

TRAVEL QUEST

Summer 2011

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Walk in the footsteps of Captain James Cook

Just Announced!

Cruise to totality on Celebrity's Millennium p7

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TRAVELQUEST
International

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Feature

Transiting in Tahiti

by Paul Deans

On June 3, 1769, Captain James Cook witnessed a rare transit of Venus from the shores of Tahiti. On June 5, 2012, you can relive his amazing experience from the very spot in paradise where Cook made his critical observations.

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305 Double D Drive
 Prescott, Arizona 86303 USA
 1-800-830-1998 (US and Canada)
 1-928-445-7754 (International)
 Fax: 1-928-445-8771
travel@TravelQuestTours.com

On the cover:

A typically stunning Tahitian sunset. Courtesy Aram Kaprielian.

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Reflections

Change is a powerful word. Sometimes we like it in our lives, sometimes not so much. During the past 18 months, TravelQuest has undergone a great number of changes — all of them very good.

Change within any organization really does start at the top. But the actual implementation of change is often actualized by those behind the scenes. It is the new core staff within the new and improved TravelQuest that I want to introduce to you today.

Many of you have already had the pleasure of talking with, or e-mailing, our Office Manager Kari Hull or our Logistics Coordinator Christine Broiles. Kari's organizational skills are focused on the operations within our office. Christine takes her exceptional attention to detail and applies it to the hour-by-hour logistics requirements of each of our tours. Two extremely qualified people now staff these two very important positions, and you can learn a little more about each of them on our [TravelQuest Team](#) webpage.

Kari, Christine, and I form the nucleus of the new TravelQuest. Recently, we've added Trish Bustria to our team as our new Administrative Assistant. Welcome aboard, Trish!

This new version of TravelQuest is built upon organization, thoroughness, and timeliness within the entire process of creating and operating a TravelQuest tour. What does this mean for you, our clients? It means you will receive accurate brochures, your tour booking will be smoothly handled, and your trip documentation will arrive in a timely



The TravelQuest home office team. From left to right: Christine Broiles, Aram Kaprielian, Trish Bustria, and Kari Hull. Courtesy TravelQuest.

manner. And it also means that when you arrive at your destination to begin your TravelQuest tour, the tour will unfold just as we promised it would.

This is an exciting time at TravelQuest, and I hope you, our travelers, notice some of the changes that are taking place here. One way or another, always feel free to contact me by phone or email — Aram@TravelQuestTours.com — and let me know how you feel we are progressing with these 'good' changes.

Aram Kaprielian



Our [Australia Total Solar Eclipse Tour](#) (November 9-16, 2012) is completely sold out. Space is still available on our three other 2012 total eclipse trips, but if you really want to visit Sydney, the Blue Mountains, Port Douglas, the Daintree rainforest, *and* see totality on land, another option is at hand. TravelQuest is pleased to announce that a *second* Australia

Total Solar Eclipse Tour is now available. It's almost identical to the first one — the only major differences are that it starts two days later (and so runs November 11-18), and there's a slight adjustment to the schedule to ensure we're all standing in the Moon's shadow on the 14th. Go to our website and [check out the Program 2 itinerary](#) for more details.

Transiting in Tahiti

by Paul Deans

Ah, Tahiti. An island of warm breezes, swaying palms, gorgeous beaches, and science experiments. If that last item seems out of place, it wasn't for Captain James Cook in 1769 when he was sent to Tahiti to observe a transit of Venus. Tough job, but somebody's gotta do it...right?

Tahiti Transit: 1769

Well, back then it *was* a tough job. When the H.M.S *Endeavour* set sail from Plymouth, England, on August 12, 1768, Cook's task was daunting — sail across thousands of miles of ocean (some uncharted), find a speck of land in the Pacific called Tahiti (which had been discovered only the year before), and get there before Venus crossed the Sun's face.

Cook's official mission, sponsored by England's Royal Society, was to observe the transit of Venus and record the times when Venus entered, and exited, the solar disk. Astronomers needed this information to help calculate the size of the solar system. Following the transit, his secret mission, sponsored by the Royal Navy, was to "search between Tahiti and New Zealand for a Continent or Land of great extent."

