DESTINATION TRAINING

The Islands of Tahiti

TAHITI
TOURISME
ʻIa ora na e Maeva!
CHAPTER 2
THE ISLANDS
A Wide Territory

118 islands divided in five archipelagoes

• The Society Islands
• The Tuamotu Atolls
• The Marquesas Islands
• The Austral Islands
• The Gambier Islands
Covering an area as large as western Europe.
Getting Around

• Air Tahiti is the only domestic carrier (not to be mistaken with Air Tahiti Nui, the international airline)

• Air passes will offer the best value for island-hopping, several types of passes are available

• Aremiti and Terevau are the 2 fast ferry companies connecting the islands of Tahiti and Moorea (note: Moorea is the only island with passenger catamaran/ferry service)
The Society Islands

The Islands of Tahiti
Tahiti
The Queen of the Pacific

- Tahiti is the largest island and Papeete is capital of French Polynesia, where the Faa’a International Airport is located.

- Tahiti Nui is the biggest part of the island and Tahiti Iti the smallest part. Both are connected by an isthmus (it will take you about 2 to 3 hours to drive around Tahiti Nui).

- Tahiti is often considered a transit island but the Queen Island has much more to offer.
Navigation time to Moorea: 40 min

Flight time from Tahiti to:
- Tetiaroa: 15 min
- Moorea: 15 min
- Raiatea: 45 min
- Bora Bora: 50 min
- Huahine: 40 min
- Raiatea: 45 min
- Manihi: 1 h 15 min
- Manihi: 1 h 15 min
- Mangareva: 4 h 25 min
- Nuku Hiva: 3 h 45 min
- Hiva Oa: 3 h 45 min
- Rurutu: 1 h 30 min
- Tubuai: 1 h 40 min
- Raivavae: 1 h 50 min

Map of Tahiti with various points of interest such as hotels, resorts, museums, parks, and natural attractions. The map includes a key to island maps indicating major hotels and resorts, guesthouses, towns, points of interest, historical sites, dive sites, surfing sites, Monoï Road, Tombo of King Pomare V, and more. Details such as Ferro Dock, Cruseship Port, Faa'a International Airport, and public market are also marked.
Tahiti Highlights

Museums & History

• Museum of Tahiti and Her Islands (on the West Coast)

• Robert Wan Pearl Museum (in Papeete)

• James Norman Hall House (on the East Coast, the original house of writer James Norman Hall, co-writer of “Mutiny on the Bounty”)

• Point Venus Lighthouse (on the East Coast in Mahina, Point Venus beach)
Marae Arahurahu (on the West Coast): for reference, a “marae” is a sacred place / archeological site that served religious, ceremonial and social purposes in Polynesian societies. They were also places of sacrifices. Polynesians are very superstitious when it comes to “marae” as they are sites full of past and history. But most of all, they were considered “tapu” or forbidden in the past. They were abandoned with the arrival of christianity in the islands. But many are still accessible for visits.
Tahiti Highlights

Tropical Gardens

• **Harrison Smith Botanical Garden**
  (on the West Coast, right by the lagoon, adjacent to the Paul Gauguin Museum)

• **Vaipahi Water Gardens**
  (on the West Coast, has a hiking trail that leads towards the top of the mountain for stunning views of Tahiti Iti)

• **Paofai Gardens** *(Papeete’s waterfront)*

• **The Queen’s Gardens**
  *(at the Assembly of French Polynesia in Papeete)*
Tahiti Highlights

Nature

- The Faarumai Waterfalls *(also known as the “Three Waterfalls” on the East Coast, 3 waterfalls and 3 trails from easy to more advanced)*

- The Arahoho Blowhole *(on the East Coast)*

- Hiking through the beautiful lush valleys and mountains *(hikes available for all-level hikers - guided hikes highly recommended)*

- Teahupoo’s mythical wave on Tahiti Iti *(where the best surfers in the world compete)*
Tahiti Highlights

Souvenir shopping

- Vaima Center in Papeete, Tahiti’s version of an open air mall
- Papeete’s public market “Le Marché” for local souvenirs such as shells, pareos, woven bags, hats, vanilla, monoï, and more
Tahiti Highlights

Food

- While in Tahiti, eat like a local and have dinner once at the “roulottes,” Tahiti’s version of food trucks

- Located on the waterfront, you will find a nice array of Tahitian, French, Chinese, Italian cuisine

- Portions are quite large and great to share!
Tahiti Hotels

- **Intercontinental Tahiti** *(West Coast, 10 minutes from the airport)*
- **Manava Suite Resort** *(West Coast, 15 minutes from the airport)*
- **Le Méridien Tahiti** *(West Coast, 20 minutes from the airport)*
- **Tahiti Nui** *(Downtown Papeete, 10 minutes from the airport)*
- **Tahiti Pearl Resort** *(East Coast, 20 minutes from the airport)*
Tetiaroa
Marlon Brando’s Dream

