

exchanges reactions to the being so close to sharks, the atmosphere is indeed one of joy mixed with wonderment. Soon, on the left side, Opunohu Bay opens to a spectacular vista that includes a dark blue half-oval bay surrounded by green mountains mixed with a variety of black rock formations. Within the context of this tour, the sight causes

four or five stingray descend on him and begin climbing over his arms, chest and back in search of food. Soon the participants jump in and are given food to feed to the stingrays, and they too feel the soft underbelly of the stingrays and find their mouths to give them a snack.

This is great, and even those who are wary soon overcome their fear

it onto the shore like a bird landing with sore feet. Lunch will be served in 20 minutes, while beer and rum punch are available immediately.

But the real attraction is the snorkeling. A huge, calm lagoon offers a wealth of opportunities to explore and interact with fish of every color and description. Many snorkel for 30 to 40 minutes, come in for a quick bite, and then get back in the water for more as the departure will not be for another hour. Scores of coral formations, in about five to ten feet of water, litter the landscape separated by small canyons that make for easy navigation. Colors abound everywhere as the sunlight refracts through the water and creates waves of blue and white light. Occasionally a fish will cruise right next to you that is not averse to being followed, giving one a mini-tour of their search for food amongst the underwater garden.

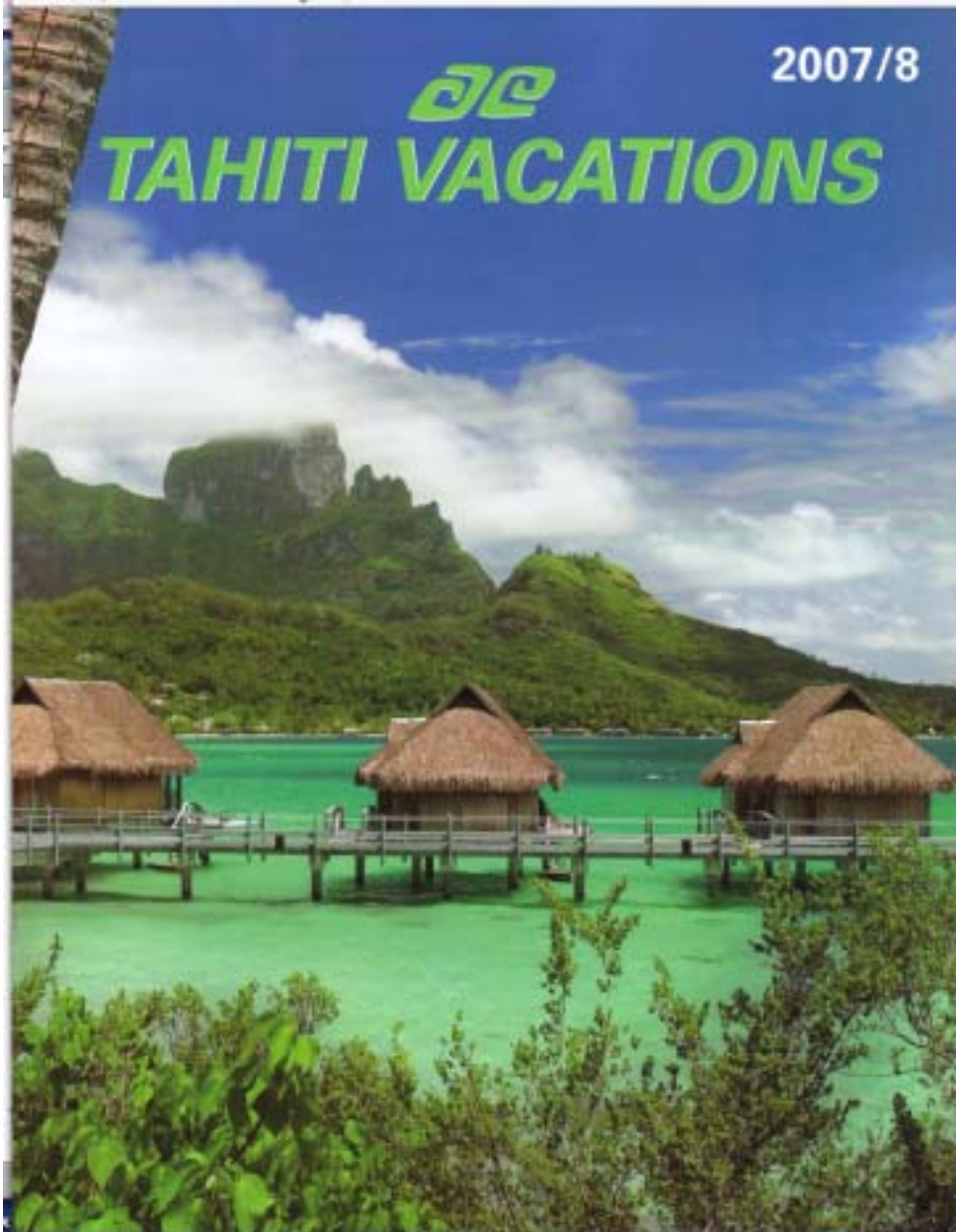
If you float above a coral formation and stay perfectly still, especially if pick one with lots of fish, they get complacent and go about their business. Sometimes a large puffer fish will poke its head out, see you and zip right back into its hiding place. Or one can see tiny little fish with multiple stripes going every which way, often hanging around a number of other fish for protection. Medium sized black fish are fond of protecting their piece of rock and will race at your mask if you get close, then retreat, survey you again,

