

Tahiti

POP 185,000

Includes »

Pape'ete.....	51
Around Tahiti Nui	65
West Coast	65
South Coast.....	68
East Coast	71
Tahiti Iti.....	73

Best Places to Stay

- » Vanira Lodge (p75)
- » Fare Suisse (p58)
- » Le Méridien Tahiti (p66)
- » Green Room Villa (p75)
- » Intercontinental Resort Tahiti (p58)

Best Places to Eat

- » Place To'ata Snacks (p59)
- » Place Vaiete Roulottes (p61)
- » Le Lotus (p60)
- » Blue Banana (p67)
- » La Plage de Maui (p76)

Why Go?

While Tahiti isn't the white-sand island of your holiday brochure, it is the heart of French Polynesia, and it would be a shame to bypass it. Waterfall-laden, shadowy mountains; unpretentiously beautiful black-sand beaches; and a distinctly Polynesian buzz make Tahiti a gem in its own right.

While exploring the lively backstreets and strolling the waterfront of the pint-sized capital Pape'ete is a must, it's the outdoor action and cultural offerings that woo visitors to extend their stay. Explore the mystical, mountainous interior on a 4WD tour, learn to dive in the translucent lagoon, wander flabbergasted amid archaeological sites, and from July to October go whale-watching or hike across the fecund interior. In July catch the country's most spectacular festival, the percussion and dance-heavy Heiva. And don't miss Tahiti Iti – this peninsula on the southeast of Tahiti, so far only known to surfers, is one of the hidden gems of French Polynesia.

When to Go

Tahiti enjoys a year-round tropical climate, but it's most popular during the dry season, from May to October. The weather is cooler and you can expect sun and clear skies – perfect for outdoor activities, including hiking. The rainy season begins in November and continues until the end of April, with frequent heavy showers and occasional storms. The island has a rather busy social calendar year-round, but in July Pape'ete is in full swing with the Heiva. Diving and surfing are popular year-round; the whale-watching season runs from July to October.



Tahiti Highlights

- 1 Exploring by 4WD the lush and craggy interior along the **Papenoo Valley** (p70)
- 2 Huffing to the top of **Mt Aorai** (p69) for the sensational views
- 3 Catching local vibes while eating at the **roulottes** (mobile food vans; p61) on the waterfront in Pape'ete
- 4 Sipping an ice-cold coconut while perusing the colourful **Marché de Pape'ete** (p54)
- 5 Watching the best of the best shake their hips at the Heiva festival's **dance competitions** (p60) in Pape'ete
- 6 Taking a boat excursion past the road's end at Teahupoo to visit the remote **Fenua Aihere** (p75)
- 7 Witnessing 30-tonne humpbacks on a **whale-watching trip** (p66)