

Huahine



Huahine is the kind of place you'll either love or hate. Surfers and backpackers following the chill-out, beach-bum trail fall hard for its savage beauty and lower-than-usual prices, while those in search of posh pampering and constant entertainment quickly tire of its sleepy island vibe. Despite being blessed with untouched beaches, isolated coves, enchanted lagoons, killer reef breaks and the most extensive complex of pre-European *marae* (traditional temples) in French Polynesia, Huahine has managed to escape the rampant package-tourist overdevelopment afflicting neighbouring isles. There's only one real luxury resort and locals aren't keen on developers' plans to construct any more. They'd rather keep their island as it is – relatively secret, unpretentious, authentically Polynesian and well off the mainstream tourist's radar. A place to just kick back and watch the world go by.

Huahine comprises two islands of fairly similar size – Huahine Nui (Big Huahine) to the north and Huahine Iti (Little Huahine) to the south. According to local oral history, this wasn't always the case. Polynesian legend has it that the split came after the god Hiro ploughed his mighty canoe into the land, cutting the place in two. The split is still evident today, not only because of the tiny gap that separates the two islands but also in their distinct personalities. Huahine Nui is more developed and noisy, home to the bustling little village of Fare and most of the main tourist and administrative facilities. Rugged and isolated, Huahine Iti offers the islands' best beaches, most wonderfully azure lagoons and a serene, get-away-from-it-all atmosphere.

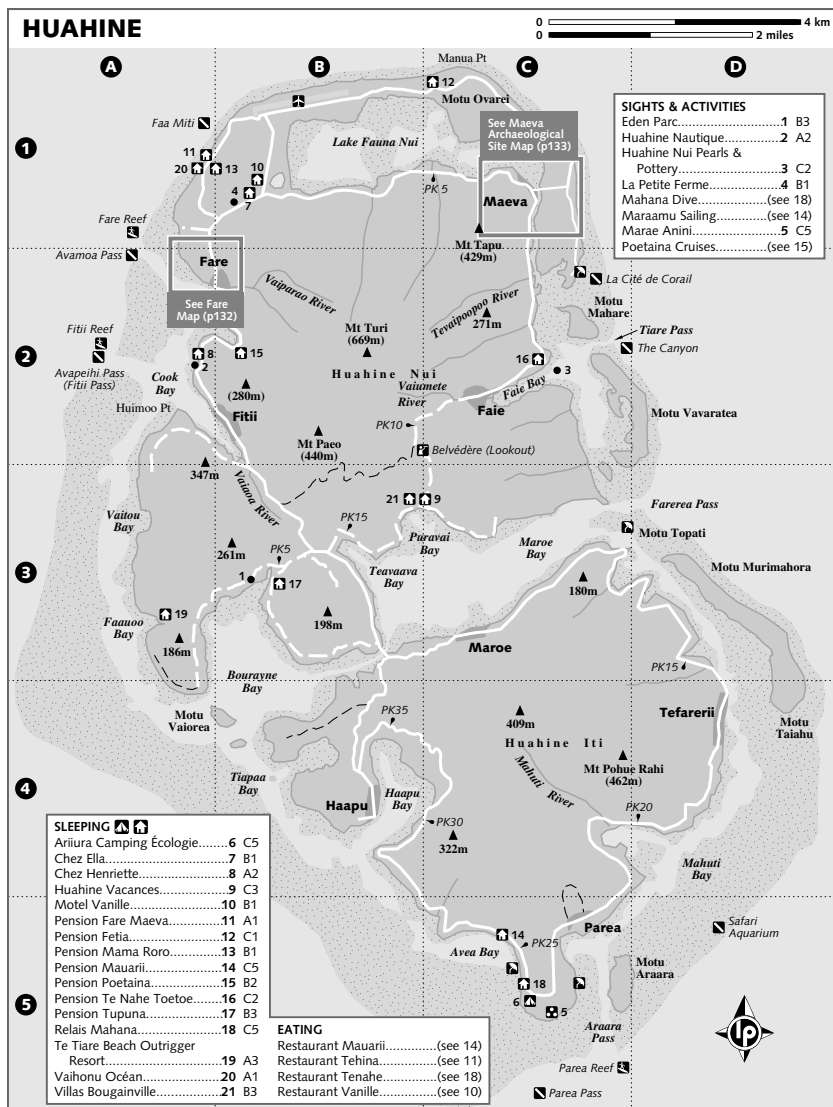
HIGHLIGHTS

- Exploring the extensive archaeological remains of the *marae* at **Maeva** (p132)
- Sunbathing on the beaches of Huahine Iti's **west coast** (p135)
- Discovering Huahine Iti's picture-perfect **lagoons** (p135) and **motu** (p135)
- Diving in the **Avapeihi (Fiti) Pass** (p55)
- Snorkelling off the pier in **Fare** (p131)



■ POPULATION: 5741

■ AREA: 75 SQ KM



HISTORY

The rough English translation of the word Huahine is vagina, and although no-one knows exactly where its name originated, historians theorise that it has something to do with the important role women played in this island's history – Huahine's ancient queens were highly respected rulers.

Europeans first arrived here in 1769, when James Cook and company landed on Huahine's shores. Polynesians inhabited the island for thousands of years before the *popaa* (Europeans) arrived: archaeological excavations to the north of Fare reveal some of the earliest traces of settlement in the Society Islands. Despite a hostile reception

from the native inhabitants, Cook returned to Huahine twice, in 1774 and 1777. In 1808 a group of London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries moved to Huahine to escape the turmoil on Tahiti. They remained for only a year but returned in 1818 to further the spread of Christianity in the region. Huahine supported the Pomares in the struggle against the French, and there were a number of clashes between 1846 and 1888, before French rule was eventually accepted. Although the French kicked the English Protestant missionaries out, the island remains predominantly Protestant.

