

# Tondelayo's Voyage

## The Tuamotus - Snorkeling, Atolls and Coconuts

May 12 - May 31, 2003

May 12 Sailing to the Tuamotus. Destination Raroria, site of the landing of the Kon Tiki, Thor Heyderdhal's raft  
- that drifted all the way from South America. The sailing was awesome. Beam reaching with 12-18 knots  
of wind. We never reefed, and made 3 back-to-back 140 mile days, without any help from the current.  
May 15 The total trip was 455 miles in 75 hours, an average of 6.06 knots. Pretty damn good for old Tondelayo.

May 16 Wind is blowing 20 knots across the atoll. This puts the boat on a lee shore and a pretty good wind  
chop is forming across the lagoon. The chain is constantly getting caught up on coral, and the  
sunbber chaffed through more than once. Eventually, I ended up putting a longer snubber (30 feet)  
out to take most of the shock when the chain came up short on the coral heads. The good news is at  
least we are not dragging toward the shore.

 [pearls\\_t.jpg \(31987 bytes\)](#)

May 17 Wind laid down a little, or I'm getting used to it. The snorkeling here is  
pretty awesome. Tons of fish, and the occasional black tip reef shark.  
There are clams here that have iridescent mantles that are pretty neat.  
Also, the corals are pretty incredible.

May 18 I finally went ashore. Mike, Karen and I went over  
to trade for some pearls. I had several skanky T-shirts,  
and some limes and 1 pamphouse. For this I got 4  
low quality pearls. Pretty cool. Not much to the  
town.

 [pearls2\\_t.jpg \(25518 bytes\)](#)

May 19 Headed out of Raroria, for another atoll, called Makemo. This one has a bigger town, so we want to  
- 20 check it out. Motored, and sailed in light winds all night. About daylight we encountered a front, and  
the wind switched abruptly from light NW to strong SE breeze (20 knots). Well, with that wind, we  
were able to make good time down to Makemo, and tried to enter the pass around 1pm, a couple hours  
before low tide. So the tide was still running out, and we were barely able to make progress against it.  
We went through a lot of turbulent water, but nothing too dangerous, and then a rain shower came over  
and visibility went down to 100 feet, so we could not see any of the markers, and bailed out. About an  
hour later, Priceless showed up and the weather cleared, so they headed in. Unfortunately, their  
transmission blew a seal about half way through the pass and they drifted back out. Once they decided  
that they needed to sail directly for Tahiti, we had another go at the pass. This time we made it in, the  
water was beginning to slacken. Once inside the lagoon we looked around a bit and with this wind the  
wind chop was quite large since we were on the lee side of the lagoon. With 7 miles of fetch to build up  
waves, this was a very bad place to be. Since it was already 3pm we could not make our way across the  
lagoon, so we turned around and decided to sail for Fakarava, about 100 miles away, and pretty much  
downwind. As dark approached, the wind began to build further, so we knew we were in for a bumpy  
night.

May 21 The wind was anywhere from 15-35+ knots when small squalls passed over, but about midnight finally  
settled into pretty much 25 knots. By morning the seas were up to about 12 feet, so at the tops, you had

a pretty good view around. Tondelayo was still sailing beautifully with 2 reefs in the main, and the storm jib. We made Fakarava around noon and called a boat inside called Twin Image. They advised us to wait a while because the tide was running hard against the wind waves, and the pass into the lagoon was a mess. About 2 we headed in, and surfed down a few nice ones, and into the pass which was had large breakers on either side from the reef. Cruising through the pass was no problem, so we then swung around behind a Motu, and dropped the hook. Still windy, but perfectly flat.

 [atoll1\\_t.jpg \(21137 bytes\)](#)

May 22 Ran the motor, and the motor mount cracked again. Great. Well, the good news is, 1) At least it is not a new problem, so I know what to do, and 2) The pass at the other end of the lagoon is over half a mile wide, so we can sail out without difficulty. So, as long as we can get the anchor off any coral that it wraps around, there should be no problem getting to Tahiti. Then we can get a tow in to Papeete harbor and see what happens. The wind is up and Twin Image is clocking it at 33 sustained, gusting to 40 or more. Swell is showing up in the anchorage, but it is very small (1 ft). The reef is protecting us nicely.

Seaward side of Fakarava

May 23 Wind is still howling, and the waves breaking on the other side of the reef look quite large. Forecast is for 10 to 18 feet, and that sounds about right from what our friends on Priceless are saying. They said that they completely lose the wind when they drop down between the waves. Lots of boats out in it, and no one got hurt, but it is really no fun. Our South African friends on DeJa Vu sailed north of the front the whole time and have light and variable wind for several days.

Anyway, today is my Birthday, so Lisa baked a cake - chocolate and chocolate icing, with coconut on top. Mmmm, good. We ate half of it for breakfast the next morning.

May 24 Wind finally started laying down a bit. Did some snorkeling with the usual black tip sharks around.  
- 25 These ones seemed a bit bolder than usual, and like to come a few feet away and check you out. Creepy. Lisa was totally encircled by over a dozen of them at one point. Not me, I see 2, and I head for the dingy.

