

French Polynesia

THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS

Why join this Voyage?

- Travelling onboard a small and comfortable working freighter, the lifeline for these remote communities, this is the ideal and only way to experience the little visited Marquesas Islands
- Daily port calls and a varied programme of guided sightseeing provide ample opportunity to explore each island. Visitors here are rare and enthusiastically welcomed with traditional Pacific Island hospitality
- Discover the intoxicating beauty, rich culture and fascinating archaeology of these untouched islands. Choice of cabin types on board ship and specialist guest lecturers. This is a true “human adventure”



Trip Summary

Cruise French Polynesia and the Marquesas Islands, including six inhabited islands which are so remote that the *Aranui III* is their lifeline to the outside world, bringing supplies and picking up copra, dried coconut and noni fruit. There will be 14 stops, so you will have plenty of time to explore. Little has changed in these untouched islands, which have few roads or cars. Visitors are rare and very much welcomed by the friendly Polynesians. Visit mysterious jungle ruins, where you will see the largest *tiki* gods outside Easter Island, along with sacred ritual sites and enigmatic petroglyphs of birds, fish and sacred turtles carved on boulders. Retrace the escape route of Herman Melville who jumped his whaling ship here in 1842 a decade before he wrote *Moby Dick*. Well suited for those who like to travel at a leisurely pace to a tropical destination that is beyond the ordinary.

Itinerary



Day 1 London/ Los Angeles/ Papeete

Depart London on the flight to Papeete via the US, crossing the international date line en route.

Day 2 Papeete

On arrival in Tahiti you will have the day to relax. Overnight in Papeete.

Day 3 Papeete/ Embarkation/ At Sea

Embark the ship with a morning departure from Papeete. Remainder of the day at sea.

Day 4 Tuamotu Archipelago/ Fakarava

Fakarava is the largest atoll in the Tuamotu with snorkelling and scuba diving for all levels in the lagoon. The entire morning will be spent on shore with lunch served on board while we set sail for the Marquesas.



Day 5 At Sea

You can relax with a book, swim in the small pool or enjoy the immense South Pacific. The spirited Polynesian crew treat you like welcomed guests and proudly introduce you to their rich culture. Almost every night they sing and play Polynesian rhythms on their ukuleles.

Day 6 The Marquesas Archipelago/ Ua Pou (Hakahau-Hakahetau)

Whenever the Aranui stops, villagers greet it. The crew unloads supplies, from cement to sugar, and reloads with sacks of copra (dried coconut meat).

In the tiny town of Hakahau, visit its church with a hand-carved wooden dais and meet the woodcarvers or hike up a hill for a breathtaking view of the distant cloud-covered mountains. At Rosalie's Restaurant you'll taste your first Marquesan lunch: breadfruit, a Marquesan staple, along with curried goat, barbecued rock lobster, poisson cru (raw fish marinated in lime juice and soaked in coconut milk), taro and sweet red bananas.



Day 7 Nuku Hiva (Taiohae-Hatiheu-Taipivai)

We sail into Taiohae's spectacular bay, a giant volcanic amphitheatre dominated by towering cliffs streaked with waterfalls. Explore Taiohae, the tiny administrative capital of the Marquesas. Taiohae Bay is where a 23-year-old sailor, Herman Melville and a friend jumped a whaling ship in 1842.

We follow their escape route by jeep along steep, winding dirt mountain roads to the village of Hatiheu to visit an archaeological site. We'll have lunch at Yvonne's Restaurant, one of the best restaurants in the Marquesas, where the specialty is pig baked in an underground oven. Travel to the valley of Taipivai, which is dotted with stone *tiki* gods, sacred ritual sites (me'ae) and immense stone platforms (paepae) where the Taipi built their houses. Enigmatic petroglyphs of birds, sacred turtles and fish are carved on huge boulders. The *Aranui's* whaleboats will sail down the river to return you to the *Aranui*, which is anchored in the bay.

Day 8 Hiva Oa (Atuona)

We have plenty of time to explore Atuona, the second largest village in the Marquesas. This is where Paul Gauguin lived and did some of his best work. You can visit the colonial store where Gauguin shopped and visit a replica of the Impressionist's infamous "House of Pleasure." As you walk up the hill to the cemetery, you'll have sweeping views of the harbour. Beneath a huge frangipani tree is a tombstone with the simple words: Paul Gauguin 1903. Enjoy another lavish Marquesan lunch at Hoa Nui Restaurant.



