

My Dream itinerary in Tahiti and her islands

By Etienne BOUTIN – Nov 2013 (pacificavenues@mail.pf)

I have lived almost 30 years in French Polynesia, 20 of them happily spent servicing large visiting yachts. I have organized many itineraries for owners or charter guests, always trying to adapt them to specific desires or demands. Now, I'd like to give you my dream itinerary. The one I would do for my guests and myself.



On Day 1, I will make sure all my guests are welcomed at Faa'a Airport with flowers and local music. I arrived in Tahiti from Paris in 1984, landing on an old DC8 at 4h00 in the morning, and I still remember that first amazing sensation of flower scents spreading from everywhere and the band playing ukulele with smiles on their faces that did not exist in mainland France.

Then, we'll spend a few hours walking along Papeete city center and get into the mood of the fish market, the Retro bar or the little Chinese shops that sell anything from fortune cookies to iPhones 5. I will also take my guests to the Wan pearl museum because one can learn a lot there about this superb gem of the ocean. My wife prefers the gold colored pearls. I love the blue and grey ones. The traditional color of the Tahitian pearl is a dark green nicely called "poerava".

I'll take my guests to Coco's restaurant for diner because they just have the best setting and the best food in Tahiti.

Day 2, we will move the yacht to neighbor island Moorea. It is a commuting destination for Papeete city white collars but also the place where I spend most of my vacation. I hope my guests will enjoy the same relaxing feeling I have when touring the island with a quad or a moppet. I will lead them up the belvedere dominating the two main bays and then through the pineapple plantations to

Opunohu domain with its amazing sceneries on the mountains making the old volcano caldera, finally up the magic mountain for a breathtaking view over the lagoon and its many shades of blue.



In the evening, I will make sure the artists from the Tiki village come and visit the yacht at anchor, playing dangerously with fire sticks on their canoes and then dancing for us on the aft deck. Polynesian people have been able to revive their traditional culture after the grey years of Christian intolerance and dances are their most spectacular success.

Day 3 will see us cruise to Huahine in the Leeward Islands, and we will enter Maroe bay early morning to feel like 18th century discoverers in search for the seventh continent. I will take my guests on a land tour while the yacht relocates at Bourayne bay on the other side of the island. Huahine is special to me. It is my favorite island in French Polynesia. It may come from the 1.000 years old Maeva village remains, nicely restored by archeologists, a special place where I can travel in times and imagine the Maohi people spreading all over the Pacific from island to island in their double canoes at times when my European ancestors were most probably farmers or beggars.

For lunch, I will ask my friend Marc to organize one of his famous picnics in the water, and that will most likely take us late into the afternoon, just when the sun sets on Huahine's West coast in a spectacular blossom of warm colors.



Day 4. We will make the 25 miles cruise to Raiatea early morning and explore the Faaroa river with kayaks. It's our little amazon and the ancient temple of Taputapuatea is next door. This "marae" is considered the most sacred place on earth by the natives of the Polynesian triangle and imposes due deference.

In the afternoon, I will take the gang onto a dive at Teavapiti pass for a drift dive with hundreds of fish and reef sharks, and hopefully a sea turtle or some dolphins coming along. Diner will most likely happen ashore at Apooiti Marina yacht club where all yachties gather to tell all sorts of stories about their travels around the world, true or not.

On Day 5, we will move the yacht north inside the lagoon to neighbor Taha'a and tour all around this wild island inside the reef. Taha'a is well known for its vanilla that the best Chefs in the world like to use. We will learn how to marry - a funny name for this intimate interaction with Mother Nature - the vanilla flowers so they can produce the famous beans. Taha'a Private Island Resort is a good place to enjoy the Polynesian skills at massages. Local masseuses have been able to mix the modern techniques with the art of "turumi", a skill only granted to ancient healers. Massage on the beach at sunset ? What else ?



We will arrive in Bora Bora on Day 6, after a quick morning cruise, and make sure to enter the main pass early enough to benefit from the best light. Light is key in the South Pacific islands and certainly one good reason for Gauguin and many following artists to stick around. May be me too! I'd like my guests to enjoy this marvelous feeling when entering Bora Bora pass. It's like the first day on earth. A mystic experience.



There is plenty to do, visit WW2 remains by quad, go hunting for Mahi mahi or yellow fin tuna on board the striker Luna Sea, go feed the sharks and rays with charismatic local guide Patrick... This island is also the perfect place to organize a traditional Tahitian meal. We will rent just for us a small islet called "motu" here. The local people will dig a big hole, heat stones and put to cook on them a whole lot of breadfruit, taro roots, plantains, chicken, pork and a delicious roasted piglet that we will enjoy dipped in fresh coconut milk. We'll also drink the local Hinano beer with dancers and musicians and make sure they not only perform for us, but stay after the show to share a bit of their instinctive ability to party.

On Day 7, we will rent a helicopter and fly to Maupiti, 30 miles away. People describe this island as Bora Bora fifty years ago, and I agree it has the tasty flavor of an old kept secret. We'll snorkel with the manta rays, lie on the beach, bicycle around the main land to meet the gentle people and get the feel for times when Wi-Fi did not exist.

I'll make sure my guests return to Papeete in the evening by air to catch their international flight so they can avoid bouncing too much against head seas. Once they are gone, I will ask the captain to sneak back into Bourayne bay, in Huahine, where I may spend the rest of my life.

