ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

June 28, 2026

Kaori Media

French Polynesia

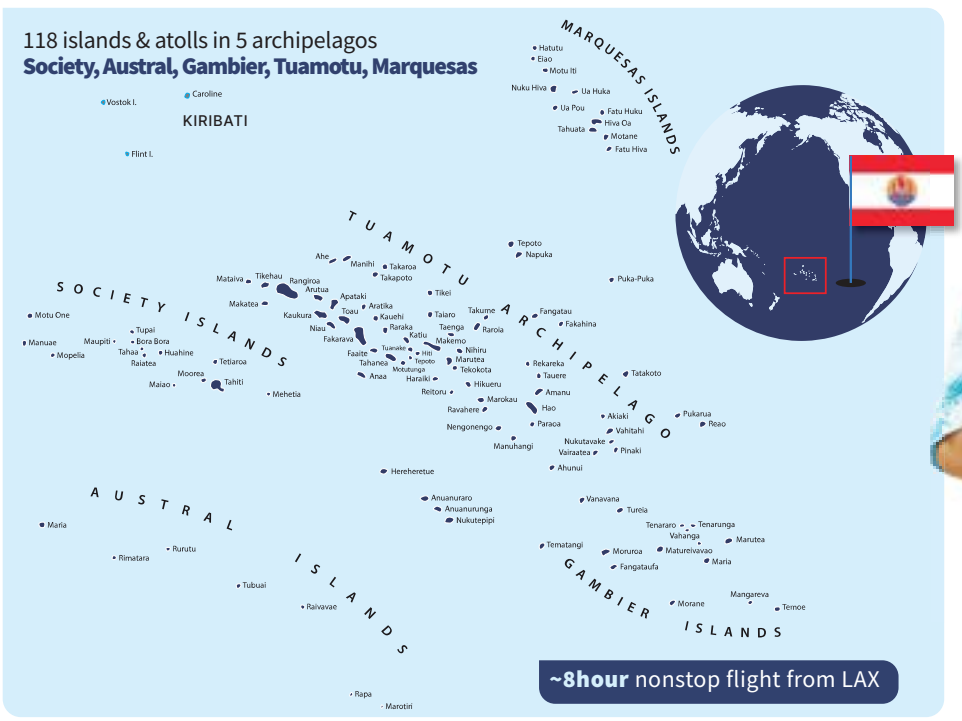
A Blueprint for Sustainable Prosperity

With 1.93 million sq mi (5 million km²) of ocean, the world's largest marine protected area, and a long-term commitment to sustainable development and economic diversification, French Polynesia is redefining growth in the Pacific.

Fabien Bellanger.

It lies less than eight hours by air from Los Angeles, scattered across an expanse of the South Pacific nearly as wide as the continental United States. Yet French Polynesia, 118 islands and atolls spread among into five archipelagos, home to roughly 280,000 inhabitants, has long occupied a singular place in the Western imagination: pristine, remote, almost mythological. What is unfolding now is the story its leaders are shaping.

Under President Moetai Brotherson, who took office in 2023, French Polynesia is positioning itself not only as one of the world's premier travel destinations but as a model for how a Pacific archipelago can pursue growth without compromising the environment, culture, or communities that make it worth visiting. The agenda is ambitious: a circular economy rooted in ocean conservation, expanded connectivity, clean energy, and a tourism philosophy that insists, in the President's own words, that there must be "a Tahiti for everyone."



MOETAI BROTHERSON, PRESIDENT OF FRENCH POLYNESIA

50% renewable electricity generation in Tahiti (2025). Target of 75% across the islands by 2030.

As an overseas collectivity of France since 2004, with an autonomy framework dating back to 1984, French Polynesia exercises broad authority over its own economic policy, tourism strategy, and natural resources, while France retains responsibility for defense and foreign affairs. "We are one of your closest neighbors to the west," President Brotherson said. "It is the welcoming nature of our population that strikes visitors. That is part of our identity and our heritage." In Tahitian, the word for tourist is manihini, meaning "guest."

That commitment took landmark form in 2024 with the designation of its 1.93 million sq mi (5 million km²) Exclusive Economic Zone as the world's largest Class 6 Marine Protected Area.Within that zone, some 425,000 sq mi (1.1 million km²) are subject to highly restricted protections. French Polynesia already sources 100 percent of its domestically consumed fish sustainably and exports approximately 2,500 tons of sashimi-grade tuna annually.

> **"Without the environment, there is nothing. Visitors expect pristine lagoons and a protected ocean, and we are committed to that."**
>
> H.E. MOETAI BROTHERSON | PRESIDENT OF FRENCH POLYNESIA

The economic strategy rests on four pillars: tourism, the blue economy, digital infrastructure and clean energy. Tourism remains the engine, with record arrivals across three consecutive years, but the government is explicit that development must be managed. "There is still room for growth," the President said, "but everything must respect our environment, our culture, and our people."

Inclusion is woven into the model. The government operates a strong hospitality training school that places local youth directly with industry partners. French Polynesia holds two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the sacred marae complex of Taputapuātea and the Marquesas Islands. On Tetiaroa, The Brando resort operates seawater air conditioning (SWAC) technology, supports research on endangered species, and partners with Coral Gardeners, a Moorea-born organization whose young members restore degraded reefs. Two hotels in Bora Bora and the Tahiti public hospital use the same SWAC technology, showing that luxury and sustainability are genuinely complementary values.

Digital connectivity is both French Polynesia's greatest infrastructural challenge and a compelling opportunity. Spread across an area the size of Europe, its 180 islands have historically faced severe bandwidth limitations. Low-orbit satellite constellations including OneWeb are now operational, with Starlink and Amazon's Kuiper entering the market. Undersea fiber-optic cables cross the Exclusive Economic Zone, with more planned, opening new possibilities for the digital economy.

OVERVIEW

GEOGRAPHY & DEMOGRAPHICS
Capital: Papeete, Tahiti
Population: ~314,000 (2025 est.)
Life expectancy: ~84 years (World Bank)
Currency: CFP Franc (XPF)
Heritage: Mā'ohi, French and Chinese
Languages: French, Tahitian and other Polynesian languages

TRADE DATA (OEC World 2024)
Exports: ~$189 million
Major exports: Black pearl, fisheries, vanilla
Imports: ~$1.51 billion
Major imports: Food, fuel, construction materials
Major trading partners: France, USA, New Zealand, Japan, China

ECONOMIC INDICATORS: (CEROM 2024)
GDP: ~$6.8 billion
GDP per capita: ~$24,100
GDP growth: +1.1%

TOURISM (ISPF 2025)
Tourist arrivals: Record 281,227 (2025)
Hotel occupancy: 76.5% average (Q3)
Air arrivals: 484 international flights
Cruise passengers: 53,941
Tourism revenues: ~$1 billion annually
Tourism share: 14.7% of GDP; 18.5% of jobs

TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY
Pacific gateway: Direct flights to Los Angeles, Seattle, San Francisco, Honolulu, Auckland and Tokyo

~45% of all visitors to French Polynesia come from North America, with the United States as the single largest source market

Based on 351,289 total visitors in 2025 (ISPF provisional data), North America accounts for roughly 158,000 visitors annually.

For U.S. investors, opportunities include the renovation of Faa'a International Airport in Papeete, a feasibility study for a second gateway in the Marquesas Islands (2.5 hours from Honolulu), urban redevelopment in the capital, and decentralization investments totaling roughly 100 billion CFP francs (about $900 million USD). The Economic Development Agency (ADE) serves as a single point of entry, providing clarity on legal and tax frameworks. The most forward-looking project is Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC), generating electricity from temperature differentials between deep and surface Pacific waters, which could reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels.

French Polynesia has adopted a policy of neutrality amid multiple Indo-Pacific frameworks. "We align with no one, and we want to be friends with everyone," President Brotherson said. This vision, balancing environmental stewardship, prosperity, and cultural identity, resonates far beyond the South Pacific. "We share many environmental values with California. Whether you are a visitor or an investor, you are welcome in French Polynesia."

Stéphane Maillon Photography.

Nuku Hiva ©Tahiti Tourisme.

Bernard Beaussier.

Justin Hu.

DGEN: The Digital Architect Behind a Connected Future

Building the Infrastructure, Policy, and Talent Pipeline for a 21st-Century Pacific Economy

The Direction Générale de l'Économie Numérique (DGEN), led by Dr. Hervé Ra'imana Lallemant-Moe, oversees telecommunications regulation, innovation policy, audiovisual industry support, and the long-term goal of technological sovereignty. Through submarine cable partnerships, expanding 4G coverage to remote communities, and a new subsidy framework designed to accelerate digital enterprise, DGEN is engineering the conditions for French Polynesia to attract technology-driven investment, highly skilled remote teams, and internationally connected businesses. The agency's Pacific Genius initiative is cultivating the next generation of local digital talent, while new film subsidies through the Tahiti Film Commission, French Polynesia's one-stop office for film and audiovisual productions, are helping attract major international productions. "Come and see French Polynesia, not only for holidays, but to understand its potential as a place to live and work. We are building a connected and forward-looking digital ecosystem." Dr. Hervé Ra'imana Lallemant-Moe, Director, DGEN.

DGEN DIRECTION GENERALE DE L'ECONOMIE NUMERIQUE

French Polynesia Gears Up for the 2027 Pacific Games

A landmark sporting event with 4,500 athletes, 24 sports and over 350 events.

French Polynesia will host the 2027 Pacific Games across Tahiti, Moorea, and Raiatea from July 24 to August 7, 2027. The event will welcome athletes from 24 nations and mark its third time hosting the Games, following editions in 1971 and 1995. Beyond sport, the Games are designed as a cultural celebration uniting Melanesian, Micronesian, and Polynesian communities through festivals and ceremonies. "This is not just a competition, it is a shared human experience," notes Noëlline Parker, President of the Organizing Committee. Sustainability and inclusion are central to the organizing vision.

> **"This is not just a competition, it is a shared human experience."**
>
> NOËLLINE PARKER | PRESIDENT OF THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

XVIII EDITION JEUX DU PACIFIQUE TAHITI 2027

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Driving Sustainable Investment and Economic Diversification Across French Polynesia's Emerging Blue and Digital Economy

Director Hinano Teanotoga explains how the Economic Development Agency is guiding investment, innovation, and sustainability in French Polynesia while diversifying beyond tourism and building a resilient Pacific economy.

For decades, tourism has shaped the global image of French Polynesia. Yet beyond its iconic lagoons and islands, the territory is building a broader economic future. At the center of this transformation is the Economic Development Agency (ADE), which works to attract investment, support entrepreneurs, and guide long-term diversification.

"The Economic Development Agency is a public institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy and Finance of French Polynesia," explains ADE Director Hinano Teanotoga. "Our main mission is to support project leaders and investors, both local and international, in implementing their initiatives throughout the territory."

Acting as a bridge between government and business, ADE provides strategic support for investment projects. "The ADE acts as a one-stop shop for investors, facilitating dialogue between the public and private sectors," Teanotoga says. "We provide support with administrative procedures and give access to regulatory frameworks, economic data, incentive schemes, and information on priority sectors."

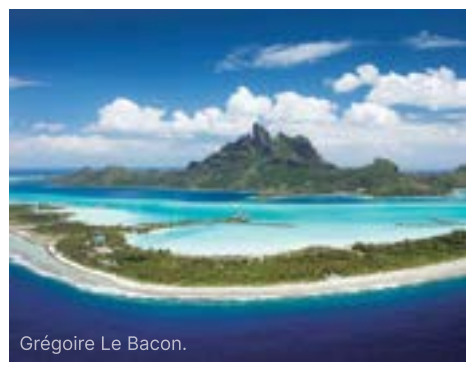
ADE also coordinates the territory's long-term economic roadmap. The CAP 2033 strategy identifies tourism, primary industries, digital and audiovisual sectors, and energy as key drivers of diversification. According to Teanotoga, the goal is "to foster sustainable and inclusive growth, create employment opportunities, and ensure that economic benefits are equitably distributed across all archipelagos."