Eight months after departure, the *Endeavour* arrived at Tahiti. Cook dropped anchor in Matavai Bay, where his Royal Marines set up a slightly fortified observing station called Fort Venus. Supplementary transit stations were established on Moorea and Taaupiri (an island off the east coast of Tahiti).

On transit day (June 3, 1769), Cook wrote: *This day prov'd as favourable to our purpose as we could wish, not a Cloud was to be seen the Whole day...so that we had every advantage we*



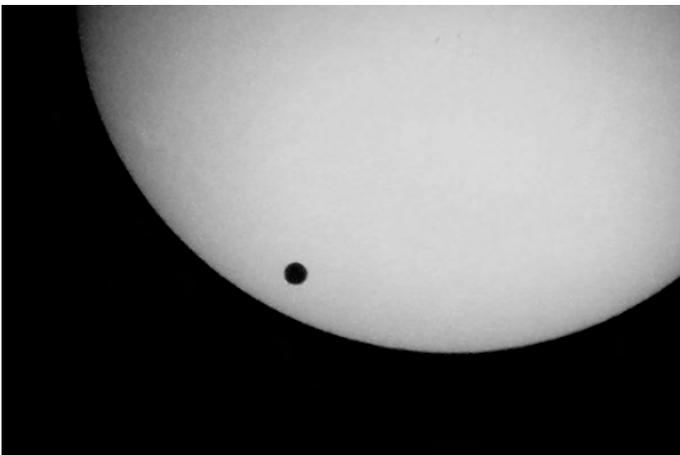
Tahiti from space. Point Venus, the location of Cook's Fort Venus, is just below the base of the north-pointing arrow. Courtesy NASA.

could desire in Observing the whole of the passage of the Planet Venus over the Sun's disk: we very distinctly saw an Atmosphere or dusky shade round the body of the Planet which very much disturbed the times of the contacts....

While the weather was first-rate, their observations were not — albeit through no fault of theirs. Cook and Charles Green, the ship's astronomer, were frustrated by the appearance of the black drop — a small, black extension that suddenly connected the limbs of Venus and the Sun just as the planet was about to fully enter, or start to exit, the solar disk. The black-drop effect, combined with the planet's "dusky shade," made it hard for them to say exactly when the transit began or ended.

Tahiti Transit: 2012

Seldom does an opportunity arise to replicate an historic scientific observation from the location where it was made. But that's exactly what you can do on TravelQuest's **Tahiti: Transit of Venus** tour (June 3-10, 2012). Almost precisely 243



Venus on the Sun's face in 2004. Courtesy Richard Tresch Fienberg.

years after Cook and his crew observed the transit from Tahiti, we'll be there watching the same event unfold!

On transit day (June 5th), you can view and photograph the transit from the grounds of our hotel (the Radisson Plaza Resort on Lafayette Beach), where you'll have a clear view of the transit through to sunset. Or, you can follow in the footsteps of Captain Cook and observe the event from Point Venus — the site where he viewed the transit in 1769.

There will be one difference between our observations and those of Cook's — the very end of the transit will not be visible to us. All the same, watching the Sun set into the Pacific, with the black disk of Venus still embedded on the solar face, will be a unique experience.

What about the black drop that so frustrated Cook — will we see it? Based on thousands of observations made during the 2004 transit, no conclusive answer is possible — some saw it; others didn't. It may well depend on the type of telescope you use and the observing conditions at our site. Regardless, the first 18 minutes of the transit, as Venus slides onto the solar disk, are not to be missed! This is an event you will not see again in your lifetime.



The lighthouse at Point Venus. Courtesy Aram Kaprielian.



Sunset over Bora Bora. Courtesy Richard Tresch Fienberg.

Exploring Tahiti and Moorea

Of course there's more to this adventure than watching Venus cross the Sun's face. We'll spend four days in beautiful Tahiti, with plenty of time to explore the island on your own. On the fifth day, after a 30-minute ferry ride across the Sea of Moons, we'll arrive on Moorea for three days of scenic wonders in this tropical paradise.

And if you can't bear the thought of leaving so soon, there are two optional add-ons: three days in Bora Bora, complete with overwater villa accommodations at the Hilton Bora Bora Nui Resort... followed by four additional nights in the incredibly beautiful, remote Marquesas Islands.

