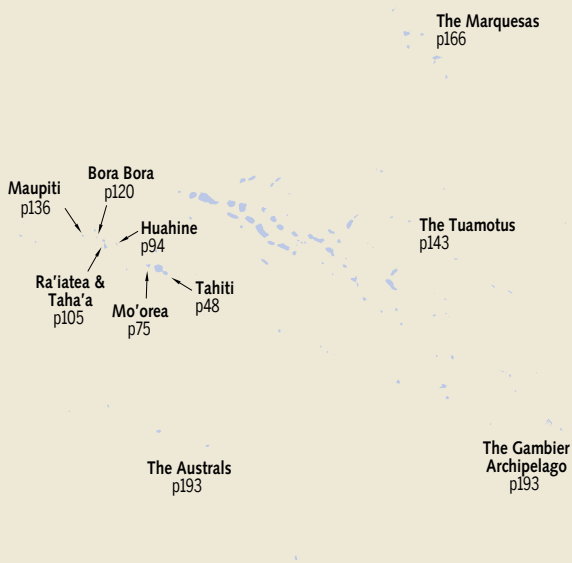




Tahiti & French Polynesia



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Celeste Brash, Jean-Bernard Carillet

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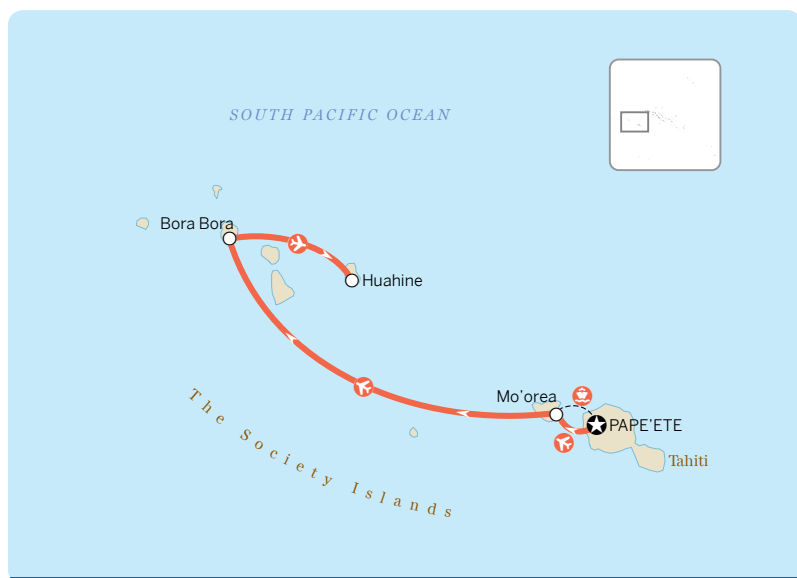


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Itineraries



1
WEEK

A Glimpse of Paradise

From Pape'ete, fly or sail straight to **Mo'orea**, and stay for at least two nights. Mo'orea boasts soaring peaks, lush verdant hillsides and aqua waters, and is considered by many to be the most beautiful of 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, enjoy near-empty beaches and don't miss trying *ma'a Tahiti* (traditional-style food) at Chez Tara.

2
WEEKS

Polynesian Passage

Explore French Polynesia's myriad 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 Taputapuataea, one of the most important spiritual sites of ancient Polynesia. 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. Take a plane to follow Paul Gauguin's trail to **Hiva Oa** to see the artist's tomb at Calvaire Cemetery and visit the Espace Culturel 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.



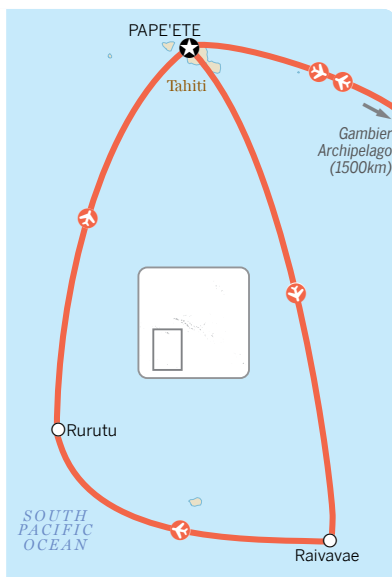
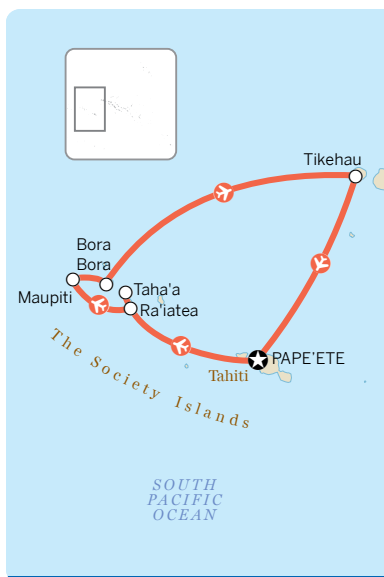
BENZENH / GETTY IMAGES ©



