

Huahine

POP 5741

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Best Places to Eat

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Why Go?

Huahine is actually two islands. Huahine Nui (Big Huahine), to the north, is home to the bustling little village of Fare and most of the main tourist and administrative facilities. Rugged and isolated Huahine Iti (Little Huahine), to the south, offers the islands' best beaches, azure lagoons and a serene, get-away-from-it-all atmosphere.

Huahine is immaculately tropical and effortlessly Polynesian. Lush and scarcely developed, this is an island to visit for extreme calm, communing with nature and a genuine taste of culture. You'll find one of the largest and best-maintained *marae* (traditional temple) complexes in the country and a few empty beaches, but if you're looking for a party, head elsewhere. It's a fantastic choice for families or honeymooners looking for quiet, romantic evenings. The aim of the game on Huahine is to relax – but visitors who move deeper into the island will find opportunities for diving, surfing, snorkelling and horse riding.

When to Go

July through to September is the dry and sunny high season – perfect for outdoor activities, especially hiking. In July the Heiva cultural festival (see p231) is a prime time to be on the island for some spontaneous fun. May, June, October and November are good shoulder-season months for decent weather. French Polynesia's biggest sporting event, Hawaiki Nui canoe race (p230), starts on Huahine in early November. Diving and surfing are popular year-round.

History

Europeans first arrived here in 1769, when James Cook and company landed on Huahine's shores. Polynesians inhabited the island for thousands of years before the *popaa* (Europeans) arrived: archaeological excavations to the north of Fare reveal some of the earliest traces of settlement in the Society Islands. Despite a hostile reception from the native inhabitants, Cook returned to Huahine twice, in 1774 and 1777. In 1808 a group of London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries moved to Huahine to escape the turmoil on Tahiti. They remained for only a year but returned in 1818 to further the spread of Christianity in the region. Huahine supported the Pomare royal family in the struggle against the French, and there were a number of clashes between 1846 and 1888, before French rule was eventually accepted. Although the French kicked the English Protestant missionaries out, the island remains predominantly Protestant.

Sights

HUAHINE NUI

The following 60km circuit of the larger island starts in Fare and goes around the island in a clockwise direction.

Fare

TOWN, BEACH

A visit to tiny Fare almost feels like stepping back in time, so perfectly does it capture the image of a sleepy South Seas port. There's not a lot to do, but that's part of Fare's appeal. Check out the colourful little waterside market and the few creative boutiques, sign up for a dive or hire a ramshackle bicycle and just pedal around a bit.

You'll find a good stretch of coral sand **beach** on the northern outskirts of town (follow the coastline from New Te Marara restaurant). It's great for sunbathing and swimming, and offers excellent sunset vistas. The wide, super-clear lagoon here drops off quickly, providing some truly great snorkelling amid stunning coral and dense fish populations.

Fare looks out over Haamene Bay, which has two passes to the sea: the northern Avamoa Pass is the main entry point for inter-island shipping, while the Avapeihi Pass (Fitii Pass) to the south is a great diving site.

Lake Fauna Nui

LAKE

The shallow expanse of Lake Fauna Nui (also known as Lake Maeva) is in fact an inlet



HUAHINE SIGHTS

Huahine Highlights

- 1 Snorkelling over colourful fish and coral at **La Cité de Corail** (p101)
- 2 Taking the uphill *marae* walk at **Maeva** (p100)
- 3 Hiking **Mt Tapu** (p104) for panoramic views over the island and lagoon
- 4 Diving in the **Avapeihi (Fitii) Pass** (p101)
- 5 Feasting on Tahitian specialities at **Chez Tara** (p108)
- 6 **Horse riding** (p104) around Lake Fauna Nui
- 7 Hiring a dinghy and finding your own slice of paradise at **Hana Iti Beach** (p101)

from the sea. The land to the north of this is known as Motu Ovaréi.

About 2km north of Fare the main sealed road runs along the inland side of Lake Fauna Nui. It's also possible to turn off to the airport and take the road on the ocean side of the lake and then return to the main part of the island by the bridge at Maeva village.