

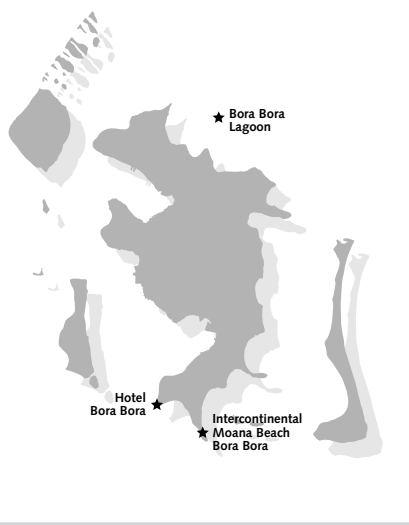
Bora Bora

Bora Bora will seduce you into buying the Cadillac of paradises, the one loaded with all the luxury trappings you know you don't need but just can't live without. Legendary not only for its lush beauty but also its hedonistic decadence, this island is a fairy-tale creation of jagged volcanic peaks juxtaposed against crystal-clear aqua lagoons. One of the world's most famous dream destinations, Bora Bora lures honeymooners, heiresses and movie stars by the plane load with a potent potion of ostentatiously hip, oh-so-romantic, slightly naughty exotica. A wicked seductress, this island tempts with a Pandora's box of guilty pleasures: but you'll have to decide if they're worth the hefty price attached.

There's no doubt Bora Bora is overpriced – both top-end and basic accommodation cost more here than anywhere else in French Polynesia, and some say this is one paradise not worth purchasing, that it's overpriced, overdeveloped and overhyped. Others argue that the island James Cook baptised as the 'pearl of the Pacific' is worth every penny of the *très cher* entrance fee. If you're looking to seriously indulge, Bora Bora has plenty of five-star resorts to pamper your every whim – the kinds of places where the glass-floored bungalows hover over turquoise seas, dinner is a multicourse candle-lit affair and breakfast is served from an outrigger canoe. If money's any object, Bora Bora has plenty of quaint family *penions* (guesthouses), often situated on some of the best real estate, in which to rest your head.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Living like royalty at the **Intercontinental Moana Beach Bora Bora** (p165), one of the world's swankiest and most dreamy luxury resorts
- Admiring the lush scenery, lagoon and idyllic *motu* (islet) on a **boat tour** (p162)
- Ogling the fish, coral and translucent water on a **snorkelling** or jet-skiing trip across the **lagoon** (p161)
- Embarking on a romantic, gastronomic and visually stimulating evening adventure by feasting on traditional food then sipping heavenly cocktails during a traditional dance performance at the swish **Hotel Bora Bora** (p165)
- Hiring a boat and spending a day stranded on a secluded, sandy **motu** (p170)



■ POPULATION: 5757

■ AREA: 47 SQ KM

HISTORY

In ancient times, the island was known as Vava'u, perhaps supporting the theory that it was colonised by inhabitants from the Tongan island of the same name. 'Bora Bora' roughly translates as 'first-born', indicating that this may have been the most important island after Ra'iatea. According to local myth, the legendary Hiro, the first king of Ra'iatea, sent his son Ohatatama to rule Bora Bora.

Due to the shortage of level ground on Bora Bora, land pressures created an unusually defensive population of fierce warriors. Only Huahine managed to resist the warriors of Bora Bora at their most expansive.

James Cook sighted Bora Bora in 1769 on his first voyage to French Polynesia, and a London Missionary Society (LMS) base was established on the island in 1820. Bora Bora supported Pomare in his push for supreme power over Tahiti, but resisted a French protectorate (established over Tahiti in 1842) until the island was annexed in 1888.

During WWII a US supply base was established here, prompted by the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. From early 1942 to mid-1946 Operation Bobcat transformed the island and, at its peak, up to 6000 men were stationed on Bora Bora. Today the runway on Motu Mute is the clearest (and most useful) reminder of those frenetic days. Until Faa'a airport on Tahiti opened in 1961, this was French Polynesia's international airport. Eight massive seven-inch naval cannons were installed around the island during the war; all but one are still in place.

Reports of a discoloured lagoon and bleached coral (the result of El Niño) spread like Chinese whispers in 2001. Although the entire Pacific was affected, Bora Bora was particularly vulnerable as it has only one pass into its lagoon. The water is a sparkling aqua once again, but the damage to the coral is irreversible.

There has been a general effort to clean up Bora Bora in recent years, and local children on cleaning bees are a fairly common sight. But you'll still see and smell more rubbish than you'd hope to, particularly in the remote northern parts of the island. It's a fragile situation: the island is dependent on tourism but is at risk of

deterring visitors because of overdevelopment, while at the same time its major drawcard – marine life – is seriously under threat. Let's hope the juggling act can be managed, because this is a truly beautiful part of the world.

ORIENTATION

Bora Bora was created by volcanic activity around three or four million years ago. The rim of the ancient volcano can be easily traced; the sea has broken into the crater to form Povai Bay at the southern tip of the island, and Motu Toopua and Motu Toopua Iti are fragments of the old crater rim. Bora Bora is spectacularly mountainous, rising to Mt Hue (619m), Mt Pahia (661m) and Mt Otemanua (727m).

The main island stretches for about 9km from north to south and is about 4km in width at the widest point. A 32km road runs around the coast.

A wide, sheltered and navigable lagoon encircles the island, with sandy *motu* (islets) edging most of the outer reef. The Teavanui Pass on Bora Bora's western side is the only pass into the lagoon.

Dusty Vaitape, south of the pass, is the main town, but Matira Point is the anchor for tourists. The quay for inter-island ships is at Farepiti, between Vaitape and Faanui. The airport is on Motu Mute at the northern extremity of the outer reef edge.

INFORMATION

There are branches of Banque de Polynésie and Banque Socredo in Vaitape, where you can exchange money or use the ATM.