Tahiti Tourisme.

Eric Gispalou.

HINANO TEANOTOGA, DIRECTOR OF ADE

Eric Gispalou.


Grégoire Le Bacon.

Tourism will remain central to the economy, but the strategy emphasizes quality rather than mass tourism. "Our ambition is to welcome 450,000 visitors per year by 2033, with an approach based on quality over quantity," she explains, highlighting the development of high-end resorts, guesthouses, and cruise tourism while protecting ecosystems and cultural heritage.

Beyond tourism, the blue economy is emerging as a powerful growth engine. French Polynesia administers nearly five million square kilometers of ocean, known as Te Tainui Atea. "Our fishing industry is strictly regulated and based on principles of sustainability," Teanotoga says, noting that longline fishing is permitted with an MSC label while purse seine and shark fishing are prohibited.

Renewable energy is another priority. "In 2025, we achieved nearly 50% of renewable energy in our electricity mix and our goal is to reach 55 to 60% by 2030," she explains. Technologies such as SWAC (Sea Water Air Conditioning), which uses cold deep-sea water to cool buildings, are already being deployed in major hotels and public facilities.

> **"French Polynesia is much more than an exceptional destination. It is a territory actively shaping an economic model aligned with the major challenges of our time."**

Looking ahead, ADE aims to position the territory as both a world-class destination and a hub for sustainable innovation. "French Polynesia is much more than an exceptional destination," Teanotoga concludes. "It is a territory actively shaping an economic model aligned with the major challenges of our time."

Looking for new opportunities? Choose French Polynesia
www.choosetahitinow.com

STRATEGIC POSITION
- Pacific hub linking North America, Asia, and Oceania
- Multiple shipping and airline companies ensuring transportation of passengers and goods between the islands and abroad

POLITICAL & MONETARY STABILITY
- Overseas country within the French Republic
- Legal framework guaranteed by French law
- Pacific franc (XPF) pegged to the euro

BLUE ECONOMY
- Marine area Te Tainui Atea covering 4.5 million km²
- Exclusive Economic Zone of more than 5 million km²
- One of the world's largest marine protected areas
- MSC-certified sustainable fisheries
- Global exports of Tahitian black pearls

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
- Strong North American visitor market
- Average stay of 14–16 days
- Growth of premium resorts and eco-tourism
- Expanding cruise and nautical tourism

RENEWABLE ENERGY
- Expansion of solar and hydropower
- SWAC deep-sea cooling technology
- Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion projects
- Climate strategy supporting energy transition

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE
- International submarine cable connectivity
- Expanding satellite coverage across archipelagos
- Growing startup and digital services ecosystem
- Opportunities for "follow-the-sun" services

RESEARCH & INNOVATION
- International marine and climate research centers
- Strong expertise in ocean science and sustainability
- Scientific collaborations across the Pacific

INVESTMENT ENVIRONMENT
- S&P rating: A / A-1
- Tax incentives and investor support
- Strong environmental governance
- Stable and transparent regulatory framework

French Polynesia Turns to the Ocean for a Model of Responsible Growth

From pearl farming to coral restoration, French Polynesia is building an ocean-based economy around sustainability, community governance, and cultural values.

French Polynesia administers nearly 1.93 million sq mi (5 million km²) of Pacific Ocean, and the way it manages that maritime territory sets it apart from much of the Pacific region.

The Direction des Ressources Marines oversees fisheries, aquaculture, and pearl farming under a philosophy its director, Moana Maamaatuaiahutapu, summarizes plainly: "Polynesia is first and foremost a sea country." Purse-seine fishing is banned, foreign industrial fleets are excluded, and all 82 locally owned offshore vessels must submit electronic catch data and carry onboard observers.

On the reefs, a traditional practice called Rāhui, temporarily closing fishing zones for regeneration, has been formalized into 26 community-managed areas across the territory. No regulation takes effect without local approval.

Pearl farming, the territory's second-largest export sector and responsible for roughly 49% of goods exports in 2024, produces 9 to 10 million pearls annually, each graded before sale. Meanwhile, Coral Gardeners, a Moorea-based restoration organization founded by Titouan Bernicot, has transplanted thousands of coral fragments onto degraded reefs, doubling fish populations at one site within 13 months.

"If small communities can act responsibly," says Maamaatuaiahutapu, "so can the rest of the world."

Harvesting the Purity of Polynesia: The Story of Bora Bora Sea Salt

How a Swiss entrepreneur turned pristine Polynesian waters into a handcrafted gourmet seasoning winning over chefs across the globe.

Nestled on a tiny motu in the lagoon of Bora Bora, Swiss-born entrepreneur Fabienne Bratschi stumbled upon an unlikely calling: harvesting sea salt from one of the most pristine waters in the world. What began as a simple experiment; a small basin, seawater, sun, and wind, has evolved into a celebrated gourmet brand that now exports to 14 countries. Together with Export Director Jean-Pierre Saab, Bratschi developed Tahiti Sea Salt to extend this vision across French Polynesia, partnering with remote island communities including Puka Puka, home to fewer than 100 residents and virtually untouched by tourism or pollution. Every crystal is harvested by hand, unwashed and unrefined, preserving naturally high levels of magnesium and calcium that chefs; among them decorated culinary figures such as Anne-Sophie Pic; prize for both their flavor and their story. From vanilla and chili blends to champagne-infused varieties, each product carries what Bratschi describes as the essence of Bora Bora itself. With California firmly in their sights as a key growth market, the brand is actively seeking distribution partners in the region.

> **"Each product carries the essence of Bora Bora itself."**
> FABIENNE BRATSCHI | FOUNDER OF BORA BORA SEA SALT

Coral Gardeners Turn Ocean Crisis Into Global Conservation Movement

From a small island initiative, Coral Gardeners blends science, technology, and storytelling to restore reefs and inspire global action.

Coral Gardeners began as a simple idea among friends in Moorea and has since grown into one of the most innovative coral restoration projects in the world. Founded by Titouan Bernicot, the organization reflects both a personal connection to the ocean and a response to a rapidly escalating environmental crisis.

Coral reefs, among the most biodiverse ecosystems on Earth, are disappearing at an alarming rate. In less than a decade, global reef loss has risen from roughly 25 percent to nearly 50 percent, driven primarily by rising ocean temperatures and acidification. Scientists warn that without significant change, up to 90 percent of reefs could vanish by 2050.

In response, Coral Gardeners has developed a hands-on restoration model rooted in both science and local knowledge. The process begins with identifying resilient coral colonies that have survived bleaching events. Fragments of these corals are cultivated in underwater nurseries for up to two years before being replanted onto damaged reefs. This method has already demonstrated measurable success, including rapid increases in marine biodiversity.

What sets the organization apart is its integration of advanced technology. Through its research and development arm, CG Labs, the team uses artificial intelligence and underwater scanning tools to monitor reef health in real time. These innovations also make scientific data accessible to local communities, empowering fishermen and residents to actively participate in conservation.

Equally important is the group's emphasis on storytelling and global engagement. By building a strong digital presence and collaborating with international partners, Coral Gardeners has turned a local effort into a worldwide movement. Its work highlights a new model of conservation, one that is participatory, data-driven, and deeply human.

TITOUAN BERNICOT, FOUNDER & CEO OF CORAL GARDENERS

People can join the movement by adopting a coral and supporting its growth online, or by participating in an ecotour in Mo'orea to help in the underwater gardens.

ROBERT WAN, FOUNDER OF ROBERT WAN

Robert Wan: The Vision Behind Tahitian Pearl Excellence

From a remote Polynesian lagoon to the showcases of the world's greatest luxury houses, Robert Wan spent five decades transforming a little-known Pacific gem into a globally coveted jewel, and he is not done yet.

There is a profession, Robert Wan will tell you, that cannot be learned from a book. It must be felt, endured, and loved across years of tidal patience and quiet obsession. "I call it a profession of hope," says the founder of Robert Wan, the Tahitian pearl empire that bears his name and his legacy. "Each year, we hope for better quality and a better harvest." More than fifty years after he first set eyes on the luminous, dark-hued gems forming deep inside the lagoons of French Polynesia, Wan remains as devoted to that hope as ever.

He began in 1973. By his own admission, he knew very little about pearl cultivation when he started. What he possessed instead was something harder to teach: tenacity. "There have been very difficult times," he acknowledges, "but I persevered with one primary goal to offer high-quality pearls to the world." Today, that world stretches from Tokyo to Shanghai, from Paris to Los Angeles, and the name Robert Wan is as inseparable from Tahitian pearls as Champagne is from its famous hillside vineyards.

Pearl farming, Wan explains, is unlike virtually any other luxury enterprise. It operates not on quarterly projections but on the rhythms of nature. An oyster takes two years to develop before grafting can even begin. After grafting, the delicate surgical process by which an irritant is introduced to prompt nacre formation, the oyster must remain in the water for another two years before the pearl is ready for harvest. Nearly four years for a single gem. "This long cycle demands discipline, passion, and attention to detail," Wan says, qualities he has worked to instill not just in his farming teams, but in his children and grandchildren, who are now active in the business.

The brand's philosophy rests on an uncompromising approach to production standards. Where other producers might rush cultivation or accept lower-grade harvests to meet demand, Robert Wan refuses. His farms maintain strict density controls in the lagoon, a decision as much ecological as aesthetic. "A lagoon has its limits," he says plainly. "If it can support one million oysters, you must not place two million. Overproduction pollutes the lagoon and destroys the ecosystem." The consequence, he notes, is irreversible: "Once damaged, recovery is very difficult."

This restraint is what produces the extraordinary quality associated with Robert Wan pearls, particularly the brand's celebrated "Connoisseurs" collection of exceptional bare pearls, selected for their nacre thickness, luster, and the rich, complex overtones that make Tahitian pearls unlike any other gem on earth.

For much of the twentieth century, Tahitian pearls were admired within the Pacific but lacked formal international standing in the luxury world. Wan changed that. One of his most consequential early moves was forging a collaboration with the Gemological Institute of America in the 1970s, the GIA, whose grading standards are recognized as the global authority on precious stones. That partnership produced an educational framework for assessing Tahitian pearls based on nacre thickness, luster, and overtone, effectively giving the pearl the scientific and commercial credentials it needed to compete on the world stage.

"A major milestone was our collaboration with the GIA," Wan recalls, "which helped establish Tahitian pearls as an international jewel. This recognition elevated the pearl on the global luxury stage." The achievement was foundational. Without it, the subsequent expansion into American, Japanese, and eventually Chinese markets would have been far more difficult.

Wan pressed the international case at every opportunity. He exhibited at Baselworld, the prestigious Swiss watch and jewelry fair. He organized the first-ever Tahitian pearl auction in Hong Kong in 1998, a landmark event that cracked open the Asian market at a pivotal moment of economic growth across the region. That same year, he opened the Robert Wan Pearl Museum in Tahiti, the only institution in the world dedicated entirely to this gem, welcoming tourists and travelers into the story of cultivation, craftsmanship, and the sea. In 2010, he inaugurated his first boutique in Shanghai. China, he notes today, "has become very important", perhaps the most important single market for Tahitian pearls in the world.

> **"I call it a profession of hope. Each year, we hope for better quality and a better harvest."**
>
> ROBERT WAN | FOUNDER OF ROBERT WAN

What makes Wan's pitch to the luxury market distinctive is not merely the beauty of his product, but its fundamental nature. Pearls, he argues, occupy a unique place among precious gems precisely because they are alive, or rather, because they come from something living. "Unlike diamonds or other stones extracted from the earth, pearls come from a living organism in the sea. They must be cultivated. This living origin gives them soul and authenticity."

That language, soul, authenticity, living, is not marketing rhetoric. It reflects a genuine philosophy about what the luxury consumer of the twenty-first century is searching for. Younger buyers, Wan observes from his boutiques in Bora Bora, "prefer modern designs and accessible prices, while still seeking quality." Experience, story, and provenance matter as much as the object itself. "Today, it is no longer just about selling a Tahitian pearl, it is about offering an experience, an immersion, expertise, and above all, a story."

