

**Sent:** Wednesday, June 17, 2009 2:55 PM  
**Subject:** Notes from Tonga

Hi Guys

It's been a while since we sent any notes home because basically not much has changed down here over the last little while, until just yesterday. We finally signed a lease on some land in the downtown core overlooking the harbour, upon which we will be building our new restaurant/bar to be called 'Laredo's'. It just happens that the name Laredo is the name of a parrot (an orange-winged Amazon). Our partners in this caper are Shawn and Karie and they own Laredo. Shawn is a Canadian from BC and Karie is a US girl from Texas, and they are our partners. It took us about 2 months to find the right location to build and we now have it... finally.

Laredo will be the bar Mascot, so every day he will be perched at the bar as kind of a conversation piece, and he is quite the talker himself. We will start to build today and should be ready to open in about 6 to 8 weeks. It will be a small, open-concept place, and we will be serving wood-fired grilled steaks, ribs, chicken, and a few other items... but grilled meats will be our claim to fame as no other establishment does so. We think we will have a hit. Running Island Explorer just doesn't provide enough cash flow and besides, we need something else to keep us busy... as we're sure Laredo's will do.

There is a vet in town for a few days now and we have an appointment at 9 am today for Bear. It's a big day for him... he loses his family jewels.

The tourist season is just beginning now... the harbour is full of sailboats of all shapes and sizes from all over the world. There is one real crazy guy from NZ who has been sailing the south pacific for 7 years in a 20 foot boat... yes, I said a 20 foot boat. This guy is about as tall as his mast. You have to be real brave to bob around the ocean in boat the size of a bathtub.

The weather is now cooler and should be just fine until Nov. when the heat and humidity will return. The whales should start arriving in the next few weeks as well.

Well that's all for now. Hope everyone is well... and drop us a note. We miss home a little now, but we'll get over that... maybe.

Paul and Brenda  
[www.islandexplorertonga.com](http://www.islandexplorertonga.com)

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 01, 2009 7:31 PM  
**Subject:** Starting to build

Hello

We finally got permission to build the restaurant. Had to have a permit issued which required a full set of architectural drawings and some money under the table. Starting tomorrow we put up forms for concrete posts. We have the re-bar already formed and the wooden post are made too, so we now put it together. Hopefully we can have it completed by Aug 1. That might be a dream but that's what we are shooting for. Still have to apply for the liquor license, but one step at a time.

These were taken last week out front of our place in the lagoon.



Malo. Paul and Brenda

**Sent:** Saturday, July 25, 2009 6:01 PM  
**Subject:** Fw: Restaurant/Bar pics

Thought you might like to see what's going on

These are only a few pictures we have so far. There are others on Shawn's camera (our partner)... waiting for him to send to us so we can forward them as well. The small green building beside our property is not part of the project.



LEFT: Block walls going up

RIGHT: Concrete Support pillars in place



LEFT: this will be the harbour view from inside once we are open

RIGHT: View of the front



**Sent:** Monday, August 10, 2009 2:26 PM

**Subject:** Notes from Tonga

Hi... Tuesday morning 7 am

It probably didn't make very big headlines back home but this nation has been shattered by the loss of 93 people (mostly women and children) when the ferry "Princess Ashika" suddenly sank last Wednesday night. It went down in less than a minute. There were only 55 survivors.

Tonga is a Kingdom nation of a little over 100,000 people, and here on Vava'u the population is about 14,000...so, it was only a matter of time before this ferry tragedy would come home and affect us in some way. Yesterday we were talking with a young guy, his name is Stanley and he will be our kitchen chef when we open the restaurant... anyway, he lost his nephew, his nephew's wife and their three kids, the oldest child was 6... a whole family was wiped out. There are stories like that everywhere... so much sadness. This place will be in mourning for some time to come.

It's probably fitting that the weather here is gloomy as well. This is the fourth straight day of cloud and rain with more to come through to next week. Thankfully we have the roof on and can continue to work on our project.

I wish I had lighter, happier news, but I don't.