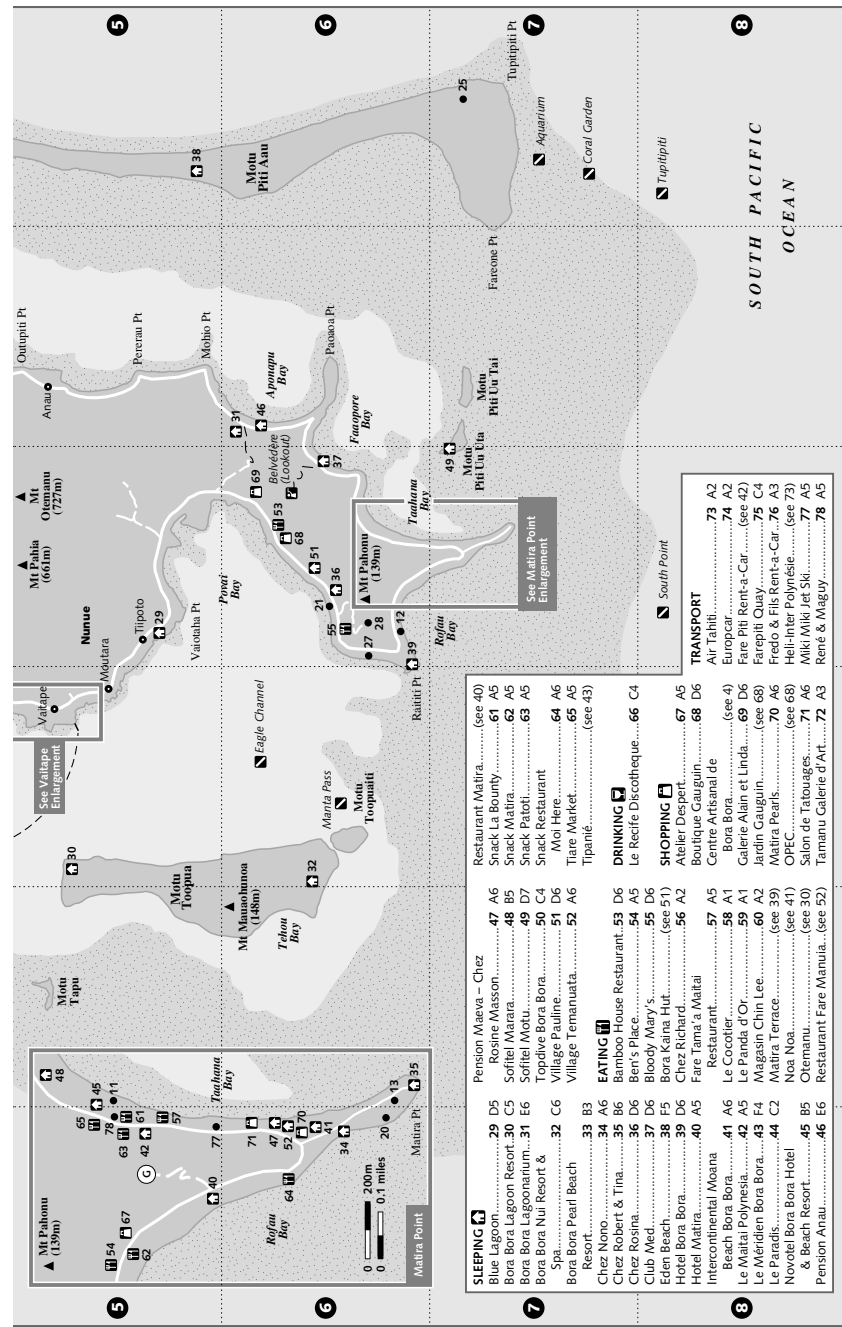
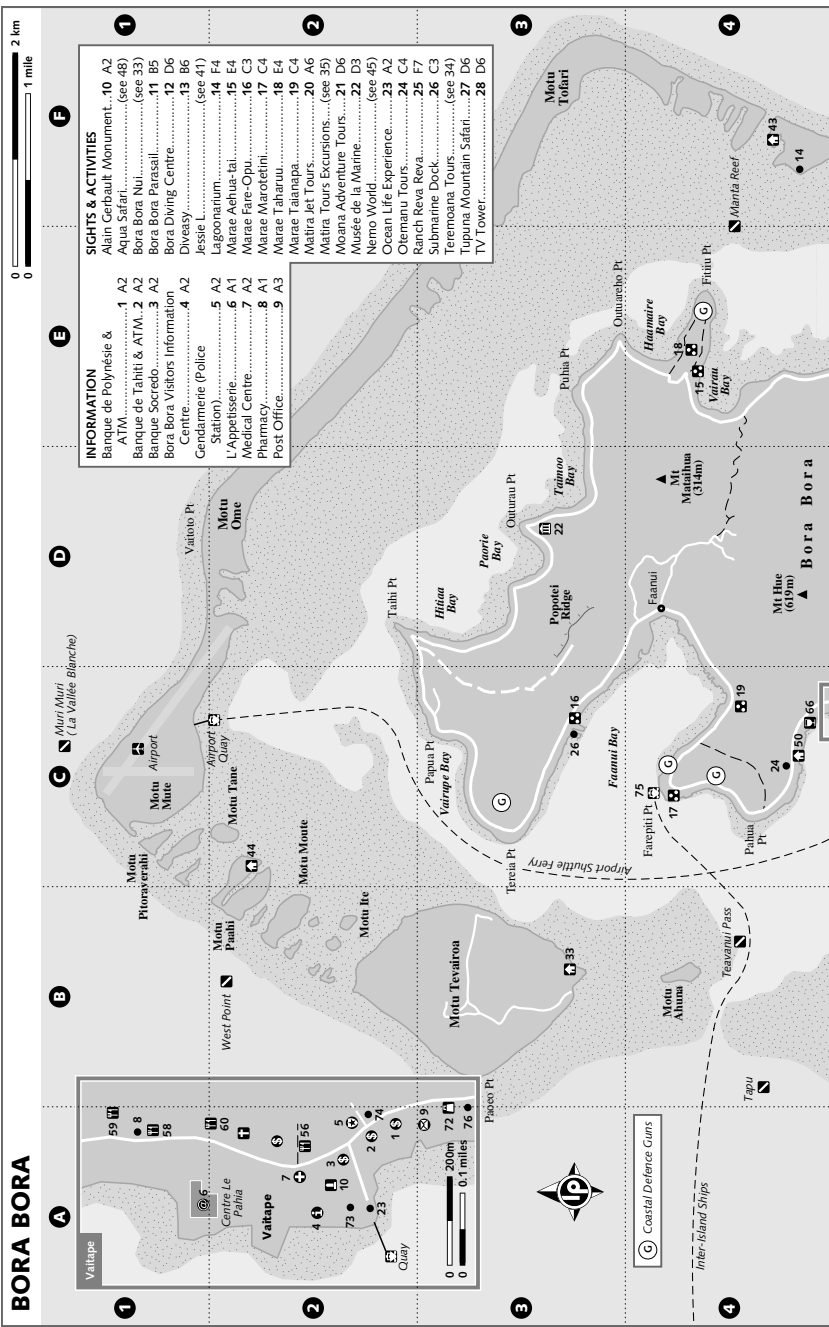
If you need medical assistance, it's a good idea to inquire first at your hotel. There's a **medical centre** (☎ 67 70 77) in Vaitape, or you can contact **Dr Juen** (☎ 67 70 62) or **Dr Rousanally & Dr Boutry** (☎ 67 77 95).

There are public telephones all around the island; phonecards can be bought at a number of shops, hotels and supermarkets. **Bora Bora visitor information centre** (☎ 67 76 36; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) The office is on the quay at Vaitape and has loads of pamphlets and other info.

L'Appétisserie (☎ 67 78 88; Centre Le Pahia; per hr 2500 CFP) Internet access in Vaitape.

Pharmacy (☎ 67 70 30; ☎ 8am-noon & 3.30-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon & 5-6pm Sat, 9-9.30am Sun) In Vaitape, just near Le Cocotier restaurant.

Post office (☎ 67 70 74) In the middle of Vaitape.



SIGHTS

Bora Bora's 32km coast road hugs the shoreline almost all the way around the island and rarely rises above sea level. It's great for a challenging day's bike ride (mere mortals may find themselves walking their bikes up the hill around Fitiuu Point on the east coast), though scooters and cars can also be easily hired. The following tour starts in Vaitape, going anticlockwise around the island.

For places to stay and eat in the following settlements, see p163 and p166.

Vaitape

If arriving by air you'll be transported from the Motu Mute airport to Vaitape, the island's main settlement. It's not the most evocative town, but it's the only place on Bora Bora that doesn't feel as if it were built exclusively for tourists. We doubt you'll feel compelled to spend your entire holiday here but Vaitape is a great place to do a bit of shopping, take care of banking and Internet needs and just get a feel for the way locals really live. Busy during the day, by late afternoon it becomes altogether sleepy, with *pétanque* (*boules*) players taking centre stage.

