

TAHITI



FOUR SEASONS RESORT BORA BORA

Tiare Tahiti

tops all for family fun

Tahiti may be a top-end destination for families looking for a Pacific holiday, but the rewards more than make up for stretching the budget. Travel images only hint at the beautiful landscapes and people and their rich culture. Search beyond the resorts and the result will be a lifetime of shared memories.





FIRST STOP TAHITI

The mountainous interior of Tahiti will likely be the family's first view as they descend into Tahiti-Faa'a International Airport. The summit, Mount Orohena, is 2241 metres above sea level, an imposing height on such a relatively small island. Many families take connecting flights almost immediately to Moorea and Bora Bora, but the island itself is well worth spending time on.

The small city of Papeete, population 25,000, is noisy and bustling, just right for children keen on some excitement and action. Wander through the long aisles of the Marché de Papeete market, where fresh tuna, swordfish and other fish are laid out for sale, and the scents of tiare Tahiti, pitate (jasmine) and orchids waft through with the breezes.

Handcrafts from throughout French Polynesia, including woven hats and baskets from the Austral Islands, Marquesan stone and wooden carvings, tifaifai or patchwork quilts will all entice everyone to dip into their pockets. And look for the red spire that tops the 19th-century Notre Dame Cathedral.

At nightfall there's no need to go back to the hotel. Head for the Place Vai'ete with its roulottes, or food carts, choose whatever type of meal you feel like, then sit down at a trestle table. You'll probably have to share, but it's a good way to meet other locals, or learn the latest travel tips. And if you or your children know some French, a simple "Bonjour. Ca va bien?" may open other doors.

You may think the boxes outside the homes of Tahitian residents are for mail and newspapers. In fact, they're for deliveries of fresh French bread. Residents get a loaf dropped off twice a day. The Robert Wan Pearl Museum focuses on the local pearl industry and sells jewelry. Said to be the only museum of its type in the world, the colours and

shapes will amaze, especially those of Tahiti's own lustrous black pearls, with their overtones of greens, pinks and blues.

For an afternoon tramp from Papeete, buy a trail pass from Papeete City Hall up the Fautaua Valley to a delightful waterfall and swim, jump and slide in the pools.

To taste the interior, hopefully not literally, hop on a four-wheel-drive vehicle and head down some back roads. If there's been rain, expect to get a good splashing of mud, but there may well be a swimming hole or waterfall nearby. Tahiti is the only island in the archipelago with black sand, so go to the popular Plage de Vaiava, with its calm, shallow water and views across to the island of Moorea.



PAPEETE PLACES TO STAY

Le Tahiti la Ora Beach Resort by Sofitel

Regardless of whether a family is laying over before heading to the outer islands such as Moorea or Bora Bora, or spending time exploring Tahiti itself – Le Tahiti la Ora Beach Resort is a great place to do both. The kids will love spending time in the pool, but don't be surprised if they opt for swimming or snorkelling at the resort's private beach. Garden Family rooms and Deluxe Family Lagoon rooms offer space and comfort, and the resort's two restaurants have special kids menus too.

Tahiti Pearl Beach Resort

This resort is located on the eastern coast, on a picturesque black sand beach. It has a secluded feel but is still easily accessible from downtown Papeete.



MOOREA

Moorea beckons families to take the 30-minute ferry ride from Papeete, and who can resist the temptation of visiting one of the world's most beautiful islands. The dramatic summit, Mount Tohivea, is over 1200 metres high, and its peak forms a jagged break on the horizon from Tahiti.

FAMILY ACTION

Mount Tohivea is surrounded by vast tracts of tropical jungle, with the silence often broken by waterfalls. Belvedere Point is the starting point for the trails that go around the mountain slopes.

Families should employ a guide for maximum reward, as they may learn about the "talking trees" which were used like drums to convey messages through the jungle, or drink water from a native vine.

Hike The Pass of the Three Coconuts, or hop on board a four-wheel-drive vehicle or an ATV for a safari tour through plantations and local villages. There may be opportunities to see the stone remains of ancient marae. Each marae began with a stone from another marae, so all the sites are connected by spirits and invisible lines. The marae hosted important events, celebrations of war and the start of long offshore voyages.

You can't get lost on Moorea, and you don't even need to use Google maps. There is only one road around the perimeter, and white markers tell you how far along its 35-kilometre length you have travelled.