ORIENTATION

A sealed road follows the coast all the way around both islands and a series of *motu* (islets) stretch along the east shores. Lake Fauna Nui, actually an inlet from the sea, is on the north coast and almost cuts off the *motu*-like northern peninsula from the rest of Huahine Nui. The reef fringes the north coast and there are only a few beaches on both islands.

Fare, the port and administrative centre, is on the west coast of Huahine Nui, 2.5km south of the airport. Faie and Maeva, on the east coast, and Fiti, on the west, are the other main settlements on Huahine Nui – although they are small and have no tourism infrastructure. There are four tiny villages on Huahine Iti: Haapu, Parea, Tefarerii and Maroe. The highest peaks are Mt Turi (669m) on Huahine Nui and Mt Pohue Rahi (462m) on Huahine Iti.

POUVANA'A A OOPA – A TAHITIAN LEADER

French Polynesia's most famous politician was Pouvana'a a Oopa, who was born in Huahine in 1895 and went on to found the Rassemblement Démocratique des Populations Tahitiennes (RDPT; Democratic Assembly of Tahitian Populations) in 1949. For nearly 10 years he was at the forefront of local politics, opposing French colonial rule, denouncing capitalism and pushing for local employment in government and administrative posts. A man of the people and a devout Protestant, this charismatic leader was strongly supported by French Polynesians, who considered him a *metua* (father) figure.

It all fell apart in 1958 when a 'yes' vote in the referendum to remain linked to France destabilised the party. Pouvana'a a Oopa was blamed for the riots that shook Pape'ete on 10 and 11 October 1958 and he was exiled to France. Split by internal dissension, the RDPT was unable to mobilise against the nuclear-testing programme in 1963, and was dissolved. Pouvana'a a Oopa was allowed to return to the Pacific in 1968 and until his death in 1977 he struggled tirelessly, but unsuccessfully, for his rehabilitation. Today he remains the pre-eminent Polynesian father figure, a man who made the all-powerful colonial structure tremble.

INFORMATION

There is a bank opposite the ferry quay in Fare and another on the bypass road running parallel to the main street; both have ATMs. Visiting yachts can obtain water from Pacific Blue Adventure, on the quay.

Bo Api New World (☎ 68 70 99; per hr 900 CFP)

Internet access in the same building as the tourist office.

Huahine visitors information centre (☎ 68 78 81; ☎ 7.30-11.30am Mon-Sat) On Fare's main street.

Medical Centre (☎ 68 82 20) On the bypass road in Fare; handles minor emergencies.

Post office To the north of the town towards the airport.

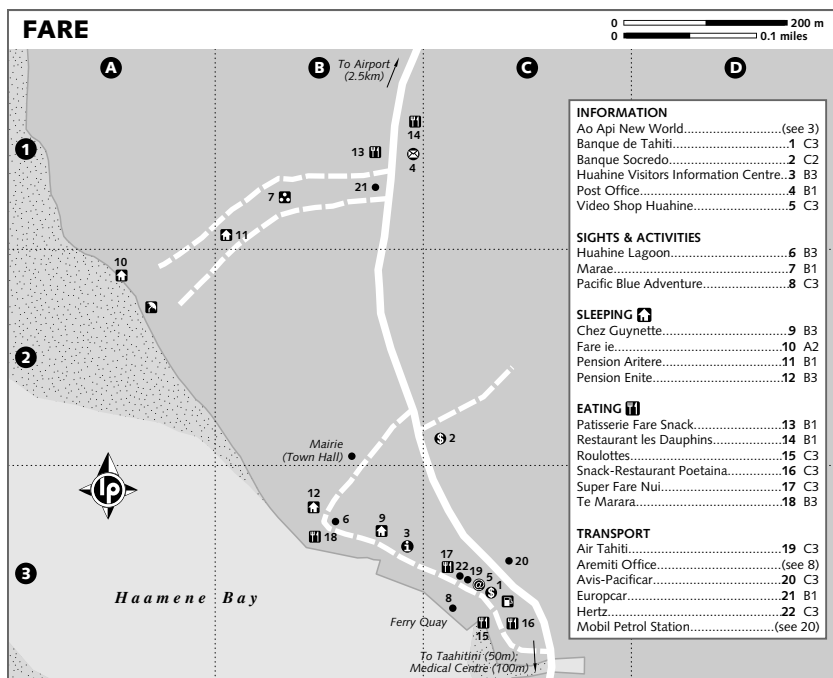
Video Shop Huahine (☎ 60 67 40; per hr 900 CFP; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 4-8pm Mon-Sat, 5-8pm Sun) Internet access.

HUAHINE NUI

The following 60km circuit of the larger island starts in Fare and goes around the island in a clockwise direction.

Fare

A visit to tiny Fare almost feels like stepping back in time, so perfectly does it capture the image of a sleepy South Seas port. The air smells of hamburger grease and freshly caught fish, and vibrates with the pumping bass of Tahitian reggae. Women in brightly coloured straw hats catch up on the latest gossip over bottles of Hinano beer in breezy outdoor cafés, men talk shop on the quay while waiting for the boat to arrive and children splash and tumble in the aqua lagoon on the edge of town. There's not a lot to do, but that's part of Fare's appeal. Check out the colourful little waterside market and the



few creative boutiques, sign up for a dive or hire a ramshackle bicycle and just peddle around a bit.

