

The Tuamotus

Includes »

Rangiroa	153
Tikehau	162
Mataiva	165
Fakarava	166
Manihi	171
Ahe	173

Best Places to Stay

- » Ninamu Resort (p164)
- » Kia Ora Resort & Spa (p158)
- » Ariiheevai – Chez Alphonsine (p166)
- » Cocoperle Lodge (p173)
- » Raimiti (p170)
- » Tevahine Dream (p156)

Best Places to Eat

- » Snack Te Anuanua (p171)
- » Cocoperle Lodge (p173)
- » Raira Lagon – Beach Raira (p160)

Why Go?

Life in the fast lane not your style? Head for 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, Fakarava and Manihi, which have the bulk of tourist infrastructure, but it's also possible to explore lesser-known beauties such as Ahe and Mataiva.

If you're into diving and snorkelling – the main reasons to come to the Tuamotus – you'll be ecstatic. 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. It's still very warm, but the humidity is higher. 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** Diving the legendary **Tiputa Pass** (p154) and **Garuae Pass** (p167)
- 2** Watching a lustrous dark pearl being 'birthed' from an oyster at a pearl farm at **Manihi** (p171)
- 3** Walking along the pink- and white-sand beaches on **Tikehau** (p162)
- 4** Cycling to coconut plantations and past the emerald lagoon of **Mataiva** (p165)
- 5** Finding your own slice of heaven on the unspoilt sands of **Les Sables Roses** (p166) on Fakarava
- 6** Slowing things down on quietly charming **Ahe** (p173)
- 7** Leaving the world behind on remote **Makemo** (p167)
- 8** Seeing surreal, raised coral formations at **Île aux Récifs** (p154), south of Rangiroa

