

Tahiti/French Polynesia Fact File

This fact file is divided, like French Polynesia itself, into separate islands. Addresses in French Polynesia rarely have a street name, but start with a PK number, which is the distance in kilometres from the main centre (Papeete on Tahiti island).

Tahiti

STAY AT

Le Méridien Tahiti

PK15, Punaauia, ph: 470 707, tahiti.lemeridien.com

A large resort, just south of Papeete, with a gorgeous sand-bottomed pool. Cooking and wine-matching classes offered to non-residents.

EAT AT

Coco's

PK13, Punaauia, ph: 582 108

Le Coco's offers French fine-dining close to Le Méridien using fresh, local produce in a beautiful ocean-front setting.

Le Carré restaurant

At Le Méridien (see above for details)

Here you can try local specialities such as korori (pearl oyster).

Les Roulottes

Vaiete Square, Papeete

This night-time open-air collection of food stalls on Papeete's waterfront offers an impressive range of cuisines, with hot grills searing steaks, flaming woks tossing noodles and huge, creamy crêpes being devoured. The food is cheap and of high quality. The only downside is it's alcohol free.

THINGS TO DO

Le Marché

Rue du 22 Septembre, Papeete

Papeete's market is open daily for local arts, crafts and fresh foods, including fish in the afternoon after the boats come in. Closes early Sundays.

Noa Noa rum

Papeete

Tahitian Import Export's distillery, which produces Noa Noa rum, has a “cellar door” where you can try the local product, which is sweeter and milder than the export variety.

Moorea

The paradise isle of Moorea is only 40 minutes by boat from Tahiti.

STAY AT

Moorea Pearl Resorts & Spa

Temae, ph: 551 750, spmhotels.com

A large, but intimate resort with lots of room options – the over-water bungalows are a real treat if you feel like splashing out.

EAT AT

La Plage

PK27, Motu Moea, ph: 565 537

On a private island just off Moorea (booking advised), this an idyllic place to relax and eat a lunch of poisson cru and tuna – just one of the great little lunch restaurants on the motu (islands) around Tahiti that are well worth searching out.

Le Mahogany

PK5, ph: 563 973

A favourite with expats because of the delicious, value-for-money food. Mahogany tables and tropical plants give this French bistro a casually seductive charm.

Le Mayflower

PK27, Tiahura, ph 565 359

Raw fish sits comfortably alongside foie gras in this smart/casual French restaurant. Lobster ravioli is the house specialty.

TO DO

Stingrays and sharks

One of the highlights of Moorea has to be the picnic tours to swim with the stingrays and sharks. It is incredible to be able to stroke the soft skin of the pale-grey rays and I know they are only reef sharks, but they look like Jaws under water. Moorea Mahana Tours also organises stingray feeding excursions. mooreamahana.com

Raiatea

South of the more-famous Bora Bora is mountainous Raiatea, French Polynesia's second-largest island.

STAY AT

Opoa Beach Hotel

Uturoa, ph: 600 510, opoabeach.com

This new nine-room resort is a fantastic option for those who like a more personal experience. Designed and built by the owners, each white-washed bungalow is a private haven. Non-residents are welcome at the equally tranquil restaurant.

Pension Yolande

PK10, Avera, ph: 663 528, haere-mai.pf

Pensions are more like B&Bs and give the chance to meet local families. Yolande Roopinia's beachfront pension is a great example, with a warm welcome and wonderful local food.

CREDITS

Fiona Smith and Aaron Mclean flew courtesy of Air Tahiti Nui and were hosted by Tahiti Tourisme, tahiti-tourisme.pf