Fare looks out over **Haamene Bay**, which has two passes to the sea: the northern Avamo Pass is the main entry point for interisland shipping, while the Avapeihi Pass (Fitii Pass) to the south is a great diving site (see p55). The town came into existence with the return of the missionaries to Huahine in 1818, and within a few years it was a bustling little port. Whalers started to call in from the 1830s and the French protectorate brought an influx of island merchants and traders. The wooden shops and buildings along the main street came with the Chinese shopkeepers who settled here in the 1920s.

For places to stay and eat in and around Fare, see p136 and p139.

Lake Fauna Nui & Fish Traps

The shallow expanse of Lake Fauna Nui (also known as Lake Maeva) is in fact an inlet from the sea. The land to the north of this is known as Motu Ovarei.

About 2km north of Fare the main sealed road runs along the inland side of Lake Fauna Nui. It's also possible to turn off to the airport and take the road on the ocean side of the island by the bridge at Maeva village. At this end the lake narrows to a channel, extending for 3km to Faie Bay.

Beside the bridge are a number of V-shaped fish traps, made from coral blocks. They have been here for centuries and some are still in use. The tips of the Vs point towards the ocean, the long stone arms emerging above the water level. As the fish are pulled towards the sea by the ebb tide they become trapped in the circular basin at the point of the V, where they are easily caught, usually by net or harpoon.

Maeva

Prior to European influence, Maeva was the seat of royal power on the island and *marae* can still be found along the shoreline, scattered among the modern buildings of the village and also up the slopes of Matairea (Pleasant Wind) Hill. Excavations and

restoration of the site commenced in 1923; nearly 30 *marae* have since been located, more than half of which have been restored. The exceptional density of *marae* on the hillside has led to a theory that it was entirely inhabited by nobility and the families of the chiefs.

Maeva village is about 7km east of Fare. The walk around the site, along the water's edge and up Matairea Hill, takes around two hours and can be hot work, so take some drinking water as well as insect repellent. A brochure with a map of the site is available from the archaeological museum.

FARE POTEE

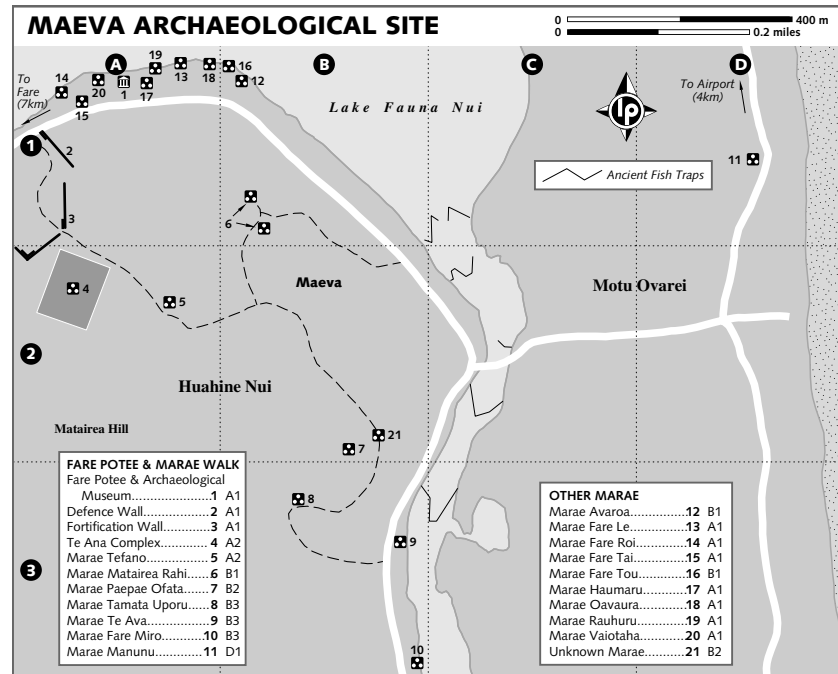
Situated on the water's edge on the Fare side of Maeva, the *fare potee* (open traditional house) has a small **archaeological museum** (admission 500 CFP; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri). The original *fare potee* was destroyed in the 1998 cyclone and rebuilt in 2001 using traditional materials. Around the site are 10 or more *marae*, some of which may date back to the 16th century. Flagstones cover a wide expanse of land along the shoreline.

MARAE WALK

It is easiest to start the walk at the **defence wall** on the Fare side of Maeva. It is thought that the wall was constructed in 1846, when French marines mounted an assault on resistance forces. Look for the trail going uphill; it soon enters dense forest and passes through patches of vanilla plantations, then crosses through a **fortification wall**. This second, older wall was built during the pre-European era, probably as protection against the warlike Bora Bora tribes.

A side path leads off to the multitiered complex of **Te Ana**, or Matairea Huiarii, draped up the hillside. This area includes *marae*, houses, agricultural terraces and other signs of habitation dating from around AD 1300 to 1800, plus signs of an earlier settlement dating from around AD 900.

The side path winds through the forest to **Marae Tefano**, with a massive banyan tree overwhelming one end of the *ahu* (altar). Further on, a trail branches off to the left and runs slightly downhill to **Marae Matairea Rahi**. Once the principal *marae* at Maeva, where the most important island chief sat



on his throne at major ceremonies, it was superseded by Marae Manunu, on the *motu* below. Also surviving are the foundations of a *fare atua* (god house), where images of gods were guarded day and night.

Nearby is the small **Marae Matairea**. You can continue down this way (as the trail eventually emerges behind a house in the middle of the village) or retrace your steps to the main trail and continue to the turn-off to **Marae Paepae Ofata**, a steep climb above the main trail but worth the effort. The *marae* is like a large platform perched on the edge of the hill, with fine views down the hillside and across Motu Papiti to the outer lagoon, and down to the mouth of Lake Fauna Nui.