His ambition has always been to position Robert Wan alongside the names that define global luxury. It is a benchmark he pursues not through marketing spend alone, but through the relentless elevation of the product. "My ambition has always been for Robert Wan to stand alongside major luxury houses," he says. "But for that, quality must be impeccable."

As the brand looks to the future, investment in sustainable hatchery systems is reducing plastic emissions in the lagoons and preventing the kind of ecosystem saturation that has degraded other pearl farming regions. The long-term vision is to use hatcheries to raise oysters to a grafting-ready stage before they ever enter the lagoon, preserving the water environment exclusively for the cultivation phase. It is the kind of forward-thinking husbandry that has defined Wan's approach from the beginning.

Robert Wan has a message that cuts through the noise of trend cycles and fleeting fashions. "The pearl is eternal," he says. "It has existed since ancient times and will continue to exist and fascinate, but only if we maintain quality." Quality, in his definition, is measurable: nacre thickness, depth of luster, richness of color, and above all, time. Time in the water. Time in the lagoon. Time in the hands of people who understand what they are tending.

"We protect the lagoon, the oyster, and the craftsmanship behind each pearl," Wan says. "That is how the Tahitian pearl remains a symbol of authenticity, excellence, and refined beauty, born of the sea, living, and timeless."

In a luxury world increasingly crowded with imitation and shortcuts, that is a rare kind of promise. And after more than fifty years in the lagoon, Robert Wan is still keeping it.

> **"The pearl is eternal. It has existed since ancient times and will continue to exist and fascinate, but only if we maintain quality."**
>
> ROBERT WAN | FOUNDER OF ROBERT WAN

Tahiti's Cosmetics Industry Blends Polynesian Tradition With Science and Ethical Sourcing

From sun-dried coconut oil to hand-bottled monoï and laboratory-developed plant extracts, the islands' beauty industry connects remote-island producers with international markets, pairing ancestral Polynesian knowledge with scientific research and ethical sourcing standards.

French Polynesia's cosmetics and personal care sector links a network of growers, processors, and manufacturers across its islands. At its center is Monoï de Tahiti, a coconut oil and Tiaré flower preparation that carries a protected designation of origin. Parfumerie Tiki, a family company founded by Gustave Langy, has bottled and packaged its Monoï TIKI in Faa'a since the 1970s, exporting internationally, including to the United States through its California distributor, Ginco International.

The supply chain begins with copra producers in remote archipelagos such as the Marquesas and Tuamotu. Huilerie de Tahiti processes sun-dried copra into oils valued for their quality, while providing cash income that helps families remain on their home islands. Laboratoire de Cosmétologie du Pacifique Sud, founded in 1992, develops ingredients from the endemic plants, working with 100 to 150 suppliers across 15 to 20 islands.

Sustainability runs through the sector. Several producers hold Union for Ethical BioTrade certification, ensuring traceability and fair compensation along the value chain. American consumers, particularly on the West Coast, show growing interest in natural Pacific ingredients. Together these companies present Tahiti not only as a destination but as a source of authentic, responsibly made products rooted in Polynesian heritage and craftsmanship.

Tourism

The Islands of Tahiti Chart a Course Toward Purposeful Growth

SCAN TO READ MORE

The South Pacific archipelago is breaking visitor records while deliberately resisting mass tourism, prioritising authenticity, environmental stewardship, and meaningful connection with local culture.

Nuku Hiva ©Tahiti Tourisme.

Mégane Salmon.

Nuku Hiva ©Tahiti Tourisme.

Alikaphoto.

For decades, French Polynesia existed in the popular imagination as a single postcard: Bora Bora, overwater bungalows, and a honeymoon destination for those who could afford the dream. That image, while still potent, no longer tells the full story. Behind the turquoise lagoons, a deliberate tourism strategy is reshaping how this remote overseas collectivity of France presents itself to the world, and to its single largest source of visitors, the United States.

In 2025, The Islands of Tahiti, the international brand name for French Polynesia's 118 islands spread across five archipelagos, welcomed 281,227 tourists, the highest total ever recorded and the third consecutive year of record visitation. Visitor numbers climbed 6.6% year-over-year, according to the Institut de la Statistique de la Polynésie Française (ISPF). The United States alone accounted for 108,503 arrivals, a 22% rise compared to pre-pandemic 2019 figures.

"The American market is absolutely critical," said Vaihere Lissant, CEO of Tahiti Tourisme. "North America accounts for roughly 42% to 45% of our visitors, with the United States as our leading source market."

For West Coast travelers, the destination is more accessible than its reputation suggests. Direct flights from Los Angeles take approximately eight hours, with Air Tahiti Nui and Air France operating regular service, while additional services are available from San Francisco. The distance, officials argue, is part of the appeal.

"In a world marked by uncertainty, our remoteness in the Pacific has become a strength," Lissant said. "We offer a safe, preserved environment where travelers can reconnect, with nature, with loved ones, and with themselves."

That philosophy of intentional smallness is central to the territory's identity. Ninety percent of cruise ships operating in its waters carry fewer than 500 passengers, and tourism policies favor managed growth over mass tourism. Islands like Maupiti and Raivavae have chosen to permit only small guesthouses, a decision the leadership has pledged to respect.

"Our objective is not simply to welcome more visitors, but to attract travelers who value authenticity, culture, and meaningful connections with the destination," Lissant said.

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>
> VAIHERE LISSANT | CEO OF TAHITI TOURISME

With roughly 280,000 inhabitants and 281,000 tourists annually, the territory maintains an almost exact one-to-one resident-to-visitor ratio. Studies suggest destinations can sustain up to two tourists per resident without significant strain, leaving room for growth, provided it remains managed.

The framework for that management is the Sustainable Tourism Plan 2030, developed with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. Its 110 actions span sustainable management, socio-economic benefits, cultural preservation, and environmental protection, with 21% completed in the plan's first year. A landmark achievement is the designation of French Polynesia's entire maritime zone, nearly five million square kilometers, as a Class 6 Marine Protected Area, with 425,000 square miles (1.1 million square kilometers) under highly restricted protection.

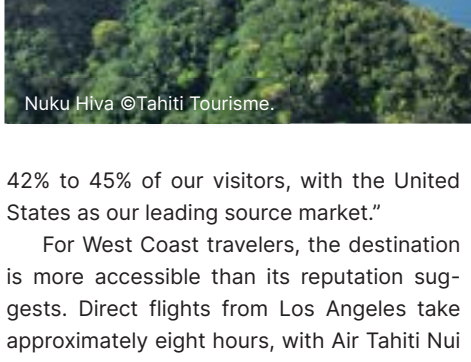
Beyond environmental protection, the tourism model promotes local participation, with family-run guesthouses, guides, artisans, and cultural practitioners playing a central role in the visitor experience, contributing to the growth of local communities while preserving traditions and ways of life. For Tahiti Tourisme, long-term success depends not only on attracting visitors, but also on ensuring that tourism continues to create opportunities for Polynesians and strengthen the cultural identity that makes the destination unique.

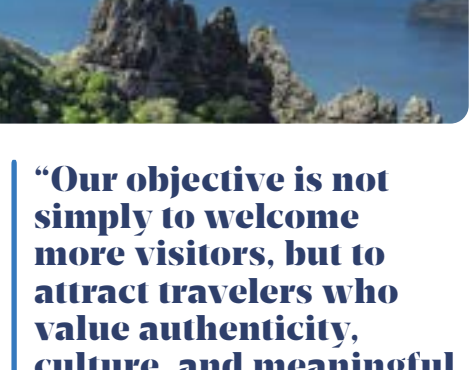
For Tahiti Tourisme's Lissant, the invitation to American travelers is straightforward: "We invite you to discover a destination that is not only beautiful, but deeply meaningful, a place where you will feel truly treasured."

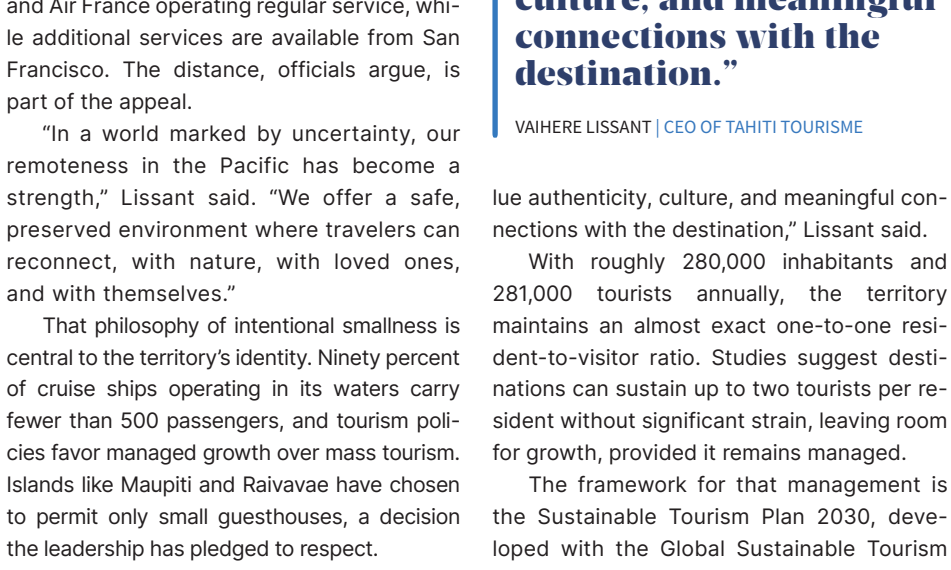
KON TIKI TAHITI:

A Boutique Hotel in the Heart of Tahiti

An immersive waterfront escape in the heart of Papeete.







Located on the waterfront in Papeete, facing Moorea, Kon Tiki Tahiti offers a fresh vision of hospitality in French Polynesia. Blending Polynesian authenticity with a modern approach, it is designed for travelers seeking a local yet contemporary experience.

More than a hotel, Kon Tiki Tahiti is a vibrant lifestyle destination. It brings together dynamic spaces such as KT Coffee for relaxed moments, the Surfhouse restaurant with panoramic views, and the Reeftop Bar overlooking the harbor.

Throughout the day, the atmosphere evolves naturally, from morning coffee to sunset gatherings, creating opportunities for locals and travelers to connect.

> *** More than a hotel, Kon Tiki Tahiti is a vibrant lifestyle destination**

At the crossroads of tradition and modern living, Kon Tiki Tahiti offers a new way to experience Tahiti, not just as a gateway to the islands, but as a destination in its own right.

Meet the Local Travel and Hospitality Experts Shaping Bespoke Island Journeys

From tailor-made island itineraries and private villa stays to immersive cultural experiences, a network of local specialists is helping travelers discover French Polynesia beyond its iconic lagoons and overwater bungalows.

Alikaphoto.

Grégoire Le Bacon.

Manaventura Tahiti.

For travelers planning a trip to French Polynesia, the journey often begins long before takeoff, with the local curators who design it. Across the islands, a community of travel agencies, villa managers, and experience operators is redefining how visitors from the U.S. West Coast discover the destination.

Tahiti Travel Services, a destination management company based in Tahiti, builds custom itineraries island by island. The American market accounts for roughly 30% of their clientele, many of them repeat visitors venturing beyond Bora Bora to atolls like Fakarava or the Marquesas.

Private rentals are expanding the options. Tahiti Homes® manages premium villas with concierge services across several islands, drawing North American guests who value privacy and space. Founder Emily Biotteau-Colas notes that today's travelers are seeking meaningful experiences and quality time with loved ones, adding that French Polynesia is just an eight-hour flight from Los Angeles and San Francisco.

At sea, Tahiti Ocean and its concierge arm Pacific Avenues support visiting superyachts and their guests, with U.S. clients representing at least 60% of the agency's clientele each year.

For those seeking immersion, Manaventura Tahiti pairs small-group adventures with cultural exchange, learning traditional carving, weaving, or coral restoration. "We want to reveal a different Polynesia, one that is authentic and rooted in nature and human connection," says founder Jessica Sorin.

