

## The Island of Love - Tahiti

Imagine a place in the middle of the Pacific Ocean where romance radiates in magical sunsets, palm trees rustle in tropical breezes and white clouds drift over mountaintops in the distance. You're in paradise - the island of Tahiti.

The largest of the French Polynesian's 118 islands, Tahiti is the most mesmerizing place in the world. A favorite amongst couples and honeymooners, the island's lack of commercialism and its simplistic way of life lead way for a romantic honeymoon at a casual, relaxed pace.

What better way to get a true feel for the island's charm than by staying in an overwater bungalow, just the two of you in a quaint little hut atop the water. Like no other hotel room you've stayed in, these thatched-roof bungalows are a constant reminder of the simple life observed in Tahiti. They offer the most private getaway as you sit, relax and take in all Tahiti has to offer. So secluded that breakfast is delivered by canoe to your hut and only a ladder connects you to the turquoise waters of the lagoon, and one long pier keeps you from drifting away from the rest of the resort. While you lie in bed, watch illuminated underwater ocean life through the glass bottom floor of your bungalow. It's just the ocean, the sky and the two of you.

For added romance in your bungalow, flowers can be delivered to your hut, along with bottles of champagne. You can even watch a private Tahitian dance show or receive a Tahitian serenade. Honeymoon packages are especially popular on the island and can include many romantic excursions.

Privacy is what you'll find an abundance of in Tahiti. If your quiet bungalow isn't enough seclusion, you'll find hidden beaches and *motus* (tiny islands) by paddling an outrigger canoe through a lagoon. You can also arrange to be dropped off by boat onto one of these islands where you'll spend hours alone together for a very private and very romantic day. It will be easy to relax with no one but the two of you around for miles.

Most hotels in Tahiti are as picturesque as their setting. With warm Polynesian smiles and a mixture of French and Polynesian style you'll find yourself welcome and comfortable on this paradise island. Aside from the overwater bungalows, suites, villas, and traditional thatched-roof huts set on land bring to life the culture and exoticism Tahiti has to offer.

Your days in Tahiti will be full of relaxation and romance while you bathe in the warm sun or swing soothingly in a hammock made for two while watching ocean waves tumble into shore.

Tahiti is world-renowned for their underwater activities. Swimming, snorkeling and scuba diving in the warm, turquoise waters are the most popular activities on the island. Jet and water skiing, windsurfing, sailing and parasailing are common as well. There are special scuba excursions and expeditions to watch a shark feeding where you're in the water with hungry reef sharks being hand-fed by a guide.

On land, thrilling jeep tours let you explore the lush greenery and jungles of the island. Hiking or mountain biking along trails will bring you to waterfalls, grottos, and Tahitian lifestyle, up front while a romantic sunset cruise will circle the island, setting sail to see Tahiti's beaches amongst a beautiful mountain backdrop. On board, you'll take part in Polynesian entertainment and enjoy ethnic Polynesian cuisine. If you travel to

Tahiti between the months of April through October, you're likely to get a glimpse of Tahitian culture, on land, through a festival. These unique celebrations showcase dancing, art and island competitions and are popular amongst both Tahitians and tourists.

You'll want to take a trip to Papeete, the capital city of Tahiti that bustles with a unique blend of straw markets, tattoo artists, and busy streets lined with boutiques. While you're there, shop for imported French perfumes, folk art and jewelry made with the precious Tahitian black pearl, Tahiti's most valuable export: For every one hundred oysters, thirty produce a black pearl, one of which may be spectacular. The public market, Le Marche, is where you'll find Tahitian handicrafts, like woven hats, bags, grass skirts, and handmade textiles. Pareus, colorful pieces of fabric worn throughout the island as a cover-up, dress or shawl are popular purchases. Look for bowls, platters and ceremonial paddles hand-carved from precious woods that grow in Tahiti. And, shop for Tahitian coconut oils that can be used as massage oil and moisturizer, blended with the sweet-smelling perfume of the natural flower, the Tiare Tahiti. For evening entertainment, dine and dance in Papeete.

There's nothing like the Tahitian cuisine you'll taste at the island's restaurants. Fresh fish and tropical fruits are delicious signature items of Tahiti. The flavor of the island is a combination of French and Tahitian as well as international dishes. You'll find that French pastries and specialties with coconut and breadfruit will surely delight your appetite.

Learn the history and culture of the island and her people at The Museum of Tahiti and Her Island and visit The Pearl Museum, the only museum in the world devoted entirely to pearls. Paul Gauguin, the artist who's captured Tahiti's beauty on canvas also has a museum presenting his life and his works.

Year-round, the climate in Tahiti is tropical but moderate with an average yearly air and water temperature in the low eighties. Summer in Tahiti is from November to March when the climate is warmer and humid, while April through October, Tahiti's winter, tends to be cooler and drier. Though most of the rain falls during the warm season, sunny days and refreshing trade winds are plentiful, every time of the year.

You won't find a more secluded place than Tahiti, and once you're there, you won't want to leave the paradise island. Enjoy nothing but one another on your enchanted honeymoon at the island of love, Tahiti.

If you plan to get married in Tahiti:

Many hotels can arrange vow renewals, Tahitian style. These range from a simple vow exchange on the beach to an elaborate day-long ritual ceremony in which the bride is given a monoi oil massage, taught a traditional dance to perform during the celebration, then dressed and adorned with flowers. The groom is painted with "tattoos" and then paddled to the ceremony in an outrigger canoe. During the ceremony, Tahitians will wrap the bride and groom in a Tahitian quilt blanket and receive the priest's blessings as they're united. As part of the ceremony, couples are blessed and given a Tahitian name. The weddings are not legal since U.S. citizens must reside in Tahiti for 30 days before a legitimate wedding can take place. Contact your hotel for more information.