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Getting There

Tahiti is a five-hour flight from Auckland on one of Air Tahiti Nui's two weekly services (Thu and Sun). TN also codeshares with Air New Zealand's twice-weekly Auckland-Papeete flights. TN offers a three-class service on its A340 aircraft, six in Poerava First class, 24 in Club Poerava business and 264 in Classe Moana economy.



pic: Lam Nguyen

Stronger NZD A Boost

The strength of the New Zealand dollar has meant Tahiti has become more cost effective in recent years, says GO Holidays' Wayne Deed. "Our contracting is in USD, so the strong dollar has made Tahiti an attractive destination." And once clients are there, it's not as expensive as most believe says Tahiti Vacation's Renae Pocklington, who is in Tahiti this weekend for Tahiti Travel Mart.

And food, don't forget the food, says Mondo's Gordon Bayne "It is [expensive] if you want to eat burgers and chips—but if it's beautiful wine and some of the best food [clients] will ever eat, then it is a bargain."

New Tahiti Website

Tahiti Tourisme has launched its new website which includes everything from language tips, activities available in the island group and upcoming special events. The site also includes a list of Tiare Agents. See tahitinow.co.nz

Tahiti Sees Strong Kiwi Interest

Outlook Strong As Markets Emerge



Pic: Grégoire LE BACON

Tahiti, a luxury escape hunter's paradise, has traditionally been a favourite for high-end and mature Kiwi travellers and there are signs this will expand with the growth of new markets in 2012.

Air Tahiti Nui New Zealand general manager Mark Hutchison says a change of vision among the island nation's properties has led to a rise in 'value-add' product being made available to clients before they arrive. "There's some creative packaging going on in market, in terms of meal deals and excursions, which really helps agents secure bookings when they're competing with the internet. It has been hard in the past for agents to get 'off the shelf' product."

South Pacific wholesale specialists confirm Tahiti's appeal continues to be steady in the high-end market. "It's a real bucket list destination, so by default it lends itself to an older, more affluent market," says Our Pacific's Shelley Gutry. "We sell truckloads of Moorea and Bora Bora, and for

the Tahiti converts who keep coming back, Taha'a and Rangiroa are part of a developing niche market."

At the same time GO Holidays says its forward bookings are 'well ahead of last year' and in particular says the wholesaler has seen an increase in Bora Bora sales as a result of marketing campaigns.

Niche markets such as divers, golfers, surfers and families are also said to be driving Tahiti interest. "So it's important agents find out what their clients like in their holidays to offer them the best island experience," says Tahiti Vacation's Renae Pocklington.

Wholesale Sales Up

Air Tahiti Nui has reported a strong start from the New Zealand market this year—particularly through the trade distribution.

"Wholesale sales up until the end of Mar this year are up 28%, and that's pure leisure travel driven through new areas of growth, particularly in the cruise market alongside the traditional FIT market," says TN New Zealand general manager Mark Hutchison.

TN's strong codeshare arrangement with Air New Zealand is delivering benefits for both carriers and passengers, he adds—and also points out that TN's 'tried and true' product hasn't deviated at all since it started scheduled flights in 1998.

At the same time, Air New Zealand says 2012 is looking 'pretty rosy' for its Tahiti route. "We're getting a good response from tacticals in the market, and the code-share kicks along nicely," says Pacific Island product and pricing manager Jo Kennedy.

Moorea Pearl Deal

GO Holidays has seven-night packages at the Moorea Pearl Resort from \$2379pp s/t, for sales to 23 Apr and travel 04-16 Jun and 05-29 Oct. The offer includes NZ airfares, transfers, and daily breakfast and dinner.



Kiwi Trade In Tahiti

A contingent of Kiwi trade is in Tahiti this week for Tahiti Travel Mart. Some of the lucky group, pictured at Le Manava Suite Resort, are Sharon Martin of Lifestyle Holidays; Shelley Gutry, Our Pacific; Faye Spooner, Air Tahiti Nui; Melissa Bramley, Infinity Holidays; Sybil Hauraki, GO Holidays; Renae Pocklington, Tahiti Vacations; Gordon Bayne, Mondo Travel and Gina Bunton, TN. Back from left, Alana Eli, Pearl Resorts; Rob Thompson, Tahiti Tourisme Australia; Steeve Hamblin, Tahiti Tourisme chairman; Munish Chetty, Orbitz Travel and hiding in the back Alain Campignon of South Pacific Management.



