# Information About French Polynesia

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General Info
Spread over a vast area about the size of Europe, the widely scattered (118 islands and atolls) of French Polynesia - part of an overseas territory of France - are divided into 5 groups: the Austral, Gambier, Marquesas, Society and Tuamotu archipelagos.

Of these, the Society archipelago is certainly the most famous. It includes the stunning islands of Bora Bora, Moorea and Tahiti - and like the enchanting Marquesas in the northeast - most are lush, dark green specs of land, volcanic in origin, with jagged-edged peaks jutting boldly into the sky.

Almost 61% of the total population of French Polynesia lives on the island of Tahiti, in and around the capital city of Papeete.

The Tuamotu archipelago (in contrast to the other groups) includes only low-lying coral atolls (78 in all), and of these, only a handful have passable inlets into their central lagoons.

Rangiroa, the largest coral atoll in French Polynesia, is famed for its natural beauty, and remains a favorite of travelers from across the globe.

The Austral and Gambier islands in the south are lightly populated, as most are still uninhabited.

The ancient subsistence economy of the larger islands has been replaced by the modern economics of tourism revenues, military employment, pearl farming, commercial fishing and a growing selection of small manufacturing jobs.

Facts and Figures:

Official Name French Polynesia an overseas territory of France, originally claimed in 1843
Population 274,578 (2006 estimate)
Capital City Papeete (27,000) Tahiti (151,500)
Languages French (official), Tahitian (official)
Official Currency Comptoirs Francais du Pacifique franc
Religions Protestant, Catholic, others
Land Area 3,660 sq km
Latitude/Longitude 17° 52S, 149° 56W
Highest Point Mt. Orohena at 7,350 ft. (2,241 m)
Health Services
French Polynesia is very well covered by health care with hospitals and many doctors, specialists and dentists in the most populated islands, infirmeries with qualified nurses in even remotely populated areas. Emergency air transportation is in place if necessary. Many cruisers have been well taken care off so one should not hesitate to contact medical help if needed.

Staphilococcus infections are prevalent and usually start from a small cut. The cuts should be cleaned out well, covered with an antibiotic cream and treated until healed, which can take as long as two weeks.

Filariosis (elephantiasis) is still known to exist in some islands. There is a preventative medicine, which gives protection for a year (only necessary if you stay over 6 months).

Outbreaks of Dengue Fever do occur here. Dengue Fever is a mosquito transmitted disease resulting in flu-like symptoms (high fevers, body aches, joint pain, headaches, dehydration). The only prevention is the application of liberal amounts of insect repellent with DEET.

Restrictions
Charter: Visiting yachts may not charter in French Polynesia. That will break the rule of temporary admission of the boat (see CUSTOMS above).

People arriving by air to charter a boat need only a valid passport, return air ticket and a visa where applicable.

The approaches to the atolls of Mururoa, and Fangataufa and the area around them are prohibited areas, classed as military zones.

The movement of yachts is restricted in certain lagoons in the Tuamotus where there are pearl farms. Generally, one should avoid anchoring near oyster beds.

Alcohol consumption is a problem in many of the islands and visiting boats are urged not to dispense drinks freely to locals.

All fruit trees, including coconut trees, are privately owned. Fruit must not be taken without prior permission. Similarly, reefs inside lagoons are owned by families, so fishing should only be done after having asked permission to do so. Often, if asked, they give freely or gladly in exchange for goods or services.

Money
French Pacific Franc (CFP for its French acronym, or XPF for its ISO acronym) with a fixed parity to the Euro (1 € = 119,33 XPF).
There are ATMs in most of the local post offices (there are post offices in all towns and little villages, even on outer islands), and at local banks in some islands. (E.g. the larger islands of the Marquesas at Taiohae, Nuka Hiva and Atuona on Hiva Oa, or Rangiroa in Tuamotu.)

Credit cards are accepted at many stores.

In some places you can exchange Euros or US Dollars at the local post office (E.g. in the Gambier at Rikitea, or in the Marquesas at Taiohae on Nuka Hiva and at Atuona on Hiva Oa, and most of the Society islands).

US $ are accepted in few places (at higher exchange rates).

It is recommended to leave the Marquesas with plenty of CFP.

CFP is also the currency in use in the French territories of New Caledonia and the islands of Wallis and Futuna. Therefore keep your extra CFP when leaving French Polynesia, if you plan to stop later at one of these islands!

Last updated April 2013.

**Communications**

**Telephone**

International Dialing Code for French Polynesia is +689. Every town and little village has a public call box. It is best to use a pre-paid international calling card which you can get from the post office.

The cellular operator in French Polynesia is "Vini". It's useful to have a quad band cell phone UNLOCKED. You can do pay-as-you-go; buy a sim card for $5 or $10 and then add money as you need it (although purchasing a SIM card can be difficult). Cell access is surprisingly good in French Polynesia, even out in the Tuamotus.

**Internet**

Internet access is possible in most of the major anchorages near towns of any size, although it is very expensive and very slow. (2013 prices: approx. US$5 for 1 hour and US$42 for 10 hours – prices vary slightly from one provider to the other). You can sign up and pay online for a block of time after connecting your WiFi antenna to the provider’s network. You may need to buy blocks of time from 3 or 4 different providers, because coverage varies from place to place.

A long range WiFi antenna is very useful to have. Coverage is pretty spotty in the Tuamotu: Rangiroa, North Fakarava, Makemo, Manihi, Tikehau, and perhaps a few others when anchored near a post office (see Manaspot info. following).
"Manaspot" (www.manaspot.pf) is a provider from the French Polynesia postal service and as such operates in all islands where there is a post office, i.e. even in some of the remotest outer islands like the Austral and Gambier.

However the WiFi range is sometimes limited, therefore you cannot get a signal in remote anchorages. Check their website for locations. You can buy access cards at the post office, or sign-in online using a credit card. In many post offices you can also use your access card to connect at the post office public computer which is available free of charge.

“HotSpot-WDG”: this is another WiFi internet provider, with WiFi zones in all Society islands, Nuku Hiva, Hiva Oa and Ua Pou in the Marquesas, and Manihi, Rangiroa, Fakarava and Tikehau in the Tuamotu. You can sign-in online using a credit card, or buy access cards at their WiFi zone stations like hotels or “pensions”, or marinas (check their website home page for locations).

"Iaoraspot": Cruisers can also use this privately owned WiFi service run by a yachting-affiliated person. They are reported to have a better Wi-Fi signal, but not necessarily a faster internet connection. Iaoraspot has WiFi zones in all Society islands, Nuku Hiva, and Hiva Oa in the Marquesas, Rangiroa, and Fakarawa in the Tuamotu, and Mangareva in Gambier.