A **monument** to Alain Gerbault, who in 1923 was the first yachtsman to achieve a nonstop solo crossing of the Atlantic, stands at Vaitape quay. Gerbault lived on Bora Bora in the 1930s.

Overland Road

Past the last houses south of Vaitape the road curves around Povai Bay. Around 100m before Galerie Alain et Linda there's a small unsealed road that shortcuts across the island (it's easy to miss, so you may need to ask around) and offers great views of the profiles of Taha'a and Ra'iatea. It takes only 20 minutes to cross the island this way (starting from the eastern side, the path commences behind the truck workshop), and is well worth the effort.

Matira Point & Around

Beyond the overland road, the coast road passes the Bamboo House Restaurant and some shops. Further south, the **TV tower** (take the turn-off just after Chez Rosina) offers a good view over the lagoon. Bloody Mary's (p167), one of the island's most popular restaurants, is also nearby.

Luxurious Hotel Bora Bora at Raititi Point marks the start of easily accessible **Matira Beach**, Bora Bora's only real beach, which sweeps out to Matira Point. Along the road are several boutiques, *snacks*, restaurants and places to stay. From the eastern edge of the Hotel Matira property a walking trail runs up the hill to a battery of **WWII coastal defence guns**. The hike takes only about 10 minutes; a great way to stretch your legs.

On the eastern side of Matira Point is the classy Intercontinental Moana Beach Bora Bora Resort. The hotel and a few little *pensions* are down the road that runs out to Matira Point; the public beach along here is fabulous. The final leg of the annual Hawaiki Nui canoe race finishes right on the beach (see the boxed text, p36).

The point takes its name from the British ship *Mathilda* that was wrecked in the Tuamotus in 1792.

Matira Point to Anau

From Matira Point, the coast road passes a collection of busy little shops, restaurants and hotels. The road rounds the point and passes Club Med, which has its own bay and its own *belvédère* (lookout) atop the ridge above the bay. The road climbs as it passes Club Med, then drops back down to the coast just before the fishing village of Anau, a rather strung-out affair.

Fitiuu Point

A fingerlike peninsula extending out into the lagoon, Fitiuu Point features several interesting sites, but they all take a bit of effort to find. Just as the road starts to climb, a track peels off and runs down to **Marae Aehua-tai**, on the water's edge. There are good views across the bay from the *marae* (traditional temple), with Mt Otemanu in the background.

Further up the hill there's a natural *marae* and two more **WWII coastal guns**. The walking trail along the ridge starts behind the first house, at the sharp bend in the road. If anybody is around ask permission to take the trail. The track terminates at, of all things, a scenic lagoon-side garbage dump! Just before the dump a steep path runs uphill and emerges on the top of the ridge just before the gun site. From the site there are fine views out over the lagoon to the *motu*.

Backtrack along the ridge-top footpath to visit **Marae Taharuu**, a natural rock pinnacle.

Haamaire Bay & Taimoo Bay

The road beyond Fitiuu Point traverses the most lightly populated stretch of coast as it rounds Haamaire and Taimoo Bays. The small, private **Musée de la Marine** (Marine Museum; ☎ 67 75 24; admission by donation) has a collection of model ships made by architect Bertrand Darasse. If you are interested in seeing models of the ships of the early European explorers, this is the place for you. The opening hours are fairly haphazard, so you might like to call ahead.

Taihi Point to Farepiti Point

The north coast of the island around Taihi Point is sparsely populated. Just after the point, a steep and often muddy track climbs up to an old WWII radar station atop Popotei Ridge and on to a **lookout** above the village of Faanui. Nearby is the forlorn site of the abandoned Hyatt hotel project.

At the end of Tereia Point, a rectangular concrete water tank marks the position of another **coastal gun**. There's no path; just clamber for a couple of minutes straight up the hill behind the tank.

Marae Fare-Opu is squeezed between the roadside and the water's edge. Two of the slabs are clearly marked with the turtle **petroglyphs** seen incised in stones at numerous other sites in the Society Islands.

Faanui Bay was the site of the US military base during WWII. From the picturesque **church** at the head of the bay a road runs inland. Where the sealed road bends right, take the unsealed fork to the left. The road climbs up towards the ridge; continue to bear left at each fork. The track often deteriorates into a muddy morass, but eventually it drops down the other side to Vairau Bay.

Returning to the coastal road, you'll see **Marae Taianapa**, on private property on the edge of a coconut plantation, just off the mountain side of the road. You've overshot the *marae* by about 100m if you get as far as the Hinano Beer and Coca-Cola depot.

Farepiti Point to Pahua Point

Inter-island ships dock at the rather drab Farepiti quay, which was built during WWII and is at the southwestern end of Faanui Bay.

A hundred metres along the shoreline is **Marae Marotetini**, which is unfortunately on an appallingly littered stretch of beach. This

is the second royal *marae* on the island and was restored in 1968.

Along the road from Farepiti Point to Pahua Point, one of the WWII defence guns can be seen silhouetted against the skyline. The road rounds the point and arrives at the remains of the old Club Med, rotting in the tropical air. Two **coastal defence guns**, placed here to guard the shipping route into the lagoon, overlook the point. The route is not well marked, so ask around if you get lost.

ACTIVITIES

Bora Bora's activities focus on its wonderful lagoon, although there are also plenty of opportunities in the mountainous interior for those not wishing to get their feet wet.

Although Bora Bora has clear, aqua water and a brochure-esque appeal, beaches are not its strong point. Even the best bits of beach are fairly narrow and slightly disappointing. For a day working on your tan and paddling in the warm water, you can either get dropped off on a *motu* that feels wonderfully secluded even in the high season, or head to the beach at Matira Point. One of the best spots along here is opposite the Intercontinental Moana Beach Bora Bora resort. There are public toilets, showers, shady areas and plenty of local kids and their footballs (don't worry, they tend to stick to the grassy area away from the beach).

Many of the *motu* remain untouched and idyllic, but it's important to remember that these little island paradises belong to local families or have been bought by the luxury hotels: don't treat the land as yours to explore without permission. If a hotel owns the *motu*, visitors are usually welcome to board the free shuttle boat if they buy a drink at the bar or a meal at the restaurant first.

Water Activities

Bora Bora's most popular activity is probably **diving**. Sharks, rays and other marine life abound, and can be seen in quite shallow waters in the lagoon, or outside the reef. Single-tank dives in Bora Bora start at around 6500 CFP; intro dives cost 7000 CFP. Check out p59 for details about dive sites, which include the exciting Tapu, and, south of Teavanui Pass, Toopua and Toopua Iti. **Bora Bora Blue Nui** (☎ 67 79 07; www.blunui.com) Based in the grounds of the Bora Bora Pearl Beach Resort on Motu Tevairoa.

Bora Diving Centre (☎ 67 71 84; www.boradive.com) Right next to Hotel Bora Bora at Matira Point, the centre offers four trips daily.

Diveasy (☎ 79 22 55; diveasy@mail.pf) At Matira Point, it offers customised dives for one (12,000 CFP) or two people (8000 CFP per person), accompanied by a dive master. During the dive you are equipped with a communication system that allows the dive master to provide a commentary on what you are seeing.