• In the 1960’s, actor Marlon Brando was in Tahiti for the filming of “Mutiny on the Bounty.” He fell in love with the islands and acquired a little haven called Tetiaroa

• Just a 15-minute flight from Tahiti

• The only atoll in the Society island group

• Tetiaroa was the retreat for royalty back in the day
Tetiaroa Highlights

• Tetiaroa is an incredible natural sanctuary for sea life and birds

• It is home to the non-profit organization “Tetiaroa Society,” where scientists from around the world can come and conduct some research
Tetiaroa
Accommodation

- The Brando
Moorea
The Magical Island

- Tahiti’s sister island, the only island reachable by fast ferry (30-minute crossing)
- Famed for its 2 stunning deep bays, Cook’s and Opunohu
- Gorgeous valleys and mountain peaks
- A world apart yet so close to the capital island Tahiti
- Where the best pineapple in the world is produced
Moorea Highlights

• Pineapple plantations and the Agricultural School *(stop to try the fresh-squeezed pineapple juice and their variety of locally made jams)*

• The Belvedere lookout point *(for incredible views of the valley and the bays)*

• The only Dolphin Center in the islands *(offering educational programs and possibilities to swim with these amazing mammals)*
Moorea Hotels

- Intercontinental Moorea Resort & Spa
- Sofitel Moorea Ia Ora Beach Resort
- Hilton Moorea Lagoon Resort & Spa
- Manava Beach Resort & Spa Moorea
- Hotel Les Tipaniers
Huahine
The Garden of Eden

• Referred to as “Little Kauai” by many visitors

• Untouched, authentic, traditional, off the beaten path

• Home to the largest concentration of ancient sacred sites “marae” in French Polynesia

• Like Tahiti, composed of 2 islands, Huahine Nui and Huahine Iti, connected by a bridge
Distance from Tahiti to Huahine: 180 km - 112mi

Flight time from Huahine to:
- Tahiti: 40 min
- Raiatea: 20 min
- Bora Bora: 25 min
Huahine Highlights

• The “marae” archeological sites and their history
• The ancient fish traps still in use today
• The blue-eyed sacred eels that have become pets for the locals and tourists (just bring canned tuna or sardines to feed them!)
• The small village of Fare, the island’s main village, for its very Polynesian flair
• Drift snorkeling
Huahine Hotels

• Maitai Lapita Village Huahine
• Hotel Le Mahana Huahine
• Royal Huahine
Raiatea and Taha’a
One Lagoon, Two Islands

• Quite an unusual fact, these 2 islands actually share the same lagoon (and a legend tells that they were once one island but got separated by a giant eel)

• Untouched, authentic, off the beaten path, like Huahine

• The airport for the 2 islands is located on Raiatea and there is no airport in Taha’a

• To reach Taha’a, resorts have their own private boats
Raiatea
The Sacred Island

• Played an important role in the migrations that took place in the islands and has remained a strong cultural center for French Polynesia

• Home to one of the largest “marae,” Marae Taputapuatea, is now a UNESCO World Heritage site

• Home to the only navigable river of French Polynesia

• Base for sailing, charter companies

• Represented by the symbolic “Tiare Apetahi” flower growing only there
Raiatea Highlights

- UNESCO World Heritage site Marae Taputapuatea and the history of the migrations
- The Faaroa River by boat, kayak or stand up paddle
- Hiking to the waterfalls (advanced)
- Visit to vanilla plantations
- Raiatea’s public market in the small town of Uturoa (for stunning locally made jewelry, vanilla, pareos, carvings etc.)
Raiatea Hotels & Sailing Companies

- Raiatea Lodge Hotel
- Opoa Beach Hotel
- Tahiti Yacht Charter
- Dream Yacht Charter
- The Moorings
Taha’a
The Vanilla Island

• Closest airport is Raiatea, and Taha’a can be reached by boat (resorts have their own private shuttle boats)

• 80% of the Tahitian vanilla production comes from Taha’a

• The island’s way of life has remained very traditional, locals live from tourism, pearl farming, fishing and vanilla of course
Taha’a Highlights

- Visit a vanilla plantation
- Visit a pearl farm
- Sailing tours, half or full day
- Drift snorkeling
- Visit to Raiatea
Taha’a Hotels

- Le Taha’a Island Resort & Spa
- Vahine Island Private Island Resort
Bora Bora
The Pearl of the Pacific

- Bora Bora was a US GI base during World War II
- The airport was built during WWII and is still operating today
- The airport is located on a small “motu” islet and Air Tahiti operates a shuttle boat service to the main land (main village of Vaitape)
- Most resorts located on small islets have their own shuttle boats
Bora Bora Highlights

