

Day 5 – Baby Dolphin -- Rangiroa [Wednesday 26-Jan-2011]

We got up to watch the sunrise. Lilli first jumped into the water. I sat down and did some diary. The mosquitoes, albeit tiny, were a bit annoying on my feet. They come and go. I had forgotten to spray myself in the morning.



Lilli is waiting for sunrise at 5:45AM



This is the view we have from our bedroom. Our bag is packed for a morning dive.



Lilli at the dive center. The Rangiroa Lagoon is in the background. 84F in the water!

After we had eaten breakfast we were picked up by the local dive center (Raie Manta Club), owned and operated by Yves Lefevre. Yves has worked as a film maker, side by side with Commandant Costeau, amongst other things. Yves basically put Rangiroa on the world diving map 25 years ago.

He took me and Lilli out on an easy dive at the mouth of the lagoon to reacquaint us with diving gear, since we have not done it for the past three years. We dove near the mouth of the lagoon, near a small island called Motu Nuhi Nuhi. We did not stay that deep (about 40ft or 12m) and we were down about 50 minutes. The visibility was alright but not great, by Polynesian standards. Lilli managed to gulp down some water during a “pull your mask off at depth” exercise, and this tainted her experience a little bit towards negative.

After the dive, we headed back to our place and then walked down into the “town” of Avatoru to eat something, since the only grocery store is closed at lunch-time. We found a local restaurant by the “marina”, where we ate some local food and watched TF1 (French TV from mainland Europe).



Rangiroa: the Marina, and the Avatoru Pass beyond that, seen from where we ate lunch



Major lunch treat: Cured tuna in coconut milk, French fries and beer.



There are flowers everywhere. These tree flowers smelled very nice.



The hibiscus is a common theme in Polynesian art.

In the afternoon I was enticed to go back for a dive, while Lilli wanted to stay back. I had no idea about the surprise I was in for.



Young and old flock to this world top 10 dive area. And we were in for a treat.

First of all, I am still working on getting rid of my angst about sharks. Next, diving in the open ocean is another thing I have not yet come to terms with. But, here I went, on a zodiac with mostly real pros. Two of the guys had been diving for 50 years! Me, I have only about 20 dives under my belt in the last 10 years (excluding my diving 20 years ago in the Mediterranean).

We jumped off the zodiac outside of the atoll, in the Pacific. The spot was close to a dive area called L'Eolienne, just north of Tiputa. The shore drops off very quickly here. And there was current. We gradually got down to about 24m (78ft) where we bobbed around and watched things around us. Big tuna fish, barracudas, napoleon fish, sharks. And the super surprise appeared: **a school of ~8 dolphins (about 3m/10ft long) approached us at 70ft depth with a baby that was still nursing.** I was blown away by the huge dolphins while others were blown away by the baby dolphin. The mother swam very close to us, as if to show it off. The other dolphins moved around in play full ways.

Eric Laborgne, a Dive Master with the Raie Manta Club for the past 20 years, kindly shared a few of his pictures from that dive.



(c) 2011 Eric Laborgne

The baby dolphin at 70ft. Photo taken by Dive Master Eric Laborgne during my dive



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The baby dolphin at 70ft. Photo taken by Dive Master Eric Laborgne during my dive

When I got back up I understood that the sight of the baby dolphin was extraordinary. Not even the two gentlemen who had been diving for 50 years had seen it, of which one was world renowned for publishing books on aquatic life. In all his dives, he had never seen this sight either. I felt very privileged.

By the time I returned to the lodge it was pitch black outside. Lilli had some shopping and we ate a light dinner. After that, we topped it off with our second (and last) bottle of chilled champagne.



While we ate, our neighbors set a fire by the shore to BBQ some fresh tuna.