Return to the main path, which winds around the hillside to **Marae Tamata Uporu**, before dropping steeply down to the road. The path emerges just south of **Marae Te Ava**. A short walk east leads to **Marae Fare Miro**, which has some particularly good stone-work and a fine setting.

A final *marae*, **Marae Manunu**, stands on the *motu*, across the bridge from the main Maeva complex. Manunu means ‘eye of the north’, and the massive structure stands 2m high, and measures 40m long and nearly 7m wide. It features a two-stepped *ahu* platform. (The only other such platform in the Leeward Islands is at Marae Anini, the community *marae* of Huahine Iti.) This *marae* was primarily dedicated to Tane, Huahine’s own god of war and fishing.

ISLAND AGRICULTURE

Huahine has a busy agricultural workforce, with plantations of vanilla, grapefruit, *uru* (breadfruit), taro and pineapples on local *faapu* (agricultural allotments). On the *motu*, melons and *pastèques* (watermelons) are grown, many of which are sold in Pape’ete’s market. Some village plantations look remarkably wild and neglected, but don’t think for a moment that somebody doesn’t own every single plant. Casually gathering fruit, in particular the much-prized pineapples, may result in an enraged villager emerging from the undergrowth with a sharp machete. Mangoes are one of the few exceptions: they fall from the trees and, delicious though they may be, are left to rot on the ground.

Faie

The coast road turns inland beside narrow Faie Bay to the village of Faie. Huahine’s famous **blue-eyed eels** can be seen in the river downstream of the bridge. Inland from Faie it’s a steep climb to the *belvédère* (lookout) on the slopes of Mt Turi – be sure to stop and snap a few photos. From this high point, the road drops even more steeply to the shores of Maroe Bay.

While in the area, a visit to **Huahine Nui Pearls & Pottery** (☎ 78 30 20; www.huahinepearlfarm.com; admission free; ☎ 10am–4pm) is a must. Peter Owen, the owner, is a potter as well as a pearl farmer and his work is shown in Pape’ete’s galleries. His studio is on his pearl farm in the middle of the lagoon. From Faie a ferry departs for the studio every 15 minutes from 10am to 3pm. Upon arrival you’ll be given a demonstration of pearl farming and have an opportunity to browse the collection of shiny black gems inside the shop.

Eden Parc

Producing tropical fruit, organic coffee, and jams, preserves and dried fruit, this **farm** (☎ 68 86 58; admission 900 CFP; ☎ 9am–4pm Mon–Sat), 1.5km off the main coast road, is worth visiting if only to try one of its fabulous salads or glasses of freshly squeezed juice. Eden Parc is also a scenic spot for a quick walk, boasting bountiful orchards, dense tropical foliage and panoramic views.

Fitii

Just before completing the Huahine Nui circuit, the road passes through the Fitii district. This is an important agricultural area in the shadow of Mt Paeo (440m), where taro, vanilla and other crops are grown.

HUAHINE ITI

The smaller, southern island features the best beaches, as well as some of Huahine’s most imaginative accommodation. The following route circles the island in a clockwise direction.

East Coast

Dotted with the reminders of the god Hiro’s splitting of the island in two, the village of **Maroe** sits on the southern side of Maroe Bay. You can spot the marks left by the god Hiro’s paddle, the imprint of his finger, and even his rocky phallus. From here the coast road

skirts across the mouth of a number of shallow inlets, looking across to Motu Murimaha, before coming to **Tefarerii** (House of the Kings). A century ago this small village was the home of Huahine’s most powerful family. Today the inhabitants devote their time to fishing, and growing watermelons and other produce on the nearby *motu*.

Marae Anini

Right on the southern tip of Huahine Iti, Marae Anini was a community *marae* made of massive coral blocks. The comparatively recent construction was dedicated to ‘Oro (the god of war) and Hiro (the god of thieves and sailors). The ‘Oro cult, with its human sacrifices, was virtually the last gasp for the old religion, which soon collapsed before the growing influence of Christianity.

Despite its beautiful lagoon-side setting and its historical importance, the area is liberally sprinkled with garbage and many of the *marae* stones have been disfigured by feeble graffiti. One almost wishes for some modern human sacrifices. There’s no signpost from the coast road but the site is about 600m after the now-closed Huahine Beach Club, at an exit near a wide bend and on the left when coming from Tefarerii.

West Coast

Some of the best **beaches** around Huahine are on the southern peninsula and along the western shore around Avea Bay. Further on, the road comes to a junction: left leads to the little village of **Haapu**; to the right, the road soon brings you back to the bridge and the completion of the island circuit.

ACTIVITIES

Relaxing is the favourite pastime in Huahine, followed by playing in the water or hiking through the jungle.

Water Activities

Fare has a pretty, sandy beach just north of the town. The wide, super-clear lagoon here drops off quickly, providing some truly great snorkelling amid stunning coral, and dense fish populations. On the east coast, near the visitor car park at the now defunct Sofitel, you’ll find La Cité de Corail, which offers more superb snorkelling among coral pinnacles and rich marine life only a few metres offshore. Motu Topati, at the en-

HUAHINE’S TOP SURF SPOTS

- **Fare Reef break** (Year-round) The left here attracts the big names of world surfing. The right is also pretty good.
- **Fitii Reef break** (Year-round) As with the left at Fare, this one is best when a southwest swell is running.
- **Parea Reef break** (Year-round) Beautiful waves as long as the trade winds aren’t blowing.

trance to Maroe Bay, is a magnificent site accessible by boat.