You can sign-in online using a credit card, or buy access cards at their WiFi zone stations like hotels or “pensions”, or marinas (check their website home page for locations). From their home page you can also get free of charge weather forecasts from: Windguru (various islands), Meteo France website (very complete including satellite pictures of the South Pacific), and 7 day GRIB files covering all of French Polynesia.

August 2012: OminAccess has expanded its high speed network coverage in French Polynesia - see www.omniaccess.com for more details.

You can also get a dongle from MANA, which is part of the telephone network (offices in almost every town of any size), but you need to sign up for an annual contract, and the service is excruciatingly slow.

Events
The Heiva Festival, three weeks from the end of June until a few days after Bastille Day (July 14th), when there are competitions of Polynesian dancing, Polynesian songs, outrigger canoe racing, fruit carrier racing, etc.. The smaller the atoll usually the closer you get to the people.

The Heiva festival is celebrated in all archipelagoes, with the most important competitions in Tahiti. Although smaller than Tahiti, the Bora Bora Heiva Festival is also famous.

Emergency telephone numbers:
MRCC 16 (Marine search and rescue)
Police 17
Fire 18
Ambulance 15

SOS Medical 42 34 56
Links
http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/oceania/pf.htm
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/australia.html#F - Maps of Australia and The Pacific
http://www.tahiti-tourisme.com/
http://www.boraboraish.com/
http://www.tahiti-explorer.com/framess/morea-index.html
http://www.360cities.net/area/tahiti-french-polynesia
http://www.lonelyplanet.com/tahiti-and-french-polynesia
http://tahitiguide.com/
http://avp4yachties.over-blog.org/
Association des Voiliers en Polynésie : The French Polynesia Cruising Association is now available online.
www.tahiti-tourisme.com
Official Tourist Office Site
Tahiti Nui Travel
Good local information on this travel companies website.
www.tahitiguide.com
Tourist Guide
Tahiti Sun Travel
Another good travel guide
Cruising Compendiums for the Tuamotus, Marquesas and Society Islands.
http://svsoggypaws.com/files/
A Compilation of Guidebook References and Cruising Reports put together by SV Soggy Paws with updates from cruisers who have used the guides. Lots of good information if planning on cruising French Polynesia.

Sailing
http://www.svwondertime.com/tag/society-islands/
http://charliescharts.com/
http://www.trimaran-naga.com/societies.htm - Trip report
http://www.noonsite.com/ - The global site for cruising sailors
http://www.noonsite.com/Countries/FrenchPolynesia - Noonsite for French Polynesia

Negotiating the passes into some of the lagoons can be a difficult operation, mainly because of the strong currents. Generally, the weakest current occurs one hour after low water and one hour after high water. Passes are for the most part well-marked, some even lit at night. However one should still be
sure to use careful eyeball navigation, ideally when the sun is overhead and the colour of the water gives a good indication of its depth.

The best facilities are to be found in Papeete; the only other centre with extensive repair facilities is on Raiatea, where two charter companies have their base. Facilities are on a par with Tahiti, or even better, and have the great convenience of being grouped together.

Provisioning is best in Tahiti and adequate in the other Society Islands. Provisions in the Marquesas are adequate, though expensive, and it's best to stock-up, particularly in fresh goods, when heading for the Tuamotus.

Fuel is available in the main settlements, although it is more difficult to find in the Tuamotus.

Security: Cruisers reports indicate that care should be taken at night to lock up dinghys, dinghy motors and other loose items on deck whilst at anchor in Opunohu Bay, Moorea and Papeete. With the downturn in the islands hotel trade it is thought there has been an upturn in non-violent crime, confirmed by the Gendarmerie.

http://www.noonosite.com/Countries/FrenchPolynesia/BoraBora - Bora Bora yachting profile

http://www.trimaran-naga.com/resources/index.htm - Sailors' Offshore Cruising Resources Local and Inshore Sailing Travelers' Resources - books, software, online cruising guides, and more -

http://www.nineofcups.com/society_islands_leewards.html

Books

http://www.amazon.com/Lonely-Planet-South-Pacific-Country/dp/1741797748/ref=dp_ob_title_bk

http://charliescharts.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=1&products_id=6  CHARLIE'S CHARTS of Polynesia - NEW! (7th Ed.) , $41.00USD

“Charlie's Charts of Polynesia” by Charles E. Woods, updated by Margo Wood, available ($33.50) at: Charlie's Charts Cruising Guides, West Marine, etc

Marsha Davock's guide is dated, but good. I also see a newer Guide to Navigation and Tourism in French Polynesia by Patrick Bonnette, Emmanuel Deschamps, but have not used it

Paper books with reviews:


- If you do a good job with electronic resources you can get away with just [Bonnette](#). The problem with Bonnette is that it is out of print in English and so can be extremely expensive. You can buy a copy in French Tahiti for $60 but by then you are about to leave the country. Search for a used one.
- If you can't buy Bonnette you will probably need [Charlie’s Charts of Polynesia](#). I am hesitant about recommending this book because it is out of date and the included chartlets are often useless. We bought the 7th edition after being told by one of the new owners that it was new and updated and paid full list price. After perusing the book and an old copy floating around electronically I can confidently state that the 7th edition is very out of date as well. Still…it is somewhere to start and for that reason we carry a copy. If I could do it again, I would buy an older edition inexpensively.
- If I were buying a second book, and the Marquesas sounded exciting to me, I would buy a copy of [Exploring the Marquesas Islands](#) by Joe Russell. It is out of date but has a lot of fun anchorages in it and gives a lot more info on the area than Charlie’s Charts.
- We had old copies of [South Pacific Anchorages](#) and [Landfalls of Paradise](#) given to us. Because we were interested in some off the beaten path options we found these fun to have aboard and have kept them and continue to use them. They are not necessary by any means but if you have access to an inexpensive copy, or a lot of cash, they are worth the shelf space just for background information on countries.

French Polynesia Cruising Guides?


South Pacific Anchorages by Warwick Clay. Google and you'll find where you can buy in the US. It is also available from Boat Books in both Australia and New Zealand. (Different ownership in each country, both have pretty good web sites.)

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A South Pacific Lonely Planet is all that you'll need. Anchorages are well marked on the charts, bouy sytem is excellent. Travel in the lagoons during daytime only though everything is well marked.

Bora Bora, and Papaette are places you can check in at. Go during the Heiva festival...Bora Bora is best as it's free and the oldest. Raiatea, Huahine and Moorea are my favorites, though Bora Bora is spectacular. Don't moor at the Bora Bora yacht club. It's not a yacht club and expensive. Don't buy food at the Heiva in Bora Bora.

You'll need to post a bond equivalent to airfare home. The banks will soak you on fees for this. Read lonely planet for what to do. Fuel and provisioning is excellent but expensive. Good boat yards in Raiatea, good industrial area in Papaette.