All in all, **this unique experience** — plus a transit of Venus in a Polynesian paradise — is not to be missed.

What's the Big Deal About a Transit of Venus?

As of the early 18th century, astronomers still didn't know the exact distance of Earth from the Sun. In 1716, Sir Edmund Halley (he of Halley's Comet fame) wrote a paper explaining how a Venus transit could be used to determine the Earth-Sun distance.

The problem is, transits of Venus are rare. Transits occur in pairs eight years apart, so the one on June 8, 2004, is followed by the upcoming transit of June 5/6, 2012. But one transit pair is separated from another by either 105.5 years or 121.5 years. After 2012, we won't see another transit until December 10/11, 2117.

And that's why Cook's mission to Tahiti was so important. The transit of June 3/4, 1769, was the last opportunity to use a transit of Venus to determine the Earth-Sun distance for another 105.5 years. For an interesting summary of the travels of numerous scientific expeditions to view the pair of 18th-century transits, see ***How Far to the Sun? The Venus Transits of 1761 & 1769.***

Notebook



When Aram and I started this little PDF magazine back in 2007, our goal was to do something a bit different. Of course we wanted to provide you, TravelQuest's clients, with information about upcoming tours, perhaps

by including a little more detail than you might find on TQ's website. But we wanted to do more. We wanted to include a little astronomy that is related to the nature of TQ's eclipse, aurora, and stargazing trips; to describe some of the personalities you'll encounter on these tours; and to tell you how many of these trips turned out (something you don't often discover unless you know someone who went on a particular tour).

And so welcome to the start of the fifth year of *Travel Quest* and this issue — Volume 5, Number 1. I'm pleased to say that during its first four years, this little e-zine has done all that, and more...and will continue to do so.

In his column, Aram talks about some of the changes occurring at TravelQuest these days. One change he didn't mention is the look of *Travel Quest*. One goal was to continue the e-zine's transition from a newsletter into a full-up (albeit small) magazine. We're heading in that direction thanks to the addition of a proper cover, a full page for the Table of Contents, and an expandable double-page-spread layout.

Something I've long wanted to do is make it easier to navigate the pages of *Travel Quest*. I have always been able to

set a hyperlink to an *external* webpage, so if you click on an underlined bold word or phrase (say, **TravelQuest's website**), you're immediately taken to that webpage. Thanks to new software, I can now create *internal* links that let you jump to pages within the e-zine. So if you see an interesting title or article in the Table of Contents (or on the cover), click on the page number and you'll go to the story. Note that while you can open *Travel Quest* using Preview (on a Mac), the e-zine looks and works best if it's opened in **Adobe Reader**.

If you're not familiar with Reader, here are a couple of navigational hints. On one side of the screen, you'll see thumbnail pages. Click on a thumbnail, and you'll jump to that page. If you have a left/right click mouse, put your cursor on any thumbnail and right-click. Then click on "Reduce Page Thumbnails" and they'll shrink and move into page pairs. If you have just a single-click mouse, click on the tiny Options menu icon sitting upper-left of the first thumbnail. Then click "Reduce Page Thumbnails" to get the same effect.

Finally, in the Toolbar stretching across the top of the magazine pages, you'll find other ways to navigate the e-zine and control the size of the pages. Go ahead and play — you can't break anything! If it gets messy, close and reopen the PDF to start again with the original settings.

Aram and I would love to hear what you think of all these changes — at TravelQuest and in this e-zine. As always, to send stories, photos, or comments, you can contact me at: **editor@travelquesttours.com**.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Deans".

Paul Deans

Travel Talk: Oh No! Where's My Passport?

