

2018 ITINERARY & PROGRAM

Saturday Departure

Itinerary subject to modification without prior notice

A Polynesian legend tells that the gods created the Marquesas Islands to be the roof of French Polynesia. On the Aranui's voyages, we take travelers to the heart of Polynesian culture and traditions, to islands that have remained untouched and where time seems to have stopped.

It is the journey of a lifetime. Embark on this incredible voyage with us!

Day 1 – MORNING DEPARTURE FROM PAPEETE, TAHITI at 10h00 am

Day 2 – TUAMOTU ARCHIPELAGO – FAKARAVA

Morning arrival in Fakarava. Designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and the second largest atoll in French Polynesia, you will have time to discover the small village of Rotoava, the church, built of coral and the local arts and crafts. Afterwards, enjoy a refreshing swim and snorkel in the translucent lagoon among the colorful ballet of tropical fish. Optional excursions, such as snorkeling or diving in the various passes or an outing to an islet for bird watching, are available at an additional cost. Return to vessel by 12:00pm.

Day 3 – AT SEA

A day to unwind and relax on one of the sun decks or in the comfort of our air-conditioned lounge. Or why not simply enjoy the views of the endless South Pacific Ocean as we make our way to the captivating Marquesas Islands. Lectures on Marquesan culture and history will send you back in time and give you full insight into this ancient civilization. During the cruise, you will also get the opportunity to learn how to move your hips like a true Tahitian! You will probably spend many evenings socializing at the bar with your fellow adventurers from around the world. The spirited Polynesian crew will proudly introduce you to their way of life and entertain you with Polynesian songs and rhythms on their ukuleles, guitars and drums.

Before you go to bed, set your watch 30 minutes ahead for Marquesan time.

Day 4 - THE MARQUESAS ARCHIPELAGO - NUKU HIVA (Taipivai - Hatiheu - Taiohae)

The Aranui will anchor in Taipivai Bay in the morning. Following breakfast, passengers will disembark to meet the awaiting 4X4's that will take them on the day's excursion. Be aware, this will be a wet landing at the beach.

Our first stop will be a visit of the archaeological site Mea'e Kamuihei with its giant banyans and petroglyphs. Hike to the nearby Paeke site, featuring paepae, immense stone platforms, where the Taipi built their houses. This will include a performance of the traditional Marquesan Pig Dance.

Your first introduction to traditional Marquesan cuisine will be served for lunch. Here, the specialty is the "Umu", an underground oven where food is cooked for hours. Local music during the meal will provide a great ambiance.

In the small village of Hatiheu, you may visit a museum that displays copies of petroglyphs from unexplored valleys. Your excursion will continue south to Taiohae with its spectacular bay, a giant volcanic amphitheatre dominated by towering cliffs streaked with waterfalls.

As the Aranui unloads, you can explore Taiohae, the tiny administrative capital of the Marquesas. Taiohae Bay is where Herman Melville, then a 23-year-old sailor, and a buddy jumped a whaling ship in 1842. You can visit the cathedral or go the market to shop for arts & crafts. You will also find banks, boutiques and an internet café. You may return to the vessel from the village on foot or by car.

Day 5 – UA POU (Hakahau)

From the decks, you'll see the soaring mountain spires unique to Ua Pou.

While the crew unloads supplies, from cement to sugar, and loads sacks of copra (dried coconut meat) and fruit, explore the quaint village of Hakahau and its church featuring a hand-carved wooden dais.

Meet the island's talented woodcarvers and artists, hike up the hill to the Cross for breathtaking views of the mountains, the lush valleys and the main village.

Another delicious Marquesan lunch will be served: breadfruit, a Marquesan staple, along with curried goat (one of the Marquesas Islands' specialties), poisson cru (raw fish marinated in lime juice and coconut milk), taro and sweet red bananas. Enjoy an excellent dance performance including the Bird Dance, traditional to Ua Pou.

Day 6 – HIVA OA (Atuona)

Aranui will arrive in Hiva Oa in the morning, where you will have plenty of time to explore Atuona, the second largest village in Marquesas. This is where Paul Gauguin lived and created some of his best work. You can visit the colonial store where he shopped, as well as a replica of his infamous "House of Pleasure" and the adjoining museum. As you walk up the hill to the cemetery, you'll have sweeping views of the harbor. Beneath a huge frangipani tree is a tombstone with the simple words: Paul Gauguin 1903. Nearby is the grave of another famous European who also was seduced by Hiva Oa: Belgian singer-composer Jacques Brel, who died in 1978.

TAHUATA (Vaitahu)

In the afternoon, the Aranui will anchor off the small island of Tahuata. On this leaf-shaped island, the air is thick with the fragrant scent of tiare, frangipani and history.

In 1595, Spanish explorers landed in the village of Vaitahu and opened fire on a crowd of curious islanders, killing about 200. Tahuata is also the site of the first French settlement in the Marquesas in 1842. The large church built by the Vatican, is decorated with beautiful Marquesan carvings and a stunning stained glass window.

Tahuata is famous for its exquisite bone and helmet shell carvings. There will be many to choose from in the village.

Day 7 – FATU HIVA (Omoa - Hanavave)

This is the most lush and remote island of the Marquesas. The only access is by sea, since there is no airport on Fatu Hiva. It is also the island of "tapa" and you will discover all about this traditional cloth.