Around the hotel-and-guesthouse area of southwestern Huahine Iti, there’s a beautiful white-sand beach and the lagoon here is very wide and good for swimming. Relais Mahana (p138) and Ariiura Camping Écologie (p138) are both located on fine stretches of sandy shore.

Huahine has some of the best and most consistent surf in French Polynesia, with left and right reef breaks best tackled by experienced surfers; see the boxed text, above. Local surfers can be very possessive, however, so be sure to respect their domain. If you do, they just might point you towards some super-secret spots.

The lagoon around Huahine is one of those picture-perfect azure visions for which French Polynesia is famous, but to truly experience paradise you’ll need to set sail for an untouched *motu* – the beaches are isolated and fantastic. To explore the lagoon and *motu* on your own, head to **Huahine Lagoon** (☎ 68 70 00; boat rental per 2/4/8 hr 4000/6000/9000 CFP) at the end of the main street in Fare. It hires out boats with outboard motors, as well as kayaks and bicycles. Nautical maps and scuba equipment are provided but you have to pay for fuel. There are no set hours, so just stop by and see if it’s open.

On Huahine Iti, contact **Maramu Sailing** (☎ 68 77 10; Pension Mauarii; half-day boat rental 10,000 CFP) to hire a boat. The price includes fuel and fishing gear.

DIVING

Huahine has two scuba centres offering magnificent dives for all experience levels. **Mahana Dive** (☎ 73 07 17; www.mahandive.com) in Fare is run by exuberant, English-speaking

Annie and offers hands-on beginner dives as well as a slew of personalised trips for experienced divers. **Pacific Blue Adventure** (☎ 68 87 21; www.divehuahine.com; ☒ closed afternoon Sun) is a friendly centre on the quay at Fare.

For more information on diving off Huahine, see p55.

Horse-Riding

To see the island from the back of a horse, visit **La Petite Ferme** (☎ 68 82 98; trips from 5000 CFP), on the main road between Fare and the airport. It offers guided horse-riding trips using 15 Marquesan horses suitable for beginners and children as well as more experienced riders. The two-hour ride along the beach, through coconut plantations and around the shore of Lake Fauna Nui is quite enchanting. Longer excursions include an all-day ride (10,000 CFP), during which you'll visit a vanilla plantation, and stop for a picnic lunch and snorkelling.

Hiking

Despite its fabulous, lush beauty, opportunities for hiking on Huahine are quite limited. There are no clearly marked trails and the occasional paths in the interior grow over quickly if they're not maintained (which is usually the case). The **marae walk** at Maeva (see p132) is probably the most interesting option. Another decent walk is the **3km trail** starting midway along the road between Fitii and the now defunct Hôtel Bellevue, that traverses a mountainous inland section of Huahine not far from the *belvédère*.

On Huahine Iti, a short **circuit walk**, easily done in an hour, starts from Parea – take the fork towards the interior just before the bridge. Enjoy the fruity, floral fragrances as you cross a number of *faapu* (agricultural allotments) before arriving back at Parea on the other side of the bridge.

TOURS

Lagoon Tours

Various lagoon tours are offered on Huahine, with stops for snorkelling, swimming, fish feeding and a *motu* picnic. Departures are at around 9am or 10am, returning towards 4pm. A minimum number of participants are required, so book ahead.

The family-run company **Poetaina Cruises** (☎ 68 89 49; www.poetaina.com; tours from 8000 CFP) offers information and very friendly lagoon

tours that include a *motu* picnic, a visit to a pearl farm, and French Polynesian song and dance performances.

Choose from jet-skiing or outrigger-canoe trips at **Huahine Nautique** (☎ 68 83 15; www.huahine-nautique.com; tours from 7000 CFP). Both include picnics on the lagoon, stops for snorkelling and shark-feeding, and also the chance to learn about the island's history.

Island Tours

There are numerous tours by 4WD or minibus that offer a quick overview of the island. They typically start in the morning or early afternoon and take three hours. Reserve ahead because a minimum number of participants (usually two) may be required. The tours cover the principal places of interest, including villages, archaeological sites, viewpoints, plantations, pearl farms, fish parks and handicraft outlets. None of the following have offices, but they'll pick you up from your hotel.

Félix Tours (☎ 68 81 69; tours 3500 CFP)

Huahine Explorer (☎ 68 87 33; tours 4000 CFP)

Huahine Land (☎ 68 89 21; www.huahineland.com; tours 4500 CFP)

SLEEPING

Most accommodation options are in and around Fare. Staying near the main village means easy access to facilities. Huahine Nui offers some of the best-value options in French Polynesia – prices are cheaper here than anywhere else in the Society Islands, and the quality is usually pretty good.

Huahine Iti's beaches do put Huahine Nui's to shame, but if you choose to stay on this side of the island, and don't have a car, you'll have to rely on hitchhiking to get around. That said, both hotels on Huahine Iti have onsite restaurants, and backpackers staying at the camping place will find a small grocery just a short walk away.

Prices include the 11% TVA in certified hotels (6% in hostels and *pensions*), plus the 150 CFP daily tax (50 CFP in hostels and *pensions*).

Fare & Around

The places listed here are either right in town or a few kilometres to the north or south.

Chez Guynette (☎ 68 83 75; chezguynette@mail.pf; dm/s/d 2000/4500/5500 CFP) One of French Polynesia's most popular backpacker centres,

this excellent-value place is on the main street opposite the beach. The seven simple but quite comfortable rooms come with fans and bathrooms (with hot water). Dorms are spacious and clean, there's a big communal kitchen and the shady terrace restaurant is perfect for people-watching. The American owner is very friendly and has a wealth of island information. Book ahead – Chez Guynette is often full.