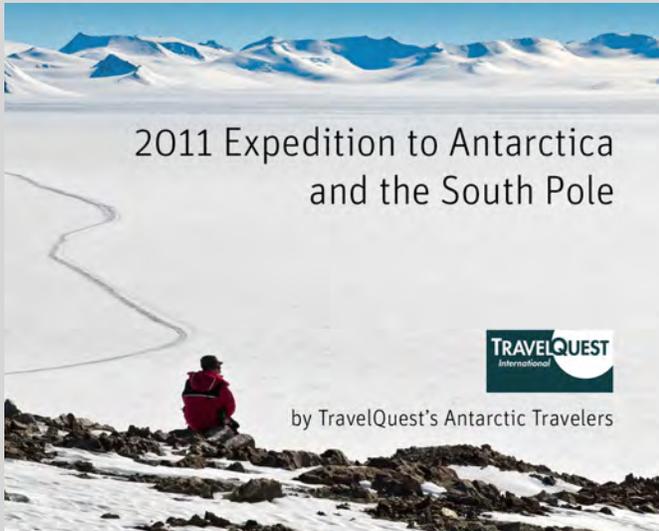


There's nothing worse than the sick feeling you get when you realize your wallet or purse is missing. No, wait. There *is* a worse feeling — it's the *panicked*, sickening feeling you get when you're traveling outside the country, and you can't find your passport.

At this point, self-recrimination and regret usually take over, followed immediately by the thought: "Now what?" Well, if you've done a bit of pre-trip homework, you'll at least know where to start.

Continued on page 8

TravelQuest's 2011 Expedition to Antarctica and the South Pole



In January 2011, 12 TravelQuest travelers flew to Union Glacier in Antarctica for a one-week trip. They camped on the ice, visited the South Pole, and searched for meteorites. But due to some extraordinary circumstances – a strike in Punta Arenas, a broken airplane part, and bad weather – they were trapped in the Antarctic for an extra 12 days. **This is their story** – in their own words and pictures.

Preview 53 pages and order this unique travel book. Also available from TQ are three solar eclipse Memory Books: **Eclipse 2010**, **Eclipse 2009**, and **Eclipse 2008**. All four books can be purchased as softcover or hardcover image-wrap.

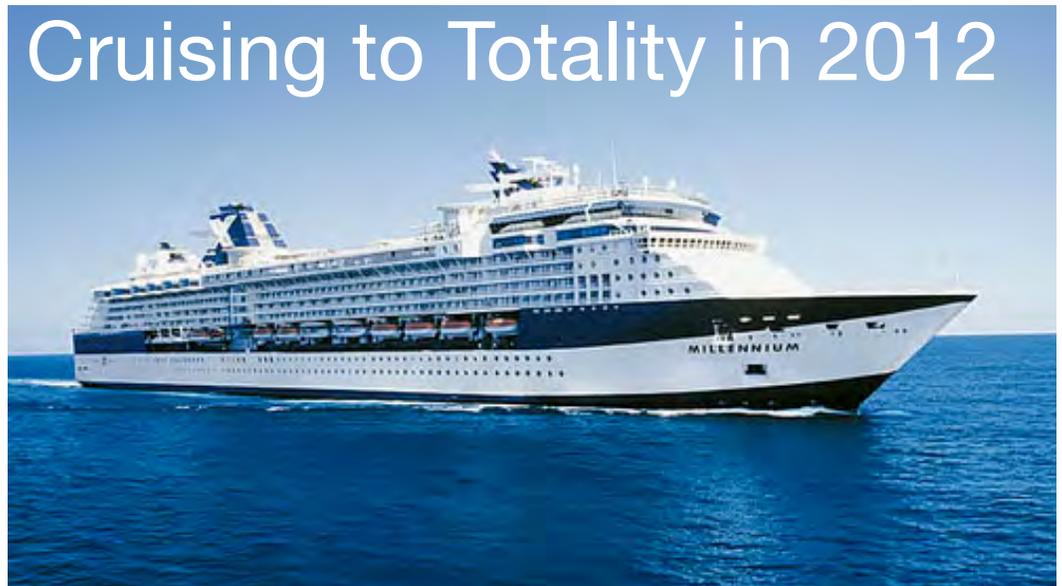
Focus On: Cruising to Totality in 2012

Until recently, TravelQuest offered three trips to Totality 2012, including an eight-day **Australian Eclipse Tour**, a 13-day, privately chartered **Papua New Guinea** expedition cruise, and an 11-day **Fiji Solar Eclipse** cruise on board the m/s *Paul Gauguin*.