Most people DO NOT speak English. Business places normally do but it's more difficult with the Tahitians. Try to deal with polynesian customs officers rather then the fr*gs. If you do get a rude fr*g ask
for his name and tell him your father is a senator and will complain directly to the fr*g ambassador. This will quiet them down. Some can be extremely bad tempered though most are pleasant and professional.

It's best to start in Tahiti then sail north due to prevailing winds.

ATM's are readily available and currency exchange. Many places will accept US dollars. When you leave convert all FRP Francs back into US dollars as FRP money is useless anywhere else in the world.

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More cruising notes:

You have to check in and out at each island.

You med-moor at the quay in Papaette (check in). The harbor has a chain running the entire length which used to be used to moor tugboats...many people snag their anchors on this chain, some require divers to free it though a lot of times the Harbor master will provide the divers free. It's best when you are leaving to leave the anchor down, power forward a few hundred yards and pull the anchor around to the opposite direction. I had no trouble doing this.

The quay has water and 220 electric available but it's very noisy. I recommend the marina.

When passing the airport you must call for clearance. It's well posted with signs.

You can easily get around Tahiti on the bus...just flag them down and they'll pick you up. Take a map and mark where you want to go. Remember the people on board will not speak English but pointing to the marked spot will be sufficient to get directions or help as to where to get off.

French for Cruisers Book Review
By doina — last modified Jul 09, 2010 01:40 PM

Published: 2010-07-09 13:40:22

Countries: Belgium, France, French Guiana, French Polynesia, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Martinique, Mayotte, Monaco, New Caledonia, Reunion Island, St Martin, St Pierre & Miquelon, Wallis and Futuna

French for Cruisers
By Kathy Parsons

Aventuras Publishing Company, Halletsville, Texas 77964

www.forcruisers.com

ISBN 0-9675905-1-5

$29.95
The success of her “Spanish for Cruisers” has prompted Kathy Parsons to produce an even more comprehensive French phrase book for cruising sailors. This is particularly helpful for sailors cruising the Caribbean where French is widely spoken from Haiti in the west to Martinique in the east, but just as useful for anyone heading for the South Pacific, to French Polynesia and beyond. An obvious improvement, compared to the Spanish version, is having the table of contents in both English and French. Generally, the introductory chapters are more wide-ranging and cover various day-to-day situations even better than the Spanish edition. Being obviously aware of the importance of eating among people whose French is their first language, and who know what is really important in life, the author has given wide coverage to meats, fish, cheese, herbs, as well as restaurants. The core of the book, however, deals with the boat itself and lists everything that could possibly go wrong, and how to explain it in passable French. Although the pronunciation of every expression is spelt out phonetically, the author very thoughtfully has also included pictures of the various parts, so the user can simply point to the offending part rather than try to make a bemused mechanic understand that “mon ahr-bruh deh-leess eh tohr-dew”, which I doubt that even the most patient angel could possibly work out that it was meant to convey "that my propeller shaft is bent" (mon arbre d’hélice est tordu). Personne ne doit partir en voyage sans ce livre!... (No one should leave on a voyage without this book).

Publications
IMRAY AND ADLARD COLES PILOT BOOKS are available at a discounted price for Noonsite.com users via World Cruising Club

*Cruising Guide to Tahiti & the Society Islands*
By Marcia Davock

Publisher: Wescott Cove Publishing Company; 1st edition (January 1, 1985)


*A Cruising Guide to the Leeward Islands of Tahiti*
By The Moorings

This informative cruising guide to French Polynesia answers all your questions on sailing the glorious Tahitian waters and includes sketch charts, anchoring tips and charts.

*Charlie’s Charts of Polynesia*
By Charles Wood and Margo Wood

Publisher: Charlies Charts (Last printed 2011)

ISBN-9780983331902

Cruisers in Polynesia have provided many significant updating details for anchorages and marina facilities in the following areas: Iles Marquises, Archipel des Tuamotu (the Tuamotu), Pitcairn Island, Isla de Pascua (Easter Island), Iles de la Societe (Society Islands--Windward Islands of Tahiti, Moorea, Huahine, Raiatea and Bora-Bora), Cook Islands, Niue and Includes entry procedures, weather
information, advice on the location of the best anchorages, navigation in coral waters and advice for running passes. Many sea view sketches aid in recognizing entry to passes and anchorages.

*The Pacific Crossing Guide*
By Michael Pocock, Revised by Ros Hogbin

Publisher: Adlard Coles; 2nd edition (August 2011)


See the detailed review

*South Pacific Anchorages*
By Warwick Clay

Publisher: Imray Laurie Norie & Wilson Ltd; 2nd edition (January 1, 2001)


Warwick Clay's cruising guide covers the South Pacific from the Mariana Islands in the northwest across to the Galapagos in the east then down passed Easter Island to New Zealand in the Southwest. The guide covers this vast area in detail and virtually every anchorage is described with supporting plans produced from the author's own information.

*Moon Tahiti*
By David Stanley

Publisher: Avalon Travel Publishing; 7th edition (December 28, 2010)


Since 1989, Moon Tahiti has been the leading travel guidebook to French Polynesia and this new edition incorporates the latest restaurant, resort, and transportation news. Stanley has been covering the South Pacific for over three decades and he knows the region better than any other travel writer.

*Guide to Navigation and Tourism in French Polynesia*
By Patrick Bonnette and Emmanuel Deschamps

Publisher Editions A.Barthelemy (13 Oct 2003)


Marquesas, Tuamotu, Gambier, Societies - Tahiti, Australs. An indispensable tool for the experienced sailor who prefers a do-it-yourself approach in discovering Polynesian waters and the local lifestyle. Detailed charts, photos and drawings add to the wealth of information as well as advice for administrative and customs formalities. In addition to being a navigational guide it is also an introduction to daily life and tourist activities in French Polynesia.
Yachtsman's Guide to French Polynesia
produced by the Port Autonome de Papeete. A pdf (2008) that can be downloaded.

Charlie's Charts of Polynesia
By Charles and Margo Wood

Publisher - Charles Charts - 7th edition

ISBN 9780983331902

Cruisers in Polynesia have provided many significant updating details for anchorages and marina facilities in the following areas: Iles Marquises Archipel des Tuamotu (the Tuamotu) Pitcairn Island Isla de Pascua (Easter Island) Iles de la Societe (Society Islands—Windward Islands of Tahiti, Moorea, Huahine, Raiatea and Bora-Bora) Cook Islands Niue
Maps

French Polynesia
http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/google_map_french_polynesia.htm  Google Earth searchable satellite map
Tahiti

Most boats no longer tie stern-to in Papeete in the long-accostomed pattern here. Crime in the downtown area has led to too many incidents of theft from the boats. So nowadays most boats go west from Papeete, around past the airport, and anchor in the Maeva Beach area or across from the Taina Marina: there are magnificent views of Moorea and the water is crystalline clear. This area also has the wonderful advantage of having a huge French hypermarket - the Carrefour. And it’s just a short bus ride into the city. Typical of the South Pacific, the anchorages tend to be either too deep or too shallow, but there are some good sand patches on the scenic edge of the reef - just don’t trust your anchor in them if the wind comes up strong!