Love ya's all

Paul and Brenda

**Sent:** Saturday, August 15, 2009 3:07 PM

**Subject:** Notes from Tonga

Hi Guys

The Minister of Transportation has resigned over this ferry tragedy... yet he still contends that the boat was seaworthy... NOT! The King is still in Scotland with his tail between his legs and probably won't return for a while because there is a price tag on his head. The people of Tonga are real pissed over this.

Yesterday was a fun day. One of the local Cafe's (the Coconet) held a fund raiser for the families of the victims that went down on the Princess Ashika. We had a chicken BBQ and many shops, individuals and restaurants donated things for a silent auction. We donated a dinner for two once our restaurant is open. Brenda bought some books etc. There was a massage therapist doing massages for what ever you wanted to donate. The proceeds from all food and drink was kicked in also. In total the community generated over \$4,000 yesterday alone. There will be other events like this over the next while too. We heard that in Nuku'alofa, some \$600,000 has been

generated so far. This money will be given to the victims families for services and some will be used to erect memorials. No bodies were ever recovered from the wreck. It was too deep (110 m) to effect a proper recovery so the sight has been deemed a permanent grave sight.

I see from the news that summer may have finally hit there. You are into some hot temps... hotter than here. We are still in the low 20's... quite nice actually.

The bar is under construction, topped with some local cedar wood, and should be finished Monday, and the BBQ pit should be finished Monday as well. It is being built out of coral stone. The cabinets in the kitchen are done, the electrical is done, and I will be doing the plumbing next week... our goal is to be open Sept. 1st. Brenda and Karie will be going to Nuku'alofa next week... by plane and not on any ferry... to get all the paperwork submitted for the bar and make our formal application for our liquor license. etc.

That's all for now.

Hope everyone is well.

Love from the flip side... Paul and Brenda

**Sent:** Friday, August 28, 2009 2:48 PM

**Subject:** Notes from Tonga

Sat 29th... 7:30 am

Brenda and Karie are still in Nuku'alofa and should return Tuesday morning. They've been working hard to get paper work done so that we and are business are legal. We now have 2 year business visas in our passports and can travel in and out of the country at will... until now we have been paying a monthly fee to stay here of \$46 each. Our business license is now in hand and our application for a permanent liquor license goes to the Cabinet next week to be rubber stamped and should be ready in about two weeks. We will be opening the restaurant and bar on Thursday next week with a temporary liquor license which we pay daily for. We need to be open Thursday as the first annual Vava'u Sailing Regatta starts. There is a pub crawl that night which we need to be part of so the pressure is on to get all the last minute details done like our water hooked up, appliances in and test run our wood fire BBQ etc. The bar is finished and the electrical is in. The Ministry of Works has signed-off on our plans and the construction, so we are good to go... just have to finish the details over the next few days. We also have about \$2000 worth of meats coming in on Monday.

The weather has been quite cool by Tongan standards... around 22 C right now and overcast. It's been quite windy lately too. There are lots of tourist now because we are in the middle of the whale watch season. Lots of Japanese with their cameras taking pictures where ever they go. We've not been out yet to swim with the whales and not sure if we will be able to before the whales leave in November but we will try. We think Laredo's Bar and Grill will keep us hoping over the next few months. Island Explorer is

full now... all Japanese. Bear is a great companion and he has been going to the job site with me everyday now that Brenda has been gone for two weeks... he's about 8 months now.

Still need to send some photos and will do soon.

Got to get ready to go to the job site. Later.

Paul

**Sent:** Saturday, September 12, 2009 5:08 PM

**Subject:** Notes from Tonga

Hi... How's everyone back home?

Sunday morning here and we have had a good week to start our new business. The word seems to be getting around that we have very good food and more people are coming around. Nobody serves steaks and ribs as good as we do (actually nobody else serves ribs... period), and we've been told that we have the best burger in the south pacific. It looks like we will be a success here. Of course we really need six or eight months to get a true sense of our success.

Had a bunch of pictures taken but I can't find the card for my camera now... may have to get another one sent from home by mail. Just can't go out and buy stuff like that here.

Still very cool here. Lots of rain these past 10 days... lots of cloud too. Had a minor earthquake the other day, but they are quite common and small and no body pays much attention to them.

Later

Paul and Brenda