However, as of June these tours were pretty much sold out, with more than a year to go until Eclipse Day in 2012. So what to do? Add more tours, of course!

As previously noted on [page 3](#), a second land tour of Australia has just been added. And only last month, TravelQuest added a 20-day eclipse cruise on Celebrity Cruises' *Millennium*. On this epic voyage, you'll explore the scenic and natural wonders of the South Pacific — the beautiful Hawaiian Islands, American Samoa, exotic Fiji, and gorgeous New Zealand, ending in famous Sydney Harbor — and stand in the Moon's shadow during the November 14, 2012, total solar eclipse!

The length of totality offered on this cruise is approximately 3 minutes and 30 seconds — just 30 seconds less



than the maximum possible. Since only a small portion of the 2012 path of totality falls on land, this eclipse cruise may well give 2012 eclipse chasers their longest possible experience under the Moon's shadow. The mobility of the *Millennium* will allow us to seek out a gap in the clouds on eclipse day, thereby elevating the chances of a successful totality sighting to more than 75 percent.

TravelQuest is working on some interesting innovations for those who participate in this special 20-day cruise (November 2 to 22, 2012). To learn more about this unique opportunity, and to reserve your place on board, visit our **South Pacific Voyage to Totality** webpage.

Before You Go

Before leaving home, photocopy your passport information page. That's the one containing your personal details and your passport ID number.

Then either take the copy with you (but keep it as hidden as possible and completely separate from where you tuck your passport), or scan it and e-mail it to yourself (using a Web-based e-mail account such as G-mail or Hot Mail). In the e-mail (or on the photocopy that you take with you), note where all your country's embassies and consulate offices are located in the country (or countries) you're visiting, plus the embassy's contact phone numbers.

Also before departure, have a new set of passport pictures taken and bring them with you. Regardless of the type of emergency ID your embassy provides to help get you home, you'll likely need a recent photo of yourself.

If you're an American citizen, consider enrolling in the Department of State's free **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program**. In addition to storing travel information that'll help the State Department find and assist you in an emergency situation, you can include your passport information in their secure online database.

If you're not a US citizen, spend some time poking through your country's passport office webpage. You'll at least learn what's expected if you lose your passport.

It's Gone. Now What?

The moment you realize that your passport is gone for good, report it to the local police. Ask for help with this at your hotel's front desk. (You'll need to bring your passport details; this is where all that pre-trip work pays off.) Make sure you get a written document from the police indicating that you've reported the loss.

Then take the loss/theft report, your passport details, the backup passport photos, and as much other ID as you have (to prove you are who you say you are) to your country's nearest embassy or consulate. Take a credit card — there will be fees involved. (You didn't stash your passport with your wallet and lose both, did you?)

Of course the bottom line is — keep your passport as hidden and secure as possible. But pre-trip preparation will certainly pay off if the worst happens.

— PD

TRAVELQUEST
International

Upcoming Adventures

Arizona/New Mexico Annular Eclipse 2012

Marvel at scenic wonders, go behind the scenes at professional observatories, and watch the May 20th annular eclipse from historic Chaco Canyon.

May 14-25, 2012

2012 Transit of Venus — Tahiti

Join us in French Polynesia to see this historic celestial event, one that will not occur again for another 105 years.

Don't miss it! *June 3-10, 2012.*

Australia Total Eclipse 2012

Sydney. The Australian Outback. Ayers Rock. The Great Barrier Reef. Don't miss out. A *SECOND TOUR* has just been added!! Come travel with us for totality Down Under.

Program 2: *November 11-18, 2012.*

Papua New Guinea Total Eclipse

Join us for a 12-day cruise to discover the wonderful cultural diversity and breath-taking scenery of Papua New Guinea, and view totality from the Great Barrier Reef.

November 3-15, 2012.

Fiji Total Eclipse Cruise

Discover spectacular Fiji, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia, and see totality at sea aboard the m/s *Paul Gauguin*.

November 10-20, 2012

NEW! South Pacific Voyage to Totality

See an amazing 3m 30s of totality on your voyage from Hawaii to Australia aboard Celebrity Cruises' *Millennium*.

November 2-22, 2012

To learn more about our other tours, please visit our website:

TravelQuestTours.com