It gets COLD in Tahiti at night! Be sure to have your blankets available. It’s only 17 1/2 degrees south of the equator, but there’s nothing between you and the antarctic! The South Pacific is much colder than we Caribbean sailors had expected. The air in Tahiti can be so fragrant with flowers it almost hurts! The island is high, and in the evenings the cooling air descends the slopes bearing the scent of millions of flowers. Unique and unbelievable, we've never encountered anything like it anywhere. It's a wonderful place, even if it is partially in the throes of development.
Moorea is just a scant 10 miles or so West of Tahiti. It's a beautiful view from the Taina anchorage and it makes for some amazing sunsets as the sun descends through Moorea's mountains!
Opunohu Bay

From: http://www.noonsite.com/Members/sue/R2012-05-29-1
Society Islands, Moorea, Opunohu Bay: Rising Crime - May 2012
By Sue Richards — last modified Sep 26, 2012 10:27 PM
Published: 2012-05-29 14:50:00
Topics: Piracy Reports 2012
Countries: French Polynesia

There have been a number of reports of rising crime from boats in Opunohu Bay, Moorea, Society Islands.

We were anchored there in May 2012 and were awakened at 1am with the noise of someone attempting to steal our outboard from the dinghy which was raised. The two thieves were in a local pirogue and paddled away once disturbed. We found they had already helped themselves to loose items on the deck such as kids shoes, and snorkelling equipment. The next morning we found our next door neighbours had had their outboard stolen (it was unlocked) from their raised dinghy, along with other loose items on the deck.

Friends who live in Polynesia tell us this is not uncommon in Moorea where the fall in hotel trade has led to the rise in crime.

Not to shatter illusions of Polynesian hospitality the robber was polite enough to shout back as he was leaving, "desolee" (sorry) after I'd used rather less polite language to him.
Colin Price
s/v Pacificbliss
Tetiaroa
Huahine - Profile

Location
Huahine lies 110 miles NW of Tahiti (or 70 miles from Moorea). Visible from Raiatea, Tahaa and Bora Bora, the two islands of Huahine Nui and Huahine Iti are connected by a bridge and have a combined area of 28 sq.miles.
The road winds 20 miles around the two islands, passing through small villages surrounded by banana, breadfruit, papaya and mango trees. All around both islands are plantations of vanilla, coffee, taro, watermelons and cantaloupe. There are few cars here, so it is perfect to explore on a bicycle. There are many secluded coves and uninhabited islets to visit.
Position 16°43'S, 151°02'W.

**Clearance**
Fare is the Port of Entry, but if you are checking into French Polynesia here, formalities will have to be completed in Papeete.
The Gendarmerie Nationale in Fare can deal with Immigration and will give you a Customs Declaration form, which has to be filled in and signed and faxed to Customs in Papeete. It is then compulsory to visit Papeete, flying the Q flag, and complete Customs clearance there.
Full details can be found at [French Polynesia Clearance](http://www.hackingfamily.com/Landfalls/French_Polynesia/huahine.htm).
Even yachts coming from Tahiti must check in with the Gendarmerie.
Last updated April 2013.

**Docking**
There is no marina but a public dock in Fare is available for loading/unloading.
Space for anchoring off the village is limited, but there are many attractive anchorages on both west and east coasts of the island.
Last updated September 2013.

From: [http://www.hackingfamily.com/Landfalls/French_Polynesia/huahine.htm](http://www.hackingfamily.com/Landfalls/French_Polynesia/huahine.htm)
For our town anchorage, we preferred anchoring south of town, in between the 2 reef entrances. There was excellent snorkeling there, and fewer flies than off the old hotel. But the whole western reef offered excellent anchorages, with nice snorkeling and exploration possibilities, in isolated splendor.

The most interesting thing was seeing the sacred blue-eyed eels. We'd heard about the eels, which live in fresh water, from our tour info. Since we were touring the island in rental cars, we paid them a visit. I didn't really know what to expect, but I was surprised at how large they were (about 3 ft). They weren't quite like the saltwater morays we see while diving, but were surprisingly similar in body shape and fin structure. It depressed me to see how little water they had, barely enough for a 3" thick eel to move in. The eels live in 'caves' where the cement along the banks of their stream has eroded or been removed.

Our tour also included a stop at a pearl farm. This farm was actually based out of a structure built on the water, but a boat took tourists out. Similar to the farms on Fakarava, the pearls are seeded with a sphere of shell from a freshwater oyster and a sliver of mantle from a Tahitian oyster. The oysters are hung deeper here so boats can pass above them, but otherwise it was similar except there was a display case including some very nice large pearls, often set in gold and/or with engravings in the nacre. All very beautiful, but the nicest ones were over $1,000 US.

The other major stop on our tour was a marae, which is basically the Society islanders' equivalent of a temple. The marae consisted of a large open space paved with stones (read REALLY HOT) and several small constructions such as altars, tables for offerings, and tombs of important people. This marae, which had been beautifully restored, included many signs explaining different parts in, among other languages, English.

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Raiatea - Profile

Location
Raiatea lies about 130 miles NW of Tahiti (or 25 miles from Huahine or Bora Bora) and is the second of the Society Islands in geographic size, population, available supplies and marine services. It has rugged mountains, deep water bays and a myriad of anchorages protected by a barrier reef. Nearly every part of the coastline is accessible by boat, which makes Raiatea interesting if avoiding rough weather by cruising to the off-wind opposite side of the island.

The town of Uturoa serves as the administrative center for the Leeward Islands. It has modern dock facilities and is a good place to work on the boat, to leave your boat for a while and to provision before your departure for the Cook Islands.

Position 16°44'S, 151°26'W.

Clearance
Uturoa is the Port of Entry, but if you are checking into French Polynesia here, formalities will have to be completed in Papeete. The Gendarmerie Nationale in Uturoa can deal with Immigration and will give you a Customs Declaration form, which has to be filled in and signed and faxed to Customs in Papeete. It is then compulsory to visit Papeete, flying the Q flag, and complete Customs clearance there. Full details can be found at French Polynesia Clearance.

Even if you checked in before in Tahiti you need to check-in with the Gendarmerie. Their office is close to the Post Office on the NW side of the town directly on the main street.

When clearing out, ask for permission for tax-free refueling and save 30% on expenses.

Last updated April 2013.