MACOUFF EVERTON / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top: Resort pool and beach, Mo'orea (p75)

Bottom: Fruit and vegetable stall at Marché de Pape'ete (p51), Tahiti

10
DAYS

The Ultimate Honeymoon

The ultimate honeymoon skips the main islands and brings you to our favourite spots for privacy and romance.

Fly to Ra'iatea from Pape'ete, then take a boat to a resort at one of **Taha'a's motu** (small islets), which look out over the turquoise lagoon and the awe-inspiring outline of Bora Bora. Kayak, take an island tour to visit pearl farms and vanilla plantations, and lounge in your own private paradise.

Sail back to Ra'iatea, from where you can catch a flight to **Maupiti**, a more isolated and rustic version of Bora Bora. Digs are Polynesian-style bungalows on the beach – nothing fancy, but perfect for snuggling.

From Maupiti, take a boat or fly to Bora Bora where you can catch a flight to **Tikehau** to pamper yourselves at the secluded Tikehau Pearl Beach Resort or at the artistic ecochic Ninamu resort, both on their own private islets. Virtually live in the glass-clear lagoon: dive, snorkel, frolic. Then dine on fabulous food, and drink cocktails as the sun sets. Of course, you could also pick just one of these islands and chill for a week or more.

8–10
DAYS

Roads Less Travelled

Pack a sweater and socks for this voyage since it dips below the Tropic of Capricorn for some chillier temperatures.

Take a flight to **Raivavae**, which has a similar form and magnificent blue lagoon to Bora Bora; only here you'll only find family-run *pensions* and a slow, traditional Polynesian pace of life. Spend two nights here. Follow goats to mountain vistas, explore the near-neon lagoon and meet the locals before taking another flight to **Rurutu** for three nights. If it's between May and October, this is one of the best islands for sighting humpback whales. Otherwise explore caves, take a horseback ride through coffee plantations and enjoy the unique uplifted coral landscapes.

Fly back to **Tahiti** before taking another flight to the **Gambier Archipelago** and its many islands encircled by one gigantic lagoon, for three nights. Explore the strange, majestic and mostly abandoned coral churches built in the 1800s and ogle the pearls farmed here, known as the most beautiful in the country. This is all doable in the time frame, but you'll have to plan well since some of these flights only run once or twice per week.

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



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 Dublin, Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, 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

Celeste first visited French Polynesia in 1991, fell in love with the place and the man who would become her husband, and moved to the country in 1995. After five years pearl farming and raising babies on a remote atoll, she and her family moved to Tahiti where they spent the next 10 years surfing, dancing, swimming and, oh yeah, working. She now divides her time between Tahiti and Portland, Oregon. During all this moving about her award-winning writing has appeared in publications from the BBC to *National Geographic*. Find more about her at www.celestebash.com.



Jean-Bernard Carillet

Paris-based journalist and photographer Jean-Bernard is a French Polynesia expert. So far, he has explored 29 islands in the five archipelagos and has clocked up more than 13 trips. For this gig he searched for the most idyllic *motu* (small islets), the best manta-ray encounters, the most thrilling lagoon tours, the tastiest *poisson cru*, the most romantic resorts and the best value accommodations. His favourite experiences included diving with hundreds of grey sharks on Fakarava, swimming in Makemo lagoon – the most translucent water he's ever seen – and climbing Mt Duff in the Gambier Archipelago.

Published by Lonely Planet Global Limited

CRN 554153

10th edition – December 2016

ISBN 978 1 78657 219 6

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

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