

# Mo'orea

POP 16,000

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Résidence Linareva (p91)
- » Green Lodge (p92)
- » Sofitel Moorea la Ora Beach Resort (p92)
- » Tehuarupe (p91)
- » Legends Resort Moorea (p89)

## Best Places to Eat

- » Le K (p95)
- » Coco Beach (p95)
- » Le Mayflower (p94)
- » Snack Mahana (p94)
- » Crêperie Toatea (p93)

## Why Go?

Mo'orea is so beautiful you'll be rubbing your eyes at your first glimpse of it from Tahiti. The loveliness of the island intensifies as you draw nearer. That turquoise lagoon that you were sure was Photoshopped in the brochure? It's better in real life. As you admire the near-vertical emerald cliffs, you'll wonder if you are the luckiest person in the world. The short answer is: yes.

Mo'orea has a healthy selection of top-end resorts, but it is also host to a good choice of smaller hotels and pensions (guesthouses). There are pretty white-sand beaches, but nothing big and sweeping. The drawcard is the limpid, warm water of the vibrant lagoon. Frolic with rays and sharks, snorkel or dive through schools of fish in translucent waters, savour the brilliant sunsets, and just chill. If you need more 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

Like Tahiti, Mo'orea enjoys a year-round tropical climate. November to April are the wetter months. From May to October it's usually much drier – perfect for outdoor activities. July and August are fairly windy. Diving and surfing are popular year-round; the whale-watching season runs from July 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.



## Mo'orea Highlights

- 1 Getting lost in **Opunohu Valley** (p86), 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** (p95)
- 3 Sighting and maybe swimming with **whales and dolphins** (p84) from July to October
- 4 Taking an unforgettable hike to **Mt Mouaputa** (p86)
- 5 Sampling tropical delights at **Moorea Tropical Garden** (p85)
- 6 Diving amid a concentration of lemon sharks in **Opunohu Bay** (p82)
- 7 Savouring fabulous lagoon vistas from the **Magical Mountain lookout** (p80)