Together, these partners share a vision: growth managed carefully, with respect for environment and culture. The result is a destination that, as several operators note, often leaves visitors feeling welcomed as guests rather than tourists.

Tahiti Travel Services Crafts Authentic, Tailor-Made Journeys Across French Polynesia

With expert local insight and trusted island partnerships, Raphaela Taufa delivers bespoke, sustainable travel experiences rooted in authenticity.

In a destination as geographically diverse and emotionally resonant as French Polynesia, creating seamless travel experiences requires far more than logistics, it demands deep local knowledge, trusted relationships, and passion for authenticity. Under the leadership of Raphaela Taufa, Owner of Tahiti Travel Services, the company has become a recognized specialist in tailor-made journeys across the islands.

Based in Tahiti, Tahiti Travel Services works closely with travel professionals to design personalized itineraries that reflect each visitor's expectations while showcasing the unique identity of every island. From Bora Bora and Moorea to more remote destinations such as Fakarava and the Marquesas, every journey is crafted individually.

> **"There is truly a Tahiti for everyone, and every trip is unique. We never replicate itineraries."**

"There is truly a Tahiti for everyone, and every trip is unique", says Raphaela. "We never replicate itineraries."

This bespoke approach is supported by the expertise of experienced travel advisors and privileged relationships with local hotels, airlines and tourist activity providers. These close partnerships allow the company to offer smooth multi-island transitions and exclusive, immersive experiences that go beyond conventional travel packages.

Sustainability also remains central to the company's philosophy. Tahiti Travel Services promotes responsible tourism through carefully selected partners, environmental education, and a strong emphasis on "slow travel," encouraging visitors to engage meaningfully with local communities and traditions.

RAPHAELA TAUFA, OWNER OF TAHITI TRAVEL SERVICES

For travelers from the U.S. West Coast, an increasingly important market, French Polynesia offers both accessibility and depth. With direct flights from California, visitors are invited to discover a destination that is not only visually extraordinary but culturally profound.

TAHITI TRAVEL SERVICES

Beyond the Bungalows, A New Vision for Tahitian Travel Emerges

Small-group journeys, sustainability, and cultural immersion are drawing modern travelers deeper into French Polynesia's lesser-known islands and communities.

Manaventura Tahiti is helping redefine tourism in French Polynesia for a new generation of travelers seeking meaning, sustainability, and authentic connection. Founded by Jessica Sorin, the company offers curated small-group and private experiences that move beyond the traditional image of luxury-only island vacations.

Instead of standardized excursions, guests are introduced to the people, traditions, and landscapes that shape the islands' identity. Experiences range from artisan workshops and family-hosted cultural activities to coral restoration, reforestation, and guided hikes through remote interiors.

The company also responds to a growing shift in travel expectations. Visitors, particularly from North America, increasingly want longer stays, personalized itineraries, and opportunities to engage with local communities. Destinations such as the Marquesas, Australs, and Gambier Islands are becoming part of that journey.

JESSICA SORIN, FOUNDER OF MANAVENTURA TAHITI

> **"We want travelers to experience Polynesia in a meaningful way, it's a place where you disconnect from modern stress and reconnect with yourself."**

At the heart of Manaventura Tahiti's approach is responsible tourism: educating guests, supporting local entrepreneurs, and preserving ecosystems and cultural heritage that define Polynesia.

www.manaventura-tahiti.com
hello@manaventura.com

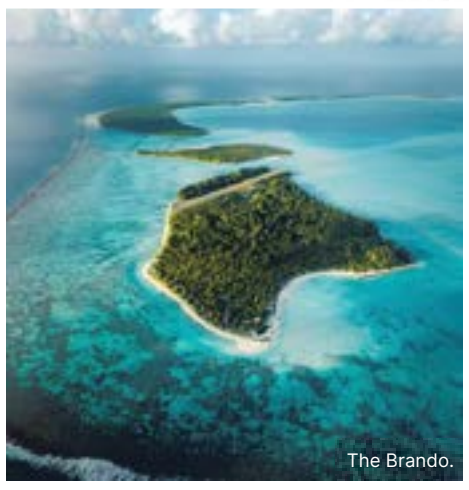
Navigating Excellence for Over 30 Years

Your premier partner for exceptional superyacht services in Tahiti and the islands.

Tim McKenna.

At the heart of our business lies a simple promise: to deliver the best service, every time. With over three decades of dedication, trust, and friendship, we have built the largest local data bank and a network of the most reliable providers and guides across the islands. Our young and dynamic team is always ready to assist, with a smile and a deep love for the ocean. We are passionate navigators, combining local expertise with a genuine desire to see each project through. Whether you are planning a luxury voyage, seeking local insight, or simply need a trusted partner on the ground, we are here to make it happen. Tahiti Ocean is honored to welcome visiting Superyachts to our pristine waters.

TAHITI OCEAN
Yachts services


The Brando.

Redefining High-End Travel in Tahiti: The Vision Behind Tahiti Homes® & ELYT Charter Tahiti®

An authentic, high-comfort approach to French Polynesia centered on privacy, space, and immersive island living.

For more than a decade, Tahiti Homes® has been quietly transforming the way discerning travelers experience French Polynesia. Founded as a real estate agency and naturally evolving into a hospitality-driven property management company, its vision has always been rooted in a simple belief: the most memorable stays are defined by privacy, authenticity, and thoughtful personalization.

Rather than operating as a traditional vacation rental platform, Tahiti Homes® curates a carefully selected portfolio of exceptional beachfront villas and distinctive island properties. Each residence is paired with tailored concierge services, from private chefs and in-villa wellness treatments to bespoke cultural and outdoor experiences, creating not simply a place to stay, but a fully designed way of living Tahiti.

This approach resonates strongly with evolving global travel trends. More and more travelers are seeking meaningful escapes that prioritize space, comfort, and emotional connection over formality. In this context, French Polynesia offers something increasingly rare: serenity, privacy, and a genuine sense of place. For visitors from California and across the U.S. West Coast, the destination represents an ideal balance between premium comfort and a slower, more authentic rhythm of travel.

Villa Manatea ©Grégoire Le Bacon.

ELYT Charter Tahiti® - Honutea catamaran.

Villa Heremoana Moorea - TahitiHomes® ©Grégoire Le Bacon.

ELYT Charter Tahiti® - Honutea catamaran.

Building on this philosophy, the company has expanded into a new chapter with ELYT Charter Tahiti®, introducing an original concept of high-end floating accommodation. Its flagship vessel, Honutea, is a fully autonomous and eco-responsible yacht designed to offer an intimate and immersive experience at sea, combining exceptional comfort with a strong commitment to sustainability.

Together, Tahiti Homes® and ELYT Charter Tahiti® embody a new generation of premium travel in Polynesia, one defined less by convention and more by lifestyle, exclusivity, and genuine connection to the surrounding environment. Every stay is thoughtfully designed, every location carefully chosen, and every experience shaped by the natural beauty and cultural richness of the islands.

For those seeking more than a destination, Tahiti offers something far more distinctive: a new way to travel, where comfort, authenticity, and slow living come together in one of the world's most extraordinary settings.

Tahiti homes
Vacation Rentals & Realty

The Brando: A Sanctuary of Reconnection and Commitment to Conservation

On the private atoll of Tetiaroa, north of Tahiti, this resort invites guests to slow down, reconnect and take part in the careful work of preserving one of French Polynesia's protected places.

This year, one of the world's largest sporting events will sweep across North America in a long wave of stadiums, travel and emotion. For many travelers, the tournament will be a global celebration worth savoring, and also a reminder of how rarely the pace lets up. The Brando offers more than an escape from that intensity. About 30 miles north of Tahiti, in the Windward Islands of the Society Archipelago, it offers a sanctuary: a private atoll where guests can balance the excitement of the competition with the deeper need to slow down, reconnect and experience French Polynesia in a preserved and meaningful form.

Getting there is part of the shift. Air Tetiaroa operates a roughly 20-minute flight from a dedicated private terminal at Tahiti Faa'a International Airport. The atoll comes into view as a ring of twelve coral islets, or motu, wrapped around a turquoise lagoon more than two and a half miles wide. The resort itself sits on the 78-hectare Motu Onetahi. A representative greets arriving guests on the runway and brings them to their villa by electric cart. From the first minutes, the rhythm is different.

A RETREAT BUILT FOR SLOWING DOWN

The Brando works well as a place to decompress, whether for couples marking an occasion or families traveling together after weeks of high-energy plans. Space, silence and privacy are the foundation here, and they are abundant. The resort has 36 private villas with one to three bedrooms, plus the three-bedroom Teremoana residence, each opening onto a garden, a private pool and the white sand beyond. Wooden walls and roofs covered with pandanus leaves draw on traditional building methods. The intent is a sense of seclusion that lets guests set their own pace.

Wellness at The Brando extends well beyond any single building. The lagoon can be explored by traditional outrigger canoe, kayak, paddleboard or simply with a mask and snorkel, and naturalist-guided boat tours introduce the fauna and flora of the different motu. On land, there are nature walks, a fitness room open around the clock and a tennis court. Meals lean on fresh produce grown on the atoll, served across the Beachcomber Café, the fine-dining Les Mutinés and the Nami teppanyaki room. Time outdoors, shared meals and unhurried days do much of the restorative work on their own.

At the center of the wellness experience is the Varua Te Ora Polynesian Spa, a destination in itself set within a 2,000-square-meter oasis of exotic plants. Its holistic treatments are inspired by Polynesian traditions and the natural elements of the island. Couples can discover Taurumi, a traditional massage understood as both therapeutic and spiritual, intended to restore internal harmony. The spa's Fare Manu, or bird's nest, treatment cabin sits in the trees about 20 feet above the ground, overlooking a freshwater lake covered in lotus flowers. After the intensity of a tournament summer, it is a setting designed for recovery and reconnection.

SUSTAINABILITY WOVEN INTO THE STAY

What distinguishes Tetiaroa is not only its beauty but the way the resort is built to help protect it. The Brando was conceived by the late Marlon Brando and hotelier Richard Bailey around the idea that hospitality and the preservation of a fragile island could reinforce one another. Guests do not simply stay in a protected setting; they take part in the work of keeping it that way. That is the rare privilege The Brando offers: the chance to experience a protected place with purpose. The property holds LEED Platinum certification for its low-carbon construction.

The clearest examples are practical ones. The Brando operates the first Sea Water Air Conditioning system in French Polynesia, drawing cold water from roughly 3,000 feet below the surface to cool its buildings and reducing the energy required for air conditioning by close to 90 percent. More than 4,000 solar panels run along the airstrip, covering about 75 percent of the resort's energy needs, and solar water heaters supply nearly all of the hotel's hot water. Rainwater recovery covers a significant share of the resort's water use, ornamental plants are irrigated with wastewater, the organic garden is irrigated with rainwater, and an extensive waste management program sorts material across more than 25 lines, crushing used glass into sand for the paths and turning food waste into compost.

Conservation here is anchored by Tetiaroa Society, the non-profit partner that runs research, education and restoration on the atoll. Its work spans green sea turtle monitoring, shark ecology studies, coral and lagoon protection, Invasive-species eradication and archaeological mapping of cultural sites. An on-island ecostation hosts visiting scientists, and the resort's Green Tour lets curious guests see the research firsthand. The society's education programs have reached thousands of local students, using the atoll as a classroom. On Tetiaroa, tourism, science and conservation are designed to work together rather than in tension.

