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Getting Started

French Polynesia thrives on tourism, and the only thing difficult about travelling here is parting with the 20 bucks it's going to cost for a burger and coke. That said, Polynesia is a destination that benefits from advance planning. Start thinking about your trip around three to six months out; this will allow you enough time to scour the Web for the best deals or book your dream honeymoon bungalow before someone else does. Definitely devote some serious hours to online research – from complete honeymoon packages to discounts on budget-oriented family guesthouses to Internet-only deals on luxury resorts, there are thousands of sites out there offering everything Tahiti-related on sale. Once you arrive, an efficient and fast system of ferries, planes and taxis whisk you from destination to destination.

WHEN TO GO

French Polynesia is an outdoor destination, so the timing of your trip will probably be influenced by the weather. The dry winter period from May to October is the best time to go; the weather is cooler and there is much less rainfall during this time. Temperatures rise during the November to April summer rainy season when it's humid, cloudy and *very rainy*. Three-quarters of the annual rainfall occurs during this period, generally in the form of brief, violent storms, although torrential rains lasting several days are not uncommon.

French Polynesia is south of the equator, but school holidays still fall in line with those of the northern hemisphere. This means that the peak season is July and August, and during this period it's no mean feat getting flights and accommodation. Christmas to early January, late February and early March, the Easter period, early May and early October are also quite busy times (which almost covers the entire year!). The peak July to August season coincides with the Heiva festival (p251), held throughout July, when the region comes to life. Unfortunately this is no secret, so plan ahead if July interests you.

Diving is popular year-round, and each season brings its share of discoveries (see the Diving chapter, p54). Surfing is also a year-round activity, but if you are sailing, it's best if you avoid the November to March tropical depressions – they can be depressing! Walking is best in the dry season, as some of the trails are simply impassable when it's wet.

See Climate Charts (p249) for more information about the weather.

BEACHED DREAMS

It's a cruel disillusion! You head to French Polynesia buoyed by dreams of lounging on a deserted beach only to discover the region is quite lacking in those sandy excuses to laze about. This is a lagoon destination, not a beach destination.

There are a few small beaches on Tahiti, Mo'orea, Huahine, Bora Bora and Maupiti, as well as in the Marquesas and the Tuamotus, but none match that postcard perfection. Some luxury hotels have built very convincing artificial beaches, but it's not quite the same, is it?

The solution is simple: head for a *motu*, one of the many sandy, idyllic dots of land that fringe lagoons. Some luxury resorts sit pretty on *motu* and have regular transport to and from the main island; otherwise you can hire a boat, arrange to be marooned on a *motu* for the day or wade into that warm water and swim out there.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

Imported goods are expensive in French Polynesia, and most goods are imported, so bring enough everyday essentials to last for your entire trip. A few must-haves include

- sunscreen: the sun can be devilishly scorching
- your own snorkel, mask and flippers: the lagoons resemble personal aquariums, free to anyone carrying the right equipment
- raincoat: it can rain at any time, even during the supposedly dry season
- first-aid kit: cuts get infected easily so be sure to pack the basics – aspirin, sticking plasters, antiseptic cream and anti-diarrhoea pills
- insect repellent: French Polynesia doesn't have malaria, but the mosquitoes still bite hard and fast
- patience: island life moves slowly, don't try to speed it up or you'll just be disappointed
- plastic bags: keep your camera and other valuables protected from the elements
- international dive card: you won't want to miss French Polynesia's magnificent underwater worlds

COSTS & MONEY

French Polynesia is expensive by anyone's standards and travel costs are some of the highest in the world. Flights alone tend to be a substantial cost, but once you arrive you may be shocked to find even the cheapest meal, bought from a vendor off the street, will set you back around 1200 CFP. Backpackers who cook all their own meals and stay in the cheapest rooms possible can skimp by on around 10,000 CFP per day. Midrange travellers, looking for more comfortable beds and wanting to take in a few restaurant meals and perhaps an organised excursion, can count on paying around 20,000 CFP per day. Top-end visitors will find the sky is the limit when it comes to posh lodging and dining options and watery excursions. Over-water bungalows start at around US\$500 per night, and a stay on a private island can cost as much as US\$10,000! To score the best deals, try to book in advance. If you're travelling with the kids, many places offer half-price discounts for children under the age of 12.