In the tranquil village of Omoa, you will see women pounding mulberry, banyan or breadfruit tree bark on logs. The bark is then dried and used as a canvas where the locals will paint ancient Marquesan designs. Fatu Hiva is also well-known for its hand-painted pareos (sarongs) and monoi, coconut oil infused with "Tiare Tahiti" blossoms, vanilla or sandalwood. You will meet skilled woodcarvers in the large handicraft center. This will be another great opportunity to purchase Marquesan art and souvenirs.

Before lunch, the Aranui will sail to the other side of the island, to jaw-dropping Hanavave Bay, also known as the Bay of Virgins. Athletic passengers may choose to make the trip on foot. On this unforgettable ten-mile hike you will take in breathtaking views of towering cliffs and majestic waterfalls. For hikers, a delicious lunch will be served at the top of the mountain. (Scale of difficulty 8/10)

Sunset in Hanavave Bay is a moment of pure bliss.

Day 8 – HIVA OA (Puamau) & TAHUATA (Kokuu)

In Puamau, travel by 4WD to the most incredible archaeological site for "tikis" (ancient, human-like religious stone sculptures) outside of Easter Island. Once you reach Mea'e Iipona, our knowledgeable guides will tell you the stories of these haunting statues of ancient times. Surrounded by beautifully lush grounds, the site is overwhelming and has a lot of what Polynesians call "mana" (spiritual power). Only a small part of the site has been restored and most of it is still buried under massive trees and rocks.

After lunch on board, Aranui will set sail for Tahuata, where you can enjoy a lazy afternoon relaxing at the beach or taking a refreshing dip in the Pacific Ocean.

Day 9 – UA HUKA (Vaipae – Hane - Hokatu)

In the early morning light, the Aranui will arrive in Ua Huka. This is one arrival not-to-be-missed! The maneuver entering the small bay and positioning the vessel for departure is truly impressive.

On the dry lands of Ua Huka, visit the small museum of Vaipae located in the island's city hall gardens. The museum features exquisite replicas of Marquesan art and our guides will immerse you in this ancient civilization.

Back onboard your 4WD, explore the island, stopping for stunning views of the Pacific, visit to the arboretum and botanical garden born from the passion of the island's former mayor, before reaching the beautiful village of Hane.

Lunch will be served at a local family restaurant.

On Ua Huka where the wild horses (brought from Chile in 1856) outnumber the inhabitants, horseback riding will be available (sign-up is required and an additional cost applies). Travelers choosing the horseback riding option will meet

the rest of the group at the restaurant. After lunch, continue discovering the island in the fishing village of Hokatu, or hike up to one of Hane's viewpoints escorted by the ship's guides. You may also choose to just relax on the beach. Of course, Ua Huka will be another opportunity to shop for art and crafts. Wood carvings, as well as engraved coconut shells, are some of the island's specialties.

Back onboard be sure to be out on deck as the Aranui sails along the coast of Ua Huka, for more gorgeous views. To end a brilliant day, a sumptuous buffet dinner will be served on deck for our Polynesian evening under the stars.

Day 10 – NUKU HIVA (Taiohae) & UA POU (Hakahau)

The ship's final day in the captivating Marquesas Islands! The Aranui will dock in the Bay of Taiohae, in Nuku Hiva. You may take the local shuttle "Le Truck" or walk to the town center for some free time.

At noon, the ship will sail to Ua Pou, and dock in the village of Hakahau. You may hike up to the Cross once again, stroll around the village, or just spend a lazy afternoon on the beach. This is your last chance for Marquesan art and souvenirs.

Day 11 – AT SEA

Day 12 – TUAMOTU ARCHIPELAGO – RANGIROA

From the decks, watch our approach and arrival into French Polynesia's largest atoll and the second largest in the world. You may spot playful dolphins greeting the ship as we enter Tiputa Pass, one of Rangiroa's two channels. Snorkeling and scuba diving excursions are available (sign-up is required and an additional cost applies). Scuba diving here is rated as one of the best in the world (all levels welcome).

The Tuamotu atolls, with their pristine environment and pure waters, offer the ideal conditions for pearl farming. This will be your opportunity to visit a working pearl farm and learn how Tahiti's famed jewel of the sea is produced. And if your dream is to bring one home, the small on-site store features a nice selection of loose and set pearls.

Should you decide not to go on any tours, enjoy Rangiroa's white sand beach and translucent lagoon. The local "mamas" will have an excellent display of shell necklaces, key chains, and other small souvenirs for sale on the beach. The Aranui will depart in the afternoon and sail to the mythical island of Bora Bora.

Day 13 – SOCIETY ISLANDS – BORA BORA

Arriving in Bora Bora's world famous lagoon of opalescent blues and greens, you will be greeted by majestic Mount Otemanu, the island's highest peak.

In this picture-perfect island paradise, you will enjoy a day at the beach and another delicious picnic, on a private "motu" (islet) surrounded by crystalline waters.

You may also choose from a variety of excursions at an additional cost: circle island tour by boat or bus, helicopter flight, 4WD off-road tour and one of the most popular for the bravest: shark and ray feeding!

Bora Bora was a US military outpost during World War II and remnants from the war such as cannons and bunkers can be seen on the 4WD tour. Evening departure for Papeete.

Day 14 – MORNING ARRIVAL IN PAPEETE, TAHITI – BY 9:00 am