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Culture A Focus of Further Growth

French Polynesia's 118 islands offer a plethora of activities, accommodation options and experiences tinged with the unique Tahitian culture, a mixture of Polynesian and French, that resonates strongly with New Zealand travellers.

Tahiti Tourisme is looking to embrace that cultural drawcard as part of a bid to substantially increase the destination's tourism infrastructure and arrivals.

The archipelago is aiming to attract five times as many tourists in the next 15 to 20 years, Tahiti Tourisme chairman Steeve Hamblin said at Tahiti Travel Mart last week. Tahiti currently only has the infrastructure to handle a tripling in visitor numbers, so development is an integral part of the plan.

Hamblin says Tahiti will need to develop 'unique tourism products' to achieve this goal, citing the development of The Brando eco-resort—which, when it opens in Sep 2013, will count deep-sea water air conditioning as one of its eco-friendly innovations. While the development will be aimed at high-end customers, Hamblin says, 'these are the products that it needs to create to attract more visitors'.

Notable Nightspots

Papeete is known for its nightspots and fine dining, where locals and visitors alike come together, perhaps for a meal with cocktail happy hour, and of course, to party. Recommended nightspots in Papeete include:

Morrisson's Cafe, particularly suited for the 30+ reveller.

Les 3 Brassiers, offering live entertainment and live sports, from football to rugby.

Le Marina, as the name suggests, set alongside visiting yachts and launches.

The Pink Coconut offering EUR4.50 cocktails every night 1730-1900.

He has also flagged an interest in developing more 'dynamic and animated' tourist developments, that will give visitors the choice of what kind of holiday they are after—and to encourage event organisers to plan large events further in advance so the NTO can promote them internationally. The NTO's local representative Rob Thompson says there are programmes running in Tahiti, like the Haeva Tahiti dance and culture competition that will ensure Tahitians remain proud of their country, and be ready to share their culture through new attractions. Thompson adds that the ambitious target will bring Tahiti into line with arrival figures for other Pacific destinations, and the Tahitian Government will ensure the country's culture, values and ecology are maintained.



Tres Bien, Le Coco's

The Kiwi delegation at Tahiti Travel Mart experienced fine French-inspired cuisine at the famous Le Coco's at the weekend.

Run by a husband and wife team, Thierry Sauvage as front of house and chief sommelier, and wife Benedicte as pastry chef, Le Coco's offers a gastronomic experience in an elegant but unpretentious setting. Cheese, foie gras, escargot and pork slow-cooked for 17 hours—the passion is palpable. Benedicte pours her heart and soul into her sweet creations. Her signature Magic Moment is a gold-covered chocolate egg that is melted away with hot chocolate sauce to reveal a fruity sorbet centre. It's theatrical dining at its best and a must-see for visitors.



Pic: Ty Sawyer

Tahitian Wedded Bliss

While it has been legal for foreigners to get married in Tahiti for a couple of years now, paperwork hurdles have been off-putting for some couples.

GO Holidays' Pacific product specialist Sybil Hauraki says there is a small but growing number of Kiwis who are making the effort to get married in French Polynesia, and those so-called 'hurdles' can be easy to navigate for a travel agent and their clients. "The potential is there as it's an untapped market, and there is a check-list of requirements on the Tahiti Tourisme website," she says. All marriage documents must be translated into French and lodged with the local council 45 days before the ceremony. For more details, see tahiti-tourisme.com

Tahiti Half-Marathon

For clients looking for a little adventure in their Tahiti holiday, the Tahiti Nui half-marathon is on 03 Nov. The entry to the 21km race from the Temaru Tunnel to Papeete's Paofai Gardens is EUR50, and there's a big prize purse up for grabs, as well as a 5km fun run and 1200m kids run. See tahitiniumarathon.com



Tahiti's Mainland Attraction

Kiwi wholesalers have noted an increase in the number of New Zealanders staying on Tahiti's main island and taking advantage of the two properties that offer the famed over-water bungalow experience—the Le Meridien Tahiti and InterContinental Tahiti Resort.