Pension Fetia (☎ 72 09 50; bungalows from 7000 CFP) With phenomenal sunsets and an isolated location on the northeastern corner of the island, Pension Fetia delivers an ultra-laid-back beach vibe. The bungalows are made from local materials and are nestled amid groves of coconut palms. Breakfast costs an extra 500 CFP, while lunch and dinner are each 2500 CFP.

Pension Poetaina (☎/fax 68 89 49; www.poetaina.com; d from 8000 CFP; ☒ ☒) In a mammoth white colonial mansion, this immaculately kept place has a giant kitchen for self-catering as well as a lovely upper-level dining terrace. Rooms are very generous in size, sparkling clean and boast a fresh coat of pastel paint. The cheapest rooms share bathrooms and don't have air-con, but breakfast is included in all prices. Its only drawback is it can get very noisy, especially in the morning.

Motel Vanille (☎ 68 71 77; www.motelvanille.com; r/bungalows 5000/10,000 CFP; ☒) This pretty guesthouse is very popular and often fully booked. It features five local-style bungalows with bathrooms (with hot water) and small verandas, set around a swimming pool. Bicycles are available for guests' use. Half-board is an additional 2900 CFP per person. The restaurant here is quite good (see p139).

Pension Mama Roro (☎ 68 84 82; houses from 8000 CFP) Tidy and functional, this place near the ocean especially appeals to families. Accommodation is in local-style *fare* (houses) fully equipped with hot-water bathrooms, TVs and kitchen areas. Airport transfers are free.

Vaihonu Océan (☎ 68 87 33; vaihonu@mail.pf; dm/huts/houses 2000/4500/7500 CFP) Choose from clean six-bed dorms with tiled floors, simple beach-side huts or spacious two-storey homes with fully equipped kitchens and hot-water bathrooms. Étienne, the friendly owner, speaks perfect English, bicycles are available and airport transfers are free.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Fare ie (☎ 60 63 77; www.tahitisafari.com in French; luxury tents US\$150) By far the most unusual sleeping option on Huahine, this fabulous find offers two giant African-themed luxury safari tents. Spacious and airy, the tents are uniquely decorated and ultracomfortable, featuring high ceilings, wooden floors, creative artwork and large beds with fluffy quilts. Right on the beach, the place has a funky, self-catering, gnarled-wood kitchen, and free snorkels, masks, kayaks and bicycles.

Pension Fare Maeva (☎ 68 75 53; www.fare-maeva.com; bungalows 10,000 CFP) By the ocean, this place has 10 well-kept bungalows sleeping one or two people, all with kitchens, private bathrooms (with hot water) and mosquito screens. Airport transfers are included. In association with Europcar, there is a room-plus-car deal at 12,000 CFP (plus taxes) per day for two people. Restaurant Tehina (p139) is here.

Pension Enite (☎ 68 82 37; r with half board per person 7000 CFP) Catering almost exclusively to return customers, the owner here requires you to reserve in advance. Known for its fabulous French cooking, this place has eight well-kept rooms and a small TV lounge. It's worth booking for the cuisine alone.

Chez Ella (☎ 68 73 07; r 9000 CFP) At the intersection of the coast road and the turn-off to the airport, Chez Ella has two houses with two bedrooms each and a chalet with mezzanine. They're comfortable and have a lounge area, TV, washing machine, refrigerator, kitchen and bathroom (with hot water).

Pension Aritere (☎ 74 40 30; pensionaritere@mail.pf; bungalows 7500 CFP; ☒) The four local-style bungalows are comfortable affairs at this new *pension*, complete with fridges and TVs. There is a tiny plunge pool and the location next to a vacant field makes for great stargazing. The proprietor is friendly. Breakfast costs an extra 600 CFP and dinner is available for 2200 CFP.

Chez Henriette (☎ 68 83 71; bungalows from 4000 CFP) The bungalows are slightly dreary and dark, with concrete floors and only the most bare-bones furnishings, but the proprietor is very friendly and the lagoon-side location is a plus.

La Petite Ferme (☎ 68 82 98; www.huahine-la-petiteferme.com; dm/d 2000/5000 CFP) Unless you really love horses (and want to be around them at all hours), sleep elsewhere. Don't get us wrong, this is a fabulous place to sign up for a horse-riding trip, but as a hotel it's seriously lacking. The sole room is small, spartan, hot and not the least bit inviting. The clean and spacious dorms are a better deal, but still lacking in atmosphere.

Around Huahine Nui

Pension Te Nahe Toetoe (☎ 68 71 43; s/d 3000/4500 CFP) Popular with surfers, backpackers and anyone looking for an authentic French Polynesian home stay. Digs are all in the owner's house, in one of three small mezzanine rooms reached by a ladder. They are rather basic and somewhat lacking in privacy, but you're paying for experience rather than comfort and it's fabulous value. There's a communal kitchen, TV lounge, *pirogue* (canoes) and bikes to borrow, and free airport transfers. Meals can be arranged.

Pension Tupuna (☎ 68 70 21; bungalows 7000 CFP) Between the mountains and Bourayne Bay, this guesthouse gets rave reviews from travellers. The three French Polynesian-style bungalows, each with a private hot-water bathroom, are located in a lush tropical garden bursting with all sorts of exotic trees. The friendly owner is an amateur horticulturalist, and happy to dish about the local

ecology. Meals (2000 CFP) are served family-style; airport transfers are free.