• Bora Bora’s main asset is its pristine lagoon and most activities and excursions revolve around the sea

• To enjoy by boat, waverunner or from up above by helicopter, parasailing or sky diving

• Hiking to the Valley of the Kings (guided hike)

• 4x4 Safari Tour exploring the interior of the island
Bora Bora Hotels- Main Island

- Maitai Polynesia Bora Bora
- Intercontinental Bora Bora Le Moana Resort
- Sofitel Bora Bora Marara Beach
- Hotel Matira
Bora Bora Hotels- Motus

- Intercontinental Bora Bora Resort & Thalasso Spa
- Sofitel Bora Bora Private Island
- The St. Regis Bora Bora Resort
- Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora
- Conrad Bora Bora Nui
- Le Méridien Bora Bora
- Bora Bora Pearl Beach Resort & Spa
The Tuamotu Archipelago

- An atoll is a “flat island” *(picture across)*

- With time, islands sink into the ocean and an atoll is what is left of a high island once it has sunk *(after a million years)*

- An atoll is composed of mainly coral-base “motu” islets, reefs, encircling an immense lagoon, connected to the ocean by small passes / channels

- There are 78 atolls in the Tuamotu Archipelago, making it the largest group of islands in French Polynesia
The Tuamotu Archipelago
A Strand of Pearls

• With their immense lagoons, stretches of virgin islets and palm trees, they typically are your Robinson Crusoe type of islands
• A large number of pearl farms have settled in these lagoons offering a pure protected environment
• Diving is among the best in the world
• Locals still subsist on fishing and pearl farming and tourism (on a smaller scale)
• Rangiroa is the largest atoll in French Polynesia and the second largest in the world

• It is so wide that you could fit the whole island of Tahiti in Rangiroa’s lagoon

• The two main villages of Avatoru and Tiputa are where all of the population is concentrated (northern part)
The Blue Lagoon
The Pink Sands

Distance from Tahiti to Rangiroa: 356 km - 221 mi
Flight time from Rangiroa to:
Tahiti: 1 h
Fakarava: 45 min
Tikehau: 20 min

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Rangiroa Highlights

• Visit a pearl farm

• Scuba diving and drift diving *(advanced divers)* or drift snorkeling *(experienced snorkelers)*

• Fishing *(lagoon, deep sea, fly fishing)*

• Rangiroa vineyards, truly unique, producing the “Coral Wine”

• Enjoy dolphin watching from the shores of the Tiputa Pass

• Biking

• Tour to the fossilized corals
Rangiroa Hotels

- Kia Ora Resort & Spa
- Hotel Maitai Rangiroa
Fakarava
Unesco Biosphere Classified

• Second largest atoll in the Tuamotu after Rangiroa

• A UNESCO Biosphere protected atoll *(overwater bungalows are not allowed)* for its pure environment and rare species

• The perfect castaway atoll
Fakarava Highlights

• Visit pearl farms

• Scuba diving in the North and South passes of the atoll (like Rangiroa, among the best diving especially for advanced divers)

• Enjoy a full-day picnic tour on pristine virgin islets

• Fishing (lagoon, deep sea, fly fishing)

• Biking between ocean and lagoon
Fakarava Accommodations

- There are no hotels or resorts in Fakarava
- Accommodations are mainly bed and breakfast and Tahitian Guesthouses
Tikehau
A Robinson Crusoe Escape

• Smaller than Rangiroa and Fakarava, Tikehau is known for its sparkling pink sand beaches and bird sanctuaries

• Tikehau, like the other atolls, is pristine, untouched and truly authentic

• The locals’ daily lives revolve around the lagoon and its treasures
Distance from Tahiti to Tikehau: 307 km - 191 mi

Flight time from Tikehau to:
- Tahiti: 55 min
- Rangiroa: 20 min

Key to Island Maps:
- Major Hotels and Resorts
- Guesthouses
- Villages
- Points of Interest
- Historical Sites
- Dive Sites
Tikehau Highlights

- Enjoy a picnic tour on one of the secluded pink sand “motu” islets
- Explore the Bird Island
- Excellent scuba diving for all levels
- Snorkeling with the giant manta rays
- Fishing (lagoon, deep sea)
Tikehau Hotels

- Tikehau Pearl Beach Resort
The Marquesas Archipelago
Mystical and Mysterious

• Islands as high as the Tuamotu are low, the Marquesas are impressive and dramatic islands

• No reefs, not a beach destination, but stunning cliffs, peaks, bays, valleys and mountains

• Legends say the gods created the Marquesas Islands to be their home, each island representing a part of the house