Nemo World (☎ 67 63 00; mail@nemoworld.pf) At the Novotel Bora Bora. Transfers from hotels to the dive centre are free.

Topdive (☎ 60 50 50; www.topdive.com) On the northern edge of Vaitape, it's a luxurious and very hi-tech centre in the accommodation complex of the same name. There's a swimming pool for dive training. Free transfers.

Swimming and **snorkelling** will probably feature prominently during your stay on Bora Bora. The water is shallow and warm and makes splashing around very appealing and safe. The snorkelling is particularly good around Hotel Bora Bora, where fishing is banned and the currents are ideal. Many hotels and *pensions* provide free masks and flippers.

For something completely different, try strolling along the bottom of the sea bed in a spaceman diving suit. **Aqua Safari** (☎ 67 71 84; www.boradive.com; trips 6000 CFP) runs 40-minute tours in which you descend to depths of 4m, check out crazy coloured coral and feed the tropical fish swirling around your body. An expert diver will accompany you on your walk.

Bora Bora Parasail (☎ 67 70 34) offers solo or two-person parasailing trips, charging 10,000 CFP per person or 17,000 CFP for two; it takes you up 275m in the air.

JET-SKIING

For an adrenalin rush, you can't beat the two-hour jet-ski tours run by **Matira Jet Tours** (☎ 67 62 73). The trips (US\$150 for two people) get good reviews from travellers and include a heart-racing ride to a secluded *motu*, where you chill out for a few minutes before seeing more of the lagoon at a slower pace. Two-hour combination jet-ski and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) tours are US\$180 for two people. Trips depart at 10am and 2pm.

Hiking

There are some beautiful walks on Bora Bora, but a guide is recommended because the paths are notoriously difficult to follow.

The island's best-loved hike takes you to the summit of **Mt Pahia**, Bora Bora's most famous mountain. A strenuous 6km round-trip excursion, the trail begins in Vaitape. En route to the summit you'll pass through beautiful orchards, *mape* (Polynesian 'chestnut' tree) and fern forests, and along the edges of craggy grey cliffs. The climb is difficult at times, but your efforts will be richly rewarded with a spectacular panoramic view encompassing all the Society Islands.

To arrange a guide, contact **Trek'in Bora Mountain Guide** (☎ 67 56 40; duwasteog@yahoo.fr). Stephane Duwa offers all sorts of trips; prices vary.

Horse-Riding

If you've ever fancied riding along the beach by moonlight or cantering across the sand on the edge of a blue lagoon, visit **Ranch Reva** (☎ 67 63 63; trips from 4000 CFP; ☎ 8am-4pm). The place offers horseback excursions for all levels of experience on Motu Piti Aau, which has great views of Ra'iatea and Taha'a. A typical beach ride lasts about an hour, but the company's best adventure is its 2½-hour moonlight ride (8500 CFP) that departs nightly at 8pm. Prices include hotel transfers; English-speaking guides are available.

Lagoon Tours

Boat tours have become a standard part of the Bora Bora experience, and we recommend you try one at some point during your stay. Not only do these trips allow you to see the island from a different perspective, but you'll also learn a bit about the region's history and culture. Choose from half- and full-day tours that take you to some of the most beautiful spots on the lagoon. Shark feeding, ray swimming and snorkelling stops along with a *motu* barbecue lunch are standard on most tours. Bring waterproof sandals, an underwater camera, a hat and sunscreen.

It will cost about 6000 CFP for half-day trips and 9000 CFP for day trips, which typically run from 9am to 4pm. As well as the regular operators, many hotels and guesthouses offer these lagoon tours (although if you're staying at a fancy hotel it's probably better to book a tour on your own as these places can tack on as much as 40% extra for the same excursion). The following are recommended.

Matira Tours Excursions (☎ 67 70 97) Based at Chez Robert & Tina.

Moana Adventure Tours (☎ 67 61 41; www.moana-tours.com)

Ocean Life Experience (☎ 74 51 11)

Taaroa (☎ 67 61 55) Lagoon tours by catamaran; also does sunset cruises (Taaroa does not have an office).

Teremoana Tours (☎ 67 71 38) Based at Chez Nono.

Underwater Tours

If you're not much of a swimmer but still would like to explore Bora Bora's underwater world, try a semisubmersible-vessel tour. **Bora Bora Submarine** (☎ 67 64 00; www.spiritofpacific.com; adult/child 50,000/30,000 CFP) and **Aquascope Bora Bora** (☎ 67 61 92; adult/child 50,000/30,000 CFP) both offer hour-long voyages along the lagoon's outer edges, just outside the pass. The sealed vessels seat six people and descend to depths of 40m. Prices include transfers from your hotel; neither company has an office.

4WD Trips

To get a feel for Bora Bora's wild interior and tear up old military tracks, join a 4WD tour. **Tupuna Mountain Safari** (☎ 67 75 06; trips 6500 CFP) runs half-day trips that visit American WWII sites along with locally important archaeological areas. Guides are informative, providing interesting tidbits on the island's flora and fauna, and you'll stop frequently to taste the native fruits.

Otemanu Tours (☎ 67 70 49; tours 2500 CFP) offers similar tours for people with less time. The two-hour trips are fun, bumpy affairs that take place in old-fashioned *le trucks*.

Catamaran & Deep-Sea Fishing

Taravana (☎ 67 77 79) hires out the 15.3m *Taravana* catamaran for 90,000/120,000/220,000 CFP per half-day/full day/24 hours. It also runs deep-sea fishing trips. **Jessie L** (☎ 67 75 22; Intercontinental Moana Beach Bora) and **Moana Adventure Tours** (☎ 67 61 41) organise deep-sea fishing trips; count on at least 36,000 CFP for four hours for up to four people.

Helicopter Tours

See the lagoon from the air on a 15-minute flight with **Héli-Inter Polynésie** (☎ 67 62 59; helico-tahiti@mail.pf), which is next door to Air Tahiti in Vaitape. Flights cost 15,000 CFP per person and include a quick loop of the lagoon that takes you over Matira Point, the Coral Garden, Mt Otemanu, Faanui Bay,

the airport on Motu Mute, Teavanui Pass, Motu Tapu and Motu Toopua. There are commentaries in English.

SLEEPING

You could easily whittle away your life savings on Bora Bora's deluxe hotels, which are as sumptuous as the hype leads you to believe. But you can also benefit from the cheaper little *pensions* that have sprung up over the last decade. There are even a few camp sites for those on a true budget.

Although places to stay can be found all around the island, as well as on the *motu*, the majority are concentrated along the southern coast. Bora Bora is definitely oriented towards package tourists and most people usually eat and drink where they stay. If you're travelling solo and looking to meet others, try a place near Matira Point. To get away from everyone, head to the *motu*.

All the top-end and midrange places accept credit cards, but many of the budget places do not. Prices cited here include the myriad taxes that apply. Remember that it is the norm to quote accommodation prices before tax, so do check before booking in.

West Coast

There are a few fine places to stay dotted along the west coast.

Topdive Bora Bora (☎ 60 50 50; www.topdive.com; garden/over-water bungalows 41,000/50,000 CFP; ♿ ♿) Travellers rave about the friendly, personalised service at this small resort catering especially to divers. Amid lush communal areas, the standout bungalows feature cathedral ceilings, palm-thatched roofs and marble floors. There's no beach, but the lagoon-facing swimming pool is fabulous enough to compensate for any lack of sand. Book well in advance, as Topdive fills quickly.