CULTURE AS PART OF THE EXPERIENCE

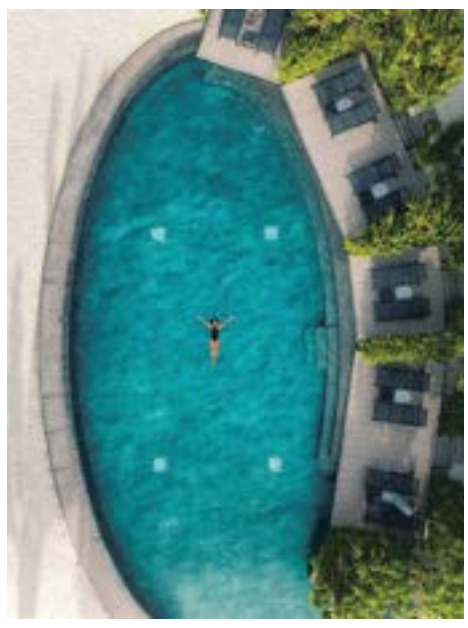
Polynesian culture gives the stay its depth. Tetiaroa is not simply a private island; it carries real historical weight in French Polynesia. The Pomare family, the royal line of Tahiti, kept it as a private residence long before Brando encountered it during the filming of Mutiny on the Bounty and purchased it in 1966. The atoll still holds vestiges of marae, the temples built by its early residents, and Polynesians continue to regard it with particular respect.

Guests meet that heritage through people and place rather than display. A team of cultural hosts introduces the Tahitian language and a range of activities, from traditional weaving to song, dance and local instruments. Polynesian culture also runs through the resort's architecture and its weekly performances, and traditional sports appear during festive seasons such as Heiva. The Explorer Center offers a library and conversations with cultural leaders and naturalist guides.

Underpinning all of it is the Polynesian relationship between people, land and ocean, a connection that gives the experience its meaning. Approached this way, culture is not a separate activity but a living thread, grounded in authenticity, respect and a strong sense of place. For travelers stepping off the momentum of the tournament, The Brando offers a different kind of arrival: a chance to slow down, reconnect and return home with a deeper sense of balance.

The Brando, by the Numbers

- **30 MILES** north of Tahiti, in the Windward Islands of the Society Archipelago
- **20-MINUTE** flight from Tahiti Faa'a International Airport aboard Air Tetiaroa
- **12 CORAL ISLETS** (motu) ringing the atoll's turquoise lagoon
- **78-HECTARE** Motu Onetahi, the islet the resort occupies
- **36 PRIVATE VILLAS,** from one to three bedrooms, plus the Teremoana residence
- **2014 OPENING,** on an atoll Marlon Brando purchased in **1966**
- **2,000 SQUARE METERS** of plantings surrounding the Varua Te Ora Polynesian Spa
- **~90% REDUCTION** in air-conditioning energy use through Sea Water Air Conditioning
- **4,000+ SOLAR PANELS** supplying about **75%** of the resort's energy needs
- **LEED PLATINUM** certification for low-carbon construction
- **70 BEEHIVES** across three motu, yielding about **1,200 KILOS** (2,600 lbs.) of honey a year
- Conservation, research and education led by **TETIAROA SOCIETY,** the resort's non-profit partner



THE BRANDO

Paradise With Purpose: Bora Bora's Mayor Charts a Sustainable Future for an Iconic Island

Beneath the turquoise lagoon and overwater bungalows that have made Bora Bora a global byword for luxury travel lies a quietly radical vision, one where environmental stewardship, Polynesian heritage and economic prosperity are inseparable.

When Gaston Tong Sang, the longtime Mayor of Bora Bora, describes his island, he reaches for something beyond its iconic image. "We have been given a magnificent lagoon, breathtaking landscapes and a living culture," he says. "As mayor, I feel responsible for managing this heritage and making it even more beautiful and more vibrant."

That responsibility has shaped a tourism model unlike almost anywhere else on earth. With a hard cap of 1,000 hotel rooms, cruise arrivals limited to vessels carrying no more than 1,000 passengers, and never more than 2,000 visitors on the island at any given time among 11,000 residents, Bora Bora has made a deliberate choice in favor of quality over quantity.

The results are embedded in the landscape itself. The iconic overwater bungalows, inspired by traditional elevated Polynesian architecture, double as marine habitats, their pilings colonized by coral that attracts fish and forms underwater nurseries. A proposed 570-hectare marine protected zone would extend an ancestral practice known as Rāhui, prohibiting fishing and navigation to allow ecosystems to regenerate.

Damien Chaudet.

Mayor Tong Sang is equally focused on the future. The commune is pioneering Sea Water Air Conditioning technology and exploring Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion, with a long-term ambition of becoming a zero-carbon island.

For Californian visitors, the mayor extends a personal welcome rooted in shared history. "Our bond with America dates back to World War II," he notes. "Bora Bora remains a welcoming island, one that honors its past while building a sustainable, resilient and culturally proud future."

GASTON TONG SANG, MAYOR OF BORA BORA

Where Time Slows Down: The Westin Bora Bora Resort & Spa

Perched above the lagoon with Mount Otemanu as its backdrop, this newly reimagined resort elevates overwater living into an art form, blending Polynesian warmth with refined contemporary elegance.

Bora Bora has long captured the imagination of travelers seeking a place where turquoise water meets volcanic drama, and The Westin Bora Bora Resort & Spa positions itself at the very heart of that fantasy. Facing the island's iconic Mount Otemanu, this newly reimagined resort is home to the largest collection of overwater bungalows on the island, complemented by a selection of beachside villas where contemporary design and Polynesian spirit intertwine with quiet grace.

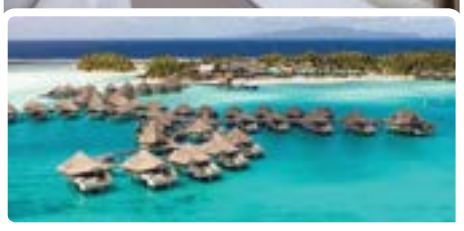
Wellness anchors the experience throughout. The signature Heavenly Bed® promises deep rest, while the Heavenly Spa draws on Polynesian and Asian healing traditions to create rituals that feel both ancient and restorative. Sunrise yoga sessions bring guests into wordless dialogue with the surrounding nature.

At the table, the kitchen explores a culinary territory where Franco-Polynesian tradition meets Mediterranean flair. Guests might celebrate local culture at a festive dinner or linger barefoot in the sand as the lagoon catches the last of the evening light, each meal its own unhurried ceremony.

The resort's commitment to its environment runs deep. An on-site Eco Center supports sea turtle conservation and local marine biodiversity, offering guests the rare opportunity to work alongside marine biologists in the field.

Bespoke experiences complete the picture: starlit dinners over still water, weddings framed by Mount Otemanu, or breakfast delivered by outrigger canoe gliding across the lagoon. At The Westin Bora Bora, the extraordinary becomes simply the expected.

THE WESTIN
BORA BORA
RESORT & SPA



Bloody Mary's Hotel Bora Bora Redefines Island Living Through Culture and Connection

From legendary celebrity haunt to boutique hotel, Bloody Mary's evolves while preserving Bora Bora's spirit, history, and human connections.

There are places you visit, and places you feel. In Bora Bora, Bloody Mary's has long belonged to the latter. What began as a laid-back lagoon-side restaurant in 1979 has grown into one of the island's most enduring cultural landmarks, a place where barefoot elegance meets spontaneous connection. Now, with the upcoming Bloody Mary's Hotel, that legacy enters a new chapter.

For decades, the restaurant has been synonymous with the island itself. Its origin story is almost cinematic. Guests from the former Bora Bora Hotel, once the island's only five-star property, would leave their secluded luxury at night and walk, flashlights in hand, to Bloody Mary's. They came seeking something different: authenticity, energy, and a sense of place that no resort could replicate.

That simple ritual sparked something bigger. Celebrities followed. Stories spread. A legend was born.

"Bloody Mary's has always been about people coming together naturally," says General Manager Julien Bressolles. "It's a place where there's no barrier between locals and visitors, just shared moments."

Over time, the restaurant became a rite of passage. No matter where travelers stayed, a visit to Bloody Mary's was essential. The promise, however mythical, of crossing paths with a famous face only added to its allure. But what truly sustained its reputation was something deeper: its authenticity.

The experience remains unchanged in spirit. Sandy floors, thatched roofs, communal tables, and the iconic display of freshly caught fish, sourced directly from local fishermen, create a setting that is both simple and unforgettable. Guests select their fish, watch it prepared, and settle into an evening that flows effortlessly from dinner into conversation, music, and laughter.

Now, that philosophy is expanding beyond a single evening.

The Bloody Mary's Hotel, set to open with 53 rooms, bungalows, and suites, is designed as a natural continuation of the restaurant's identity. The project is rooted in decades of connection with the island and aims to extend that sense of belonging into the guest experience.

> **"Bloody Mary's has always been about people coming together naturally."**

Importantly, this evolution is not entirely new. In the early days under founder Baron George, a few bungalows already existed near the restaurant, an early glimpse of what Bloody Mary's could become. Today's hotel builds on that original vision, transforming it into a fully realized hospitality concept.

Rather than isolating guests, the hotel invites them into the rhythm of island life. Located on Bora Bora's main island, it offers proximity to local markets, beaches, and everyday Polynesian culture, something often missing from more remote luxury resorts.

"We didn't want to create another place where guests feel disconnected," Bressolles explains. "The idea is to be a crossroads, where people meet, exchange, and experience Bora Bora as it really is."

JULIEN BRESSOLLES, GENERAL MANAGER OF BLOODY MARY'S HOTEL

> **"Bora Bora is not just a destination. It is a living island. We want people to come for the beauty, but stay for the human connection."**

This approach reflects a broader shift in luxury travel. Today's visitors, especially those from California, the hotel's primary market, are seeking more than just pristine views. They want meaning, sustainability, and cultural depth.

Bloody Mary's is responding with a strong commitment to environmental responsibility and local integration. From short supply chains that prioritize Polynesian products to innovative sustainability initiatives, including coral reef restoration in partnership with scientists and local students, the project aims to protect the very ecosystem that defines Bora Bora.

Yet for all its forward-thinking ambitions, the essence remains unchanged.

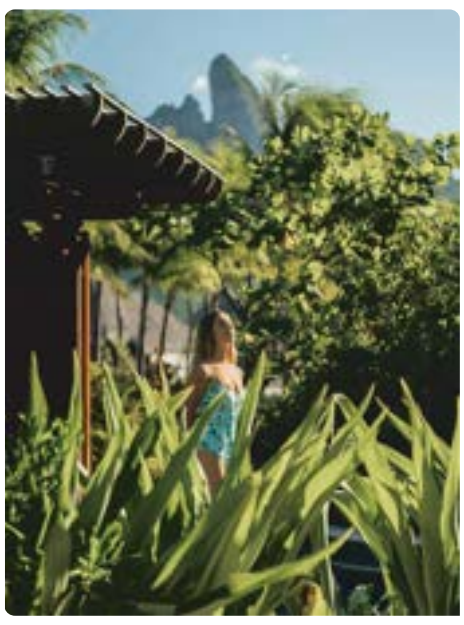
At Bloody Mary's Hotel, luxury is not about exclusivity. It is about connection, to people, to place, and to the moment itself.

As Bressolles puts it, "Bora Bora is not just a destination. It is a living island. We want people to come for the beauty, but stay for the human connection."

BLOODY MARY'S
HOTEL • MARINA • RESTAURANT • BAR
Bora Bora

The St. Regis Bora Bora Resort Marks 20 Years With a Vilebrequin Collaboration

To celebrate two decades on its private motu facing Mount Otemanu, the resort dedicates June 2026 to anniversary experiences, gastronomic events, and a limited-edition capsule collection created with French swimwear house Vilebrequin.



ST REGIS
BORA BORA

Twenty years ago, The St. Regis Bora Bora Resort opened on a preserved motu in French Polynesia, set against the volcanic silhouette of Mount Otemanu. Two decades on, the property continues to shape a style of island living drawn from the lagoon, the surrounding gardens, and the rhythms of Polynesian culture.