Le Meridien director commercial and marketing Vincent Guerin says the short-haul market in particular is willing to spend more time in Tahiti before heading to favourite outer islands Moorea and Bora Bora. Kiwi and Aussie product managers and wholesalers pictured checking out the overwater bungalows are (from left) team Air Tahiti Nui, Lisa Dosanjh and Faye Spooner; Vince Arnone of World Travel Group; Our Pacific's Shelley Gutry; Lifestyle Holidays' Sharon Martin; Infinity Holidays' Mel Bramley and Munish Chetty of Orbitz.com



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Cruising Tahiti Today

Sailing Between Worlds In Paradise

Quick Facts

- * The Tahitian currency is the French Pacific Franc—which currently sits at around XPF66.8 for every dollar. A beer costs around XPF600 at a hotel.
- * Tahitians drive on the right-hand side of the road.
- * French and Tahitian are official languages, but English is spoken widely in tourist areas. Key phrases include: laorana, hello or welcome; maruru, thank you; aita pe'ape'a, no worries.

Bora Bora Bonuses

Tahiti Vacations has a seven-night package at the St Regis Bora Bora Resort with bonuses including two 80-minute massages and a snorkelling safari. Priced from \$5195pp s/t, it includes Air Tahiti Nui airfares ex Auckland, and one night pre- and post- at Radisson Plaza Resort Tahiti. For sales to 31 May, travel 01-31 May and 01 Nov-31 Mar 2013.



Freighter Cruising Growth

A cruising option for adventurous Kiwis that want to see the remote Marquesas islands is the freighter ship Aranui 3 (pictured above). Described by Air Tahiti Nui New Zealand general manager Mark Hutchinson as the lifeline of the archipelago, the freighter sails 15-day roundtrip voyages ex-Tahiti. Hutchinson says special interest products such as the Aranui 3 are contributing to the increase in the number of New Zealanders travelling to French Polynesia.

Adding to the unique nature of freighter cruising, the Aranui boasts a crew of expert lecturers that will educate cruisers on the colourful culture, history and geography of the region. Aranui 3's 2013 schedule is now available for booking in addition to 2012. See aranui.com

There's nothing quite like lying belly down on the front of a catamaran, your head just a foot clear of the edge of the bow, and feeling the weightlessness of sailing over the azure waters of French Polynesia's islands.

You feel giddy and wild for a moment, in fear of falling into the deep crystal clear water, but do it anyway—there are colours I've never seen before, and I'm in heaven. Looking around some of the group is pensive, some relaxed, others chatting and lounging just like superstars on the half million Euro catamaran that is part of The Moorings' fleet.

And that says it all about the product; you can, and will, do whatever you please amongst French Polynesia's Islands.

Our skipper, chef, concierge, personal shopper and time keeper rolled-into-one, Laurent, took us through the day's itinerary—plotting where we were sailing from and to on Taha'a, includ-



ing where we'd snorkel and play before setting off. It's just a taste of what The Moorings can offer clients keen on sailing in Tahiti's famous Society Islands, from crewed set sailings to bare boat charters.

Itineraries include seven-day Raiatea-Taha'a sailing, with coral garden snorkelling on the tiny motu of Tautau off Taha'a's northeast coast, where a hundred angel fish follow snorkellers down the channel, and crossing to Bora Bora's Teavanui pass for three days of island exploration and yacht club dining.

Longer itineraries venture to Maupiti for a cycling excursion and on to Huahine to the well-protected lagoon for the night.

Provisioning is taken care of pre-departure, with requested supplies already in the galley to ensure a smooth departure—it's ideal for a group of friends looking for adventure in the Pacific. See moorings.fr

Gauguin's Kiwi Boost

Tahiti's Paul Gauguin cruise company is riding the wake of skyrocketing Kiwi interest in cruising—and its New Zealand business is even outperforming Australia's.

Australia-based representative Daniel Reynolds says competitive deals, combined with the appeal of sailing in French Polynesia on the luxurious Paul Gauguin have seen Kiwi sales go 'through the roof'.

"[The Kiwi market] is doing incredibly well," says Reynolds. "The big thing is it's close to home, and the all inclusive product is a huge benefit in Tahiti and tends to sell quickly once deals are in-market," he adds.

The addition of the Moana to Paul Gauguin's fleet at the end of the year is expected to be popular with Europe-bound Kiwis, he adds. The cruise line has just released its 2013 itineraries.