Taxation is another bugbear here: a TVA (*taxe sur la valeur ajoutée*; value-added tax), which was introduced in 1998, currently adds 6% to your hotel bill (and that's not including the 5% government tax and the *taxe de séjour*, accommodation tax or daily tax, which top off the bill). We've included all taxes in our listed prices.

TRAVEL LITERATURE

Pulitzer-winning writer Tony Horwitz follows the voyages of Captain Cook and his beer-swilling friend Williamson in *Blue Latitudes: Boldly Going Where Captain Cook Has Gone Before* (2002). It's a frustrating, funny and insightful read.

The congenitally acerbic Paul Theroux was at his sourest when he visited *The Happy Isles of Oceania* (1992), describing Tahiti as 'a paradise of fruit trees, brown tits and kiddie porn'. Crossing the South Pacific from Australia and New Zealand to Hawaii, he didn't find much of it very happy, but the insights are up to his usual high standards. His fellow passengers are prodded unmercifully with his sharpest pen and the beautiful, gloomy Marquesas are the perfect site for a Theroux visit. The French don't come out of it very well, but neither do the Polynesians, who are presented as eagerly embracing their own decline.

HOW MUCH?

Night on a private island:
US\$10,000

Burger, fries and a coke
at a *roulotte*: 1500 CFP

Five-island airpass:
25,000 CFP

Dinner for two at a
midrange restaurant:
6000 CFP

Simple bungalow with
fan: 60,000 to 80,000 CFP

See also Lonely Planet
Index, inside front cover.

Much more upbeat is Gavin Bell's award-winning *In Search of Tusitala* (1994), which traces the Pacific wanderings of Robert Louis Stevenson. Like a number of other writers, Bell finds the Marquesas fascinating, beautiful and deeply depressing. 'How long has it been raining?' Bell asks the first Marquesan he meets. 'About one year,' comes the reply.

In *Kon-tiki: Across the Pacific by Raft* (1953), Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl recounts his epic voyage to try to prove his (now discounted) theory that Polynesia was populated by Incas from South America.

TOP TENS**Best Over-the-Top Lux Resorts**

If you're going to really splurge, French Polynesia just might be the best place in the world to do it. The following places are the best of the best.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ■ Intercontinental Moana Beach (p165),
Bora Bora | ■ Bora Bora Lagoon Resort (p165),
Bora Bora |
| ■ Hotel Bora Bora (p165),
Bora Bora | ■ Bora Bora Nui Resort & Spa (p165),
Bora Bora |
| ■ Moorea Pearl Resort (p122),
Mo'orea | ■ Mo'orea Beachcomber Intercontinental
Resort (p123), Mo'orea |
| ■ Bora Bora Pearl Beach Resort (p166),
Bora Bora | ■ Tikehau Pearl Beach Resort (p191),
Tuamotus |
| ■ Le Taha'a Private Island & Spa (p154),
Taha'a | ■ Intercontinental Resort Tahiti (p95),
Pape'ete |

Best-Value Accommodation

Even the cheapest, most dismal fleapits cost a small fortune in French Polynesia, and frankly there are a lot of places out there just not worth the price. The following are our top picks for good value – they are not necessarily the cheapest places, they simply have the best cost-to-worth ratio.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| ■ Fare ie (p137), Huahine | ■ Pension Poe Iti (p175), Maupiti |
| ■ Vanira Lodge (p110), Tahiti | ■ Village Pauline (p163), Bora Bora |
| ■ Motu Aito Paradise (p199), Fakarava | ■ Pension Kanahau (p226), Hiva Oa |
| ■ Hanakéé Pearl Lodge (p226), Hiva Oa | ■ Novotel Bora Bora Hotel & Beach Resort
(p164), Bora Bora |
| ■ Tarariki Village (p124), Mo'orea | |
| ■ Pension Mauarii (p138), Huahine | |

Best Reads

For a bit of armchair-travel, try the following titles.

