



GENERAL TRAVEL INFORMATION TAHITI



The Islands of Tahiti: The official designation for the destination also known as French Polynesia, consist of five island groups, or archipelagoes, which lie in the South Pacific – south of the equator.

The Islands of Tahiti are just eight hours by air from California. Surrounded by pristine, crystal clear blue waters, the 118 islands and atolls offer natural beauty, authentic island culture, and unique French Polynesian style. *The Islands of Tahiti* are world-renowned for their white-sand beaches, stunning turquoise lagoons and varied landscapes ranging from coral atolls to volcanic mountain peaks. Each island offers a variety of accommodation experiences from luxurious resorts with overwater villas, to family guesthouses, to sailing via private charter or scheduled cruise. Privacy comes naturally in *The Islands of Tahiti* and offers visitors the space to relax and reconnect and to be *Embraced By Mana*. *Mana* is the life force and spirit that connects all things in *The Islands of Tahiti*. Tahiti is halfway between California and Australia, on the same side of the International Date Line as North America and in the same time zone as Hawaii.

Time Difference

The Islands of Tahiti are in the same time zone as Hawaii, two hours behind Pacific Standard Time, and three hours behind during daylight saving time, late March through October. (**Although there are actually three-time zones in The Islands of Tahiti, the islands within the other zones, are not frequently visited.*)

Size

The Islands of Tahiti extend over such a large area that it took explorers several years to discover and chart all 118 islands and atolls. The total area covers more than 1.5 million square miles, or for comparison, approximately the same area size as Western Europe. The total land area of the 118 islands and atolls covers only 1,544 sq. mi, roughly the same size as the state of Rhode Island.

Overview of Islands

The most frequently visited islands are Tahiti, Bora Bora, Moorea, Huahine, Raiatea, Taha'a, and Rangiroa. More and more travelers are discovering the destination's incredible and distinctive beauty that is found throughout the archipelagoes.

Topography

The country's varied landscape ranges from just above sea level coral atolls to volcanic mountain peaks. *The Islands of Tahiti* are renowned for warm waters, white-sand beaches, stunning turquoise lagoons, lush green hills and abundant flowering plants.

Capital of French Polynesia

Papeete is the capital city located on the northwest side of Tahiti.

Population

The number of people living in *The Islands of Tahiti* is more than 245,000. About 75% are Polynesian; 15% European and about 10% Chinese.

Temperatures and Seasons

The Islands of Tahiti are a year-round tourist destination, with predictably tropical weather year-round. The average year-round temperature is 79 degrees Fahrenheit. Many hotels are air-conditioned. Water temperatures average 79 degrees in the winter and 84 degrees during the summer, with less than a degree of variation from the surface down to a depth of 150 feet.

Entry Requirements

A passport valid for three months after the return date and a round-trip ticket for entry is all that is required for short stays under 90 days for US & Canadian visitors. Visas are not required for short stays. For visitors wishing to stay longer than 90 days, a long stay visa is required. Citizens of other countries should consult their travel agents or the French Consulate.

Air Service

Frequent airline connections link Tahiti with Los Angeles, San Francisco, Hawaii, Europe, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan. Airlines serving Tahiti to and from the US mainland include Air Tahiti Nui and Air France from Los Angeles and United Airlines and French bee from San Francisco.

Hawaiian Airlines also has one flight weekly from Honolulu. Air Tahiti Nui codeshares with American Airlines and offers flights from 15 cities throughout the United States including New York, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Chicago, Boston, Dallas/ Fort Worth, Miami and Washington, D.C.

Travel Time

Flight time to Tahiti is just eight hours from both Los Angeles & San Francisco. Air Tahiti Nui, Tahiti's national carrier, offers nonstop direct service from LAX, as does Air France. French bee and United Airlines will be flying nonstop service from San Francisco.

Languages

French and Tahitian are the official languages, though English is widely spoken in tourist areas.

Economy

The Islands of Tahiti's economy relies heavily on tourism, Tahitian cultured pearls, agriculture, and ocean resources.

Currency

The Islands of Tahiti's currency, the French Pacific Franc (XPF, previously CFP), fluctuates with the euro (there are about 100 XPFs for every U.S. dollar). Hotels and financial institutions offer exchange services. Euros and major credit cards are widely accepted.

Tipping

Tipping is not customary or expected in Tahitian culture. However, tipping is always welcomed for exemplary service.

Taxes

There is no sales tax in *The Islands of Tahiti*. However, a special 6% reduced rate Value Added Tax (VAT) applies to all rented accommodations (hotel rooms, guesthouses and family stays), and room and meal packages -- both American Plan (3 meals) and Modified American Plan (breakfast and dinner). A 5% VAT is added for room tax. A 16% VAT rate applies to purchases in shops, stores and boutiques. A 10% VAT rate applies to bars, excursions, car rentals, snacks and restaurants involving meals not included in a room-meal package.

Accommodations

The Islands of Tahiti, catering to a wide range of budgets and personal preferences, offers a diverse array of options from hotels, resorts to hospitable family guesthouses and private homes.

Popular Activities

Some of the world's best snorkeling, scuba diving and surfing are found in *The Islands of Tahiti*. Also popular are outrigger canoeing, bicycle and horseback riding, four-wheel jeep safaris, spear and deep-sea fishing, swimming, sailing, jet skiing, windsurfing, tennis, island tours, swimming with sharks and rays, helicopter rides, visiting museums, ancient *maraes* (temples), and other cultural experiences. Sunset watching, beach strolling, relaxing in the sand, enjoying exquisite Tahitian cuisine, walking through beautiful fragrant gardens, and simply getting to know hospitable Tahitian people are memorable highlights of any visit to *The Islands of Tahiti*.

Getting Around

Taxis and buses are popular forms of transportation on the main island of Tahiti. On the outer islands, car and scooter rentals are available. Boats are often the mode of transportation on many of the islands including Bora Bora.

Cruise Ship/Sailing

The Islands of Tahiti offer a wide range of cruising options operating year-round, including the Aranui, Haumana Cruises, Paul Gauguin Cruises and Windstar Cruises. Other cruises offer cruise rotations within *The Islands of Tahiti* with various itineraries focused on the South Pacific. Numerous private yacht charters are also available.

Profile of the American Tourist to *The Islands of Tahiti*

Upper-middle and higher income levels; married couples in their 40s and older; honeymooning couples; water sport enthusiasts (diving, snorkeling, sailing and fishing); South Pacific island culture enthusiasts. Most visitors stay a week to 10 days but many enjoy shorter visits. The majority visit more than one island.

Shopping

Shops are generally open from 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., except on Saturdays when many close at noon; only hotel shops are open on Sunday. Long lunch breaks are common in *The Islands of Tahiti*. Duty-free shopping is mainly available on Tahiti. Tahitian cultured pearls, mother-of-pearl shell carvings, coconut and tiare soaps, monoï oil, vanilla beans, shell leis, wood carvings, colorful *pareus*, and woven hats and baskets are among the most popular items.

Entertainment

Music and dancing tell the story of the Tahitian people. Beautifully costumed dancers demonstrate beauty, strength and grace in traditional dances, which have been passed down from generation to generation.

Tips for Travelers

The electric current in most hotels is 110 or 220 volts, depending upon the specific location. Visitors should bring adapters, sunscreen, sunglasses, insect repellent and a hat for shade. Loose fitting cotton washables are recommended for comfort, and old sneakers or rubber aqua socks are suggested for walking in shallow water. The Activities Desk at hotels in *The Islands of Tahiti* are an excellent source of information where guests will find knowledgeable staff who are eager to assist and help tailor itineraries or provide recommendations.