waiting for another move to race back at you. You are in a massive aquarium ready to be explored endlessly.

Back on the beach, after lunch, Ziggy demonstrates the proper method for peeling a coconut, employing all his humor and knowledge in the process. Volunteers are brought up to perform various tasks and receive the appropriate applause at the urging of Ziggy, along with his warning, "Don't stand under a palm tree with brown coconuts, they might fall on your head and that will be very painful." A portable DVD player is set up to show the video footage of the feedings, which can be compiled into a personal DVD for those interested. Albert Tours does a very good job with the DVDs and they're worth the price.

Then the day's adventure ends at 2:15 pm. As the boat backs away from the shore, Ziggy yells with urging and triumph, "Ok, Are you all Happy? Of course everyone is and they express it in unison. Those picked up at various hotels are dropped at the docks along the way. Albert Tours Lagoon Motu Picnic is reasonably priced and money well spent, and this reporter went on the tour again a week later because it was so exhilarating, fun and relaxing.

For tours to Tahiti or to book with Albert Tours contact Tahiti Vacations at 800-553-3477 or check them out on the web at <http://www.tahitivacations.net/>



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one to pause and reflect on such a singular view of loveliness in French Polynesia.

Soon the Inter-Continental Moorea Hotel comes up on the left and the boat takes the slow path near the shore and adjacent to over water bungalows. Ziggy gives some background on the dolphin pen at the hotel and then warns everyone, "We have many honeymooners staying here, so do not look inside the windows of the rooms, you don't know what you might see." Once the buoys have been cleared, the boat quickly moves to the next stop.

The water is clear and about four feet deep with a bright white sandy bottom. In similarity with the sharks, a number of stingrays have gathered in anticipation of food. Following a stern warning from Ziggy to use only masks and snorkels, no swim fins, he jumps in the water and

and join in the process. Stingrays are cruising everywhere, with the occasional small shark moving through the crowd monitoring the situation. After a few minutes it becomes routine, with everyone aware of how to attract a stingray into their arms. These fish are fascinating, almost like big puppy dogs. What a sheer ball of fun it is to stand in the warm water, look at the lush island close by, and dip your face in the water to view and touch stingrays all around.

After a time Ziggy calls everyone back and the boat is en route to two small islands just off the tip of Moorea in the Tahitian Islands. As the water depth decreases, the boat slows down and eases into the lagoon between the Motus. Not only is Ziggy a great tour guide, but he is a highly competent boat captain. He eases the boat through the shoals to carefully bring

**Beautiful Miss Botswana Malebogo Marumoagae will fly to Lusaka, Zambia, for the May 14-26 All-African Cultural Festival as she embarks on her ambitious program as the country's reigning beauty queen.**