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Air Tahiti Nui

Rob's Top Five:

- * Buy a pearl. Not only are they a souvenir unique to Tahiti, they're often worth far more than what clients pay in Tahiti.
- * Go on a shark and sting ray excursion. Swimming with sharks and manta rays is incredible. Note they are no longer called feeding trips. Operators offer these trips on most islands.
- * For repeat visitors (35% of Kiwi arrivals are on at least their second trip), rent a bach and spend time at a hotel or resort. The best baches are on Tahiti or Moorea.
- * Have a surf lesson. There's lots of operators, and numerous surf breaks around the islands that suit learners.
- * When staying in Tahiti or in transit, go to the roulettes (restaurants set up in trucks and grouped together) at least once. A meal from the trucks costs XPF1000-3000. They're open daily 1700-0000, but Thu, Fri and Sat are busiest. Clients will have the *chao men speciale* (the Tahitian version of chicken chow mein) of their lives.



Rob Thompson
Tahiti Tourisme

Boutique Feel

The Le Radisson Plaza Resort Tahiti has recently reduced the number of hotel rooms in its inventory from 152 to 91, as some rooms have been purchased as apartments by private investors. Director of sales and marketing Jeannine Bishop says the boutique destination resort has a focus on making clients feel at home. "Clients shouldn't come expecting six-star service, because they won't get it—but we will give them eight-star authenticity," she says. The property offers clients Tahitian dance lessons, aqua aerobics, yoga, kids club and an onsite tattooist.



Moorea's MICE Appeal



Discovering Moorea

Formed from a gigantic volcano that has slowly sunk into the Pacific Ocean on a dramatic lean, the island of Moorea offers some of the most dramatic landscapes in all of French Polynesia—and is enjoying increased popularity as a meetings and incentives destination.

Moorea appeals to the adventurous Kiwi 'MICE' market for a number of reasons, namely the wide range of accommodation available and its plethora of activities for groups and incentive travellers. Each major property has a MICE co-ordinator onsite and there's such a wide range of accommodation that

can cater to all kinds of groups, says Tahiti Tourisme's Rob Thompson. For example, he says, Moorea can handle small incentive groups at high end properties and has a massive amount of activities including quad biking, marae visits, gastronomic dining and ray and shark excursions.

Hoteliers on the island continue to see potential in the MICE market. The Intercontinental Moorea general manager Thierry Brovelli says the group market has been strong from Australia and New Zealand—with overall Kiwi market share at 5-7%. "It's a market we cherish because of its proximity—it has good potential," he adds

... MICE 2012 Growth

Local Air Tahiti Nui general manager Mark Hutchinson says the MICE market is one of the fastest growing segments in the first quarter of this calendar year. "The number of forward bookings by groups from New Zealand has doubled the number of bookings held for this segment at the same time in 2011," he says.

Moorea Eco Initiatives

Moorea's high-end chain resorts are taking steps to preserving the region's coral reefs and diverse lagoon life, while giving guests an understanding of the eco-system that draws them to the destination.

The InterContinental Moorea Resort plans to introduce an underwater pathway of plaques for clients snorkelling amongst its over-water bungalows and the surrounding areas. The property also houses the Moorea Dolphin Centre, which is home to three bottlenose dolphins. The mammals are either ex-show or ex-Navy (the US military used to use them to find underwater mines) and are available for visitors to meet and swim with (from around \$227pp) with proceeds going to dolphin research.

Meanwhile, the Hilton Moorea Resort is reintroducing corals that have been depleted as a result of coral bleaching as the island's water level recedes; while National Geographic is in the process of mapping the bio-sphere of the island's eco-system from flora to fauna in and out of the water.



Transport Yourself...

For more pictures from the Tahiti Travel Mart delegation's extravagant island foray, see the Travel Today NZ Facebook page [HERE](#)

Moorea Ferry Update

Tahiti's ferry terminal has been re-vamped, with a new Polynesian-inspired open terminal. There are two ferries that sail between Tahiti and Moorea, the Aremiti and the smaller, faster Aremiti 5 with seven or eight return journeys daily 0500-1830. Fares are from XPF1500 for adults and XPF950 for children to 12 years. See [aremiti.pf](#)

Internet Fees

Currently most of Tahiti's hotels charge for internet access, XPF500-900 per hour. Representatives from properties *Travel Today* spoke to in Tahiti this week say they are in negotiations with internet service providers to reduce the cost of internet, or integrate the cost into room nights.