Day 9 Fatu Hiva (Omoa-Hanavave)

This is the most lush and remote island of the Marquesas. It's also a centre of Marquesan crafts. As your guides lead you through the village of Omoa, you'll see



women hammering mulberry, banyan or breadfruit bark on logs. They dry it and then paint ancient Marquesan designs on their famous tapa cloth. Fatu Hiva is also well-known for its hand-painted *pareus* (sarongs) and *monoi*, a perfumed coconut oil scented with tiare blossoms and sandalwood. Skilled woodcarvers will invite you into their home/studios.

Hanavave is on the Bay of the Virgins, which is one of the world's most beautiful bays. Some athletic passengers may choose to make the trip by foot. On this unforgettable ten mile hike you'll have unforgettable views of towering cliffs and majestic waterfalls.



Day 10 Hiva Oa (Puamau)

We'll travel by foot or jeep to the most important archaeological sites for *tikis* (ancient, human-like religious sculptures), other than Easter Island. Our trained guides will show you these mysterious jungle ruins of Puamau and tell the stories of these haunting statues from an ancient civilization.

Day 11 Tahuata (Vaitahu)

On this leaf-shaped island the air is thick with the fragrant scent of tiare, frangipani and history. In the tiny village of Vaitahu, Spanish explorers landed in 1595 and opened fire on a crowd of the curious islanders, killing about 200. When the first missionaries came in 1797, the generous local chief left his wife with missionary John Harris, with instruction that he treat her as his own wife. Harris fled the next day.



Tahuata also is the site of the first French settlement in the Marquesas in 1842. The huge church built by the Vatican is decorated with beautiful Marquesan carvings. Picnic in the Valley of Hapatoni and swim and snorkel at a nearby beach.



Day 12 Ua Huka (Vaipae-Hane-Hokatu)

Today we visit a museum with exquisite replicas of Marquesan art. There will be the chance to either explore the island by four-wheel drive or ride Marquesan horses. For three hours we'll explore the mountain landscape with stunning views of the Pacific. The wild horses (brought from Chile in 1856) thrive here, outnumbering the island's 476 residents. We'll have a traditional lunch at a local restaurant then visit the arboretum and the garden of fruits and flower.

Day 13 Nuku Hiva (Taiohae)/ Ua Pou

We will dock in Nuku Hiva at Taiohae in the morning. You may take the *Le Truck* back to the town centre and spend free time there. At noon, the ship will sail to Ua Pou, returning to our first stop in the Marquesas, Hakahau. This is your last chance to buy Marquesan crafts.

Day 14 At Sea



Day 15 Tuamotu Archipelago/ Rangiroa

At Rangiroa, the largest atoll in the world, we'll picnic on a coral beach and swim or snorkel in a translucent lagoon. "Rangi" is an underwater jewellery box with stunning colours of corals and clouds of tropical fishes. You'll have the opportunity to purchase black pearls from local black pearl farmers. These rare black pearls are French Polynesia's main economic resource.

Day 16 Papeete/ Disembark/ Los Angeles

Morning arrival back into Papeete where you disembark, with the rest of the day at leisure before departing on the evening flight back to the UK via Los Angeles.



Day 17 Travelling

Re-cross the International date line

Day 18 London

Arrive back to London

The Boat

Aranui III
Capacity: 200 passengers

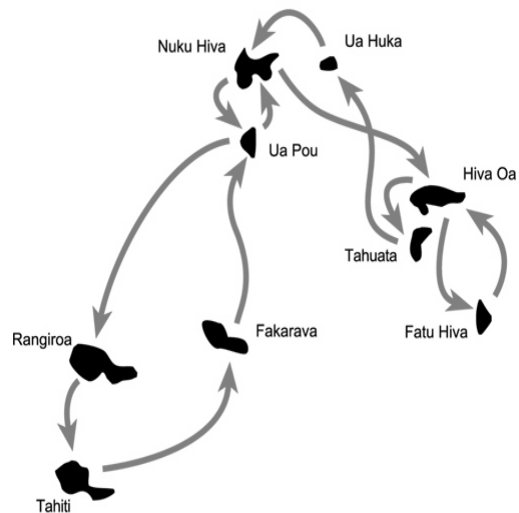
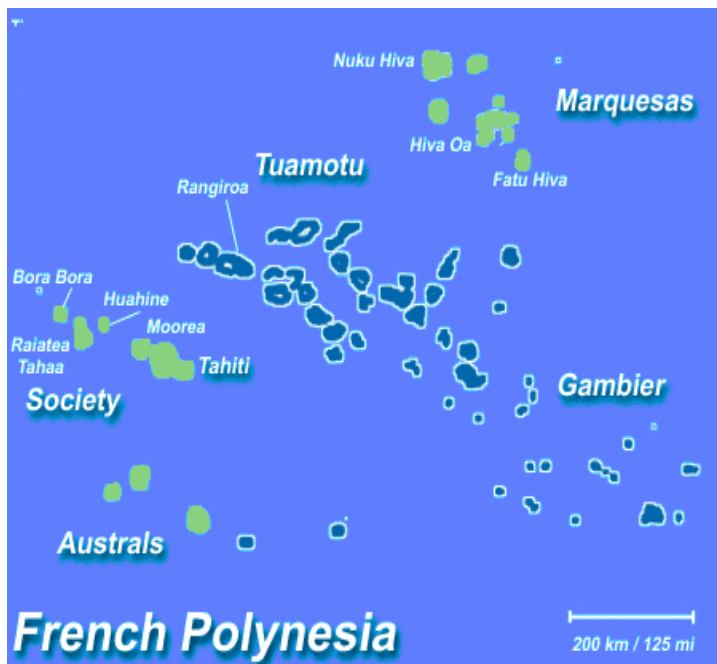