Village Pauline (☎ 67 72 16; vpauline@38mail.pf; camp sites per person 2500 CFP, dm 3500 CFP, bungalows 7500-13,000 CFP) This beautifully maintained place is in a French Polynesian-style village amid a tropical garden. Dorms are a simple but solid option, and the most expensive bungalow rivals those at the top hotels for a fraction of the price. It's right before Chez Rosina towards Matira Point, on the inland side of the road. Transfers from Farepiti quay cost 500 CFP; transfers from Vaitape quay 300 CFP. Bicycles, kayaks and English-speaking staff are extra pluses.

Chez Rosina (☎ 67 70 91; adesaintpierre@mail.pf; s/d from 6000/7500 CFP, bungalows 14,000 CFP) Warm and friendly, Chez Rosina features two relatively new bungalows with their own kitchens as well as pleasantly decorated rooms with common lounge and kitchen facilities. The cheapest share bathrooms. It's on the mountain side of the road, 4.5km from Vaitape.

Blue Lagoon (☎ 67 65 64; r per person 2200 CFP) The five rooms are incredibly basic and can get rather hot, but if you're on a really tight budget they'll do for a night or two. It's about a 20-minute walk on foot south of Vaitape. Half board doubles the price.

Matira Point & Around

Much of the island's accommodation is clustered around Matira Point, at the southern toe of Bora Bora. This area also features the island's best beach, and loads of dive operators and tour companies. If you're travelling solo and looking to meet others, this is probably your best bet. Don't hold your breath though: Bora Bora caters almost exclusively to couples.

BUDGET

They may lack the luxury of the top hotels, but there are a number of little *pensions* around Matira Point that lay claim to the best sweep of beach on the main island. Many of the following places have cold water only; unusually for budget places, they all accept credit cards.

Chez Nono (☎ 67 71 38; nono.leverd@mail.pf; r 7500 CFP, bungalows 10,000-13,000 CFP) If you can secure the big bungalow, this place is fantastic value. Almost as classy as the ones found at the power resorts, this spacious and breezy affair features long, airy windows overlooking the lagoon, high-quality linens and comfortable beds. The smaller bungalows are less plush, though still adequate. The rooms are tiny, hot, overpriced and altogether claustrophobic, but Chez Nono's fabulous location – on Bora's best beach – makes it hard to resist. There's a communal kitchen and lounge chairs in the sand.

Pension Maeva – Chez Rosine Masson (☎ 67 72 04; dm/r 3500/7500 CFP) Right on the water's edge, this *pension* has loads of charm and character, as does Rosine herself. The house creaks and the walls are paper thin, but it's full of the late Jean Masson's paintings and the lagoon-side setting is a delight. There

are two rooms downstairs for one or two people, and three upstairs (two with sea views). A dorm-style room with three single beds is pleasant but obviously doesn't offer much privacy. There's a shared lounge room, kitchen and two bathrooms (one with hot water). Transfers cost 500 CFP.

Chez Robert & Tina (☎ 67 63 55; r 8000 CFP) A big white complex right on the point, Chez Robert & Tina offers rooms in simple, fan-cooled homes, all with shared bathroom and kitchen. There's no beach access, but the location is tranquil and some rooms have lovely balconies overlooking the sea. Transfers from Vaitape cost 500 CFP.

MIDRANGE

As you saunter into the midrange category, you can safely expect private bathrooms with hot water. Credit cards are accepted at all midrange places.

Novotel Bora Bora Hotel & Beach Resort (☎ 60 59 50; www.accorhotels.com; r from 13,000 CFP; ☎ ☎) It's not quite as classy as some of the neighbouring joints, but this beach-front place comes with a much more affordable price tag. Travellers give it good reviews for value, despite the slightly cramped site, and the pool will blow you away – a hip, dazzling mirage that melts into the sea. Digs are in 80 modern rooms, four of which have disabled access.

Village Temanuata (☎ 67 75 61; www.temanuata.com; bungalows from 14,000 CFP) A great-value option that's often fully booked, this place features a variety of bungalows done up in the local style with lots of Tahitian wall art and petite porches, located near a small beach. Skip the 'superior bungalows', as they're not worth the extra price. Look for Temanuata just before the Matira Point turn-off and the Intercontinental.

Hotel Matira (☎ 67 78 58; bungalows 22,000-40,000 CFP) The thatched-roof bungalows are simple, spacious and tastefully decorated at this hotel on Matira Beach. The service is friendly and helpful and the place has a fabulous restaurant. Half board adds 5000 CFP per person, while full board costs an additional 8000 CFP. Return transfers from Vaitape cost 1500 CFP per person. The setup can be a bit confusing – look for reception, the restaurant and four of the bungalows in one spot and the rest of the bungalows up the road to the north.

TOP END

Intercontinental Moana Beach Bora Bora (☎ 60 49 00; www.borabora.interconti.com; bungalows from 70,000 CFP; ☎ ☎ ☎) Seamlessly blending into its natural environment, the Intercontinental is another jet-set favourite and one of Bora Bora's most lush delights. The over-water bungalows exude romance – vanilla plants in the bathroom perfume the air, a glass window in the floor reveals myriad tropical fish swimming in the crystal-clear lagoon below. The pool is a fantastic vision of multiple terraces and a tumbling waterfall. The outdoor areas are tropical jungles, perfect for wandering. Ideal for honeymooners.

Le Maitai Polynesia (☎ 60 30 00; www.hotelmaitai.com; r/bungalows from 30,000/46,000 CFP; ☎ ☎) While not as isolated or as glamorous as its competitors, this sprawling resort offers slightly lower prices without compromising too much in the luxury department. Rooms are comfortable and modern; the over-water bungalows feature token glass windows cut into the floor and Polynesian designs. Units across the road from the beach are just as appealing – set in the hills amid lush jungle foliage.

Sofitel Marara (☎ 60 55 00; www.sofitel.com; bungalows from 45,000 CFP; ☎ ☎) This hotel was closed for major renovations when we stopped by, which is good because the place was due for a face-lift. Originally built by filmmaker

Dino De Laurentiis in 1977 to house Mia Farrow and his crew while shooting *Hurricane* (which bombed at the box office), it was getting pretty worn around the edges – hopefully the new version will bring the place up to its competitors' standards.

East Coast

The east coast is less built-up than the rest of the island, with only a few places to choose from.

Pension Anau (☎ 67 78 17; fax 67 73 24; bungalow/s/d 7000/10,000 CFP) One of the best budget places on the island, this *pension* has bungalows that are well equipped with big bathrooms and kitchen facilities. The trees are laden with bananas and breakfast is included in the price. Free transfers from the Vaitape quay are offered, and bikes are available. There's no beach, but there's a nice decked area. Credit cards are accepted.

Bora Bora Lagoonarium (☎ 67 71 34; camp sites per person 2000 CFP, dm/d/bungalows 3000/8000/9000 CFP) This place is seemingly made of cardboard, but it's clean and in a quiet area. Pluses include a communal kitchen, bicycles for hire and boat trips across to the Lagoonarium (an enclosed snorkelling area where you can swim with rays and sharks).