The next day we took a look around on shore. A small "resort" that seems to cater to diving around the pass and such, and a bunch of ruins from the mid 1800s. Other than that, not much to look at other than the usual coral and coconut trees. The crew is getting restless. Actually, they are downright unbearable, and I am about to drop them off at the nearest coconut tree.

May 26 We tried to sail north to get to the town on the other end of the atoll. The pass on that end will be no problem to sail out of so we figured we would go up there and hang out until the wind is nice. Well, there was essentially no wind. In 8 hours we traveled less than 7 miles, and only 1 mile toward our destination. Bummer. It was so quiet, that your ears would ring from the lack of sound. No wind, no waves against the hull, no nothing.

May 27 Better wind today, but right on the nose. Sailed 24 miles, 12 miles made good, and dropped the hook in a nice anchorage half way up the atoll. Everyone had a nice sail, and therefore a good day. I had a great little snorkel after sailing all day, and saw several new fish species, and some unique corals as well.

 [atoll2\\_t.jpg \(20554 bytes\)](#)

May 28 More light wind but from a more favorable direction. About 2-5 knots all day. On this, we were able to go about 12 miles and within sight of the anchorage. Then we gave up ghosting along, and put in the dingy and used it to motor the last 3 miles. I think we had the record for the fastest trip to the beach once the hook was down. We were able to secure some lamb chops, fresh green beans and cold beer for dinner that night. Our first fresh food in over 2 weeks. Delicious. Nothing like lack of refrigeration (the motor is screwed up again remember?) to make you appreciate cold. We found out that tomorrow is a

holiday and everything is closed. There is a community ice machine, but it seems to be closed as well, but all info is kinda vague here.

May 29 Ascention Day. Nothing is open, so Pat and Lisa head for shore to walk around for a few hours, and check out the town thouroughly, while I stay on the boat and do a few boat projects.

May 30 Friday, apparently, another public holiday, so school and the gov't is closed. We hung around the community ice machine for a while, and some guys with coolers and the key pulled up and got a bunch of ice. We were able to get a nice big bag full as well, and no one seemed to want to charge us, so hey, cool, free ice today. They sign that says they are open several times a day is wrong, and they only come by once a day to fill coolers. We will go tomorrow before we leave, I guess.

May 31 Ice! We got some ice today at the "community ice machine." I guess they run a big machine for the fisherman and only one guy has the key. Well, we got about 20lbs and cooled down the fridge and a bunch of beer and soda. Then headed over and bought some food like frozen chicken that we could now keep a few days. Wind was light but in the right direction and strong enough to sail.

Jun 1-3 Left for Tahiti. Before we got underway we headed over to shore to try to score some more ice, but it turned out that they don't get ice on weekends. Bummer. Light wind leaving the anchorage, but we made about 3 knots across the lagoon toward the pass. Once in the pass, we were barely able to get through the current but after an hour or so we had gone a few hundred yards and we beginning to get free of the current. As the day wore on, the wind got lighter.

We were becalmed most of the night and next morning, other than the occasional rain squall. Seemed like we were in the doldrums. We made 40 miles for the first 24 hours. Around noon, the wind freshened and backed to the south. After a few hours the boat was sailing well around 6 knots or so. Wind got up around 20, and I put 2 reefs in the main since there was nice dark clouds around. Shortly after that the genoa blew out. The old sail was a bit used up and light for pointing upwind in a fresh breeze. I'll miss that one though. Well, at that point, we went straight to the storm jib and staysail combo. This got us moving upwind again fairly well. The wind continued to build, we were in a full fledged convergence zone which is usually stationary, so we knew that we need to sail through it not run with it or hove to. So we pointed upwind carrying only the storm jib and made decent progress across the wind in the general direction of Tahiti.

Around midnight, the wind began backing east, and easing up a bit from it's 35-40 knot peak. By daybreak we were under full sail and making OK time in confused seas. After a few hours the wind settled into a nice trade wind pattern. 15 -18 knots from the SE and we were beam reaching with quartering waves. Yeah. Fianially making good time right at Tahiti. The rest of the day and night were uneventful and we reached Tahiti in the early morning.

As we rounded point Venus and headed for the harbor the wind began to die. There was a tide rip running across the channel and we got caught with no wind and started getting sucked toward the reef. Luckily, with the help of Suzi the 2hp suzuki on the dingy, we wer able to just barely get out of it and stay off the reef. Yikes. We got some help from another cruiser that Mike on Priceless was able to round up off the dock, and then had enough power to get in to the anchorage. Then we med moored the boat to the dock, right on the quay, in downtown Papeete. Cool.

The day was spent checking out the town, market, ect. I got the layout of the area, and checked out a few marine stores and machine shops. Got dinner at a "rilette," basically a really nice food truck. This is about the cheapest way to eat in town. There are about 20 that show up every evening by the pier.

[Tabiti - The Big City!](#)