

Mo'orea

POP 17,230

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Résidence Linareva (p89)
- ➔ Green Lodge (p89)
- ➔ Sofitel Moorea la Ora Moorea Beach Resort (p90)
- ➔ Tehuarupe (p89)
- ➔ Les Tipaniers (p87)

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Coco Beach (p92)
- ➔ Le Mayflower (p92)
- ➔ Snack Mahana (p91)
- ➔ Crêperie Toatea (p90)
- ➔ Le Coco's Moorea (p92)

Why Go?

If you've been dreaming of holiday-brochure turquoise lagoons, white-sand beaches, vertical peaks and lush landscapes, you'd be hard-pressed to find better than this gem of an island. Hovering less than 20km across the 'Sea of the Moon' from its big sister, Tahiti, Mo'orea absorbs its many visitors so gracefully that it feels surprisingly nontouristy.

Mo'orea has a healthy selection of top-end resorts, but it is also host to a good choice of smaller hotels. There are pretty white-sand beaches, but nothing big and sweeping. The drawback is the limpid, warm water of the vibrant lagoon. If you need some action, learn to kitesurf, take a hike, go on a whale- or dolphin-watching tour, hire a bike or a kayak, or go horse riding. Whatever the experience, there's only one word to describe Mo'orea: divine!

When to Go

- ➔ November to April are the wetter months.
- ➔ From May to October it's usually much drier – perfect for outdoor activities, especially hiking.
- ➔ July and August are fairly windy and may be chilly when the *mara'amu* (southeast trade wind) blows.
- ➔ Diving and surfing are popular year-round
- ➔ The whale-watching season runs from July or August to October.

History

The island's ancient name was Eimeo (sometimes spelled Aimeho). Some say that Mo'orea, which means 'yellow lizard', was the name of one of the island's ruling families, while others attribute this name to an image seen by a high priest while visiting the island.

Mo'orea was heavily populated before the Europeans arrived on its idyllic doorstep. Samuel Wallis was the first European to sight the island (1767); he was soon followed

by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville (1768) and James Cook (1769). The missionaries arrived on the scene in the early 1800s and made themselves at home, soon establishing their headquarters on the island. As elsewhere, European diseases and the introduction of weapons and alcohol had a disastrous effect on the population of Mo'orea, which declined during the 19th century.

Copra and vanilla were important crops in the past, but these days Mo'orea is the



Mo'orea Highlights

- 1** Getting lost in **Opunohu Valley** (p81), with its ancient *marae* (traditional temples), breathtaking vistas and hidden walking paths.
- 2** Paddling to Motu Tiahura from Hauru Point for lunch at **Coco Beach** (p92).
- 3** Taking an unforgettable hike to **Mt Mouaputa** (p83).
- 4** Sampling tropical delights at **Moorea Tropical Garden** (p80).
- 5** Diving amid a concentration of lemon sharks in **Opunohu Bay** (p77).
- 6** Savouring fabulous lagoon vistas from the **Magical Mountain** (p77).