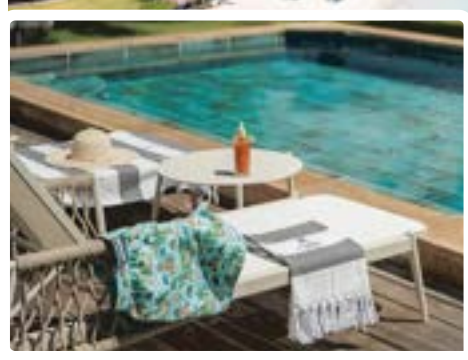
The resort's 90 villas range from overwater accommodations suspended above the lagoon to garden villas scented with tiare and frangipani. Its expansive overwater bungalows are counted among the larger examples in the South Pacific. Across all of them, St. Regis hospitality is anchored by the brand's signature butler service, with attention given to the details that shape a stay.

A sanctuary at the center of the property, the Lagoonarium is a protected marine ecosystem where corals and tropical fish offer a window into Polynesian biodiversity. The sanctuary is home to more than 150 species of tropical fish and coral, among them Moana, the resort's resident Napoleon fish. On a private islet within the Lagoonarium, the resort's spa draws on treatments pairing French expertise with rituals rooted in Tahitian tradition.

The culinary program spans French, Asian, and Italian influences, alongside Polynesian evenings and tailored dining experiences: breakfast delivered by outrigger canoe, lunch at the water's edge, or a private dinner on the beach. Celebrations are also part of the resort's offering, from vow renewals to traditional Polynesian wedding ceremonies framed by the turquoise lagoon and Mount Otemanu.

To mark the milestone, the resort has planned a month of events throughout June 2026, including exclusive experiences and gastronomic gatherings. At the center of the program is a limited-edition collaboration with Vilebrequin, the French luxury swimwear house.

For more than 50 years, Vilebrequin has been known for bold color palettes, a playful sensibility, and the spirit of Saint-Tropez. The partnership extends the house's relationships with several St. Regis properties around the world and brings together two brands that share an interest in craftsmanship and a considered approach to leisure.



Conceived as a portrait of its destination, the capsule collection goes beyond resort wear. It centers on an exclusive print created for the resort's 20th anniversary and applied across every piece in the line.

Rendered in shades of blue that echo the lagoon's clear waters, the print gathers emblematic elements of the island and the resort into a single visual narrative. At its center rises Mount Otemanu, the volcanic peak reaching 727 meters and visible from much of the property. The summit also lends its name to the resort's 727 Bar, a favored spot for watching the sunset.

The design features the resort's overwater bungalows alongside swaying palms, coral gardens, and marine life drawn from the surrounding lagoon. The tiare flower, an emblem of Tahiti and a symbol of welcome and Polynesian grace, appears throughout as a nod to local culture and the destination's traditions of hospitality.

Sea turtles, a cultural symbol in French Polynesia, reflect the resort's environmental commitments, including initiatives with Te Mana O Te Moana and the Vilebrequin Foundation. Coral motifs echo Natura Ora, the resort's sustainability program dedicated to preserving Bora Bora's fragile ecosystem. Moana, the Napoleon fish of the Lagoonarium, also appears among the motifs.

Together, these elements form a print rooted in the identity of Bora Bora, and a fitting way for The St. Regis Bora Bora Resort to mark 20 years in French Polynesia.

Moorea's Mayor Maps a Future Between Authenticity and Ambition

Nestled 30 minutes by boat from Papeete, the island of Moorea is quietly rewriting the rules of sustainable tourism under the leadership of a municipality determined to protect its soul while opening its arms to the world.

> **"Our goal is not to create a spectacular, artificial destination. Our goal is authenticity. There are no tourist needs that outweigh the needs of our population."**
>
> EVANS HAUMANI | MAYOR OF MOOREA

At first glance, Moorea looks like a postcard: emerald peaks plunging toward a turquoise lagoon, pineapple fields lining roads that wind between villages. But beneath that beauty, Mayor Evans Haumani is steering a community of nearly 20,000 residents through one of the more complex balancing acts in the Pacific, welcoming the world without losing itself in the process.

"Our goal is not to create a spectacular, artificial destination," Haumani says plainly. "Our goal is authenticity. There are no tourist needs that outweigh the needs of our population."

That philosophy is woven into nearly every municipal decision. Moorea is the only commune in French Polynesia with a lagoon management plan, the PGEM, which for more than two decades has governed fishing, nautical activities, whale watching, and cruise ship anchoring. On land, a strict urban code prohibits high-rise construction. "We will not build structures taller than the palm trees," Haumani notes.

© Stéphane Mailion Photography.

The commune has also pioneered renewable energy infrastructure, potable water treatment, and French Polynesia's first bioclimatic school. A new photovoltaic farm aims to hit 50% renewable energy. Meanwhile, a municipal Tourism Committee, unique among Polynesian communes, unites hoteliers, guides, artisans, and operators under one coordinated voice.

Housing pressure from roughly 1,500 short-term rental listings remains a challenge, but the mayor's vision stays grounded: social housing with gardens, fruit trees, and space for families to grow their own food.

"If you look at Moorea from the sky, it resembles a heart," Haumani reflects. "We welcome visitors warmly, but we expect respect for our lagoon, our mountains, our culture, and our traditions."

Moorea Beach Lodge and Moorea Island Beach Hotel Redefine Boutique Island Hospitality

At two small beachfront properties in Moorea, personalized service, sustainability, and authentic Polynesian hospitality offer travelers from the U.S. a refined alternative to large resorts in French Polynesia.

Just a short ferry ride from Tahiti, the island of Moorea in French Polynesia offers a slower rhythm of travel. Here, boutique properties like Moorea Beach Lodge and Moorea Island Beach Hotel provide an intimate alternative to large luxury resorts, focusing on nature, personal service, and authenticity.

For Claude Hameau, general manager of both properties, scale is the defining difference. "Today, true luxury is silence, time, and hospitality at a human scale," he says. With only a limited number of rooms, staff can anticipate guests' needs and create genuine connections rarely found in larger branded hotels.

Nature is central to the experience. Although visitors arrive through Tahiti, Moorea quickly feels worlds away. Lush mountains, a luminous lagoon, and an unspoiled coastline immerse travelers in an environment that feels immediate rather than staged.

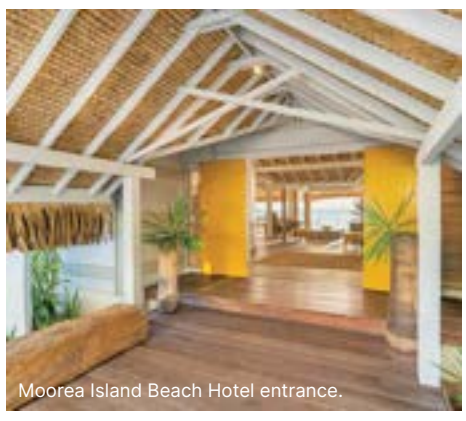
Operating small hotels on a remote Pacific island comes with challenges, from complex supply chains to training local talent. Yet that investment strengthens the community while preserving a distinctly Polynesian sense of hospitality.

> **"Today, true luxury is silence, time, and hospitality at a human scale."**
>
> CLAUDE HAMEAU | GENERAL MANAGER

Sustainability also shapes daily operations. Plastic water bottles have been replaced by filtered fountains, bathrooms use refillable dispensers, and guests are encouraged to respect the lagoon and local culture.

American travelers, particularly from the West Coast, now represent about half of visitors. Direct flights to Tahiti from Los Angeles and San Francisco make the journey surprisingly accessible, while Moorea offers a quieter alternative to destinations such as Hawaii or Bora Bora.

For Hameau, Moorea's future depends on careful balance. Growth must remain controlled to protect the lagoon, culture, and community that make the island unique and worth discovering for travelers seeking meaningful Pacific escapes today.


Moorea Island Beach Hotel entrance.

Moorea Beach Lodge beachfront.

Moorea Island Beach Hotel living room.

Sofitel Kia Ora Moorea: Where French Elegance Meets Polynesian Paradise

An iconic beachfront resort blending refined luxury, vibrant culture, and untouched natural beauty on Moorea's most spectacular lagoon.

PATRICE AIRA, GENERAL MANAGER OF SOFITEL KIA ORA MOOREA

Just minutes from Tahiti, across a stretch of luminous South Pacific water, Sofitel Kia Ora Moorea Beach Resort offers a rare balance of accessibility and escape. Set on Temae Beach, widely regarded as the most beautiful and longest beach on Moorea, the resort captures the essence of French Polynesia in its purest form. Here, powdery white sand meets a turquoise lagoon protected for more than two decades, preserving vibrant coral gardens and a remarkable diversity of marine life. Behind the shoreline, dramatic volcanic peaks rise sharply, framing a setting that feels both powerful and serene.

Since its creation in 1977, the property has established itself as one of Moorea's most iconic destinations. Acquired by the Wane Group in 2020 and part of the prestigious Accor luxury portfolio, the resort has recently entered a new chapter. Following an extensive renovation completed in April 2026, its spaces have been entirely reimagined, offering a more contemporary and immersive experience while preserving the spirit that has long defined it. "This transformation was about elevating every detail without losing the soul of the place," Patrice Aira, General Manager explains. "We wanted guests to feel the harmony between French elegance and Polynesian authenticity from the moment they arrive."

"At the Sofitel Kia Ora Moorea Beach Resort, we are driven by the desire to offer an incomparable experience and make our property a benchmark in Polynesia. We move forward carried by a collective pride and ambition to embody, by combining the warm and authentic Polynesian hospitality with French excellence and elegance, faithful to the Sofitel signature," says Patrice Aira.

The redesign focuses on fluidity between indoor and outdoor spaces, allowing the surrounding environment to shape the experience. Natural materials, soft textures, and open architecture create a sense of calm continuity, where the lagoon and gardens are always within view. Reception areas, restaurants, bars, and shared spaces now embody a refined yet relaxed aesthetic, reflecting the subtle balance between sophistication and island life.

The resort's 109 villas are conceived as private sanctuaries, each offering a distinct relationship with nature. Overwater villas provide a quintessential Polynesian experience, suspended above the lagoon with direct access to its clear, warm waters. Through glass panels, guests can observe marine life drifting below, creating a constant connection to the ocean. Beachfront villas offer immediate access to the sand and sea, while garden villas are nestled within lush tropical vegetation, providing privacy and tranquility. Across all categories, interiors combine contemporary comfort with local inspiration, featuring natural wood, airy layouts, and understated luxury.

At the heart of the property, an infinity pool stretches toward the horizon, merging visually with the Pacific Ocean. Facing Tahiti, it offers panoramic views that evolve throughout the day as light shifts across the water. Guests gather here to relax, enjoy cocktails, or simply take in the scenery. At the resort there is a stillness that you don't find in many places. It feels like time slows down, and you start to notice every detail, such as the light, the colors and the sound of the water.

Wellness plays a central role in the experience, embodied by Le Jardin Spa & Beauty, a sanctuary set within a tropical garden. Treatments are inspired by Polynesian traditions, including the Taurumi massage, which uses monoi, tiaré, and Tahitian vanilla oils to create a deeply sensory ritual. Sunrise yoga sessions overlooking the lagoon encourage reconnection, while a modern fitness center provides space for balance and renewal. The approach is holistic, focusing not only on relaxation but also on restoring harmony between body and mind.

The lagoon itself is one of the resort's defining features, offering guests direct access to one of the most vibrant marine ecosystems in the region. Snorkeling reveals coral gardens teeming with life, while paddleboarding and kayaking provide a quieter way to explore the water. Rays, tropical fish, and sea turtles are frequent companions, and during the migration season from July to November, humpback whales can sometimes be observed nearby. These encounters highlight the unique relationship between the resort and its natural environment.

Cultural immersion is another essential element of the experience. The resort celebrates Polynesian heritage through regular events and activities that bring local traditions to life. Evening gatherings feature dance performances, music, and fire shows under the stars, creating a vibrant and festive atmosphere. During the day, guests can participate in activities such as ukulele lessons, traditional dance workshops, and flower crown making. "Sharing our culture is something we are deeply proud of," Patrice Aira notes. "It allows guests to connect with Moorea in a meaningful way, beyond what they see."