Te Tiare Beach Outrigger Resort (☎ 60 60 50; www.tetiarebeachresort.com; bungalows 36,000-80,000 CFP; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) Huahine's one true luxury resort satiates fantasies of a palm-fringed, white-sand beach overlooking an azure lagoon. The 41 bungalows (11 of which are perched over the shimmering lagoon) are not just posh, they also blend into the environment beautifully. The onsite restaurant serves fine food at reasonable prices and the whole gamut of water activities are available. Te Tiare can only be reached by boat; airport transfers cost 6000 CFP return, shuttles to the mainland cost 500 CFP one way.

Villas Bougainville (☎ 68 81 59; villas 17,000-24,000 CFP) In a verdant setting on the north shore of Maroe Bay. Offers three fully equipped, perfectly comfortable villas accommodating up to five people each. Rates include the use of a car and boat, perfect for visiting idyllic Motu Topati. Airport transfers included.

Huahine Vacances (☎ 68 73 63; huahinevacances@hotmail.com; villas 28,000 CFP) Next to Villas Bougainville, this place has three fully equipped villas situated in a garden and overlooking the bay. The spacious, modern houses can accommodate up to seven people and a car and boat are available for guests' use. Airport transfers are free.

Huahine Iti

The (marginally) smaller island has several ideally situated places as well as the most beautiful beaches and widest lagoon. If you're fixing your own food, however, shops are limited and there's no public transport to speak of.

Ariuru Camping Écologie (☎ 52 26 32; camp sites 1500 CFP, bungalows 4500 CFP) Backpackers give this place great reviews for its location, price and tranquillity. In a jungle-like setting right on the beach, and near prime surfing spots, you can either pitch a tent or stay in the simple local-style dwellings. There's a communal kitchen, a thatched-roof *fare* beside the beach that offers meals and a small grocery just 300m away.

Relais Mahana (☎ 68 81 54; www.relaimahana.com; bungalows from 200,000 CFP; ☒ ☒) While its shady, palm-fringed beach-side location, delicious restaurant and on-site dive centre are all fantastic, we can't help feeling the 22 French Polynesian-style bungalows

are just a tad overpriced for what you get. Sure they've got all the modern amenities, and their tropical-garden setting is endearing, but they simply lack the sex appeal of similarly priced places. Airport transfers are 1500 CFP one way.

EATING

Most of Huahine's places to eat are found near Fare. Around the rest of the island, eating options are limited to restaurants in *pensions* – some of which are fabulous.

Fare & Around

The quayside *roulottes* are Huahine's best bargain for cheap eats. They operate from early morning until late at night. Fish, chicken, burgers, steaks and chips are the order of the day, and a meal typically costs around 800 to 1500 CFP. If you're preparing your own meals, fruit, vegetables and fish are available from the impromptu quayside marketplace. Fare has several well-stocked food shops, including **Super Fare Nui** (☒ Mon-Sat, morning Sun), opposite the waterfront, and **Taahitini** (☒ Mon-Sat, morning Sun), immediately south of the town centre.

Te Marara (☎ 68 70 81; dishes 1500-2000 CFP; ☒ lunch & dinner) In a great location right on the lagoon, this lively restaurant is a favourite local watering hole and the best place to eat around Fare. With polished oyster shells nailed to the walls and coloured lights strewn from the thatched ceiling, it has a beach-bar vibe and cooks a mean shrimp curry. The menu is meat- and seafood-based, portions are generous and dishes come with a choice of starch or vegetable on the side.

Restaurant Vanille (☎ 68 71 77; dishes 1500-2500 CFP; ☒ closed Mon) In the hotel of the same name, this popular restaurant is a consistently good choice. The menu includes tasty French Polynesian-style tuna *chaud froid* (cold jellied tuna), tuna tartare with local honey and fish steaks.

Restaurant les Dauphins (☎ 68 78 84; dishes 1000-1500 CFP; ☒ dinner) This place doesn't advertise itself to tourists but if you happen to pop in you'll be welcomed warmly by the almost exclusively local crowd. The food is very traditional Polynesian-French, the menu limited. Fishing décor, with lots of nets scattered about, sets the ramshackle vibe.

Restaurant Tehina (☎ 68 75 53; dishes 1000-2500 CFP) Pension Fare Maevé's restaurant faces

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Restaurant Mauarii (☎ 68 86 49; dishes 1500-4500 CFP; ☒ lunch & dinner) This restaurant at Pension Mauarii on Huahine Iti has some of the best food on the island and you should try to make it down here for dinner at least once. Served in a traditional reed hut overlooking the sea, the French Polynesian menu features local delicacies like *farfaru* (a fermented raw fish that emits the most nauseating smell; see p67), chicken *fafa* (chicken with taro leaves), braised *pua* (pork) with cabbage, raw fish, taro, and *fei* (a type of banana), *uru* (breadfruit) and *poe* (crushed fruit wrapped in a banana leaf and then baked in the oven with a vanilla bean) for dessert. Don't miss out on the house-specialty drink, *pau ti* punch – it has a serious kick!

the sea and offers a varied and rather interesting day-long menu of fried tuna, tuna *carpaccio* (thinly sliced raw meat or fish), baked papaya and simple sandwiches.

Snack-Restaurant Poetaina (☎ 68 80 50; dishes 1000-1500 CFP; ☒ lunch & dinner) In the centre of Fare, this place is run by the same friendly folk who own the guesthouse down the street. The Chinese food here is quite good if you order well: the appetiser *nam* are a must and the chow mein is also quite yummy, but skip the lemon chicken.

Chez Guynette (☎ 68 83 75; dishes 500-1000 CFP; ☒ breakfast & lunch) Delicious espresso and fruit smoothies, along with breakfast dishes, burgers and salads, are served on a pleasant open-air terrace.