Docking
Note that the leading marks and main marks between the pass and the port are lit. There are three public Marinas in Raiatea: Two in Uturoa and one in Apooiti.

Uturoa’s main marina for the local fishermen, loading/unloading, ferries and access for big cruise ships is in the centre of town. It is divided into two areas: a well-protected part for fishing boats and ferries; and a very exposed part for visitors. Sailboats are only allowed to dock in the latter part. There is no power supply or water connection. Wash from the fast fishing boats and ferries are sometimes a hazard if staying on the dock here as well as strong easterly winds. Keep in mind, there are some steel rings directly attached to the pier’s concrete wall. The nearby Shell Gas Station does not offer water for visitors. There is no security and there have been incidents of thefts from boats here. If an overnight stay is planned, it is highly recommended to secure everything on deck as well as the dinghy engine(s) and the dinghy itself.

The second marina in Uturoa (north) is the home base of Dream Yacht Charters and is usually overcrowded with permanent residents. However, there are two moorings in front of the marina entrance which can be used if free and by liaising with Dream Yacht Charters.

Marina Apooiti is located shortly after the airport in a westerly direction and is the home base for Sunsail Charters, Moorings and Tahiti Yacht Charter. It has a new visitors dock with power (220V, 50 XPF each KWh) and water. There is places for 4 to 5 boats. They charge (March 2013) monohulls 220 XPF/m/day and multihulls 330 XPF a day. Every 7th day is free. The area is well secured and there are some shops a15 min walk away. They also have a laundry. Advance reservations for any of the Marinas are only possible for permanent residents. There is a small marina at the boatyard Chantier Naval, but only for their customers waiting to get pulled out of the water.

Anchorages
There are a number of, safe, secluded anchorages around the island. Baie Haamene on the west coast offers a secure holding in mud. In front of the northern Uturoa marina (Dream Yacht Charters) is a good and not too deep spot for a sandy anchorage. There are numerous places before the reef on the west and east side of Raiatea for anchoring depending on the wind direction. It is recommended to get the exact spot information from locals or a good map.

Last updated June 2013.

La Marina d’Uturoa
Uturoa
Tel:(689) 66 31 52 ,VHF Channel 12 or 16

**La cale Uturerae**
Tel:(689) 60 00 45/66 10 10 Fax:(689) 66 28 41 ,VHF Channel 72
http://www.cnislv.com , cni@mail.pf
A private marina for boats having work done at Chantier Naval des Îles.

**Marina Apooiti**
Raiatea , B.P. 165 - 98 735 Uturoa, Raiatea
Tel:+689 66 35 93 Fax:+689 66 20 94 ,VHF Channel 68 or 12
moorings@mail.pf
All facilities, laundry, fuel, WiFi, bar, restaurants, yacht charter companies and a dive school.

**Yacht Clubs**

**Yacht Club de Raiatea**
Marina d’Apooti
Tel:(689) 66 42 20
Contact: Yves Robert. Nautical center focussed towards sailing instruction (Hobie Cat 16’ & traditional outrigger sailing canoes).

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**Tahaa - Profile**

**Location**
Tahaa lies in the same barrier reef as Raiatea to the south. Tahaa is often called the Vanilla island due to those numerous plantations that flourish in the fertile valleys bordered by deepwater bays. You can navigate the channel encircling the island.

**Clearance**
No clearance necessary as Tahaa is considered one with Raiatea.

**Docking**
A public dock (Quai de Tapuamu) at Uporu/Iripau is available for loading/unloading. There are no public moorings anywhere, however, on Tahaa, many local businesses have installed private moorings for the free use of any yacht that patronizes their activities. Some other private moorings are unsuitable for yachts and therefore it is important to check any mooring before leaving the yacht unattended! So be sure to inquire after tying to any mooring.

**Iti Marina**
(south of Tahaa)
Tel:(689) 65 61 01 Fax:(689) 65 63 87 ,VHF Channel 68
marinaiti@mail.pf
A sheltered anchorage rather than a marina. WiFi, showers.

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Its protected from big waves, but the trades can get strong enough to create some chop in areas. More protected and easier than San Francisco Bay.

There is an excellent anchorage off motu TauTau with fantastic sunsets over Bora Bora. If Raiatea is something you would consider as well, we liked anchorages near motu Irihu (one of a few publicly accessible motus in Societies) and in Faaroa Bay (with dinghy ride on river Aoppomau). See attached pictures for what you'll get (and miss if you do not go). All mentioned anchorages were so quiet while we were there that we thought we were on land (but we were on 43’ cat).

We bareboated in Tahiti in 2005 had a great time. The entrances through the coral reefs are well marked for the islands that we visited. We went to Bora-Bora, Tahaa, and Raiatea. We went in May and had several heavy rainstorms. The passage back from Bora-Bora to Tahaa was interesting with 25 knot winds, 8 to 10 foot seas and rain. August may be a bit more tame. You should not have any difficulty navigating as the reefs are relatively easy to see with the very clear water. Make sure to visit Bloody Mary's in Bora-Bora and Marina Iti in Tahaa. Great restaurants and anchorages.


On Raiatea there is a nice shallow river you can go explore with your dingy. I liked that.

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I'd pick my route/destination via the best weather/wind as I leave the marina. I've had the wind on the nose to Bora Bora and that was not fun, only to have the wind on the nose to Huahine several days later (trade winds? go figure!)

You can have an excellent trip just staying in the Raiatea/Tahaa lagoon. Sailing on those calm, flat waters with unobstructed breezes is fantastic.

Coming back from Huahine, I like to enter the lagoon at Irihu Passe, then anchor in Baie Faaroa and do the river trip that day or next AM. Fun for the kids AND adults. Take a couple Hinanos for the adults.
Around Fare (the classic French Polynesian town) I've always liked anchoring close to beach on the left of Passe Avamoa, next to what used to be the Bali Hai. My favorite is Baie d'Avea, out on the inner edge of the reef. Spectacular colors, good breeze, "end of the world" feel but with Relais Mahana right on shore. Great romantic spot for a couple to have dinner or drinks.

On our first visit to Raiatea I was struck by the lack of sandy, reef-side anchorages which we had always sought out in the other Society Islands. Instead, we found ourselves nosing into deeply cut bays with water depths of over 80 feet. On our return at the end of March, we had more time to explore and found some lovely spots in 8 feet of water over white sand. Raiatea has the second largest population after Tahiti, but its small town of Uturoa is a lovely place with a city dock (harboring the ferries to Tahaa), a few banks, general goods stores, three grocery stores (none very big), and some tourist shops for those arriving by cruise ship. There are no public buses, so hitching is the norm for visiting yachtyes as we made our way the 6 miles (10 km) from the anchorage off a boat yard (where we found all the other cruisers) to the town of Uturoa. The highlight of the Raiatea visit was the dinghy trip up the river at the head of Faaroa Bay. We reveled in the fresh water scent, the overhanging branches of giant hibiscus, and the floral displays along the banks. We went up twice, once with our visitors Bill and Mary and their kids, and again with cruising friends on Cookie Cutter. On the second trip we tied the dinghy to a dock and walked ashore through the botanical garden.

