CLARK GABLE, MARLON BRANDO, FLETCHER CHRISTIAN, AND YOU

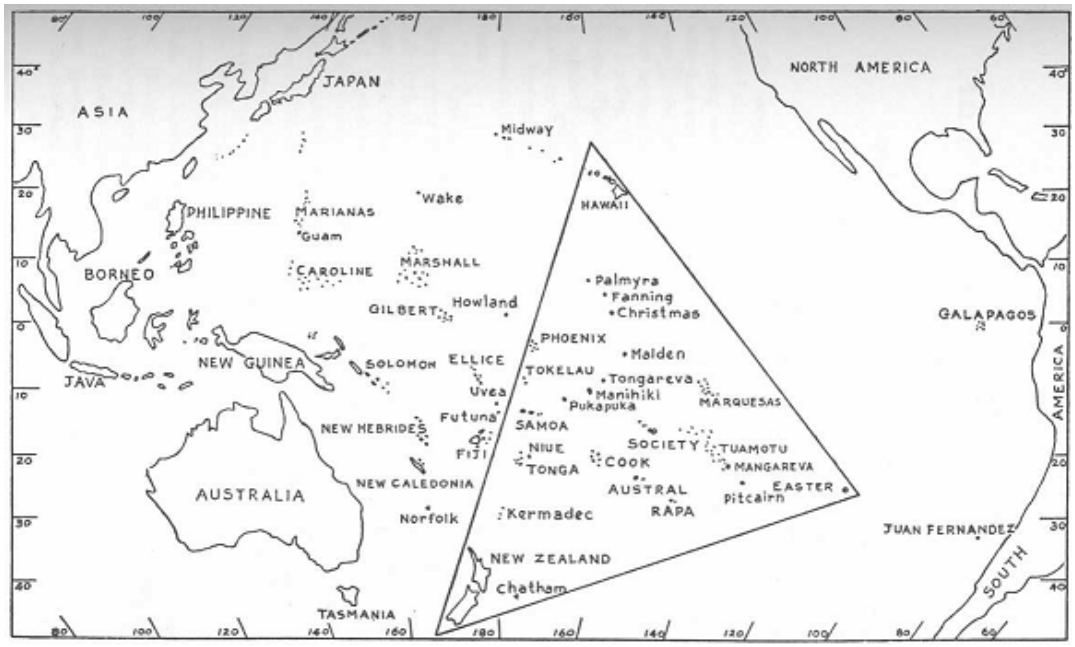
All of us since we were young have heard the story of The Mutiny on the Bounty - of how, on April 28, 1789, Fletcher Christian, first mate of HMS (His Majesty's Ship of the British Royal Navy) Bounty led a mutiny of the crew against the tyrannical Captain William Bligh, set Bligh and crew members loyal to him in a longboat, and took the Bounty to sail into history.

Clark Gable was Fletcher Christian in Mutiny on the Bounty, which won the Oscar for Best Picture in 1935. Marlon Brando played him in 1962, as did Mel Gibson in 1984. Everyone knows the story, for it is epically famous. Yet so very, very few have ever experienced being where it took place, because it was in remotest Polynesia. Next January, I am going to take a small group of TTPers to do just that.

IN THE WAKE OF THE BOUNTY:
Pitcairn Island and Remote Polynesia
Monday, January 14 - Wednesday January 30, 2013