The Motu

Staying on a *motu* ensures unrivalled tranquillity, a complete escape and great views of Bora Bora.

Bora Bora Lagoon Resort (☎ 60 40 00; www.borabolagoonresort.com; bungalows from 60,000 CFP; ☎ ☎ ☎) Another award winner, Bora Bora Lagoon gets consistently high marks from travellers. One of only two properties on Motu Toopua, it has an idyllic and secluded feel (although with more than 75 bungalows it isn't exactly small). The bungalows here are quite posh, but Bora Bora Lagoon's real draw is the sheer amount of entertainment on offer – everything from tennis courts to a gymnasium, boutiques, boats, restaurants and bars. Be sure to check out the fabulous new treehouse spa. A shuttle runs between the resort and the main island (from just in front of the tourist office) every half-hour from 8am to midnight.

Bora Bora Nui Resort & Spa (☎ 60 33 00; www.boraboranui.com; bungalows 75,000-300,000 CFP; ☎ ☎ ☎) Sure to become a hot favourite, this new resort on Motu Toopua oozes

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hotel Bora Bora (☎ 60 44 60; www.amanresorts.com; bungalows from 75,000 CFP; ☎ ☎ ☎) Consistently regarded as one of the best hotels in the world, the Hotel Bora Bora has long been the domain of the rich and famous – Pierce Brosnan is a regular. Exuding the most gracious and exotic South Pacific charm, this masterpiece rules Bora's best real estate, but manages to be incredibly luxurious without feeling ostentatious. The over-water bungalows – featuring gorgeous four-poster beds draped with mosquito nets – are so delicious you might not want to leave. The restaurant is fabulous – dinner is served right on the beach accompanied by a Polynesian dance performance. Don't miss the complimentary afternoon high tea. The hotel is on Raititi Point, about 7km from Vaitape.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Club Med (☎ 60 46 04; www.clubmed.com; 2-person all-inclusive packages from US\$375; 🍷 🍷) Although the Club Med theme can feel a little cheesy, this is actually one of the best deals in Bora Bora (book over the Internet) and our favourite affordable sleeping option on the island. Although it caters mainly to honeymooning Americans on package tours, individuals can book hotel-only stays if there's space available. Club Med doesn't have the all-out luxurious finesse of Bora's ritziest resorts, but it's hardly shabby. On a fine stretch of private beach, the bungalows are spacious with fabulous baths, giant windows and massive king-sized beds. The themed buffet meals taste pretty decent and offer loads of choices. Rates include all the booze you can drink – and not just the cheap stuff – as well as evening shows, *motu* excursions and snorkelling trips. Skip the extra paid excursions – it's much cheaper to organise them on your own.

swanky charm. Bungalows are unusually spacious, with slick features like Italian-marble bathrooms and Indonesian canopy beds. Over-water bungalows feature the obligatory glass-floor viewing panel; the spa is perched on a lava hill overlooking the resort and offers the usual pampering but with extraordinary 360-degree panoramic views.

Bora Bora Pearl Beach Resort (☎ 60 52 00; www.pearlresorts.com; bungalows from 55,000 CFP; 🍷 🍷) With a magnificent swimming pool and over-water restaurant, this sexy resort on Motu Tevairoa boasts a variety of luxurious bungalows constructed from natural materials – including some special over-water ones. Traditional dance performances are generally held three times weekly. Add an extra 7500/10,000 CFP for half/full board. There's a shuttle every 45 minutes between 8.15am and 10pm.

Le Paradis (☎ 67 75 53; bungalows from 13,000 CFP) On Motu Paahi, this perfectly affordable *motu pension* (well, affordable for a *motu* off Bora Bora) has a relaxed atmosphere. There are five simple bungalows in a lagoon-side coconut plantation. Bathroom facilities are generally shared (there are two bungalows

with private bathrooms). Airport transfers are free; transport to Vaitape costs 1000 CFP per person. Credit cards are not accepted.

Le Méridien Bora Bora (☎ 60 51 51; www.lemeridien.com; bungalows from 70,000 CFP; 🍷 🍷) Once considered one of the world's best hotels, Le Méridien has slipped a bit in the snotty rankings – although we're not quite sure why. On the eastern side of the lagoon, on Motu Piti Aau, this place almost defies description. The architecture is fantastic, and sometimes eccentric, and the view of Mt Otomanu on Bora Bora is unique. The vast glass floors in the over-water bungalows are mesmerising, the boat-shaped bar is fabulous and Le Méridien is now involved in sea-turtle protection work, so guests have the added bonus of watching the rehabilitating turtles as they potter about. There's a shuttle boat to and from Anau on the main island from 8am to midnight.

Sofitel Motu (☎ 60 56 00; www.sofitel.com; bungalows from 75,000 CFP; 🍷) On tiny Motu Piti Uu Uta, this Sofitel is five glorious minutes by boat from the main island. The bungalows are perched on a hillside, scattered among the coconut trees. French Polynesian architecture hides the air-con, satellite TV and computer modems. You can choose from beach or over-water bungalows; there's a restaurant with a panoramic view, a sunset bar, and regular shuttle boats from Sofitel Marara.

Eden Beach (☎ 60 57 60; borabora@mail.pf; garden/beach bungalows 30,000/35,000 CFP) The environmentally friendly Eden might not be as luxurious as some *motu* hotels, but it is still a rather stylish place to relax. With only 12 bungalows, it ensures an intimate and peaceful stay, although access off Motu Piti Au is not always readily available and some visitors think it's just too quiet.

EATING

The tourist influx aside, Bora Bora goes to bed early. Most restaurants firmly shut their doors at 9pm, so don't wait until then or you may go hungry. Other than the *snacks* (snack bars), nearly all the independent restaurants as well as some of the resort restaurants offer free transport to and from your hotel.

All the luxury hotels have dance performances with buffet dinners several times a week, costing around 7500 to 9000 CFP.

West Coast

Vaitape is no culinary capital, but there are a few good places for breakfast, a snack or a cheap meal. There's a string of stalls along the main road that sell sandwiches and cool drinks. You can also get a beer and play lotto, should you so fancy. In the evening several *roulottes* (food vans) take up position along the main road and serve simple dishes (1000 to 1500 CFP). Magasin Chin Lee is the main supermarket in Vaitape. There are also a few bigger supermarkets just north of Vaitape on the side of the road facing the mountain.

Bora Kaina Hut (☎ 67 72 16; dishes 1500-3000 CFP; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Travellers rave about the food at this funky restaurant in Village Pauline. The menu incorporates cuisine from around the globe with very interesting results – the *uru* (breadfruit) gnocchi is recommended. The Saturday-night Pacific buffet (a feast of grilled meats, fish, and local fruits and vegetables) also gets good reviews and includes live music and dance performances.

Topdive Bora Bora (☎ 60 50 50; dishes 2000-3600 CFP; 🍷 lunch & dinner) The restaurant at the hotel by the same name has fabulous cathedral ceilings, stylish décor and an outdoor terrace overlooking the lagoon. The menu at this romantic joint fuses the flavours of France and Polynesia with great results, although options are limited mainly to meat and seafood. The restaurant offers free transport.

Bamboo House Restaurant (☎ 67 76 24; dishes 1200-5500 CFP; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) A long-

time island favourite, Bamboo House is a fairly unpretentious eatery constructed entirely from local bamboo. The French cuisine gets consistently good reviews and the lunchtime snack menu is very reasonably priced. The restaurant provides free transport and credit cards are accepted.