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| ■ <i>Mutiny on the Bounty</i> by Nordhoff and Hall | ■ <i>Breadfruit</i> by Celestine Hitiura Vaite |
| ■ <i>Tales of the South Pacific</i> by James A Michener | ■ <i>The Happy Isles of Oceania</i> by Paul Theroux |
| ■ <i>Le Mariage de Loti</i> by Pierre Loti | ■ <i>The Moon & Sixpence</i> by W Somerset
Maugham |
| ■ <i>Noa Noa: The Tahiti Journal of Paul Gauguin</i>
by Paul Gauguin | ■ <i>Henderson's Spear</i> by Ronald Wright |
| ■ <i>Blue Latitudes: Boldly Going Where Captain
Cook Has Gone Before</i> by Tony Horwitz | ■ <i>In the South Seas</i> by Robert Louis
Stevenson |

White Savages in the South Seas (1995) by Mel Kernahan is a witty collection of experiences, accumulated by the author during years of studying and travelling as a solo woman in French Polynesia. It provides a candid look at the not-so-swanky lives of real people living in Tahiti.

For an unabashed look at the history of travel and sex, check out *Sultry Climates: Travel and Sex Since the Grand Tour* (2002) by Ian Littlewood, which pays particular attention to the attitude of many early explorers towards Tahitian women. It also examines the myth of Tahiti as a place linked with the lure of uninhibited sex.

SPECIALITY WEBSITES

Pensions: www.farepassion.pf in French

Polynesian weddings: www.tikivillage.pf

INTERNET RESOURCES

LonelyPlanet.com (www.lonelyplanet.com) Provides summaries on travelling to most places on earth, including the all-important Thorn Three bulletin board, where you can ask questions of travellers who've been to Tahiti recently.

Tahiti Explorer (www.tahitiexplorer.com) Discounts on lodging, customised honeymoon packages and destination descriptions.

Tahiti Nui Travel (www.tahiti-nui.com) Aimed at travel agents, but packed with loads of useful info.

Tahiti Tourisme (www.tahiti-tourisme.com) Official Tahiti tourism website in English.

Itineraries

When you arrive in French Polynesia you may decide to ditch your action-packed itinerary in favour of Pacific-paced languor, but here are some suggestions anyway. Don't expect to see everything, unless you want to come back exhausted from your trip. Getting around the islands can take time, and there's nothing worse than being in a hurry in the Pacific – the locals will think you are mad. That said, do try to visit a few different islands so you can get a feel for the variations in culture, climate and geology.

