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Directory A–Z .............. 236
Transport ..................... 246
Language ........................ 253
Index ............................. 265
Map Legend .................... 271

THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Celeste Brash
Jean-Bernard Carillet
“All you’ve got to do is decide to go and the hardest part is over. So go!”

TONY WHEELER, COFOUNDER – LONELY PLANET

Welcome to Tahiti & French Polynesia ........ 2
Map ........................................ 4
15 Top Experiences ........ 6
Need to Know ........ 14
If You Like ........ 16
Month by Month ........ 19
Itineraries ........ 22
Which Island? ........ 26
Diving ........ 31
Travel with Children ........ 39
Regions at a Glance ........ 43

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Tahiti & French Polynesia Today ........ 214
History ........ 216
Environment ........ 226
Islander Life ........ 229
French Polynesia in Popular Culture ........ 233

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Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first.

Look out for these icons:

- **TOP CHOICE** Our author’s top recommendation
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- **FREE** No payment required
See the Index for a full list of destinations covered in this book.

On the Road

TAHITI ...............48
PAPE’ETE ...............51
AROUND TAHITI NUI ....65
West Coast .............65
South Coast ............68
East Coast ............71
TAHITI ITI ............73

MO’OREA ...............77

HUAHINE ...............98

RA’IATEA &
TAHA’A ...............110
RA’IATEA ...............111
TAHA’A ...............120

BORA BORA ............126

MAUPITI ...............143

THE TUAMOTUS ........151
RANGIROA ..............153
TIKEHAI ................162
MATAIVA ...............165
FAKARAVA ..............166
MANIHI ................171
AHE ....................173

THE MARQUESAS ........174
NUKU HIVA ..............177
Taiohae .................178
Hakau Valley ..........182
Toovii Plateau ........182

Taipivai ...............183
Hatihau .................183
‘UA HUKA ...............185
‘UA POU ...............189
Hakahau ...............189
Hakahetau ............191
Hakamaii .............191
Hohoi .................192
HIVA OA ...............192
Atuona & Around ....193
Taaoa .................198
Puamau ...............199
Hanapaoa ............199
Hanaiapa ............199
TAHUATA ............200
FATU HIVA ...........201

THE AUSTRALS &
THE GAMBIER
ARCHIPELAGO ........203
THE AUSTRALS ........204
Rurutu .................205
Tubuai .................207
Raivavae ..............208
Rimatara ..............209
THE GAMBIER
ARCHIPELAGO ........210
Mangareva ...........210
Tahiti & French Polynesia

Maupiti
Motu (small islet) beaches and manta rays (p143)

Bora Bora
Over-the-water bungalow bliss (p126)

Huahine
Authentic, laid-back Polynesian perfection (p98)

Mo’orea
High peaks, blue lagoons (p77)

Pape’ete
The Heiva festival showcases Polynesian culture (p51)

Rangiroa
The world’s third-largest atoll (p153)

Teahupoo
Watch surfing pros ride the monster wave (p74)

Papenoo Valley
Visit waterfalls in Tahiti’s lush interior (p70)

Rurutu & the Australs
Whales, caves and culture (p205)

Visit waterfalls in Tahiti’s lush interior (p70)

Whales, caves and culture (p205)
The Marquesas
Wild terrain and ancient art (p174)

Gambier Archipelago
Eerie but beautiful church relics (p210)
OUR STORY
A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that’s all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, Across Asia on the Cheap. Within a week they’d sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born. Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony’s belief that ‘a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse’.

OUR WRITERS

Celeste Brash
Coordinating Author; Plan Your Trip, Understand and Survival Guide
Celeste first visited French Polynesia in 1991, fell in love with her new husband as well as Polynesian culture, and moved to the country in 1995. Her first five years were spent living off fish and coconuts on a pearl farm on an atoll sans plumbing, telephone and airstrip, and the next 10 years were spent on Tahiti. Now in Portland, Oregon, she often complains of the cold. Her award-winning travel stories have appeared in Travelers’ Tales books, and her travel articles have appeared in publications such as the Los Angeles Times and Islands magazine. She’s written over 30 Lonely Planet guides, but she considers the Tahiti & French Polynesia guide to be her pièce de résistance.

