

Welcome to the South Pacific

*Adrift in the daydreamy South Pacific –
deliciously remote and surprisingly
diverse – you can de-stress or ramp up
the action, with some superfresh seafood
awaiting at day's end.*

South Seas Dreaming

The South Pacific's paradisiacal reputation can be traced back to European explorers, returning home with tales of fertile soils, beautiful islanders and simple ways. These island nations have modernised since the late 1700s, but their allure remains undiminished: you'll still find gin-clear waters, smiling locals and gardenia-scented airs. But what's most amazing is how untainted by tourism most islands are. Blame it on remoteness, blame it on airfares...but few people who fantasise about the South Seas ever actually make the journey. Getting off the tourism grid and playing Robinson Crusoe is the true gift of the South Pacific.

Cultural Diversity

Even geography geeks crinkle their brows when contemplating this many islands, this far from anywhere else. On the map, all those dots look the same, their many-vowelled names tripping over the tongue. But on the ground there's a diversity befitting any such earthly expanse. Yes, there are Polynesian nations, Melanesian nations, Micronesian nations...but beneath these blanket names are myriad languages, customs, histories and landscapes that make each island group unique. It's not just homogenous beaches and reefs – bust out of your resort to find societies and experiences as rich as coconut cream.

Active Islands

Life moves slowly under the southern sun – it's no wonder sit-on-a-beach-and-read-a-book holidays are why most visitors are here. But what if you want a bit of action? Look around and you'll find world-class surf breaks, plus amazing snorkelling and diving sites. More surprisingly, you might try hiking to find crumbling *tiki* (sacred) statues in the jungle, trekking to the top of a volcano, swimming into a sea cave, rappelling down a waterfall or kayaking to a forgotten beach. The adventure-travel vein has scarcely been tapped here and, other than a few mechanised experiences like jet-skiing and 4WD tours, what's on offer is authentic, uncrowded and something you'll never likely forget.

Dinner Time

The South Pacific doesn't have a terrific rep' for fine food and wine. But sidestep the Westernised resort restaurants and be adventurous: you'll find hearty local stews cooked with coconut milk, fabulous fresh seafood (how's that lobster?), peppery Chinese noodle soups and even the odd Indian curry. And who needs shiraz when the weather is this humid? Sip a cold local lager instead – the perfect thirst quencher as the sun sets on another day in paradise.



Why I Love the South Pacific

By Charles Rawlings-Way, Writer

Sure, you've got the palm trees, the seafood, the hypercoloured reefs, the sweet scent of hibiscus on the evening breeze... But the best thing about the South Pacific is the pace of life. Or rather, the lack of pace. I spend most of my time careening around Australia's big cities, drinking too much coffee and talking a lot. Every slowed-down trip I make to the South Seas is an antidote to the mayhem, extending my allocated time on this lonely planet by unknown years.

For more about our writers, see page 612.