L'Appetisserie (☎ 67 78 88; pastries 130-400 CFP, toasted sandwiches 500-900 CFP; 🍷 breakfast & lunch) The most sophisticated place in town for breakfast or a snack, it serves excellent coffee along with a delicious range of freshly baked pastries and light sandwiches. This is also the place to check your email. Look for it in Vaitape's Centre Le Pahia, near the quay.

Le Panda d'Or (☎ 67 62 10; dishes 1500-2500; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Serving up big plates of Cantonese specialities, this restaurant feels a bit impersonal but the quality of the food is quite good. It's just to the north of Vaitape.

Also recommended:

Blue Lagoon (☎ 67 65 64; dishes 1200-2500 CFP; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Free transfers from your hotel.

Chez Richard (☎ 67 69 69; dishes 1000-1500 CFP; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Chinese takeaway in Vaitape.

Le Cocotier (☎ 67 74 18; dishes 1000-2100 CFP; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Good Chinese on the northern side of Vaitape.

Matira Point & Around

The area around Matira Point offers the island's most varied eating options. Many of the fancy resorts have fabulous restaurants, often offering very reasonably priced lunch menus.

RESTAURANTS

Noa Noa (☎ 60 49 00; breakfast buffet 2500 CFP, dishes 1500-3000 CFP) Noa Noa, at the Intercontinental Moana Beach, has a reputation for fine food and an especially attractive setting right on the beach. The international menu features a lot of American and seafood dishes and is quite reasonably priced considering the location. At lunch there are loads of salads and sandwiches to choose from; breakfast is an all-you-can-eat egg and bacon-heavy buffet. The resort's dinner and dance performance (around 9000 CFP) is well respected.

Matira Terrace (☎ 60 44 60; dishes 1500-6000 CFP) This highly regarded restaurant in the Hotel Bora Bora offers excellent international cuisine with an emphasis on French and French Polynesian food, along with professional service and a romantic, open-air setting. The

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Bloody Mary's (☎ 67 72 86; appetisers 1200-1500 CFP, mains 2500-3000 CFP; 🍷 lunch & dinner) A Bora Bora institution, and perhaps one of the most famous bars in the South Pacific, Bloody Mary's is a not-to-be-missed Bora experience. OK, so the food – hand-picked fresh fish, seafood and meat cooked American-barbecue way – is not always consistently excellent, but the ambience is unbeatable and it's a favourite with celebrities. Coconut-tree stools, coloured lights, a thatched roof and a floor of sand all heighten the Jimmy Buffet (think time is inconsequential) illusion, so stop by for at least a sunset cocktail. Free transport is provided from anywhere between Vaitape and Club Med during dinner hours. Credit cards are accepted.

attached bar serves frothy tropical cocktails and light meals at funky wooden tables under a thatched roof.

Restaurant Matira (☎ 67 70 51; dishes 1200-2000 CFP) Part of the Hotel Matira, this restaurant has a pleasant ambience with worn wooden tables and chairs, creaky floorboards and big plate-glass windows looking out onto the sea. The menu has loads of Chinese offerings along with a few lighter snack options. If you're on a budget, order a burger and fries, a steal at 600 CFP. Free transport is offered anywhere between Hotel Bora Bora and Anau.

Snack La Bounty (☎ 67 70 43; dishes 800-2500 CFP; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Funky little Snack La Bounty is festively decorated with loads of bright yellow lights and dense foliage in an open-air thatched-roof building. It's popular for its tasty thin-crust pizzas, delicious pastas and house specialities such as *mahi mahi* (dorado) with vanilla sauce and raspberry vinegar. There are also plenty of burgers, crepes, salads and even fondue on offer. Credit cards are accepted.

Restaurant Fare Manuia (☎ 67 68 06; dishes 2000-5000 CFP; ☺ lunch & dinner) Offering an eclectic menu of fish, lamb, veal and steak cooked in unique sauces, this restaurant is part of Village Temanua. The appetisers are as appealing as the mains – think goat-cheese salad or pasta with smoked salmon – and easily make a meal. Sadly, the place keeps the most erratic hours so call first to see if it's open. If it is, there's free transport.

Fare Tama'a Maitai Restaurant (☎ 60 30 00; dishes 1500-4500 CFP; ☺ lunch & dinner) Part of Le Maitai Polynesia, this place serves pleasant food, including lots of French Polynesian specialities, in a mellow setting.

CAFÉS & SNACK BARS

Ben's Place (☎ 67 74 54; dishes 300-2000 CFP; ☺ breakfast & lunch) A local and tourist favourite for decades, this ramshackle beach shack across from the water is as popular for its energetic ambience as it is for its varied home-cooked meals. The menu features everything from tuna-salad sandwiches and spicy *poisson cru* (raw fish dish) to fajitas, pizza, pasta and eggy breakfast options.

Snack Matira (☎ 67 77 32; dishes 500-1500 CFP; ☺ lunch Tue-Sun) Beside the lagoon (great views) and diagonally opposite Ben's Place, this alfresco *snack* is a favourite with the

French-speaking expat community. The food is of the burger, pizza and omelette variety, but quite good. Takeaways available.

Snack Restaurant Moi Here (☎ 67 68 41; burgers from 400 CFP, dishes 1600-2000 CFP; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Great wooden tables, a large menu and a location overlooking the lagoon make this *snack* an obvious choice. Oh yeah, the food's not bad either. Breakfast and light lunches are decent value and portions aren't too skimpy. Dinner includes loads of Chinese dishes and steaks sautéed in a variety of sauces.

Snack Patoti (☎ 67 61 99; dishes 1000-2000 CFP; ☺ 8am-2pm & 7-9pm Mon-Sat) This option offers a good mix of French Polynesian and Chinese dishes. It's in a lovely raised position that catches the breeze – perfect on a sweltering day.

SELF-CATERING

Tiare Market (☺ 6.30am-1.30pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 6.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Sun) Across from the Novotel Bora Bora, this place is well stocked with all the necessities – from wine and fresh bread to sunscreen and toothpaste.

The Motu

Free shuttles, which generally operate until midnight, allow you to enjoy the restaurants at the luxury hotels on the *motu* around Bora Bora. Like their competitors on the main island, they offer evening performances with dinner buffets several times a week. Reservations are advisable, and you may not be allowed over if the hotel is fully booked.

Otemanu (☎ 60 40 02; dishes from 2500 CFP; ☺ lunch & dinner) Perhaps the most romantic restaurant on the island, Otemanu is in the Bora Bora Lagoon Resort. You can enjoy a wonderful candle-lit dinner as you watch the sun set over Bora Bora's most sacred peak or sample a fine bottle of wine at a table overlooking the lagoon. The gourmet cuisine is fresh and exquisitely presented, the service polite and professional. There are shuttles from the Vaitape quay.

Tipanié (☎ 60 51 51; dishes from 2000 CFP; ☺ lunch & dinner) In Le Méridien Bora Bora, this is a superb surfboard-shaped restaurant right by the lagoon – the views are fabulous. There's a different set menu each night or you can choose from a variety of French and French Polynesian à la carte offerings. The shuttle operates from the Anau quay.