One stop on the way should be the Moorea Dolphin Centre at the Intercontinental Moorea Resort and Spa. Visitors can get in the water with the dolphins and share an unforgettable experience with them, while learning about how they live and how we can preserve their environment. It's also possible to watch the dolphins in their lagoon and discuss any topics with their trainers.

You can get close to the marine action another way, by paddling a transparent kayak over the lagoon. Or take a boat trip to a motu and enjoy seafood and fruit at a thatched beach hut.

Tiki Village on Moorea mixes excitement with tradition. The villagers live there and share their dances and songs to keep their traditions alive. Families can learn how to open a coconut, weave a simple basket, or try some basic Tahitian dance moves and drumming.

Tiki Parc Moorea

Tiki Parc Moorea, on the island of Moorea, has four courses that vary in difficulty from walking nets and bridges to swings, rope ladders and zip lines.

Everyone, apart from those doing the simplest Tiki Tamarii course, starts with a little supervised training, wearing a full harness and gloves. The staff will then help you decide which two courses match your abilities. And you can do them twice if you want.

Little ones as young as three can have their own fun on the Tiki Tamarii course, which is no more than 1.5 metres above the ground.

The most challenging course, Tiki Manu, has a jump into the void, and a high platform 20 metres above the ground. Be brave! Whatever level you choose, it's a great way to bond as a family, with everyone talking to and encouraging each other. Unlike other zip-line adventure parks, once you've done your training you keep harnessed up and set your own pace.



TIKI PARC MOOREA



MOOREA



MOOREA



INTERCONTINENTAL MOOREA RESORT AND SPA



MANAVA BEACH RESORT AND SPA



INTERCONTINENTAL MOOREA RESORT AND SPA

PLACES TO STAY

The over-water bungalow is one of the great attractions of a holiday in Tahiti. They are set right over a blue lagoon, so you can dive into the water from your private deck, and look straight down at an exotic marine world just below the surface of the water. A short walk back along the wharf or pontoon leads to all the amenities of an international resort.

The first overwater bungalow was constructed by three American men in the early 1960s. They took the traditional Polynesian grass huts and set them on concrete stilts on the water, and called it "Tahitian television." They quickly built more, on the island of Moorea, and other hoteliers soon saw their attraction.

Manava Beach Resort and Spa

One special part of the resort is the To'a Nui reserve, where corals regenerate in perfect conditions. It's ideal for teaching kids about this fragile environment.

Swim up to the edge of the resort's infinity swimming pool, or soak in the spa pool. Older children can learn scuba techniques at the diving school, or enjoy traditional Tahitian treatments at the Manea Spa. The resort has several types of over-water and garden bungalows. There's a Polynesian dance show every Wednesday night, and on Saturday nights the Mahana'i Restaurant becomes a showplace for traditional Tahitian dance and music. Walk to the village of Maharepa, or ring a nearby restaurant and their car will pick you up.

Intercontinental Moorea Resort and Spa

From Monday to Saturday, twice a day, children aged from four to 12 can run along to the Planet Trekkers Kid's Club for some fun mixed with inspirational activities.

There are heaps of other things to do, including a dolphin centre and a special centre for treating sick and injured turtles. Paddle an outrigger canoe, ride a horse or head inland on an all-terrain-vehicle. And even six-year-olds can go on the Aquablue Helmet Dive for a special underwater walk.

There are over-water, garden and beach bungalows, and three restaurants. Or order room service for a family night in.