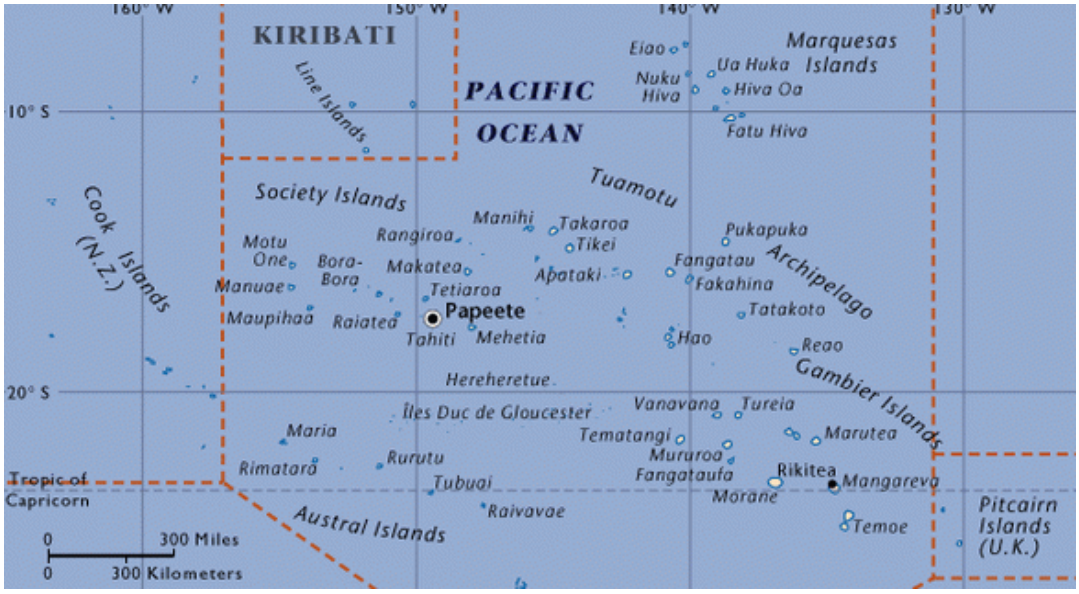
First, the background and history.

The three main island regions of the Pacific Ocean are Micronesia ("small islands" like the Carolines and the Marshalls), Melanesia ("dark islands" like Fiji and the Solomons), and Polynesia ("many islands" like Tonga, the Cooks, and French Polynesia). The Polynesia Triangle encompasses all the islands from Hawaii to New Zealand to Easter Island:



The purpose of the Bounty voyage was to gather breadfruit seedlings in Tahiti, and bring them to Jamaica to plant, providing food for slaves on British sugar cane plantations. It was on the return voyage from Tahiti, with Bligh insisting water be given to the seedlings before the crew and flogging any crewman who complained, that the mutiny occurred in waters among the islands of Tonga. Christian and 18 mutineers sailed the Bounty 1,300 miles back to Tahiti.

Tahiti is the main island of what is now French Polynesia, of which there are five island groups: the Societies, Tuamotus, Marquesas, Gambiers, and Australs:



After picking up a bevy of Tahitian maidens - with Christian marrying a chieftain's daughter named Maipiti - the mutineers left for the remotest island on Bligh's charts, Tubuai in the Australs. The native Tubuaians proved less than friendly however, so after three months, they sailed back to Tahiti, where half of the mutineers decided to stay. The remaining nine, led by Christian, were determined to find an uninhabited island so remote they could never be found.

Christian recalled Bligh (who had sailed with Captain James Cook) telling him about an island that Cook could not find. It was called Pitcairn after the sailor who first spotted it aboard a British ship, HMS Swallow, in 1767. Cook suspected that the Swallow's captain had mischarted it. Sailing past Mangareva, the remotest of the Gambiers, Christian hunted the seas for Pitcairn - and found it, on January 15, 1790.

Sure enough, it was 200 miles away from the Swallow chart location. There was no natural harbor, yet the tiny island was fertile with fresh water springs - and uninhabited. This was where they could live and never be found. They burned the Bounty and sank her. Whatever became of the Bounty mutineers was the Great Mystery of the English-speaking world for almost twenty-five years, until two ships of the British Navy found Pitcairn and to their astonishment discovered their hidden colony in 1814.

To this day, all Pitcairners are descendants of the original mutineers and their Tahitian wives. It is still just as hard to reach Pitcairn as ever - by boat - and remains one of the most isolated and inaccessible populated islands on earth.

