



MEDIA RELEASE

Sharp-toothed locals welcome nervous agents to Polynesian paradise

16 February 2017: **It's hard to picture a more relaxing setting than a tranquil Tahitian lagoon - unless of course you're sharing the warm waters with hungry stingrays and curious sharks.**

That's the unsettling scenario a select group of Travellers Choice agents recently found themselves in during an idyllic five-day educational to Moorea and Papeete. Thankfully, says Kayla McDiarmid from Easy Travel and Cruise Nambour, the sharks decided to keep their distance, although the stingrays were quite happy to rub shoulders.

"The guides held food out and these half-metre long stingrays would glide right over our faces, so close we could touch them, which was quite scary," says McDiarmid.

"Thankfully the reef sharks were more scared of us, so they hung around the edge and didn't mingle."

Denise Bradley from Moss Vale Cruise & Travel says the group's collective blood pressure also rose sharply during a four-wheeled drive up to Belvedere Lookout on Moorea for spectacular views of Cook and Opunohu bays.

"At one point it was so steep the driver had to reverse up the mountain while we sat in the back hanging on for dear life," Bradley reports.

There were more relaxing activities, such as reclining in overwater bungalows watching the sea-life through clear glass panels in the floor (better known as 'Tahitian TV'), enjoying the local cuisine (including raw tuna fish marinated with coconut milk and lime) and hassle-free shopping for black pearls in Papeete's markets.

The group - which travelled as guests of Air Tahiti Nui and Tahiti Tourisme - also got the opportunity to inspect the *Aranui 5*, a mixed passenger/cargo vessel that has operated the 14-day journey between Papeete and the Marquesas Islands since late 2015.

Both agents claim the vessel exceeded their expectations.

"It has more cabin balconies than its predecessor, and the facilities are so nice it could almost pass for a normal cruise ship," says Bradley. "The only exception being it has a huge crane on the front."

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