Hilton Moorea Lagoon Resort & Spa

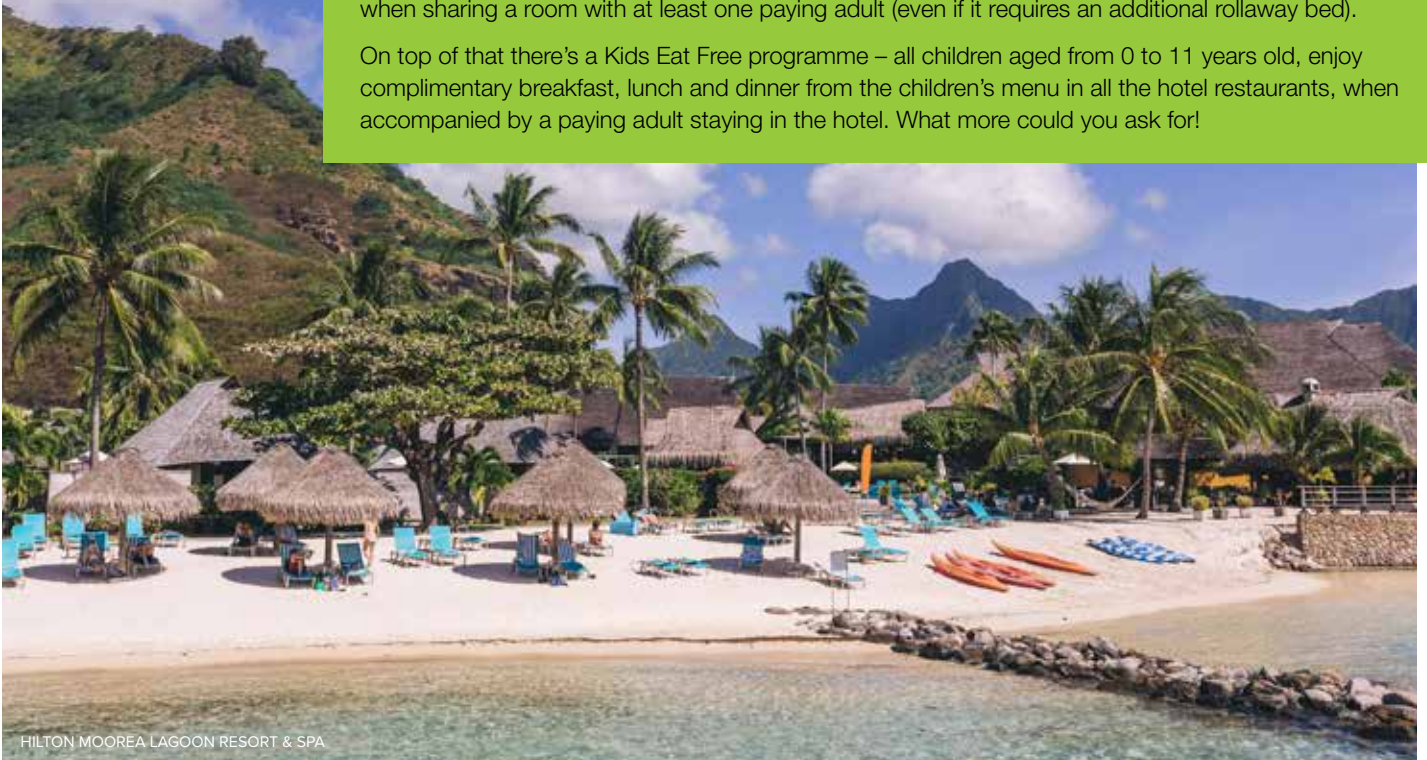
For a real family treat, it's hard to go past Hilton Moorea Lagoon Resort & Spa, the island's only five-star resort. The magic starts with the amazing surroundings. The resort sits on a spectacular crystal blue lagoon that's sheltered, and not too deep. You couldn't hope for a safer or more spectacular swimming, kayaking, paddleboarding and snorkelling spot.

Families staying in an over-water bungalow can swim right off the deck and in the evening, light up the glass window on the floor to see all the marine activity.

Back on land there is plenty more to do. Tennis, anyone? The resort has two courts that are free for all to use. Plus the kids can try their hand at other activities – such as flower leis head piece making and traditional weaving.

The resort also offers a bunch of bonuses that help families stay within budget. This includes their Kids Stay Free programme - stays for up to two children aged from 0 to 11 years old are complimentary when sharing a room with at least one paying adult (even if it requires an additional rollaway bed).

On top of that there's a Kids Eat Free programme – all children aged from 0 to 11 years old, enjoy complimentary breakfast, lunch and dinner from the children's menu in all the hotel restaurants, when accompanied by a paying adult staying in the hotel. What more could you ask for!



HILTON MOOREA LAGOON RESORT & SPA

**LOOK OUT FOR
BREADFRUIT, A
TAHITIAN STAPLE
FOOD. IT HAS LIGHT
GREEN SKIN AND
A CREAMY FLESH.
BREADFRUIT CAN BE
EATEN RAW OR BAKED,
FRIED OR BOILED.**

It is also used in pies and cakes. All parts of the breadfruit tree are used - canoes are made from the wood, sticky juice from the ripe skin is applied as a caulking to make the canoe watertight, and the leaves and bark have medicinal qualities.