The most exciting snorkeling trip was at night during the full moon. Urbanites might not believe me (I'm not sure I would have), but down here it is possible to read a novel by the light of the full moon. We were anchored out on sand flats that stretch out to the barrier reef, but there were several coral heads nearby. Of course, the water dims the moonlight so much that we had to take lights with us (in plastic bags, since we don't actually have any underwater lights) but I had a lot of fun. Unfortunately, we didn't really see the coral polyps we had hoped would be out (the full moon may have actually been too bright for them.) However, I did get some great pictures of a lionfish. Imagine free-diving diving 20 feet (6 meters) holding a light in a bag in one hand, a camera in the other, to photograph a lionfish at night! Very exhilarating, but I think we need some better lights. I would love to go for a night dive sometime.

The other exciting part of Raiatea itself was the Apoomau river, the only navigable river in French Polynesia. Large, slow-moving, and beautiful, the river was decorated with a scattering of glorious blossoms in colors ranging from purple-red to dark yellow. The banks were lushly vegetated and the water was calm enough to reflect the surrounding scenery.
Bora Bora
Bora Bora - Profile

Location
Bora Bora lies about 160 miles NW of Tahiti (or 26 miles from Raiatea or Maupiti). Bora Bora is called the most beautiful island of the Pacific. Protected by a circling barrier reef, its lagoon offers a myriad of nice anchorages. Only one pass leads to Vaitape, the main village. Despite its touristic development, Bora Bora has kept her Polynesian charm.
Position 16°30'S, 151°46'W.

Clearance
Vaitape is a Port of Entry, but if you are checking into French Polynesia here, formalities will have to be completed in Papeete.
The Gendarmerie Nationale in Vaitape can deal with Immigration and will give you a Customs Declaration form, which has to be filled in and signed and faxed to Customs in Papeete. It is then compulsory to visit Papeete, flying the Q flag, and complete Customs clearance there.
Full details can be found at French Polynesia Clearance
Even if you checked in before in Tahiti, you need to check-in with the Gendarmerie and check-out with them before leaving for final clearance. It is very important to have outward clearance papers at your next port of call.
When you check out, you will be able to get your bond money back at a local bank.

Last updated April 2013.

Docking

Enter the pass at 113.4°, after the second marker, take a course of 70° towards the baie of Faanui. The Boa Bora Yacht Club is just inside the only channel entering the lagoon.

Although the anchorage is deep (85') in the area around the rebuilt Boa Bora Yacht Club, the holding is good. There are also mooring buoys, but it is understood that they may not have been maintained recently. The anchorage and mooring field here is well protected from prevailing winds from the East and South.

There are also moorings at the newer MaiKai Marina, around the corner, closer to Vaitape and near the fuel dock. A floating dock, for loading/unloading, a fixed dock and floating docks for dinghies are available here.

A public dock is available for loading/unloading at downtown Vaitape. Another popular mooring stop is in front of Bloody Mary's Restaurant.

Most anchorages on the east coast of Bora Bora have been restricted for lagoon and ecological reasons. It is now not allowed to anchor further than 1 NM east of Bora Bora airport. Also due to a drastic drop in Manta Ray population recently, all cruising yachts are requested not to attempt to snorkel in the area. All access to this area is restricted.

Last updated July 2013.

Bora Bora Yacht Club
98730 Nunue, Bora Bora, French Polynesia
Tel:(+689) 67 60 47, VHF Channel 69
http://www.boraborayachtclub.net, boraborayc@mail.pf

The original yacht club was destroyed by Cyclone Oli in February 2010. It has now been rebuilt and the restaurant re-opened under new ownership.

25 mooring buoys (which may have not been maintained), dinghy dock, water, showers, garbage, internet hotspot, bike rental, laundry service, shuttle bus, bar and restaurant.

Last updated July 2013.

Mai Kai Marina & Yacht Club
B.P. 162 Vaitape, Bora Bora 98730, French Polynesia
Tel:+689 603 800 (Marina & Restaurant) / +689 26 12 78 (out of hours) / +689 79 23 57 (emergency)
VHF Channel 16, 69
http://www.maikaimarina.com, info@maikaimarina.com

This is a new facility opened by the previous owners of the Bora Bora YC, Teiva and Jessica. It is not far from the Te Ava Nui pass and just minutes from Vaitape.

All facilities, 32 secure moorings, floating dock for water/loading/unloading etc, 40ft fixed dock, dinghy dock, laundry, water re-fill services, free WiFi, mail holding, re-provisioning and grocery shuttle to and from town, bar and excellent restaurant. Chandlery, banks, P.O., fuel all close by.

Last updated July 2013.

Yacht Clubs

Bora Bora Yacht Club
98730 Nunue, Bora Bora, French Polynesia
Tel:(+689) 67 60 47, VHF Channel 69
http://www.boraborayachtclub.net, boraborayc@mail.pf

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Bora Bora

Although there is no official public harbour to speak of on Bora Bora, there are a few locations recognized by the public for mooring, anchoring, or docking your boat:

1) The main dock at the Vaitape wharf can be used on a temporary basis for loading and unloading. There's quite a bit of boats wanting to dock here, so "temporary" is the key word here.

2) The first and maybe most popular spot for mooring vessels is in front of the famous Bloody Mary's restaurant, where services are few but include water fillups, trash facilities, a dingy docking area, and a local card phone. It's probably not a stretch to say that over 90% of the boats mooring here have dinner or drinks at the restaurant. Long stays here are not permitted.

3) Another public and popular place to anchor or moor vessels is the Bora bora yacht club. Here, vessels from all over the world are permitted to stay for times of longer duration if necessary, (no drydocking) and can utilize the facilities for water fillups, electrical hookups, garbage disposal, and newly revamped restaurant and bar services among other things.
4) You will also see yachts at various other random protected places within the lagoon waters. A few favorites include anchoring in the protected waters of Motu Toopua, and just inside the Teavamoa Pass and to the South of Motu Piti Aau where there is a 30 foot sandy bottom and good holding.

See the Moorings itinerary:

The Moorings Tahiti Itinerary - Bareboats

Raiatea and Taha'a are two islands enclosed in a single barrier reef.

Raiatea

Uturoa is the only harbour on Raiatea island. The large lagoon offers near complete circumnavigation of Raiatea within it's barriers.