It may seem impossible to leave home for Tahiti, sail to Pitcairn, visit the remotest islands of the Australs and the Gambiers, and be back home two weeks later - but that's what we'll do. We go in January, the austral summer, when the seas are calmest. Here's the itinerary:

Monday, January 14. Depart Los Angeles on Air Tahiti at 4:30pm, arrive Papeete, Tahiti at 10:00pm. Transfer to the Radisson Resort Tahiti on Matavai Bay, the very bay where the Bounty anchored, both before and after the mutiny:

Tuesday, January 15. Day at leisure to enjoy Matavai Bay, visit nearby Papeete, or explore Tahiti.

Wednesday, January 16. Morning flight to Raivavae in the Austral Islands. As beautiful as Bora Bora (or was 60 years ago), this is idyllic Polynesia untouched by tourist hordes, with extraordinarily friendly people living a traditional island life. We'll stay at the Pension Raivavae Tama.

Thursday, January 17. A full day in the paradise of Raivavae - fishing with the islanders, a barbeque on a *motu* (sand island on the fringing reef), kayaking in the lagoon, exploring the island's archaeology, or simply relaxing and getting to know the islanders.

Friday, January 18. 40 minute mid-afternoon flight to Tubuai.

This spectacular paradise has even fewer visitors than Raivavae. There are eight colors of sand on Tubuai's many beaches, from white to pink to ocher. Most of the island is as untouched as when the Bounty mutineers were here. We stay at the Vaitea Nui pension.

Saturday, January 19-Sunday January 20. We'll spend the weekend thoroughly exploring the island's history - the site of the mutineers' Fort George, numerous *marae* (ancient ceremonial altars) - and enjoying the joyous, music-filled Sunday church services. We'll get to them in time after camping overnight on a picture postcard *motu*.

Monday, January 21. We're back at the Radisson on Tahiti's Matavai Bay by early afternoon. Then we're off to explore rarely visited inland Tahiti, venturing up the Papenoo Valley where a number of mutineers who stayed in Tahiti hid out and eventually captured. We go past a number of beautiful waterfalls to reach the Vaituoru Pool for a refreshing swim, followed by an early dinner at the Relais de Moroto.

Tuesday, January 22. We're off early for our flight to Mangareva. As soon as we arrive, we board an expedition research ship, chartered just for us, the Research Vessel Discovery, for our sail to Pitcairn, departing late afternoon.

An expedition catamaran, guys get the bunks in one hull, gals in the other. She is built not for luxury, but for remote island research. Yet she has a spacious main cabin and a well-equipped

galley that serves great food. We'll be aboard her for two nights, and we'll have a lot of fun.

Wednesday, January 23. At sea, cruising the 335 miles to Pitcairn.

Thursday, January 24. We arrive at Bounty Bay by mid-morning, where we anchor and Pitcairners row out in their long boats to bring us ashore at the small quay. Every Pitcairner is a descendant of the original mutineers and their Tahitian wives. You'll meet direct descendants of Fletcher Christian. We'll all stay in their private homes in Adamstown:

Not many people come here, one of the world's most isolated and remotest communities, so we'll get an ultra-warm welcome. We'll explore the island tomorrow, but today so many Pitcairners will be inviting us over to their place for a cup of tea that we won't get out of Adamstown. We will, however, see the Bounty Bible on display, the Bounty anchor, and two of the Bounty's cannons.