HILTON MOOREA LAGOON RESORT & SPA



BORA BORA

The Tahitian alphabet is made up of 13 letters, but no letter b. Bora Bora is actually pronounced “Pora Pora”. It means “first-born”, but early visitors heard it as “Bora Bora”.

It's a 45-minute flight from Papeete to the small airport on Bora Bora, and the view from the plane window is sure to excite everyone in the family as Mount Otemanu comes into view.

You can explore Mount Otemanu on a guided hike or a Jeep Safari tour, or circle the island in a four-wheel-drive vehicle, stopping at local landmarks, villages and historic sites, and watch local artisans at work producing sarongs and other items. Visit the main village of Vaitape and shop at the local stalls and boutiques.

After lunch, cruise on a boat to a special spot to snorkel in the lagoon, head for the horizon on a jet-ski, or go on a fishing trip on the lagoon.

In the evening, if you want an alternative to your resort's restaurants, dine at Mai Kai Bora Bora or the legendary Bloody Mary's for its great ambience, while the family can feast on the catch of the day or vegetarian options.

Every lagoon activity is available on Bora Bora, from swimming to snorkelling, paddleboarding to jetskiing, parasailing to skydiving.

SEASONAL EVENTS

Watch out for some of Bora Bora's events, as there's usually something happening during the year. Muri Muri Lagoon is on the migration route for dolphins from August to November, and you may also see tuna, turtles and sometimes whales.

From November to January, sea turtles haul themselves up the beaches to dig pits in the sand and lay their eggs. In July, the young turtles hatch from their eggs and make the treacherous crawl down to the sea. This usually happens at night, but the Kemp Ridley turtles in Bora Bora often take an even greater risk of being picked off by predators by venturing to the water during the day.

May to December is the time to swim with giant, magnificent manta rays. They usually avoid human contact, but not in the waters of the Anau Lagoon. The word is that you can swim next to them, but don't touch them. And if you are around in early November, join thousands of other spectators for the closing stage of Hawaiki Nui Va'a, said to be the longest and biggest canoe race in the world.



Paddlers from around the Pacific race in over 100 canoes for a distance of about 130 kilometres between four of French Polynesia's islands before the big finish at Bora Bora, accompanied by a flotilla of small craft. Everyone heads for Matira Beach to welcome the winning canoeists, accompanied by music and dancing. Hawaiki Nui is not only a sporting event; it is part of Polynesian culture.

PLACES TO STAY

Bora Bora has become synonymous with over-water bungalows, lavishly appointed floating villas, often with glass floors, so guests can look down on the marine life below them. Most of the resort hotels on Bora Bora are built on their own tiny island, or motu, and families must order a boat if they want to leave the resort. But you probably won't want to, as you can swim from your own private deck, receive your room service order via an outrigger canoe, and spend your family holiday time in seclusion and opulent luxury.

Four Seasons Bora Bora

This Four Seasons proves that Bora Bora isn't just for couples! The resort boasts a state of the art 'Kids for All Seasons' Clubhouse that features a splash pad and comes packed with games, movies and other activities — not to mention a steady supply of ripe local fruits and freshly squeezed juices. Yummy! Outdoor activities include canoe rides on the stunning lagoon, fishing, hermit crab hunts and races, team sports, island-style fashion shows and limbo contests. Snorkelling with the resident marine biologist, introduction to scuba diving and Waverunners are also available for bigger kids. On top of that, teens get their very own space, Chill Island!

St Regis Bora Bora

In keeping with its impeccably high standards, St Regis Bora Bora is home to a top-notch Kid's Club with quality games, toys and a host of activities. The doors open from 9am to 12pm and again from 1pm to 5.30pm. The children get their own pool. Mum and Dad can make use of the resort's babysitting services. And while there is no set kids activity schedule, the fully certified childcare staff are experts at keeping the little ones busy and smiling!

Le Meridien Bora Bora

Yes it has a drop-dead gorgeous beach which is made for kid's swimming. And plenty of scheduled children's activities. But what really sets Le Meridien Bora Bora apart is its unique Ecological Centre where kids can learn about, and get up close and personal with the local marine life — including hand-feeding the local turtles which are cared for by the resort's Turtle Team!