Custom-built in 2000 in Romania, the *Aranui III* is specially designed as a small supply ship with additional space for up to 200 passengers, offering a comfortable and authentic way in which to see the islands of the South Pacific. 'Aranui' is Maori for "The Great Highway" and she is crewed mainly by Marquesans, many descendents of some of the most adventurous Pacific explorers.

All the cabins have en-suite facilities, outside views and some with balconies. Standard cabins have twin lower berths, while deluxe cabins and suites have queen sized beds. There is ample space on the sundeck to relax, along with an outdoor swimming pool. There is also a gym, two bars, a library, TV lounge, coffee bar, boutique and a small lecture room in which to learn about the rich Marquesan culture and history from onboard experts.

Meals are served in informal seating; breakfast is buffet style, while lunch and dinner menus will vary depending on what fresh ingredients are available. Complimentary wine is provided at both lunch and dinner. During shore excursions, either a picnic lunch or a delicious meal at a local restaurant will be provided.

Route Maps - French Polynesia & the Marquesas Islands



Expedition Dates for 2012/13

4th - 17th February
25th February - 9th March
17th - 30th March
7th - 20th April
28th April - 11th May
19th May - 1st Jun
9th - 22nd June
30th June - 13th July
21st July - 3rd August
11th - 24th August

1st - 14th September
22nd September - 5th October
13th - 26th October
3rd - 16th November
24th November - 7th December
15th - 28th December
12th - 25th January 2013
2nd - 15th February 2013
23rd February - 8th March 2013
16th - 29th March 2013

Guide Prices for 2012/13

Cabin Type

(quoted per person based on 2 sharing)

Standard	£3,350
Deluxe with shower	£3,550
Deluxe with bath	£3,950
Suite without balcony	£4,375
Suite with balcony	£4,500

Includes

- 1 night pre voyage accommodation in Papeete
- 14 day voyage on a full board basis
- Wine with lunch and dinner onboard
- All guided landings and excursions mentioned in the itinerary, subject to weather conditions

Excludes

- International flights London - Tahiti return
- Any additional pre or post services not mentioned
- Travel insurance & vaccinations
- Visas & gratuities
- Other drinks onboard and any items of a personal nature

The above prices are a **guide price only** and are subject to exchange rate fluctuations and possible fuel surcharges.

Single Supplement

For those solo travellers preferring their own cabin, typically a multiplier of 1.5 on the cost of a single berth is used to calculate the single supplement.

Flight Information

Please note, these guide prices exclude international flights to and from Papeete due to significant price fluctuation. We are however very happy to book flights for you, as well as any additional hotel accommodation in Tahiti, as part of your overall trip. The advantage of booking the whole trip through Steppes Travel is you will then benefit from full ATOL cover.

Visa Information

Currently British passport holders do not require a visa for this Tahiti & the Marquesas Islands, however you will require pre registration of an online visas waiver to travel via the US.

Want to discuss this trip?



Please call Sue 01285 880981 for more details or to check availability

Having spent the best part of 5 years on her “gap year” working in travel seemed the natural progression. Sue is most at home travelling to remote wilderness areas of the globe including the polar regions, Patagonia & the Yukon. Having travelled to both Antarctica & the Canadian High Arctic, Spitsbergen is the next trip on her long list. Sue is passionate about wildlife & loves to get up close either by kayak or on foot.

Sue is Country Director for Steppes Voyages

Sueg@steppestravel.co.uk