

Honeymoon



French Polynesia. The Romance Awaits

A night so dark, untouched by city lights is a rare find. The backdrop so deeply black that the glitzy stars dance and twinkle down to the sea. A night sky so mesmerizing that the phrase “dancing in the moonlight” must have been coined here. This night sky can only belong to French Polynesia.

Sharing nuptials or honeymooning in the French Polynesian islands truly solidifies a couple’s romantic union. There is little distraction from extensive options of daily activities, including beach frolicking, canoeing, nightly sunset sailing, parasailing, wave running, snorkeling, choosing a black pearl from a pearl farm, dining by candlelight and indulging in moonlight romance. Have breakfast brought by canoe to your over-water-bungalow and your dinner served on the private bungalow patio. Imagine sipping champagne while sitting on a glass bottom floor watching an octopus below. In sum, French Polynesia is where you go to get away, relax and focus on the splendor of a



honeymoon.

Weddings in Tahiti are not legally binding for Americans. Parliament is considering legalizing unions for Americans, but until then, couples can have a legal ceremony in the US and then have a symbolic ceremony in Tahiti. Having a ceremony performed in a land so ancient and full of history feels as natural as Adam and Eve. There are a few styles to choose from: an over-water glass bottom

wedding chapel to a traditional Tahitian beach ceremony. In a traditional Tahitian ceremony, the couple dresses in brightly colored pareu’s (sarongs), local flowers, and shells. The groom travels to the ceremony in a canoe and the bride is carried on a rattan throne. Traditional music and dance are present to honor the couple. The ceremony is performed by a Tahitian priest and the couple is given a Tahitian name. There are several locations that accommodate this ceremony.

Tahiti is in the Society Islands in French Polynesia and hosts the main airport and the capital city of Papeete. Of all of the Society Islands two have emerged as the mystical and most romantic islands in the world: Moorea and Bora Bora. Just two hours farther than

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Hawaii from the U.S. – and with direct flights from Los Angeles – Moorea and Bora Bora are closer than you would think. The islands enjoy a tropical temperature of 82 degrees year round. The rainy season is December through February. Local dolphins stay year-round. But if you visit between July and November – and you are adventurous – you may want to swim with the Humpback Whales. These majestic mammals return yearly to give birth.

Some have compared these tiny islands to its much bigger sister, Hawaii. The Tahitians settled Hawaii and some of the native customs are similar, but the comparison quickly fades. Tahiti is more like Hawaii 50 years ago – naturally untouched and beautifully preserved, with fewer hotels in all of its islands combined than Kaanapali Beach on Maui.

Moorea's volcanic, soaring peaks rise from the ocean; softly draping waterfalls, fragrant exotic blossoms and fern covered terrain have earned this location the title of The Magical Island. The locals are warm and inviting. The food is French-Tahitian and must be enjoyed slowly while listening to stories of years gone by. The beautiful churches welcome visitors in for a quiet moment of reflection. The numerous unspoiled beaches and docks request your presence. This island's pristine lush foliage is seen best by 4X4 on a guided tour or guided hike. As you bump along the mountain areas you will see the natural dense floral gardens, fruit trees, and large fern meadows. A 360 degree view from atop a peak reveals views of the main island of Tahiti (just a 30 minute ferry ride away) and stretches of endless sea waters.

A 40 minute flight to Bora Bora flies over several tiny islands Taha'a, Raiatea and Huahine. From the airstrip a speedboat whisks away honeymooners to their oasis. The lagoon is dotted with many small motu's, some with resorts tucked into them heaping with leaning coconut trees and the Tiare' flowers (the flower of Tahiti). The ridge surrounding this island is strong and nearly complete; the water entering the lagoon comes to a near stand still. This creates an aquarium style lagoon to bask in. The view from the boat delights honeymooners with stingrays, blow fish, angel fish, and numerous other schools of tropical fish. The island is skirted with over-water-bungalows with ample space between them for added seclusion and romance. Arrival at your luxurious resort means the beginning of the most enchanting experience of your lifetime. Bora Bora has earned its legendary reputation and aptly nicknamed The Romantic Island.

The Tahitian Islands are not where one goes to find high rise condos, night-life, shopping malls, Wal-Mart or Starbucks. Forget life as you know it; you are in the South Pacific as nature intended the islands to be. To fully experience these islands you must be open to the culture, the lifestyles of the people, the simplicity the locals have in everyday life. The Tahitians truly love their lands. It is common to see the locals sweeping the beaches with large palm leaves to keep them clean and yes, the garden boxes in the front yards are indeed graves of beloved family members. The depth that this culture has kept its authenticity despite the tourism and modern luxuries is astonishing.

---April Schmitt, *All About Honeymoons*

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