PRIVATE ISLAND LUXURY

The Brando

For a special treat, away from Tahiti, Bora Bora and Moorea, board a plane for a 20-minute flight to the private island of Tetiaroa, once owned by Marlon Brando, and stay at the luxurious resort named after him. The Brando has only 35 villas, all integrated into the natural tropical jungle and totally private. Families can go paddling, snorkelling or kayaking together on the lagoon, or just find some shade and chill out on the beach.

The Brando's two restaurants showcase Polynesian cuisine or classic French cooking. And now there is Nami, a teppanyaki venue in an elegant and simple setting.

Managed by chef Kaito Nakamura, Nami's three menus are designed around the land, the sea, or both, and meals are prepared on an iron teppanyaki griddle in front of diners. A selection of sake and Japanese beers, plus leading wines from around the world, complement the flavours.



GUESTHOUSE STAYS – A LOCAL CONNECTION

Tahiti's guesthouses, or pensions, (pronounced like *penchant*) provide a special opportunity for families to immerse themselves in an authentic, personalised experience of French Polynesian life and build lasting connections.

There are a wide variety of guesthouses, but most are family-operated, with up to about a dozen rooms or bungalows, and give off the vibe of a local inn. Others may be a room or two in someone's own home. Guests are greeted with the renowned warm Tahitian hospitality.

Guesthouses dot the islands, including Tahiti and Bora Bora, and are usually located in stunning locations close to the water, making it easy for families to pull up a deck chair or have a swim before breakfast. Some are set in lush gardens, where a melodic choir of birdsong may drift through your windows.

Owners often love to share their knowledge of the islands and their history and you may be invited to visit hidden gems, participate in local activities, learn about the Tahitian way of life, or even take part in local customs and try out a few dances or art lessons.

Many guesthouses also offer communal areas for dining and relaxing, and some serve home-cooked meals, creating further opportunities for families to immerse themselves in Tahitian life.





FAMILY FAVOURITES

Living the dream.

As the New Zealand based Trade Manager for Tahiti Tourisme, Moana McKeen is an expert on the dreamy islands of Tahiti. More often than not, her visits to Tahiti have been work related, rather than family fun! But on this occasion, the whole family got to enjoy the best these glorious islands have to offer.

Why did you choose this destination for your family holiday?

We have previously visited a number of Pacific Islands (pre-children) and had done Fiji as a family. We were looking for somewhere that we didn't have to fly too far, offered a number of adventure activities, good weather and great food.

How many times has your family been there?

Once. We are planning to do a yacht charter in 2019.

Which property/properties did you stay at?

Three different places. Tahiti – Manava Suites, Moorea – Sofitel la Ora Moorea, and Bora Bora – St Regis.

What was the reason for choosing the accommodation?

Manava Suites in Tahiti is close to the airport and offers kitchenettes in all room categories. There's a convenience store across the road and a supermarket within walking distance, so we could get supplies for the rest of our holiday. Sofitel la Ora Moorea has fantastic snorkelling and a stunning location. (Our kids loved watching all the different fish and rays). St Regis Bora Bora has the largest overwater villas in Bora Bora which meant we could spread out. The unique lagoonarium offers brilliant swimming, plus there's the beach and pool. Also each villa gets assigned a butler and ours was an ex-Disney employee who was amazing with the children!

How old are your children?

They were six and eight at the time of travel.

What did the kids love most about Tahiti?

The lagoons and Nutella crepes!

What did you love most about the island?

Picture perfect destination – images do not do it justice! The blend of Tahitian and French cultures means that it is laid back with amazing food too.

What were your top three family activities?

Swimming with the sharks and rays in Moorea, jetskiing and stand up paddleboarding.



What are your top tips for taking a family away here?

It's not as expensive as you think, especially if you get out and about and dine like locals. Visit the roulettes for dinner, the marche for fruit and veg.

We always take a few snack foods away with us – always handy when you've been swimming all day and need an afternoon snack. We also travel with the kids reef shoes, snorkels and masks so that they fit correctly.

Always take sunscreen! Leave devices at home so you can get out and enjoy the destination and your family time!

Paradise Awaits



Hilton

MOOREA LAGOON
RESORT & SPA

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