They turned out to be right as we enjoyed all the different forms of trees and shrubs, like those in the following pictures.





As we walked along the shore of Kanumera Bay we spied a tree covered island in the distance, as shown below.

There was a sandbar on the left of the island that connected to the mainland and it would have been possible to walk over to the little island. We were tempted to explore



the island but as we approached we saw the sign on the left which warned us away.

At this point we decided to retrace our steps and take the road leading along the shore of Kuto Bay. The road hugged the beach pretty closely. There were hotels and family homes on the land side of the road and a couple restaurants on the beach side. We first checked out the land side where we got this photo of a fence made out of branches cut from the scrub brush trees that grew profusely. Their twisted form almost gave the fence the appearance of being woven from wood.



We also got a nice picture of a bougainvillea bush growing on a fence, as shown on the left.

Eventually we came to the open grounds of a church where there was a large meeting hall with a palm frond roof, as shown on the right.



Nearby was this signpost giving the mileage to various famous cities around the world. This sign favored south seas cities but Paris and Tokyo were also shown. These things are always fun for travelers to look at so we snapped a quick photo, as shown on the right.



At this point it was nearing noon time and the walk along the road was getting a bit warm when we got out of the shade. At this latitude and time of year the sun was almost directly overhead at this time of day. We cast almost no shadow and had to look straight down to see any shadow at all. We decided to cross the street and go down onto the white sand beach so that we



could walk the surf line back to the tender pier. The light was intense as it streamed through the breaks in the forest of trees which made photography kind of tricky. However, we were able to get a picture of the Amsterdam framed by the branches of some trees, as shown on the left.



We waded through the surf as it washed up on the sand and that helped to keep us cool. Barbara, having cat like instincts regarding moving water, did not take enthusiastically to this exercise. However, with a little encouragement she managed to stay in the water as it washed over her feet, as shown on the right. By the way, check out the minimal shadow.



We proceeded down the beach taking photos and enjoying a gorgeous day and this wonderful spot on earth.

We soon met up with our friends Steve and Bobbie who were doing the same as us in soaking up as much of these good times as we could hold.



It wasn't much further down the beach that we met up with Sherry, who actually had on a bathing suit and had been swimming in the surf. We took a picture of her which included husband, Tom, basking in the sun in the background, as shown on the right.



Other denizens of the beach that we encountered



included Mike and Martha who parked in the grassy area next to the sand.

Our grand daughter, Emily, has recently authored her first book and Barbara had given a copy to Martha. Martha, also a dotting grandmother, showed us that she

had brought that book to read while on the beach. Yeah Martha!!



We were getting a little parched so we decided to drop in at a beachside restaurant and grab a drink while we watched the passing scene. As we approached fellow Amsterdam passengers, Tom and Helene, came into view, as shown on the right. We had first met them on the bus tour of Beijing in what seems like an eternity ago back on 15 October.



We found a table and then Orlin worked his way through the crowd at the bar where with minimal language skills he successfully negotiated with the harried bar tender for two chilled cans of the local beer. We sipped the beer and enjoyed the view out over the beach and the Bay of



Kuto. As we were finishing we got a vacationing French speaking couple to take our picture. The intense backlighting from the sun plus the weak flash unit on our camera combined to make the photo nearly unusable. However, since this was a picture of such a magical moment for us we tortured the poor photo with our editing program until it was marginally acceptable, as shown on the left.

From the beachside restaurant we walked back toward the tender boat pier. We caught a tender boat and returned to the luxurious air conditioned facilities on the Amsterdam.

About 6pm the Amsterdam pulled up its anchor and got underway. It sailed away from Ile des Pins and set a northwest course for Noumea, located on the main island of New Caledonia.

After resting up from our exploration of Ile des Pins we were ready to join our friends, Frank and Jody, for dinner in the Canaletto Restaurant on the Lido Deck. We had met Frank and Jody at the Cruise Specialists “Chat Time” sessions near the start of the cruise. At 6:30pm we were seated in the restaurant and ready for a night of good food and conversation with our new cruising friends from Kansas. During the dinner one of the stewards took a picture of our little group, as shown on the right.



At the end of the meal but before dessert is served the Canaletto Restaurant has a signature dish that they serve the table. That dish is a mound of brightly colored cotton candy deposited by the steward on the table with a flourish. Although Barbara has sworn to cut back on desserts and sweets, she is vulnerable to this old-fashioned treat.



Announcing that cotton candy is mostly air, she sheepishly took a little of the sweet stuff, as shown in the photo on the left.

We finished dinner and said good night to Frank and Jody whom we knew a lot better now that we had a chance to chat over a fine meal. The sea was calm and the Amsterdam sailed smoothly through the night towards Noumea where we expect to dock before 8am.