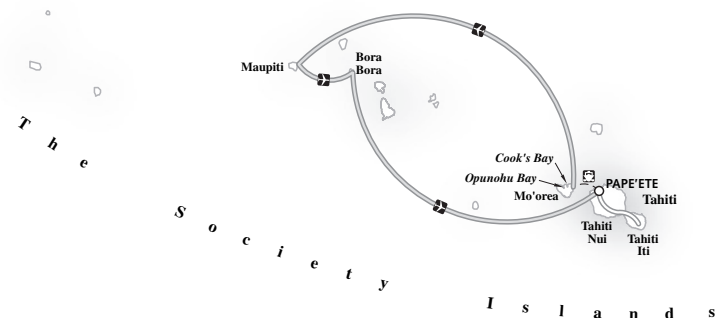
CLASSIC ROUTES

SOCIETY ISLANDS TEASER

Two Weeks / Tahiti to Maupiti

Spend a few days getting over the jet lag in Tahiti. You'll arrive in Pape'ete, but don't stay here. Instead head straight for **Tahiti Iti** (p109), Tahiti's smaller half. Set up camp at a chilled-out *pension*, taking day trips around the island. Devote some time to shopping and partying in **Pape'ete** (p86), hiking through the misty, jungle-like interior or catching a gentle break on some of Polynesia's easiest waves. From Tahiti, it's easy to catch a ferry to ultra-gorgeous **Mo'orea** (p112), where you'll want to stay for at least three nights. Boasting soaring and jagged peaks, verdant and dense foliage and those magical aqua waters that French Polynesia is known for, Mo'orea is considered by many to be the most beautiful isle in the archipelago. Cycle around magnificent **Cook's Bay** (p116) and **Opunohu Bay** (p116), explore the untouristy southern coast or simply spend your days soaking up sun and splashing around in the tepid lagoon. From Mo'orea, catch a plane to **Maupiti** (p171), the quietest and most remote of the Society Islands. Devote at least two nights to playing Robinson Crusoe on a sandy *motu* surrounded by picture-perfect turquoise lagoons. Amenities and tourist infrastructure are limited, but those seeking solace in a simple beach bungalow away from the crowds will fall in love. From Maupiti, it's a short flight to dreamy **Bora Bora** (p156), where you can end your holiday in style – live it up in an over-water bungalow at a five-star resort or partake in a myriad of water excursions on the drop-dead-gorgeous lagoon. Fly back to Tahiti for your last night.

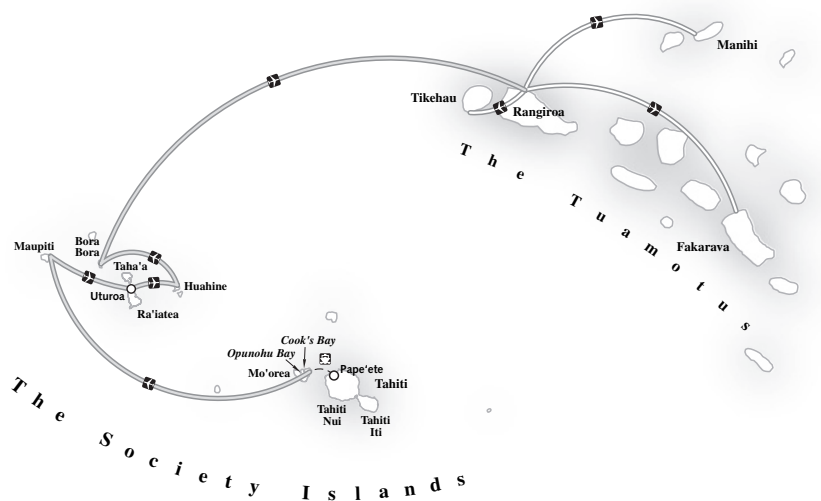
Fabulous resorts, sublime diving, sandy white beaches and translucent lagoons – the islands on this route are some of the most beautiful in French Polynesia.



