Coral Route

With the exception of their Christchurch-Melbourne service, flown by Skymasters, the entire route-network of Tasman Empire Airways is operated by five Short Solent flying-boats. For some time these splendid marine aircraft have provided luxurious travel between Sydney and Auckland and Wellington (incidentally, New Zealand's faith in flying-boats was demonstrated recently by the opening of a £20,000 marine-aircraft passenger terminal at Evans Bay, Wellington). The Solents also operate island services eastward across the Pacific, of which the most recent is the aptly named Coral Route, from Auckland to Tahiti by way of Fiji, Samoa and Aitutaki. As these illustrations show, this fortnightly service follows a route with stopping places worthy of that usually overworked word "romantic."

Pictured above is the harbour at Papeete, Tahiti, with Borea island visible in the background. The other views show the small coral-island refuelling stop at Aitutaki, in the Cook Group; TEAL have built on this island, Akaiami, some native huts in true tropical surroundings. Passengers and crew can enjoy ideal swimming from the sandy beach (below) during the two-hour break in their journey. The Coral Route has proved very popular with American tourists (who fly from San Francisco to Fiji by landplane in order to pick up the Solent service), and the frequency may be doubled next year.