Tahaa

There is one harbour on Tahaa and a few good places to anchor or moor boats. The harbour is located in Tapuamu Bay on the northwest side of the island and is called Tapuamu village. Tapuamu bay is considered by sailors to be one of the most sheltered in the area, affording good protection from the famously strong southeasterly tradewinds known as "Maraamu".

For good places to moor outside of Tapuamu bay, the 2 most popular places to moor are at the Marina Iti, on the south side of the island, and also in front of the Hibiscus hotel in Haamene bay on the east side of Tahaa.

Huahine

There is no public harbour to speak of on Huahine, but several good places to anchor and moor your boat. One of the most popular spots to moor is in the protected lagoon directly in front of the village of Fare. You will also see yachts at various other random protected places within the lagoon waters.

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Have fun and be prepared for deep anchorages. We anchored in the south of Raiatea in 100 ft, and off the town in Bora Bora it is about 65 ft. If you want to go off the itinerary, we had a ball in Patio, on the north end of Tahaa. It is a remote town, where a lot of locals don't even speak French, but they rounded up an Australian woman who had married a local and we spent several days with them, skindiving on the reef, going to their home and vanilla plantation.

It is getting close enough to Bastille Day that you may be able to take in some of the festivities. After watching the 'professionals' doing the hula in Papeete, we much preferred the more spontaneous action in the remote places like Patio.

I remember anchoring in Fare and renting motorbikes to see the island. There is a good surf break right outside the entrance to the lagoon, and you can use the current in the pass like a ski lift to get you back outside.
In Raiatea, the big smoke is Uturoa, where there was a new marina we used in 1992, but it was full of local boats by 1997. Talk to the charter base about where to leave the boat when you go to town. There was also a nice shallower anchorage off an island just inside Toahotu pass.

Remember that this is coral country, and you don't try to navigate around the lagoons unless the sun is high, and wear your polaroids.

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I have been to Bora Bora. My suggestion for the best way to learn about and see the island in the short amount of time you have is:

There is only one way in and out by boat. So when you come in, head approx 110 deg magnetic to Vaitape and anchor just north. Check out "downtown" Vaitape and schedule a Jeep Tour (even though they use zebra striped Land Rovers, not Jeeps). The tour will take you up into the mountains where you can not go alone. You will also learn a lot about the history of the island, see historic stuff, see how the locals live, see a pearl farm, and eat some of super delicious fruit. We learned the most about the island from the Jeep tour. You will get to see much of the island from way up. Spectacular views.

While on the tour, you might see other spots to anchor. That's why I suggested the tour first before sailing around inside the island.

If you want you can also rent a car in Vaitape and drive around the island (but you can't go up in the mountains, only the Jeep tour because it really is 4wd, I mean serious 4wd, not just dirt). It only took us an hour to drive all the way around at slow speed. You will see and learn more from the Jeep tour though. Taking your boat to the far side of the island (inside) would probably be more fun than the car rental.

There is not much to "do" on the Island except have dinner at Bloody Mary's. I think they have a water taxi for the restaurant also.

I would skip the glass bottom boat and submarine tours. Although it was cool to see the outside of the volcano that is the island. It's just a steep drop down into the ocean floor. We went to 150 ft and the whole way it was just a nearly vertical wall of coral.

Don't be surprised to see male cross dressers (locals in drag). It's normal there and perfectly acceptable. Has to do with their history of human sacrifice. You'll probably learn about it.


You may become bored if you spend all your time in Bora Bora. It is a cool island but it does not have as much exploring potential as Raiatea/Tahaa and Huahine. Bora Bora is a also very impacted by tourism. Worth a look though! If your charter company allows it, I would sneak over to Maupiti. It is about 20-30
miles away from Bora Bora. It has a dangerous pass, but the island is like a miniature Bora-Bora. It is unspoiled and seldom visited by tourists.


And yes, you can certainly anchor for free in Bora Bora depending on how fast your dinghy is and how far you want to be from the store. The east side will always be one of my favorite anchorages from 4 years of cruising.

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Anchored in 3 to 6 meters depths S and E of the island.


The deepest anchorage (Bora Bora if I remember correctly) was around 100' but that was the exception, not the rule.

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While both Bora Bora and Fatu Hiva (Marquesas) had depths approaching/ exceeding 100 ft, most anchorages were in the 15-30 foot range. 275' of primary chain is adequate.

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Items I would rate higher than more chain (more than the 275' you already have):

1) A bullet-proof snubber system, with a back-up, that you can pay-out under load. These are CRITICAL to a good anchoring technique. Have a spare rigged and in place, and allow yourself lots of spare snubber-rode that you can pay out if you need to lay out more chain in the middle of the night. DO NOT FORGET chafe protection for the snubbers. Firehose is excellent.

2) An anchor more than suitable for your boat. "Good enough" isn't. When the merde hits the fan, and you are dragging in 40 knots, in a big chop, at 2:00 am, with driving rain and a lee shore looming, you will quickly get religion, and wish you had spent a few extra bucks on the right gear. Do it once, do it right.

3) The gear, and knowhow, to quickly add to you scope, deploy a second anchor, etc. In other words, plan your back-up and tertiary contingencies NOW, and make sure everythng will work in the heat of battle. Do the shackles fit the anchor shank? Can you quickly mate your back-up rode to the primary chain? Do you even have back-up rode??

Remember, these ideallic places can turn unforgiving... there is often no one around to help (or too busy taking care of their own situation), and sourcing ANYTHING there is next to impossible. Get the stuff you will need before you leave, while you have time, $, and a West Marine nearby.

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We've found that the deeper the anchorage, the less the numerical scope ratio required for good holding. Consider that in the hypothetical 100' anchorage, if you deploy 275' of chain you must lift 175'
of it off the bottom before the pull on the hook stops being horizontal. If there is room, we will routinely use 4+1, and more under storm conditions, but in the real world 3:1 is often the most that there is room for. If this makes you uncomfortable, I'd suggest moving up to a bigger (and perhaps better design) anchor. They are a bit expensive, but peace of mind is worth a few bucks. And don't worry about the extra weight -- compared to the weight of the chain, an extra large anchor is an insignificant addition.