FRENCH POLYNESIA EXPLORER**One Month / Tahiti to the Tuamotus**

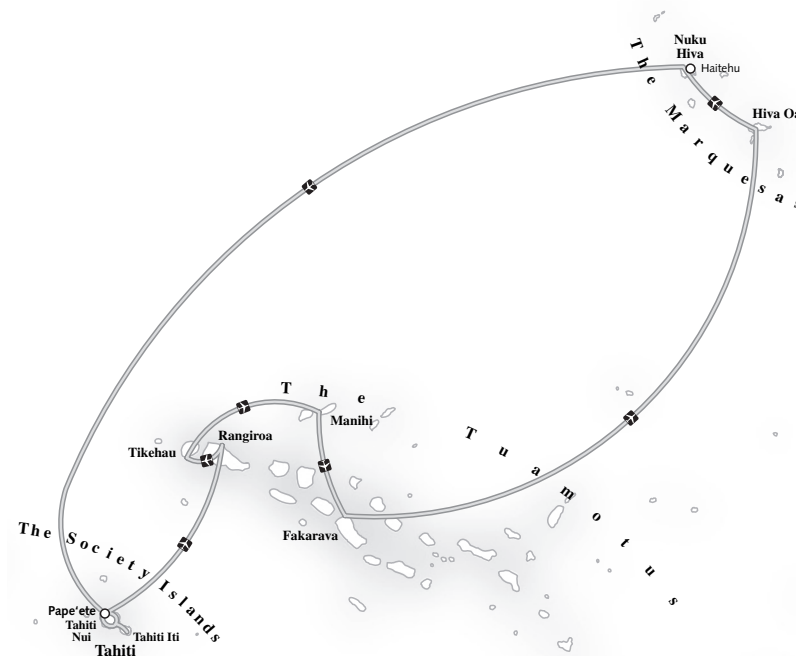
With a month at your disposal, you can really get a feel for the various islands of the Society group and also spend some time on an atoll in the Tuamotus. We'd suggest following the itinerary listed previously for two weeks, but after visiting **Maupiti** (p171), catch a flight to **Ra'iatea** (p142). A lushly gorgeous island, Ra'iatea doesn't have any beaches, but days pass easily when you're exploring Polynesia's most traditional *marae* (p144), snorkelling and diving amid brightly coloured fish and majestic coral. Be sure to spend an afternoon shopping for pearls and handicrafts in sleepy little **Uturoa** (p144). Not only does the place have a completely untouristy and local vibe, you'll also get a kick out of learning it's actually French Polynesia's second-largest city! Sharing the same lagoon as Ra'iatea, **Taha'a** (p151) is a savage beauty. Home to vanilla plantations and pearl farms, it boasts some fabulous snorkelling off its white-sand *motu*. Fly to **Huahine** (p129) next. There's not a lot to do, but the island has a subtle, low-key charm that appeals especially to budget travellers and surfers – it has some of the cheapest beds and best breaks in French Polynesia. Aside from the usual lagoon tours and snorkelling excursions, Huahine also has some fine stretches of sandy beaches in the south. From Huahine, head to **Bora Bora** (p156) – see the previous itinerary for more here. With the Society Island circuit finished, it's time to explore the otherworldly atolls of the **Tuamotus** (p177). Head to **Rangiroa** (p181) first and spend a few days exploring the atoll's fantastic, mostly untouched, lagoon, or diving and snorkelling in its sharky passes. If you have time left after exploring Rangiroa, spend a few days checking out **Manihi** (p193), **Tikehau** (p190) or **Fakarava** (p198) – three other popular atolls.

From Tahiti's lush mountains to Ra'iatea's sacred *marae* to the sun-soaked beauty of the Tuamotus, you'll experience a little bit of everything when following this route.

**LAGOONS & MOUNTAINS: THE WILD MYSTERY TOUR****Two Weeks / Tahiti to the Marquesas**

Unless you're arriving by sea, your trip will start in **Tahiti** (p81), where you should spend the first three nights getting accustomed to the tropical humidity and languid pace of island life. Soak up Pape'ete's colourful hustle – it's going to get a lot quieter from here on out – and shop for pearls at the fabulous **market** (p88), dine at chic **restaurants** (p96) or take in an eye-catching **dance performance** (p99). Drive around the island for a day, stopping to check out the fantastic scenery, surf spots, black-sand beaches and misty mountain hikes. Spend at least one night on **Tahiti Iiti** (p109) – the drop-dead gorgeous little sister. Fly to the **Tuamotus** (p177) next. Consisting of 77 coral atolls, these islands are as famous for their pearl farms as they are for their picture-perfect turquoise lagoons and fabulous **diving** (p54). Spend five nights playing on some or all of the following: **Rangiroa** (p181), with its idyllic lagoons; **Tikehau** (p190), which has a number of enchanting *motu* dotting the lagoon; **Manihi** (p193), famous for its black pearl production; and **Fakarava** (p198), offering all the attractions in a serene setting. Hop on a plane for the **Marquesas** (p202) next. Wild and rugged, travelling here is like stepping back in time, but don't expect to spend much time on the beach – the Marquesas are more of a responsible-tourism destination. Ride horses through verdant green valleys or follow Gauguin's trail in **Hiva Oa** (p221); hike across windswept ridges into ancient volcanic craters or let yourself succumb to Haitehu's peaceful village charm in **Nuku Hiva** (p206). Fly back to Tahiti on your third-last day, and spend your final two nights treating yourself to a full pamper in a sexy hotel.

