

By Dolores Bundy

# Journey to the South Seas

## Destination. . . Paradise!

Lost in the vastness of the Pacific Ocean scattered far and wide across the sea like many precious grains of sand, Tahiti and Her Islands has always held a very special fascination for travelers. Whether you're someone who absolutely loves encounters and the authentic, or a demanding traveler in search of the exceptional, these islands will evoke visions of heaven on earth. Sometimes words fail to describe the beguiling beauty that paves the way—from an enormous range of extraordinary panoramic landscapes of sunset seas, steep slopes rich with nature, to azure lagoons and dreamy beaches. Tahiti and Her Islands are beyond ordinary, equally alluring but clearly one destination—Paradise!

Our journey begins in Tahiti, the queen of the Pacific, a mythical place with a magical name that will captivate you. Tahiti is the largest of the Polynesian islands and the heart of the Polynesian world. It towers over the ocean crowned by a circle of majestic peaks and its interior is so deep with lush valleys, black sand beaches and roaring rivers that one can only marvel at the masterpiece of beauty blessed with nature's generosity. The moment you land you know you're in God's country, a spectacular corner of the earth. You're greeted with a traditional Polynesian welcome, a warm smile, flowers circling your neck and the lure of Polynesian music. By land, by air or by sea, if you are lover of nature, take an inland tour and discover nature through a gentle breeze of colorful panorama views, surrounded by untouched landscapes and down falling water. Or take a West Coast Tour with Paradise Tours, and discover the bustling Capital city of Papeete full of quaint shops, unique museums, colorful markets and passionate music and dance. But if you just love the sea like me, take an island tour and discover the city's many museums (Paul Gauguin and Tahiti museum), roadside gardens and restaurants by the seashore. Or take to the air by helicopter and journey to Tahiti's

valleys, waterfalls, reefs and lagoons, from a high-point view, a very classical experience.

Next stop you can only anticipate in paradise. Soaring magically out of the ocean in an explosion of green velvet, Moorea, the sister city of Tahiti is only 10 minutes by plane and 30 minutes by boat from Tahiti. It is exactly what you would imagine a South Sea island to look like. It has not lost any of its authenticity, I'm told; it remains savage and enchanting, where many myths came to life. Breathtakingly beautiful, this butterfly-shaped island is a wild rustic paradise of colors, romantic sandy beaches and athletic hikes. Hidden in the meadows are fields of pineapple and vanilla trees, while the shores are dotted with tiny villages. The entire island can be covered in just two hours by car, an exciting tour of infinite choices of high-end boutiques, art galleries and quaint shops featuring Polynesian collectables. Take a 4x4 safari tour into lush forests and up to waterfalls, and jet ski or a schooner ride. Visit Tiki Village, an authentic recreation of life as it was many years ago and experience a spectacular dance show in the natural setting of an open-air theater while dining on traditional Polynesian cuisine. Or you can just relax at one of the class resort hotels hidden along the shores of the brightest blue lagoon you ever saw. Or relax in a bungalow that sits directly on the water and flaunts golden sunsets and dawn awakenings as you've never felt before.

In search of a haven of peace and tranquility, majestic white sand beaches, jagged mountains and magnificent lagoons of turquoise water? Well, this is it! Bora, Bora, the romantic island. Simply said the most beautiful island in the world. Romantics and honeymooners throughout time have laid claim to its magical ambience, its enchanting, castle-like Mountains which pierces the sky over a lagoon that resembles an artist's palette of blues and greens. It has perfect white-sand beaches, and emerald waters.

■ Tahiti and Her Islands are located south of the equator, same time zone as Hawaii, 7 and 1/2 hours from Los Angeles. Non stop flights are available from LAX daily.

■ All visitors to Tahiti and Her Islands must have a return airline ticket and a passport that is valid six months beyond their return date.

■ French and Tahitian are the official languages. English is spoken in hotels and shops throughout the islands.

■ Local currency is the French Pacific Franc (XPF or CFP). International Banks and ATM machines can be found at Faa'a Int'l airport and throughout the main islands. VISA and MasterCard are commonly accepted in most hotels, restaurants, and boutiques while American Express is accepted in some.

■ The climate and lifestyle on the islands calls for casual and comfortable clothing.

For more information please visit  
[www.Tahiti-Tourisme.com](http://www.Tahiti-Tourisme.com)



Divers, snorklers, and boaters will be immersed in infinite marine life and scenic wonders. At the Le Meridian, home of turtle preservation dive into the water from your terrace in a bungalow that sit on stilts in the water. Or you can just lounge in your canopy bed surrounded by veils and a warm breeze. There's nothing preventing you from watching the fish swim while in bed; the bungalow has glass-bottom floors. This is the worlds most favorite playground. Anything goes here!

You will never forget sailing to The Marquesas Islands. The myth of the Garden of Eden or of the dreamy islands lost at the end of the earth, seems a bit far-fetched until you go. These islands have enchanted navigators and adventurers of the heart for decades. Here is where nature runs wild, where herds of goats and packs of wild horses roam in complete freedom. Fruits of the earth and sea, abound, and towering mountains disappear in the clouds as 1000-ft waterfalls cascade into the mist. These clustered of islands near the equator have two distinct groups: the northern group with Nuku Hiva, the big island, Ua Pou and sugarloaf mountains, and Ua Huka, the island of horses; and the southern group with Hiva Oa, the island of the tiki statues, and Tahuata and Fatu Hiva. Each island has a fierce pride in its own integrity. The Marquesas Islands are so remote that the ship, the Aranui III is their lifeline to the outside world bringing supplies and picking up copra (dried coconut) and noni fruit. You'll board the luxurious Aranui III in Tahiti and sail 800 miles to the most spectacular and remote islands in the French Polynesia. And at each port the villagers will gather to meet you. You'll discover that the Marquesan cultural differences of language, songs and rhythmic haka dances and decorative tattoos are quite unique to each island. There are dramatic dive sites, heart stopping views by helicopter, four-wheel drive safaris over mountains to mysterious jungle river valleys and out-board sea-shuttles. And if you ride there are horses everywhere. Don't forget to bring home a black pearl and If your bold like me get a tattoo!

Home of perfect white-sand beaches, alluring black sand beaches, the black pearl the legendary noni juice, and full-body tattoos, Tahiti and Her Islands will welcome you with open arms and offer you the opportunity to live a dream come true. Only seven and a half hours from Los Angeles. Air Tahiti will take you there and your journey begins with the ultimate change of scenery you've always dreamed of. Luxurious, deluxe hotels await you — Sofitel Maeva Beach, Intercontinental Beachcomber, Le Meridian, among many others.

So go ahead! Deep sea dive, snorkel, surf, frolic with dolphins, go fishing, golfing, ride horseback, hike, sail, feed the sting ray and sharks, or just lounge on the beach, the incredible Polynesian experience will be just as you imagine, a little piece heaven on earth, called paradise! For more information visit [www.Tahiti-Tourisme.com](http://www.Tahiti-Tourisme.com)

Look for other articles by Dolores Bundy: The Marquesas Islands: Land of the Men, Bora Bora...Honeymoon Heaven, and Music & Dance of Polynesia. Dolores Bundy may be reached at [dbnetinc@mindspring.com](mailto:dbnetinc@mindspring.com).