I'm sure there are deep anchorages in Fatu-Hiva, but we anchored there at Hanavave bay in about 25 ft. I'm not trying to ressurect an old hot topic, but everyone there had bow and stern anchors, and we were packed pretty tightly.
Tupai
Maupiti
A short and easy sail away from Bora Bora (26 nm away), Maupiti is called the paradise destination to discover.
This little island offers a well protected lagoon. Fewer yachts venture here and thus you will be more welcomed. People here have been less touched by tourism and are very hospitable. The village of Vaiea is small and charming.
Clearance
No check-in here but prior permission from the Gendarmerie in Bora Bora is required.
Docking
A word of caution about the pass. It is well marked with 2 bearing ranges and several lateral markers. The best time to enter the pass is midday as the continual outgoing tidal current is at its lowest. Do not enter if swell is higher than 5 ft or if strong winds from the S-SE as the waves will make the pass too dangerous to negotiate.
Public dock available for loading/unloading. Check schedule of local freighters.
Village anchorage has good holding in sand (10-30) and is well protected.
Manuae
Society Island Descriptions

http://www.trimaran-naga.com/Societies-TEXT.htm

Guidebook type electronic resources:

- Start by going to noon-site and go through the time consuming process of printing the entire region to .PDF for your hard drive. Better yet, get together with a bunch of cruisers and divvy up the work and share the files between you.
- Next, go to Soggy Paws and download all of the compendiums. Then download anything else on that page that seems interesting - great bunch of information. Open the French Polynesia compendiums (Marquesas, Tuamotus, Societies) and peruse the weather information.
- Want better info than the terribly photocopy of what was a bad chart to start with? Go to Google Maps, switch to satellite view, find an atoll, locate the passes noted in the guidebooks and zoom in. Print a visual of the pass to .PDF. While you don’t always get a clear view, in concert with our charts, we found this often very helpful.

Like many islands, Tahiti’s are best seen from the deck of a boat. Inside the lagoons the water is calm and the reefs are almost excessively marked. Outside the water is VERY deep with no hidden hazards; your destination islands (like Bora Bora or Huahine) are clearly visible and can be made in some hours of fun sailing. Trying to do all four islands is a bit ambitious, that said, I’ve done several times in a 7-8 day trip. Bora Bora would be the one I’d skip, but if you haven’t been there......

It sounds like you have the travel-time portion down. I have always spent the night in Papeete after the LAX flight, then on to Raiatea the next day; largely because it’s not always possible to make that connection in one day. The LAX flight is not a bad one (7.5 hours) as pacific flights go: only 2 time zones, good food, open bar, in-seat entertainment, etc. on Air Tahiti Nui.

Can’t help with TYC, never used them. Their clients are mostly Europeans, they seem especially suited to French-speaking clients (naturally). Their boats do appeared to be well maintained. They are in the same Marina as the Moorings/Sunsail group.
One great way for "fly-in's" to get some "local knowledge" is to take the ferry boat from Tahiti to Huahine then on to Raiatea. We parked ourselves up on the deck above the bridge and had literally a "bird's eye view" of each entrance through the reef to the harbors. That experience on the ferry boat was worth its weight in gold for getting real experience of how to navigate the passes before you have to do it yourself on the charter boat.

- - Also you get a real life feel for what the waters are like in between the islands. Flying over by little airplane is just not the same as being on the water watching and feeling how a professional ferry boat captain handles everything.

Tahaa and Huahini were our favorites of that group. You can actually sail around Tahaa inside the reef as there is plenty of room and the trades make it possible for a full 360 as they wrap around the island. Anchoring on the most part throughout group not the greatest but doable. For us Bora Bora was like an old French Wh---. Worn and tiered out but it was like that back in 1972 when I sailed there the 1st time. Some like it for the social life there is plenty of it. Huahini is great with many historical sites and fun to Hitch hike around the Island. Huahini has some of the best surfing in the S. Pacific.

We did not find the depths limiting nor problematic. When it seemed deepish we dropped one anchor on the shallow water and the other in the deep and spent time like this. Never any problem.

Found plenty of shallow anchorages - 3 to 6 meters, too.
girlfriend was calling it Bora Boring) due to throngs of charter boats and cruise ship passengers and indifferent inhabitants. Although the scenery is amazing from a geological standpoint the waters have been stripped of fish and are overcrowded by tour boats. Maupiti is a mini Bora Bora less tourists and plus fish. The bad news for you is you're not allowed to take charter boats there as the reef pass is really dangerous. Dangerous with all caps. For real... Major pucker factor from my personal experience. Boats have gotten wrecked here and others have gotten in only to be trapped by BIG breaking waves in the pass for weeks on end.

The BEST places to go are:

#1 Maupiti (not allowed to go if chartering) could be the best island in Societies.

#2 Huahine But, get off the beaten path and go to the East side. Awesome bays all to yourself and tons of fish. Get out and see the archaeological ruins, vanilla beans drying in the sun, ancient fish traps, etc.

I specifically asked the charter company if there was anywhere they did not want us to go, and they had no issues with us going anywhere. Perhaps things have changed since 2006?

We actually enjoyed Bora Bora. We sailed around through the lagoon to the south side and there were few boats. We did see a cruise ship on the north side, but it did not bother us as we didn't really go ashore to the touristy shops and the like.

We did go to Bloody Mary's on the North side. I had heard it was a magnet for tourists and was advised to stir clear. But we went anyway and had the best dinner of the whole trip. They provide free water at the end of their nice pier, so if nothing else its worth a look.

Also, Bora Bora has some large artillery from WWII mounted on a hill guarding the the channel into the lagoon. We saw pictures on-line, but we never made it up the hill to the guns. We simply ran out of time on our 7-day cruise to fit everything in.
Sailing Charter Companies

Weather

From http://thegiddyupplan.blogspot.com/p/blog-page.html

- Start practicing your French weather terms! Go to Meteo France’s site for French Polynesia.
- Download the map of weather zones to keep on your hard drive.
- Familiarize yourself with the two weather bulletins that you will be downloading regularly through saildocs. They are the bulletin marine (underneath the zone map you just downloaded) and the more flowery and effusive previsions courte echange.
- Be aware that you will hear VHF weather in most of the Society Islands, but not the Marquesas and Tuamotus. The VHF weather will be announced on Channel 16 and move to either 22 or 23 depending on your area. This VHF 16 announcement will often cause panic in the non-French speaking pack the first few times because they worry that it is a special emergency bulletin. The marine emergency unit usually has Anglophones working but if not there is usually someone bilingual on the radio.
- Download the Tuamotus Current Guestimator and if download the Rangiroa tide information from NOAA. In the upper right of this page you can download the year’s data in various formats. I recommend downloading the text version. You will need to rename the file .txt or just open it with a text editor and resave it. From there you can cut and paste it into the Tuamotus Guestimator as per their directions.
- Download tracks for the areas you will visit. Some sources: world index, and Hacking Family.

From: http://www.noonsite.com/Countries/Galapagos/pacific-planning-advice

French Polynesia: Weather forecasts in French are available from Meteo France, Tel:(689) 36 65 08, Fax:(689) 80 33 09, www.meteo.pf

Weather forecasts for the next 24 hours are broadcast every day on VHF channels 27 (Windward Islands) and 26 (Leeward Islands) at 1100, 1200, 2040, 2100 local Tahiti time.

Mahina Radio forecasts for French Polynesia on 8803 kHz at 2100Z (also on VHF channels 26 and 27). Warnings at 0640Z and 1800Z.
Itineraries