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Match Your Clients

Tahiti Vacations product and marketing manager Renae Pocklington says it's important to match Tahiti's diverse islands to the holiday requirements of clients. Kiwis are mainly heading to Tahiti, Moorea and Bora Bora for a traditional Tahiti holiday 'that's more affordable' than many think, but there are other options, she says. "[Tahiti has] some great hidden treasures for those looking for an off the beaten track option as well," she says. Pocklington recommends clients pre-pay as much as they can, taking advantage of deals including meal plans and activities.

Tahiti Domestic

Air Tahiti is Tahiti's domestic carrier, operating scheduled and charter services out of Tahiti Nui and between islands. The carrier has air passes for travel to and within island groups including the Tuamotus, Marquesas and between the Society Islands and the Tuamotus, from EUR278pp. Travel agent rates are also available.



Growing Garden Bungalow Demand

The InterContinental Moorea Resort & Spa, which has undergone a full renovation over the last three years, says interest in its garden bungalows with private plunge pools and enclosed tropical gardens is increasing. Rooms division manager Marion Laporte says the New Zealand market is interested in 'a bit of everything', but most clients are being up-sold to a higher bungalow category from its lead-in Lanai rooms. Wholesalers in Tahiti for Travel Mart last week said they have noted an increasing trend towards garden bungalows as an affordable alternative to the sought-after overwater bungalow category.

Luxury Tahiti Today

Off The Beaten Track Luxury



Visitors to French Polynesia's more remote islands can take their luxury Tahitian experience to a whole new level of isolation—and return home with a fresh outlook after spending days indulging in the fresh cuisine and culture in surroundings that are equal parts pure luxury and simplicity.

New Zealand South Pacific product managers in Tahiti this week had the chance to stay at two properties that, for the time being at least, few in their markets have experienced—Le Taha'a Private Island and Spa and the newly re-opened Kia Ora Resort & Spa.

A member of the Relais & Chateau luxury collection of hotels, Le Taha'a offers secluded luxury with a dis-

tinctly Polynesian feel on its private motu (island) Tau Tau.

Guests dine in the forest canopy in a large raised building with a central bar and a Robinson Crusoe-style deck area. The property offers excursions to a local pearl farm, scuba diving and helicopter tours of the stunning surroundings.

Taha'a is known as the Vanilla Island owing to its large production of 'Tahitian gold', which is produced by meticulous hand-pollination and a lengthy drying process—making Tahitian vanilla the most expensive in the world to buy outside of Tahiti, but surprisingly affordable in Tahiti. However, remind clients to declare their vanilla when re-entering New Zealand.

... Blue Lagoons

North of Tahiti Nui lies Rangiroa in the Tuamotu Islands, the largest atoll in the world and home to the fresh Kia Ora Resort & Spa.

The property was closed for around 18 months for a total renovation—and emerged in Oct last year as one of Tahiti's top properties. Set on the northeast of the atoll and just a five minute drive from the airport, Kia Ora overlooks the aqua blue lagoon and offers some of the best snorkelling and diving in French Polynesia just minutes away by boat. While elsewhere in Tahiti it's overwater bungalows that reign supreme, it is Kia Ora's private villas that offer the most indulgent experience. The 220m² space centres around a forest green plunge pool and deck area, loungers and outdoor bath and shower—floating in the pool under the stars is pure heaven.

Luxury Tahiti Packages

GO Holidays has Le Taha'a all inclusive stay three, pay two packages priced from \$553pp pn for sales to 31 Mar 2013 travel by 01 Apr.

Kia Ora Resort & Spa has stay five, pay three and stay three, pay two deals priced from \$440pp s/t with transfers and American breakfast daily for sales and travel to 31 May. Kia Ora also has stay five, pay four deals with breakfast for sales to 31 Mar 2013 and travel 01 Jun-31 Mar 13.



Drift Snorkelling Thrill

One of the signature experiences on offer at the Kia Ora Resort & Spa is actually under the water.

Those looking for a little soft adventure can drift snorkel with the incoming tide through a passage between two motu with hundreds of sharks and sting rays as they feed. It's a mind-blowing experience for nature lovers.

For more photos, see our Facebook page

>> [CLICK HERE](#) <<

Bora Bora Family Fun

The Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora says it is preparing events and activities for the coming high season, with a focus on families and romance. "There will be parties for teenagers, a water treasure hunt for kids and we currently have a stay five, pay four offer in-market year-round—the only blackout is around the festive season," says revenue manager Eugenie Jason. Wholesalers have details.



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