

The Tuamotus

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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Ninamu (p156)
- ➔ Kia Ora Resort & Spa (p151)
- ➔ Ariiheevai (p158)
- ➔ Havaiki Pearl Lodge (p162)
- ➔ Tegahine Dream (p151)

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Raira Lagon – Beach Raira (p152)
- ➔ Mitivai (p152)
- ➔ Tikehau Village (p157)
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Why Go?

The Tuamotus? It's the dream South Seas snapshot: the 77 atolls – narrow coral rings encircling turquoise lagoons – that make up this stunning archipelago are flung over an immense stretch of indigo-blue ocean.

Life in the atolls is equal parts harsh and paradisiacal: hardly anything grows, so there's little fruit and vegetables, and the only drinking water is collected from the rain. Yet the silence, starry skies, coral beaches, blue lagoons, idyllic *motu* (coral islets) and languid pace of life captivate nearly everyone who makes it here. Most tourists visit Rangiroa, Tikehau and Fakarava, which have the bulk of the tourist infrastructure, but it's also possible to explore lesser-known beauties such as Ahe, Mataiva and Makemo.

Anyone who loves the water will adore the Tuamotus. The vast, pristine marine area offers unparalleled opportunities to encounter the menagerie of marine life. For nondivers, fantastic lagoon excursions beckon.

When to Go

- ➔ The Tuamotus get more sunshine than any other archipelago in French Polynesia.
- ➔ The shoulder seasons (April to May and October to November) are the best times to visit.
- ➔ From December to March is the period when storms and rain are more likely.
- ➔ Between June and September, the prevailing trade winds produce pleasantly mild weather but rough seas – not ideal for boat excursions.
- ➔ Diving is excellent year-round, but the seas are calmer from October to May.

The Tuamotus Highlights

- 1 Exploring the legendary **Tiputa Pass** (p37) and seeing surreal coral formations at **Île aux Récifs** (p145) on Rangiroa
- 2 Going nose-to-nose with hundreds of sharks in **Tumakohua Pass** (p39) and finding your own slice of heaven on the unspoilt sands of **Les Sables Roses** (p159) on Fakarava.
- 3 Walking along the pink- and white-sand beaches on **Takehau** (p154).
- 4 Swimming in the pristine emerald waters of lagoon around **Mataiva** (p157).
- 5 Slowing things down on quietly charming **Ahe** (p162).
- 6 Leaving the world behind on remote **Aratika** (p162).