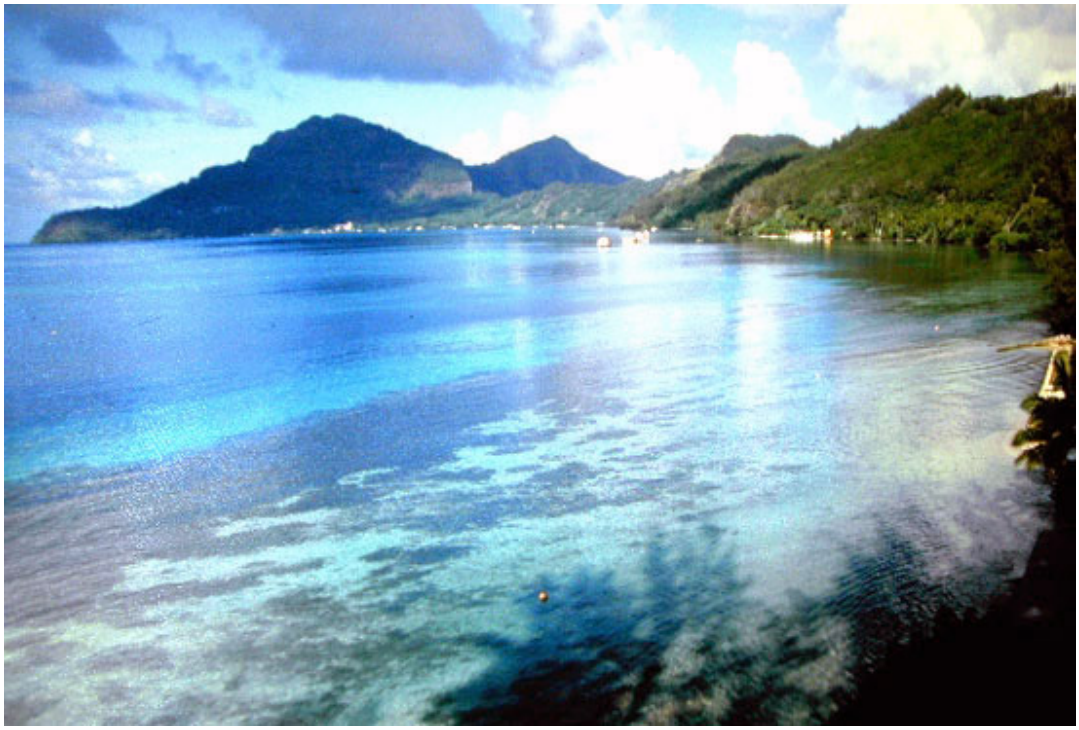
Friday, January 25. Today, Jaqui Christian will lead us on a tour of the entire island - it's not big, less than four square miles. We'll walk to Fletcher Christian's Cave, peer over The Edge, examine ancient petroglyphs, snorkel over the sunken remains of The Bounty, and swim in St. Paul's Pool:

Tonight, we join a festive dinner at Olive Christian's home, Big Fence. Everyone on the island shows up for a lot of food and even more fun.

Saturday, January 26. We have a free morning to explore further or simply enjoy the company of Pitcairners you've gotten to know. After lunch, reluctantly we depart, saying goodbye to our new friends whom we'll never forget, rowed out in the long boats to the Discovery, and wistfully sail away into the Pacific.

Sunday, January 27. At sea.

Monday, January, 28. We arrive Mangareva around noon. Another untouched Polynesian paradise:



We'll stay at the Pension Maro'i, and spend the afternoon exploring the town of Rikitea, or relaxing at the lagoon bar.

Tuesday, January 29. Last morning in paradise. We can get up early for an island tour, or go for one last dip in the crystal clear turquoise lagoon. Then mid-afternoon, we fly back to Papeete, where after our sumptuous Farewell Dinner, we board the Air Tahiti flight back to LA.

Wednesday, January 30. The Air Tahiti flight arrives at 11am, time for connections back home, where we can all start planning our next adventure.

Now for a few details.

The per person cost, all-inclusive (boat charter, air flights to the Australs and Gambiers, food, accommodations, tours, fees, everything except booze, personal incidentals, and international flights to Tahiti), is *$8,850*.

This adventure is *couples only*. Yes, that means my wife will be with me - this adventure is too romantic not to bring her! I am limited to *four couples*. If you want to be one of these four, please let me know *immediately*.

Let me repeat for clarity. Only four other couples can join us to sail in the wake of the Bounty, to

experience remote Polynesia that so many dream of seeing yet so very few ever get to see, to be a part of storied history that everyone knows about but almost no one knows first hand, to make that history a part of your life.

Clark Gable, Marlon Brando, Fletcher Christian... and you? If so, let Miko know quickly: 703-992-4529 or miko@tothepointnews.com .