Jean-Bernard Carillet
Diving, On the Road
Paris-based journalist and photographer Jean-Bernard is a diehard Polynesian lover and diving instructor. So far, he has explored 28 islands in the five archipelagos. On this research gig he searched for the most idyllic motu (small islet), the best manta-ray encounters, the most thrilling lagoon tours, the tastiest poisson cru (raw fish in coconut milk) dish, the most romantic spots, the most enjoyable hikes and the best-value accommodation. His favourite experiences included following the Hawaiki Nui canoe race by boat and attending the Marquesas Arts Festival on Nuku Hiva.
Jean-Bernard has contributed to many Lonely Planet titles and he writes for travel and dive magazines.

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Whether you’ve got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.

One week
A Glimpse of Paradise

From Pape’ete, fly or boat straight to Mo’orea, and stay for at least two nights. Mo’orea boasts soaring peaks, verdant hillsides and aqua waters, and is considered by many to be the most beautiful isle in the Society Islands. Cycle around magnificent Cook’s Bay and Opunohu Bay, explore the island’s archaeological sites or simply soak up the sun and splash around in the lagoon. From Mo’orea, fly to Bora Bora. Live it up for a night or more (depending on your budget) in an overwater bungalow or partake in a variety of water excursions on the vast, blue lagoon. Dine by candlelight, relax in a spa and look out for celebrities. From Bora Bora, it’s a short flight to much more low-key Huahine, where you can end your holiday with two days of complete relaxation and a taste of authentic Polynesian culture. Go diving or snorkelling, take an island tour, and don’t miss trying ma’a Tahiti (traditional-style food) at the restaurant Mauarii.
Explore French Polynesia’s myriad of welcoming cultures as well as its natural beauty. Start with a day or more on Tahiti, where you can take an island tour or hire a car to explore Marché de Pape’ete (Pape’ete Market) and the waterfalls, roadside caves and hidden beaches around the island. At night, catch a dance performance at one of the resorts or (if it’s a Friday or Saturday) go out for a wild night in Pape’ete.

Next get on a plane to Ra’iatea to see the impressive Marae Taputapuatea, one of the most important spiritual sites of ancient Polynesia and hike up the Temehani Plateau in search of the tiare apetahi, one of the world’s rarest flowers. Dive or snorkel the lagoon and be sure to take a picnic tour out to one of the island’s fringing white-sand islets or kayak up Faaroa River, the only navigable river in French Polynesia. From here, take a short flight to Bora Bora to snorkel the lagoon, swoon at the island’s square silhouette and live la vida jet set for a day or two. Then take a flight to Rangiroa, the largest coral atoll in the country. Dive with sharks, live in your swimsuit and quench your thirst with coconuts. Don’t miss a tour of the immense lagoon to see pink-sand beaches and the surreally beautiful Lagon Bleu (Blue Lagoon), a lagoon within a lagoon. At sunset, watch dolphins frolic in Tiputa Pass.

Change cultures entirely when you fly on to the Marquesas (via Tahiti). Travelling here is like stepping back in time. You’ll start in Nuku Hiva, where you can hike across windswept ridges into ancient volcanic craters before checking out the island’s array of eerie archaeological sites, including Hikokua, Kamuihei and Tahakia. Follow Gauguin’s trail to Hiva Oa to see the artist’s tomb at Calvaire Cemetery and visit the Espace Culturul Paul Gauguin. Don’t miss the giant stone tiki (sacred statues) at Ipona and several other ancient sites on the island. Alternatively, you could visit all of the Marquesas islands by taking the Aranui cargo ship for one of the world’s most unique cruises focusing on culture and archaeology.
» (above) Stilt bungalows over the waters of Bora Bora (p126)
» (left) Cyclists on Mo’orea (p77)