• Nuku Hiva and Hiva Oa are the main islands
The Marquesas Islands

- Marquesans have a fierce pride for their islands and a strong sense of identity.
- The finest wood, bones and stone carvings can be found in the Marquesas.
- "Tapa" also is one of their specialties, made from bark from the trees. Originally used to make clothes, it is now used for paintings, that will then serve as wall decoration.
Nuku Hiva
The Majestic Island

- Administrative center for the Marquesas Islands
- Inspired writer Herman Melville who wrote “Typee,” recalling his stay there in the 19th century
- Robert Louis Stevenson also traveled to the Marquesas in the 19th century and wrote “South Seas”
Nuku Hiva Highlights

• Visit the beautiful little village and Bay of Taiohae

• Tour the island by 4WD to the Taipivai Valley and Nuku Hiva’s own canyons

• Visit archeological sacred sites (known as “paepae’ in the Marquesas) in Hatiheu

• Horseback riding

• Hiking through the valleys and to the waterfalls (advanced)
Hiva Oa

In the Artists’ Steps

• Second largest island in the Marquesas after Nuku Hiva

• Was previously the capital of the Marquesas before it was replaced by Nuku Hiva

• Final resting place of artist Paul Gauguin and singer Jacques Brel

• Home to the tallest tikis in French Polynesia (located in Puamau)
Hiva Oa Highlights

- Visit the “Calvaire Cemetery” for an homage to Paul Gauguin and Jacques Brel
- Explore Paul Gauguin’s world at the Paul Gauguin Museum and his reconstituted “Maison du Jouir”
- Visit the archeological sites of Taaoa and giant tikis in Puamau
- Horseback riding
- Hiking
Nuku Hiva and Hiva Oa Accommodations

- Nuku Hiva Keikahanui Pearl Lodge
- Hiva Oa Hanakee Pearl Lodge
- A variety of bed and breakfast, Tahitian Guesthouses available on the 2 islands and other Marquesas islands
- Aranui Cruises is another great way to see a few of these islands (some islands in the Marquesas do not have an airport)
The Austral Archipelago
Between Lagoons & Caves

• In the Southern part of French Polynesia, these islands get a slightly different climate with much cooler temperatures during the “Tahitian winter”

• Weaving is at its finest in the Austral archipelago

• Their landscape definitely is a great mix between the Tuamotu and the Marquesas
Tubuai
The Island of Peace

• Dotted with a stunning lagoon, Tubuai has remained untouched and authentic.

• The Bounty’s mutineers tried to settle there but the local tribes, at the time, fought fiercely to chase them away. Today, one of the beaches carries the name of “Bloody Beach”.

• Tubuai also is a major agricultural center for French Polynesia.
Rurutu
The Hidden Whales Sanctuary

• Rurutu has become THE place to observe and scuba dive with humpback whales and their calves during their yearly migration, from July until about October

• Like Tubuai, the pristine lagoon and well-preserved, pure environment, offers an ideal shelter for these mammals

• It is, of course, one of the island’s main attractions half of the year
Raivavae
The Dream Island

• Raivavae is what a lot of locals will call the most beautiful island of French Polynesia

• For many, it is what Bora Bora used to be, before it became the most popular Tahitian island

• Totally unspoiled, and like Tubuai and Rurutu, off the beaten path

• Over the years, tourism is picking up more and more
Accommodation in the three islands are mainly Tahitian Guesthouses (family stays)
The Gambier Archipelago
The Islands at the End of the World

• Like the Austral islands, the Gambier’s climate slightly differs from the Society Islands

• They are the cradle of catholicism and many constructions from the 18th and 19th century are still in use

• Agriculture also plays a major role in their economy
Mangareva
Pearls’ Sanctuary

• Mangareva pretty much has it all: pristine lagoons and beaches, verdant mountains and virgin “motu” islets

• This is where some of the most stunning Tahitian cultured pearls come from, the lagoons there being purer than any other islands

• Pearl farming is one of the main industries and mother of pearls, shells and pearls largely enhance local constructions
The Gambier Islands

GAMBIER ARCHIPELAGO

Distance from Tahiti to Mangareva: 1652 km - 1027 mi

Flight time from Mangareva to Tahiti: 4 h 25 min

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KEY TO ISLAND MAPS:
- Guesthouses
- Villages
- Points of Interest
- Historical Sites

MANGAREVA

1. CHEZ BIANCA & BENOÎT
2. PENSION MARO'I
3. ATUMOANA LODGE
4. CHEZ JOJO
Mangareva Accommodations

- There are no hotels or resorts in Mangareva, however there are a variety of Tahitian Guesthouses (family stays) to choose from.

- Like the Austral islands, a perfect shelter for sailing boats.
And Beyond Those

- There are of course many other islands, as remember, we have 118 altogether. Here are a few more that tourists are discovering
- Maupiti, known as “Mini Bora Bora,” in the Society Islands
- Ahe, in the Tuamotu Archipelago