Leave the crowds behind, and head into the wilds. The coral atolls of the Tuamotus are perfect to get away from it all and time stands still in the rugged Marquesas.



FORGOTTEN POLYNESIA: FAR OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Two Weeks / Tahiti to the Australs

If your idea of the perfect paradise doesn't include crowds, swanky hotels or a myriad of gourmet restaurant choices, but does include remote isolation in a place so far removed from anywhere it feels like another world, then this tour far off the beaten path is the one for you. Start off with a few days in **Tahiti** (p81), visit **Pape'ete** (p86) and really soak up the ambiance (entertainment is going to be limited to the coconut-shaking do-it-yourself variety after this). Rent a car and explore the island – both **Tahiti Nui** (p101) and **Tahiti Iiti** (p109). If you're a surfer, catch some waves. If you've always wanted to try, sign up for a lesson. Head to the **Gambier Archipelago** (p241) next. Surrounded by an untouched, translucent, aqua lagoon, this exquisite group of islands is an armchair travel destination for most. Tourism options are very minimal. There's not much to do besides swimming in the lagoon or lazing on white-sand *motu* beaches, but flights only leave once a week (see p260) so be prepared to be stuck here a while. From the Gambier, head to the rough-and-tumble **Australs** (p231) – you should have had more than your fill of beach by now, so get ready to shift gears. The Australs are effectively an extension of the range of submerged peaks making up the southern Cook Islands. It can get rather chilly on the islands, and the emphasis here is on trekking, meeting locals, eating sturdy meals and taking things slow, slow, *slow*. Tourism facilities are limited here, which is good if you want to escape the crowds. The archipelago is remarkably varied, from the limestone caverns of **Rurutu** (p232) to the fertile slopes and windy bays of **Tubuai** (p236) to the Bora Bora-like lagoon of **Raivavae** (p238).

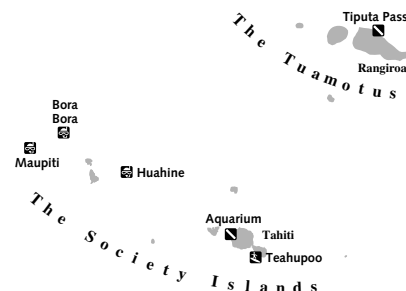
On this route you'll experience another face of French Polynesia, one seldom seen by tourists. The Gambier Archipelago is untouched and unspoiled, and the pace is slow in the rugged Australs.



TAILORED TRIPS

WET & WILD TAHITI

Tahiti is more of a lagoon destination than a beach destination, but luckily she's blessed with some pretty awesome water. Not only are they gentle and warm, the lagoons are also the most gorgeous hues of blue you'll ever see and packed with coral reefs and schools of brightly coloured tropical fish. If you're wanting to spend most of your time in the water – snorkelling, diving, jet-skiing, surfing or just plain swimming – this is the route for you. In the Tuamotus, **Rangiroa** (p59) is one of the best-known dive areas in the world, home to lots of toothy sharks and powerfully strong currents. **Tiputa Pass** (p59) is the most famous site. Beginner divers should check out Tahiti's **Aquarium** (p54), filled with dozens of fish species. **Bora Bora** (p156), **Maupiti** (p171) and **Huahine** (p129) all have placid lagoons with dense fish populations, perfect for lazy snorkels or just splashing around with the kids. Beginner surfers should head straight to **Tahiti** (p102) – home to French Polynesia's gentlest surf breaks. Experts will love the powerful reef breaks of **Huahine** (p135) and Tahiti's world-famous **Teahupoo** (p102) wave.