> **"At the Sofitel Kia Ora Moorea Beach Resort, we are driven by the desire to offer an incomparable experience and make our property a benchmark in Polynesia. We move forward carried by a collective pride and ambition to embody, by combining the warm and authentic Polynesian hospitality with French excellence and elegance, faithful to the Sofitel signature."**
>
> PATRICE AIRA | GENERAL MANAGER OF SOFITEL KIA ORA MOOREA

Romance is woven into every aspect of the resort, making it a sought-after destination for weddings, honeymoons, and special celebrations. Ceremonies on the beach draw inspiration from Polynesian traditions, incorporating music, rituals, and floral arrangements in settings that feel both intimate and grand. Couples can enjoy private dinners with their feet in the sand, breakfasts delivered by canoe directly to their villa, or curated experiences that combine wellness, gastronomy, and seclusion. Each moment is designed to feel personal and unforgettable.

Cuisine is a central pillar of the Sofitel Kia Ora Moorea experience, reflecting the broader philosophy of blending French refinement with Polynesian authenticity. Under the direction of Chef Frédéric Gigou, the resort's culinary offerings celebrate fresh, local ingredients and creative expression. At Pure restaurant, guests dine in a chic yet relaxed setting overlooking the lagoon, enjoying dishes that highlight freshly caught fish, tropical fruits, and island-grown vegetables. The menu reflects a careful balance of international influences and local flavors, resulting in a cuisine that is both accessible and distinctive.

For a more elevated dining experience, K restaurant offers a gastronomic journey unlike any other on the island. Set directly on the sand beneath a striking wooden ceiling crafted from rare Kahaia wood, it combines elegance with a deep connection to its surroundings. Tasting menus, available in multiple courses, showcase exceptional ingredients prepared with precision and creativity, accompanied by thoughtfully selected wine pairings. "Each dish is meant to tell a story," Chef Gigou explains. "It's about creating a connection between the guest, the ingredients, and the place."

The resort's bars further enhance the culinary experience. Bar View provides an ideal setting to enjoy tropical cocktails while watching the sun set over the lagoon, while the Beach Bar offers a more casual atmosphere for light bites and refreshments by the water. Together, these spaces create a dynamic yet harmonious approach to dining and relaxation.

Beyond the resort, Moorea itself offers a wealth of experiences that enrich any stay. Known as Tahiti's "sister island," it lies just 17 kilometers away yet feels distinctly different. Its heart-shaped silhouette encompasses dramatic peaks, lush valleys, and deep bays with emerald waters. Land and sea exist in remarkable harmony, creating landscapes that are both striking and soothing. Visitors can explore pineapple and vanilla plantations, hike through tropical trails, or discover hidden waterfalls. The island's lagoons are home to an extraordinary range of marine life, including rays, reef sharks, dolphins, and seasonal whales.

What sets Moorea apart, however, is not only its natural beauty but also its atmosphere. Life unfolds at a gentler pace, shaped by a deep connection to nature and a strong sense of community. This spirit is reflected in every aspect of the Sofitel Kia Ora Moorea Beach Resort, from its design to its service.

Indeed, the human element is one of the resort's greatest strengths. A predominantly Polynesian team, many of whom are from Moorea itself, brings authenticity and warmth to every interaction. Their pride in their culture and their island is evident, creating an experience that feels both welcoming and genuine. From the moment guests arrive, they are not simply visitors but participants in a shared story.

Today, fully reimagined, Sofitel Kia Ora Moorea Beach Resort stands as a testament to the enduring appeal of French Polynesia. It offers more than luxury; it offers a sense of place, a connection to nature, and an invitation to slow down. In a world that often moves too quickly, it provides a rare opportunity to pause, reflect, and savor each moment in a setting of extraordinary beauty.

Two Ships, One Soul: Aranui Cruises and the Polynesia Few Ever See

From the volcanic cliffs of the Marquesas to the barely charted shores of the Austral Islands, Aranui Cruises operates two vessels that double as supply ships, cultural embassies, and the journey of a lifetime.

There are cruise ships that deliver passengers to paradise, and then there is Aranui, a company that has spent more than four decades proving that the vessel itself can be the point. Since 1984, when a Tahitian cargo company called Compagnie Polynesienne de Transport Maritime converted its freighter to carry passengers alongside provisions, Aranui Cruises has been threading through some of the most isolated waters on earth. The ships don't pull into sanitized terminals. They drop anchor where communities need them most, unloading rice, cement, and school supplies while travelers stand at the rail, watching a logistical lifeline perform its work in real time. That spectacle, unglamorous, essential, quietly theatrical, is as much a part of the experience as any beach landing.

Aranui 5 in Fatu Hiva.

Grégoire Le Bacon.

Ua Huka Centre Artisanal.

THE ARANUI 5: LIVING ALONGSIDE THE MARQUESAS

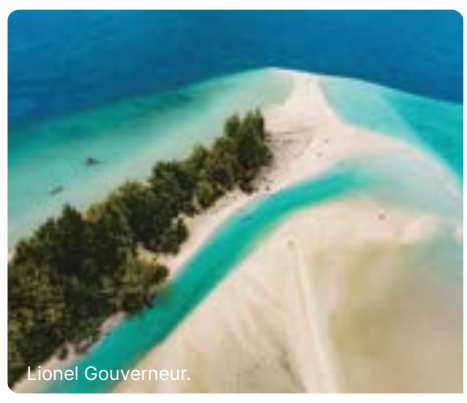
The Marquesas Islands are not postcard Polynesia. There are no sprawling lagoons, no resort beaches smoothed for tourism. What they offer instead is something rawer and richer: towering basalt cliffs, valleys muffled in jungle, a living artistic tradition stretching back centuries. The Aranui 5 has served this archipelago as freighter, lifeline, and floating cultural ambassador for decades, and the ship's identity is inseparable from the islands it connects.

The nearly all-Polynesian crew shapes the onboard world accordingly, filling evenings with traditional music and dance, building menus around fresh fish and produce sourced directly from island communities. A Marquesan tattoo artist keeps a studio aboard, crafting ancestral designs that map each traveler's personal story onto their skin, one of several initiatives that dissolve the boundary between visiting a place and genuinely inhabiting it. Guest lecturers, painting workshops inspired by the surrounding landscapes, and onshore dinners prepared by local families complete a program oriented entirely around the islands rather than the ship.

Accommodating up to 254 passengers across 103 cabins, from Presidential Suites with expansive private balconies to four-berth family staterooms, the Aranui 5 runs a thirteen-day itinerary through the Marquesas, Society Islands, and Tuamotu. It calls at Nuku Hiva, where stone platforms and petroglyphs survive in the jungle above Taiohae Bay; at Fatu Hiva, the most remote island in all of French Polynesia; and at Ua Pou, whose cathedral basalt spires frame one of the Pacific's most dramatic harbors. At each port, the cargo operations themselves become part of the spectacle, a choreography of cranes, skiffs, and crew that locals and passengers gather around together, the line between observer and participant blurring naturally.

Aranui has long called itself the "seventh island" of the Marquesas, a phrase that earns its weight. Over four decades, the ship has helped convert subsistence fishermen and farmers into guides, drivers, and artisans, keeping tourism revenue circulating within the communities it visits. Goods flow outward from Tahiti; economic opportunity flows inward. It is, by design, a circular economy carried on a hull.

Aranoa.


Lionel Gouverneur.

Suite Premium of Aranoa.

ARANUI Cruises
Aranui 5 departs year-round from Papeete, Tahiti. ***Aranoa*** launches 2027. For itineraries, charter inquiries, and advance bookings: **aranui.com**

THE ARANOA: A NEW SHIP FOR AN UNDISCOVERED POLYNESIA

Launching in 2027, the Aranoa is Aranui's next proposition, and its most ambitious. Where the Aranui 5 has long anchored itself to the Marquesas, the new vessel will chart a course through the Austral Islands, an archipelago located roughly 300 miles south of Tahiti that most of the world has yet to find. Picture Bora Bora half a century before tourism arrived: lush volcanic mountains falling into lagoons of startling color, communities whose warmth is unhurried and unperformed precisely because outside visitors remain rare.

The five inhabited islands of the Australs, Rimatara, Rurutu, Tubuai, Raivavae, and Rapa, each carry their own character. Raivavae is ringed by a reef of extraordinary beauty. Rurutu is known for humpback whale gatherings offshore. And Rapa, the southernmost and perhaps the most arresting of the five, is governed entirely by a council of elders who manage all land as communal property. To preserve its cultural traditions, the Aranoa will be permitted to call there just six times per year, the kind of access that cannot be engineered or scaled, and that defines the entire spirit of the itinerary.

The vessel itself reflects a philosophy of deliberate refinement. Custom-built with more than forty years of Aranui know-how behind it, the Aranoa will carry 198 passengers across 91 cabins, 62 of which feature private balconies. Two restaurants, two bars, a spa and fitness room, a lounge, a boutique, and two whirlpools complete the public spaces. At 380 feet with a crew of 103, it is engineered for smooth passage through remote waters. A diesel-electric propulsion system, ecofriendly antifouling hull coating, and dynamic positioning technology reduce fuel consumption and environmental footprint, a design priority that reflects Aranui's commitment to sailing responsibly through landscapes that remain, against considerable odds, largely pristine.

Beyond its regular year-round Austral itinerary, the Aranoa will make occasional extended voyages through the eastern Tuamotu atolls and the Gambier Islands, ending at Pitcairn, one of the most isolated inhabited islands on the planet. And for travelers or organizations seeking an entirely exclusive passage, the Aranoa is available for private charter. Whether for a corporate retreat, a cultural expedition, a film production, or a multigenerational family voyage in search of something genuinely unrepeatable, chartering the full vessel offers complete flexibility over itinerary, programming, and pace, in waters that no other ship currently reaches.

The Marquesas earned their UNESCO recognition slowly, through decades of quiet stewardship. The Australs are at the beginning of that story. Aranui intends to be there for it, and to bring along anyone curious enough to make the crossing.

Tahiti Yacht Charter Pairs Private Sailing With a Boutique Stay on Huahine Island

A family-owned Polynesian company combines a fleet of over thirty sailing catamarans with a 33-room boutique hotel in southern Huahine, offering travelers a slower, personal way to discover the Leeward Islands.

Tahiti Yacht Charter © Bertrand Duquenne.

For over three decades, Tahiti Yacht Charter has built its reputation on private sailing across French Polynesia's Leeward Islands. Today the 100% Polynesian, family-owned business operates a fleet of over thirty boats, mainly sailing catamarans, from its base in Raiatea. Its recent acquisition of Le Mahana Huahine, a three-star boutique hotel with 33 rooms, extends that vision from sea to land.

"The boat itself naturally embodies slow tourism," says Ségolène Picard, CEO of Tahiti Yacht Charter and owner of Le Mahana Huahine. "Sailing encourages travelers to take their time, to travel with the rhythm of the wind and the sea. Combining that with a hotel stay creates a more complete travel experience."

The pairing is geographic as well as philosophical. The hotel sits in the south of Huahine, an island known for its archaeological sites, ancient fish traps, and lush vegetation that has earned it the nickname "Garden of Eden." Sailing distances between the islands are short, roughly three to four hours, yet cruises begin at three nights to give guests time to settle in. All are private, with a dedicated, largely Polynesian crew.

That local connection is central. The company invests in maritime training so island residents can work close to home, and crews guide guests to farms, artisans, and small restaurants along the way. Solar panels and low-speed engines help protect the lagoon.

Le Mahana Hotel @Bertrand Duquenne.

American travelers now make up close to 40% of the clientele, many of them seeking a slower, more immersive way to experience French Polynesia's islands, lagoons, and culture.

"Experience Polynesia from the sea and take the time to truly feel it," Picard says. "When travelers slow down and immerse themselves in the culture, they often return home with a new understanding of what true luxury means."

SCAN TO READ MORE

HOTEL LE MAHANA × TAHITI YACHT CHARTER

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Air, Sea, and Cargo Services Are Reshaping How French Polynesia Connects With the World

From long-haul jets crossing the Pacific to a brightly painted ferry weaving between islands, French Polynesia's transport network is expanding in every direction, reshaping how the world reaches paradise and how its people connect with one another.

