

'Opera in Paradise' – Samoa - 2014 & 2015

"What a wonderful experience it was for a first-timer!e

Margaret - Esk, Qld.

2014 So much of our planning for our 10th Anniversary Festival had to be changed as we went along.....the hotel in Auckland changed, the restaurant in Auckland, the Resort, the Venue, the piano, the string quartet and finally..at the last minute...the tenor changed!! 'sounds disastrous doesn't it...yet every one of these unforeseen and unavoidable changes was for the better! We ended up treating everyone to a truly super 10 days...with wonderful performances, much-enjoyed local tours, the annual White Sunday church service, a special one for children and many a young person performed and sang on this important day, we enjoyed a comfy and stylish air-conditioned venue for our well-received concerts, ate sumptuous buffet dinners and heard local musicians each night. We were even treated to a Fia Fia night which



ended with a heart-stopping display of fire throwing and hijinks. There were tears shed when it was time to leave and staff gathered to sing a song of farewell as we boarded our airport transfers. So many said they wanted to do it all again...including Jason, the very helpful GM at Tanoa Tusitala resort. This charming fellow who had no idea what he was getting himself into, warmly and passionately adopted our festival and it's patrons...and he so loved being part of it. He promised to do anything and everything to assist us to present an even better Festival in 2015.

2015. How could we say 'No!' When we set the dates for a re-run of our Festival in Samoa, we engaged all of the same nine artists but of course, varied the programmes. Again, the concerts throughout the week were much-enjoyed and we added a very special little performance by the Samoa Victim Support Choir. This group of 30-odd young people have all suffered abuse and live, for their protection, in an orphanage sort of set up, along with babies, disabled children and other young folk. They came to our resort, all beautifully dressed in church 'whites' and sang and danced four songs for us. It was very moving and our lovely clients brought all sorts of gifts from home and these, along with a donation for the refuge, were greatly appreciated. Our clients again visited local churches, in particular, the old Congregational church, where the traditional singing is a joy to hear. We added some different tours for those who had already enjoyed seeing Robert Louis Stevenson house, the Cultural Village and other key sights. One tour that was truly enjoyed was the "Arts and Crafts", where we visited a museum and training college with a huge collection of traditional and more modern pieces, including giant wooden sculptures. There our happy travellers saw young budding artists at work in all sorts of genres, before visiting two lovely gallery/shops where many a fond purchase took place. Jason and his team at Tanoa Resort were again welcoming. They now grow many of their own fruit and vegetables on site..so our food was fresh and tasty. We all enjoyed excellent, warm and friendly service and a lovely holiday atmosphere.r.

"As for SAMOA, it was brilliant. Far surpassed N. Island I think with everything on site and beautiful accommodation/grounds/meals. tours, etc etc. Yes. it was hot and humid, but then we were mostly in AC. The concerts were A+++++. The quartet from Rigoletto gave the one with Dame Joan, Pav, Horne and Milnes a run for the money. (saw them at the Met in the late 70's or early 80's and have the recording.) Are you considering going back there again????" Barbara - Canada/Melbourne - 2014

"What a wonderful experience it was for a first-timer! I have arrived back with wonderful memories of Samoa itself and its culture, a lovely resort with happy, friendly and helpful staff, great meals - and of course, fabulous entertainment from all the singers and musicians. The concerts were delightful - too difficult to pick out a favourite. To top it all off, the weather was kind to us, and I didn't even need to unpack my insect repellent. I can only try to imagine how much time and effort you must have put into the organising and preparation for the

whole event, not to mention fitting in all the necessary rehearsals. During my unpacking and putting gear away, I re-read your initial brochure. You certainly delivered on all counts - and more!..."

Margaret - Esk Qld - 2015