ROMANTIC TAHITI

Tahiti and her islands are long-time favourite honeymoon destinations. Most folks usually pick an island (and resort) and spend their whole trip there. But if you'd rather not spend your dream vacation all in one spot, then you'll enjoy this romantic romp through France's sexiest accessory. Tiny **Maupiti** (p171) should be your first stop. It's not nearly as swanky as some of Tahiti's islands, but it possibly has the most beautiful, dreamy, azure lagoon in all of French Polynesia. Plus it's really isolated and rustic, giving newlyweds the chance to play Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden – minus the snake and too many eavesdroppers. Digs are usually intimate, Polynesian-style bungalows right on the beach; nothing fancy, but perfect for snuggling. From Maupiti, head straight to **Bora Bora** (p156) – the fantasy honeymoon destination. From Bora Bora, you'll want to catch a flight to the **Tuamotus** (p177). An up-and-coming honeymoon destination, these atolls are remote, unspoilt, wild and exotic, and can hold their own against any of the Society Islands when it comes to beauty. Visit before the rest of the world does.



Snapshot

Tau'i Roa! This slogan (meaning 'complete change') is exactly what has been happening in Tahiti since independentist Tavini Huiraatira party leader Oscar Temaru won the presidency in May 2004. You'll see *Tau'i!* scrawled on bumper stickers, gracing T-shirts, flown on flags and even used as publicity for local businesses. It's been a bumpy but hopeful road. Gaston Flosse, who was (essentially) the democratically elected dictator of Tahiti for over 20 years, had a hard time accepting defeat to his long-time opponent. After the Chirac government unofficially aided Flosse with a coup, which resulted in mass peaceful protests and a consequent re-vote, he had no choice but to step down. Little by little, the new regime is uncovering huge embezzlements linked to the previous government, and Flosse and his cronies are being examined by the French courts.

Meanwhile, Tahiti is hoping for a rebirth. Temaru's government has little practical experience in actual governing and change is slow and sometimes faulty. Yet the people, even those who backed Flosse, feel the weight of partisanship and the eye of Big Brother being lifted away. A freedom, one that most of the population was unaware that they'd been missing all these years, is blossoming. The goal is not to brashly cut ties with France, but to carefully use the funding that has been flooding the territory for years to improve and develop the economy until the country can survive on its own. Ideas are being thrown around and actually listened to; old systems are being gingerly dismantled; people are becoming less afraid to voice their opinions. The majority of the population still does not want independence from France, they were just sick and tired of having to grease Flosse's palms every time they needed to get something done, and are happy for any kind of change.

Temaru, while being dramatically more Polynesian than his predecessor, also has a preoccupation with the American dream that is ruffling feathers. In celebration of the opening of the direct Air Tahiti Nui flight to New York, he threw a huge party for 4 July; a month later he quietly acknowledged Bastille Day. TNTV, the Tahiti-based satellite TV network, now broadcasts a nightly newscast in English and there have been proposals to start teaching English at the primary-school level. To the French this is all a bit uncouth – who is financing this country anyway? The population meanwhile chatter away as proudly as ever in their native Tahitian while chomping their McDonald's burgers. Is it possible to regain a traditional cultural heritage while embracing the American lifestyle? It sounds like an oxymoron but Temaru is working towards both, either blindly or with a brilliant plan that is waiting to be revealed.