For a territory scattered across an ocean expanse larger than Europe, connectivity is not a convenience, it is a lifeline. Air Tahiti Nui, the flag carrier handling roughly half of all international traffic through Papeete, sits at the center of that mission.

The Los Angeles route is a cornerstone. CEO Lionel Guérin notes "From Los Angeles, it's just a short flight, closer than people think. Your journey begins the moment you board." American visitors represent around half of all tourists to the islands, and codeshare agreements with American Airlines and Alaska Airlines support seamless West Coast connections. A fleet of Boeing 787 Dreamliners, with cabin renovations planned for 2027–2028, delivers what the airline calls an immersive experience, Tahitian culture beginning at the boarding gate, not on arrival.

French bee, the long-haul low-cost carrier operating an all-Airbus A350 fleet, adds another transatlantic dimension to this network. Its Paris–San Francisco–Papeete route carried 30,000 passengers between California and Tahiti in 2025 alone, the only direct air link between San Francisco and French Polynesia. With four weekly frequencies between Paris and Tahiti planned for next summer, the carrier is steadily expanding access for both American and European travelers.

Air Tahiti Nui.

> **"From Los Angeles, it's just a short flight, closer than people think. Your journey begins the moment you board."**
>
> LIONEL GUÉRIN | CEO OF AIR TAHITI NUI

On the domestic front, Motu Link Airline is preparing to launch dedicated air cargo services, the first of its kind in the archipelago. Founder Alexandre Mu envisions fresh Polynesian fish reaching California markets and U.S. goods arriving efficiently in the outer islands. Meanwhile, Fenua Airports, which took over management of Bora Bora, Raiatea, and Rangiroa airports in 2025, is expanding terminals and modernizing facilities to keep pace with growing traffic.

Once on the ground, getting between islands is itself a journey. Veteran carrier Air Tahiti has served the domestic network for 68 years, connecting nearly one million passengers annually across 48 destinations, from Bora Bora to the remote Marquesas. Newer entrant Air Moana, operating since 2023, has added capacity and elevated onboard service on the territory's highest-demand routes, making island-hopping more accessible for visitors and residents alike.

By sea, ferry services such as Vaeara'i's remain the practical backbone of inter-island life, linking Tahiti with Moorea and the Leeward Islands while offering travelers a slower, more intimate way to move between archipelagos, ocean views included.

Vaeara'i: Sail the Soul of Polynesia

More than a ferry, Vaeara'i offers music, ocean breezes and a warm Polynesian welcome, transforming every crossing between Tahiti and the islands into a joyful, culturally rooted experience at sea.

Manuari Bonnefin.

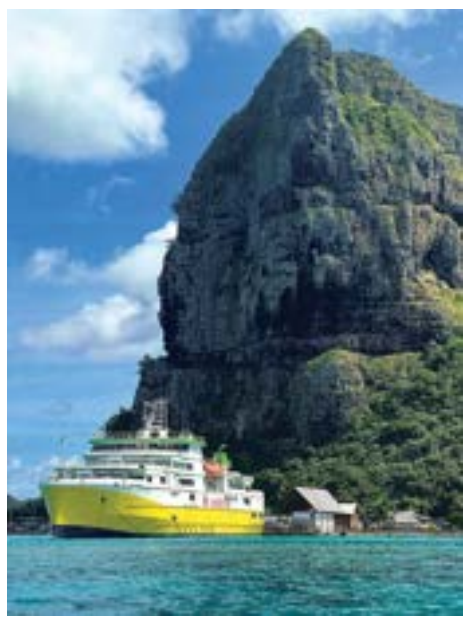
On a Friday afternoon in French Polynesia, as the sun softens over the lagoon, guitars begin to play at the back of a bright yellow ship. Passengers gather at Quinn's Bar, cocktails in hand, while others strum ukuleles, sing or simply watch the horizon. This is Vaeara'i, not just transportation, but a floating slice of Polynesian life.

> **"We are not just transporting people, we are reconnecting families and strengthening local economies."**
>
> PATRICIA LICHON | CFO IN CHARGE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION OPERATIONS

Created in 2018 by a local captain who wanted to offer islanders more choice and connection, Vaeara'i was built around a simple idea: sea travel should feel human. Its custom-designed vessel, launched in 2021, links Tahiti and Moorea during the week and sails to the Leeward Islands on holiday weekends. Families board with their cars and belongings, heading home for extended stays.

"We are not just transporting people, we are reconnecting families and strengthening local economies," says Patricia Lichon, CFO in charge of Public Relations, Marketing and Communication Operations.

Onboard, the atmosphere feels closer to a community gathering than a commute. There is a restaurant, open-air seating and space to relax, study or socialize. Paperless ticketing and a no-plastic policy reflect a quiet commitment to sustainability.



From the moment passengers step aboard, Lichon says, "it is not just a trip. It is an experience."

For visitors from Los Angeles and beyond, Vaeara'i offers something rare: the chance to cross turquoise waters not as a tourist, but as part of the rhythm of Polynesian life.

vaearaiofficiel
vaearaiofficiel

Air Moana Takes Flight Across French Polynesia's Island Skies

Launched just three years ago, the young carrier is reshaping inter-island travel by pairing competitive fares, expanded capacity, and an onboard experience rooted in authentic Polynesian warmth.

When Air Moana carried its first passengers in February 2023, it entered one of the Pacific's most established domestic markets with a clear ambition: to offer a genuine alternative. Starting with two aircraft, the carrier has since grown to a fleet of four ATR 72-600s serving eight island routes, steadily easing the seat shortages that have long complicated trip planning for residents and visitors alike.

Routes connecting Tahiti to Bora Bora, Moorea, and Rangiroa, popular with travelers from California and the broader U.S. West Coast, were among the first priorities. Schedules are engineered to align with long-haul arrivals, allowing passengers to connect seamlessly to inter-island flights and build multi-destination itineraries without backtracking through Tahiti.

Onboard, the experience draws on local culture: cabin colors inspired by sea and sky, locally sourced vanilla biscuits and fruit-based treats, and a trolley service uncommon on short regional hops. Seat assignments keep families together, and international visitors are placed, where possible, on the left side of the aircraft for the arrival views.

> **"Our role is not just to transport visitors, but to ensure that every step of their journey is memorable."**
>
> MARANIA BOIXIÈRE | VICE PRESIDENT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE OF AIR MOANA

"For many visitors, a trip to French Polynesia is a once-in-a-lifetime experience," says Marania Boixière, Chief Customer Experience Officer. "Our role is not just to transport them, but to ensure that every step of their journey is memorable." French Polynesia, she adds, is only a few hours from Hawaii, closer than most West Coast travelers realize.

Air Tahiti Nui Marks Nearly Three Decades Connecting French Polynesia to California

CEO Lionel Guérin discusses the carrier's role linking the islands to North America and Europe, its fleet of Boeing 787 Dreamliners, and its commitment to Polynesian hospitality, sustainability, and the communities it serves.

For nearly 28 years, Air Tahiti Nui has organized itself around a single idea: connecting French Polynesia to the wider world. The carrier has grown into a central link between the islands and key international markets, chief among them the United States, and California in particular.

"Air Tahiti Nui was created nearly 28 years ago with a clear mission: to connect French Polynesia to key international markets," says CEO Lionel Guérin. That mission reaches across North America and Europe, especially France, while also tying Polynesia to the South Pacific, including Australia, New Zealand, and Japan.

> **"Air Tahiti Nui is more than an airline, it is an ambassador of French Polynesia."**

For Guérin, the work carries weight beyond commerce, connectivity is also a matter of sovereignty, enabling Polynesians to travel abroad while allowing visitors to reach the islands. Today the airline accounts for roughly half of all international traffic into Papeete, and few markets matter more to that flow than California. The relationship runs deep: ties between Polynesia and the United States date back to World War II, when an American base was established in Bora Bora. Since then, the American market, particularly high-end tourism, has been fundamental to the airline's growth. "American visitors represent about half of all tourists to Polynesia and roughly 35% of our business," Guérin notes. To strengthen those links, Air Tahiti Nui partners with U.S. carriers including American Airlines and Alaska Airlines, allowing travelers to connect from across the country with a single onward journey.

What distinguishes the experience, he adds, is that it begins at the gate rather than at the destination. From Los Angeles, he says, passengers "are already immersed in Tahitian culture before they even arrive."

Tourism is a cornerstone of the Polynesian economy, and the airline sees itself as an active promoter of the destination, working closely with tourism authorities and maintaining marketing teams in California. Beyond the flight itself, Polynesia offers a high-end ecosystem of luxury resorts, boutique cruises, and distinctive experiences across islands such as Tahiti, Moorea, and Bora Bora. Air Tahiti Nui aims to complement that offering with a culturally rich travel experience aligned to the destination's positioning.

LIONEL GUÉRIN,
CEO OF AIR TAHITI NUI

At the heart of the operation is a fleet of Boeing 787 Dreamliners, among the more advanced aircraft flying long-haul routes today. The carrier is building on that foundation with cabin renovations scheduled for 2027–2028, designed to maintain a high level of comfort and to reflect Polynesian hospitality, pairing modern engineering with a warm onboard atmosphere from departure to arrival.

In a competitive long-haul market, Guérin returns repeatedly to one theme: identity. "Air Tahiti Nui is more than an airline," he says. "It is an ambassador of French Polynesia." Passengers, he argues, feel the culture and warmth

> **"You'll already feel like you're in Tahiti before you even arrive."**

from the moment they board, whether departing Paris or Los Angeles, Auckland or Narita. He frames the airline's scale as an advantage. As a smaller carrier, it relies on closely connected, motivated teams able to offer personalized service that larger operators can find harder to match. That approach is captured in the way the company describes itself, as an immersive airline, built around hospitality that, in his words, is genuine and effortless.

Asked how French Polynesia manages its reliance on international tourism, Guérin points to a deliberately balanced model. The islands host roughly one tourist per resident, a ratio he considers sustainable compared with many destinations, and offer a wide range of accommodations, from luxury resorts to family guesthouses and cruises, which spreads visitors across the archipelago. The government, he adds, regulates tourism development carefully to preserve quality and avoid over-tourism, with parallel efforts in renewable energy, environmental protection, and biodiversity conservation.

Sustainability runs through much of that approach. The Dreamliners are more fuel-efficient than older aircraft, and the company optimizes operations through lighter loads and eco-piloting techniques. It is also exploring sustainable aviation fuels, though regional production remains limited; Guérin says he is personally involved in efforts to develop a SAF ecosystem in the Pacific. Onboard, the carrier is reducing single-use plastics, sourcing local products, and adopting circular-economy practices. Through a voluntary carbon offset program, it supports a local environmental project led by the SOP Manu association: the protection of the Tahitian Monarch, an endemic bird now critically endangered.

Support for the community, Guérin says, is part of the company's DNA. The airline prioritizes hiring and training Polynesian staff, including relaunched programs for cabin crew, and collaborates with local organizations on recycling, upcycling, and community-based projects. "Our goal is to contribute meaningfully to Polynesia's social and economic fabric," he says.

Looking ahead, he describes a strategy of sustainable, measured growth. The airline plans to expand its network through partnerships with carriers such as American Airlines, Alaska Airlines, and Qantas, while exploring new markets in Asia and the South Pacific. A central ambition is to position Tahiti as a Pacific hub, giving travelers the option to connect onward to Sydney, Auckland, and Tokyo.

For now, his message to Los Angeles readers is simple, and he delivers part of it in French: "Le Pacifique est pacifique", the Pacific is peaceful. Polynesia, he says, is a place of calm in a complex world: safe, welcoming, and authentic, where visitors come as much for human connection as for the landscapes. And it is closer than many imagine. "From Los Angeles, it's just a short flight, even closer than Hawaii in some respects." His invitation is direct: choose Air Tahiti Nui, and the journey begins the moment you board. "You'll already feel like you're in Tahiti before you even arrive."