Pâtisserie Fare Snack (☎ 68 77 18; dishes 1000 CFP; ☒ breakfast & lunch) Serves big portions of *poisson cru* (raw fish dish), *steak-frites* (steak and chips) and other snack staples; the food was tasty when we visited and you can eat outside in the mellow garden area.

Around the Island

Once you've left Fare there aren't too many places to eat, apart from the hotels.

Restaurant Tenahe (☎ 68 81 54; dishes 1500-3000 CFP, set menu 3000 CFP; ☒ lunch & dinner) This eatery at Relais Mahana gets favourable word-of-mouth reviews along with our stamp of approval. The setting is a light-filled room near the lagoon or a sandy outdoor patio. The dinner menu features well-presented

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Pension Mauarii (☎ 68 86 49; www.mauarii.com; r/bungalows from 7500/10,000 CFP; ☒) This funky joint offers loads of different room-and-bungalow options, some fancier than others, but all crafted from local materials and enhanced with creative touches like polished oyster-shell shingles or knobby wooden coffee tables. We thought Mauarii was the hippest spot to stay on Huahine Iti – it's in a fabulous beach-side location, has loads of activities on offer, tons of character and one of the island's best-respected restaurants – but we feel it's only fair to mention that some travellers have complained that it tries so hard to exude shabby chic it sacrifices comfort. You'll have to visit to decide, but book in advance as it's likely to be full.

local specialities with a welcome original twist. At lunch choose from giant thin-crust pizzas, lots of salads, curries or fresh fish.

Eden Parc (☎ 68 86 58; dishes 1000-2500 CFP; ☺ lunch) One woman actually swore the best salads on earth were made here. We wish we could tell you it was true, but sadly Eden Parc's hours are so erratic it wasn't serving food the day we visited. If the restaurant is open, it's been recommended not only for the salads but also the set menus featuring organic produce. The creamy, freshly squeezed fruit juices (300 CFP) are another must.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

There are three ways to entertain yourself at night on Huahine: curl up in bed with a bottle of Bordeaux and a trashy novel; cruise the Fare strip with your pals (blaring radio mandatory) and park by the quay with some Hinano; or head to Huahine's only bar.

Te Marara (☎ 68 70 81), a restaurant and beach bar in Fare stays open until midnight and is *the* place to party in Huahine. Linger over a fruity cocktail as the sun sinks low on the horizon or get rowdy over a few pitchers with friends after the dinner crowd heads home. Te Marara is so popular with locals (and tourists) it's planning to expand.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Huahine, the first of the Leeward Islands, is 170km west of Tahiti and 35km east of Ra'iatea and Taha'a.

Air

Huahine's airport is 2.5km north of Fare. **Air Tahiti** (☎ 68 77 02; ☺ 7.30-11.45am & 1.30-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 7.30-11.30am Sat) operates all flights and has an office on the main street in Fare, opposite the quay. Destinations include Pape'ete (10,000 CFP, 35 minutes, three to five daily), Ra'iatea (5500 CFP, 15 minutes, daily) and Bora Bora (7500 CFP, 20 minutes, daily). You can also get to Maupiti (8000 CFP, 40 minutes, daily) but you have to change aircraft at Ra'iatea.

Boat

The *Aremiti 3* links Pape'ete, Huahine and Ra'iatea twice a week (Monday and Friday). It departs Pape'ete 7am and arrives at Huahine 10.45am. From Pape'ete to Huahine it's 4500/2500 CFP adult/child; from Huahine to Ra'iatea 2000/1000 CFP adult/child. The

Aremiti 3 office (☎ 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-3pm) is on the quay in the centre of Fare. Call ☎ 74 39 40, 73 52 73 or 68 75 16 for information.

Inter-island cargo ships are another option, although less reliable. The *Vaeanu*, *Taporo VII* and *Hawaiki Nui* depart from Pape'ete and stop at Huahine (see p263 for more information).

GETTING AROUND

To/From the Airport

You could walk into town, but *pensions* and hotels in Fare will arrange taxi transfers (sometimes included in the tariff). It costs 750 CFP to go to Fare and 1500 CFP to get to the south of the island.

Car

Huahine's three car-hire operators will deliver directly to the airport or to your hotel. Book ahead for long weekends, school vacations, Christmas and peak tourist seasons as there are sometimes not enough cars to go around. Hire periods of four, eight, 24 and 48 hours are offered, with or without unlimited mileage. If you intend to drive all the way around the island, unlimited mileage will probably be cheaper. It's worth asking about discounts. Credit cards are accepted. There are two petrol stations in Fare.

Avis-Pacificar (☎ 68 73 34) Next to the Mobil petrol station in Fare, it also has a counter at the airport. A Citroën Saxo or Peugeot 106 costs 9000 CFP for 24 hours with unlimited mileage.

Europcar (☎ 68 82 59) The main agent is north of the centre of Fare near the post office, and also has counters at the airport and Relais Mahana. A compact car costs 10,000 CFP for 24 hours with unlimited mileage.

Hertz (☎ 66 76 85) Right on the main strip in Fare, Hertz has the best deal in town. Cars cost only 6000 CFP per 24 hours with unlimited mileage. They're a little junky looking, and most lack air-con, but are well worth the price.

Scooter & Bicycle

You can hire bicycles from Europcar (see above) or Huahine Lagoon (p135) for about 2000 CFP a day. For scooters, check with Europcar, which charges 6500 CFP for 24 hours or 5000 CFP for four hours.

Taxi

Public transport doesn't really exist. For taxis, call **Moe's Taxi** (☎ 72 80 60). Moe speaks perfect English and will take you anywhere on the island. Prices vary but are reasonable.

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