FAST FACTS

Population: 249,200

GDP per capita:

1,904,000 CFP

Inflation: 0.7%

Land area: 3500 sq km

Water area:

5,030,000 sq km

Unemployment rate:

11.7%

Average temperature:

26.9°C

Number of poisonous

snakes and spiders: 0

Mango season:

October to December

and May to July

The Authors

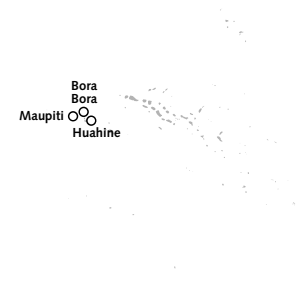


BECCA BLOND

Whether on Lonely Planet time (*South Africa* and *Thailand*) or personal time (trips to Zanzibar, Mauritius and the south coast of France), Becca has devoted way too much time searching for the best beach destination in the world. Her search ended after discovering French Polynesia: she says the sand is only so-so, but the water perfect and the people fantastic. When not roaming the world, Becca lives in Boulder, Colorado. In infrequent spare moments she likes to play in the mountains or just chill out with her boyfriend, Aaron, and their big goofy dog, Duke. Becca wrote the Getting Started, Itineraries, Tahiti, Huahine, Ra'iatea & Taha'a, Bora Bora, Maupiti, Directory and Transport chapters.

My Favourite Trip

My favourite trip is totally lagoon oriented: I love nothing more than floating on my back in a turquoise lagoon or snorkelling for hours among all sorts of funky coloured fish, so I can never get enough of Maupiti (p171), although I have to say, it's not great alone. I went with my boyfriend, and we had the most romantic, Robinson Crusoe holiday (think fresh-split coconuts, rustic bungalows and family-style dinners where you get to really practise French). I also have a bad habit of splurging on fine food, creative resorts and glam shopping that I cannot afford, so Bora Bora (p156) is another favourite. It's overpriced, but the sexy hype is real. To just get a feel for local life, and live out that whole beach-bum backpacker fantasy, I like to hit Huahine (p129).



CELESTE BRASH

After two magical trips to French Polynesia, Celeste moved to a tiny atoll in the Tuamotus in 1995. Over five years, she cleaned pearl oysters till her fingers were raw, and learned to love sharks, bake bread and cook fish in more ways than she thought humanly possible. Cravings for indoor plumbing and fresh fruit prompted a move to Tahiti, where she has lived ever since. She now writes, raises her children, dabbles in the pearl business and still cooks lots of fish. She has travelled extensively throughout the Pacific, Asia, Europe and the Americas. Celeste wrote the History, Culture, Tahitian Dance, Environment, Food & Drink, Mo'orea, Tuamotus, Marquesas, Australs and Gambier Archipelago chapters.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are independent, dedicated travellers. They don't research using just the Internet or phone, and they don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage. They travel widely, to all the popular spots and off the beaten track. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, cafés, bars, galleries, palaces, museums and more – and they take pride in getting all the details right, and telling it how it is. For more, see the authors section on www.lonelyplanet.com.



HILARY ROGERS

Hilary delights in the details of travelling: murky coffees, feisty taxi drives and magical carpets. She has spent much of her life gallivanting around the world seeking such experiences. She has lived in the UK, studied in France, traipsed through much of Asia, been fascinated by the Middle East, blown away by the Indian subcontinent and seduced by the Pacific. Hilary now works in children's publishing, but travel continues to entice her from her base in Melbourne.

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Jean-Bernard Carillet wrote the Diving chapter. Born with restless feet and fins, his journeys have led him to the best dive destinations in the world, including French Polynesia, New Caledonia, the Red Sea, the Caribbean and, lately, Fiji and Vanuatu. As a dive instructor and incorrigible traveller, Jean-Bernard has written widely for various French publications, including *Plongeurs International* magazine. He has also coordinated and co-authored two Lonely Planet diving guides: *Tahiti & French Polynesia* and *The Red Sea*.

Michael Sorokin wrote the Health chapter. Dr Sorokin has extensive experience as a physician and GP in South Africa, the UK, the Pacific Islands and rural South Australia. He has special interests in rheumatology, infectious diseases and preventative medicine. He was recently awarded the Order of Fiji in recognition of his services to health care in Fiji. Dr Sorokin is partly responsible for the maintenance of the Traveller's Medical & Vaccination Centre (TMVC) Database and helps with reference material for the continuing education of TMVC medical staff.



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