DRINKING

You'll feel like a pumpkin if you're out after 10pm on Bora Bora. Nightlife is as restrained as it is on the other islands of French Polynesia. Dinner and a show in one of the big hotels is about the sum of things, but you'll find you wake up so early here that you'll be yawning in unison with the bartender who wants to close at 9pm. You can waltz into most of the luxury hotels for a cold beer or cocktail; some even have happy hours. The *motu* hotels offer free shuttle services, usually until about midnight. There's generally a rather appealing snack menu around, too.

Bloody Mary's (☎ 67 72 86) The best place on the island to mingle, this very popular restaurant and bar is *the* place on Bora Bora to cut loose over a few sunset cocktails. It attracts locals, expats and tourists alike for its funky ambience, sand floors and coconut-tree stools.

Intercontinental Moana Beach Bora Bora (☎ 60 49 00) This open-air bar has daily happy hours from 4pm to 6pm and a long cocktail list. The vibe is relaxed and welcoming but drinks are surprisingly unadventurous for such a swanky place.

Le Recife Discotheque (☎ 67 73 87; admission 1000 CFP; ☺ 11pm-3am Fri & Sat) Bora Bora's sole nightclub caters mainly to young locals, and the place can get a little rough (it's not unheard of for drunken brawls to start after one too many Hinanos). Solo women may not feel comfortable here, but if you're travelling in a small clique, it can prove to be a fun, very local, night out. Look for the club about 1km north of Vaitape.

ENTERTAINMENT

Don't miss a traditional dance performance by a local group in one of the luxury hotels. The men often look a bit clumsy alongside the remarkably nimble women, who seem to have a few extra joints to achieve the mesmerising gyrations required. You can usually get in for the price of a drink at the bar, or for between 6500 and 8000 CFP you can also feast on a buffet dinner. There are performances two or three times weekly; ask at the reception desks about the schedule and entry policy as some places are now charging 2500 CFP admission fees to a show.

Club Med (☎ 60 46 04; admission 6500 CFP) puts on a different stage show each night – from minimusicals to Polynesian dance perform-

ances. Admission includes a buffet dinner with unlimited bottles of wine followed by the evening show, usually lasting about an hour. Call for show times and reservations.

SHOPPING

Shopping on Bora Bora tends to mean hopping between the many galleries and boutiques scattered around the island, buying (or dreaming about buying) pearls, wrapping yourself in various brightly coloured *pareu* (sarongs) or perhaps getting a traditional Marquesan-designed tattoo. This is by no means an exhaustive list of the galleries and craft shops on Bora Bora; plenty of others can be found along the coastal road.

Atelier Despert (☎ 60 48 15; www.despert.com) Even if you can't afford to purchase the original paintings, it's worth stopping by this lovely little studio to chat with the charming artist and check out his latest work. Alain Despert only does originals (no prints), and his work has gained worldwide acclaim for its bold and bright patterns. He is perhaps best known for the painting he created for the Absolut Vodka advertising campaign, *Absolut Despert*.

Office Polynésien d'Expertise et de Commercialisation (OPEC; ☎ 67 61 62) This impeccably run rare-pearl company puts your pearl in a machine so you can see its quality. If you're serious about purchasing fine pearls, stop here first, if only for a quick lesson on cultured pearls. You can't get the pearls you've bought elsewhere assessed here; it's just a guarantee of the pearls you buy from OPEC.

Matira Pearls (☎ 67 79 14) Selling set and loose pearls starting at around 10,000 CFP, this shop offers some creative pieces. It's run by two Americans so you won't have to worry about the language barrier.

Jardin Gauguin (☎ 67 76 23) Specialises in fine art and crafts from the Marquesas, including some unique-looking *pareu*. You won't find your usual souvenir numbers here – this is for beautiful *objets d'art* only.

Boutique Gauguin (☎ 67 76 67) Next door, this boutique sells some of the most artistic-looking *pareu* on the island. It offers a varied collection of clothes, crafts and sculptures.

Tamanu Galerie d'Art (☎ 67 66 89) Loads of Polynesian art, along with the usual T-shirts, curios and pearls, are sold at this pretty special gallery just next to the post office in Vaitape.

Galerie Alain et Linda (☎ 67 70 32) About halfway between Vaitape and Matira Point, this gallery has a little bit of everything – including a mix of art, books and pottery.

Salon de Tatouages (☎ 67 66 73) For traditionally designed tattoos head to this shop in Matira Point. Popular, sterile and reliable.

In the tourist office by the Vaitape quay, Centre Artisanal de Bora Bora has lots of stalls selling *pareu*, basketwork and other crafts produced by island women.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bora Bora is 270km northwest of Tahiti and can be reached by air or boat from there.

Air

Air Tahiti (☎ 67 70 35; ✈ 7.30-11.30am & 1.30-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8-11am Sat) flies between Bora Bora and Tahiti (14,000 CFP, 45 minutes, six daily), Huahine (7500 CFP, 20 minutes, daily), Mo'orea (18,000 CFP, 15 minutes, daily) and Ra'iatea (6500 CFP, 20 minutes, daily). Air Tahiti also has direct flights from Bora Bora to the Tuamotus, with a very handy flight to Rangiroa (23,000 CFP, 1½ hours, daily) and an onward connection to Manihi (26,000 CFP, two hours, twice weekly). While flights to Rangiroa go daily, they only operate twice a week in the reverse direction.

Flying into Bora Bora, the left side of the aircraft offers the best views of the spectacular scenery.

Boat

Inter-island boats dock at the Farepiti quay, 3km north of Vaitape.

The cargo ship **Vaeanu** (☎ 41 25 35) makes three trips a week between Pape'ete and Bora Bora (via Huahine, Ra'iatea and Taha'a), leaving Pape'ete on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 5pm; it leaves Bora Bora on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday.

The **Maupiti Express** (☎ 67 66 69) runs between Bora Bora and Maupiti (2500 CFP, 1¾ hours, three times weekly) or Ra'iatea/Taha'a (2500 CFP, 1½ hours, four times weekly). The boat departs the Vaitape quay for Maupiti at 8.30am on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday; the return trip leaves Maupiti at 4pm on the same day. It's quite possible to visit Maupiti as a day trip from Bora Bora – return fares cost 3500 CFP. The boat departs for Ra'iatea and Taha'a at 7am on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and at 4pm on Sunday.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Arriving on Bora Bora is quite dramatic. The airport is on Motu Mute, at the northern edge of the lagoon; transfers are offered to and from the Vaitape quay on two large catamaran ferries (included in the cost of your ticket). This makes for a wonderful free tour of the western side of the island! There's a regular bus service from the quay to the hotels at Matira Point (500 CFP).

When leaving by air, you need to be at the quay at least 1¼ hours before the flight. The top hotels transfer their visitors directly to and from the airport; everyone else is picked up at the quay by the catamaran ferries (the cost of this is included in the ticket).

Boat, Kayak & Jet Ski

Renting a boat is a heavenly way to explore the lagoon, and if you can get a few of you together, this is a cheaper option than the organised tours available. **René & Maguy** (☎ 67 60 61), next to Snack La Bounty in Vaitape, rents outboard-powered boats for 9000 CFP for a half-day and 13,000 CFP for the full day. The boats can seat up to four passengers, and snorkelling equipment is included. Village Pauline has kayaks for rent.

Miki Miki Jet Ski (☎ 67 76 44) rents jet skis for 15,000 CFP for two hours. It's shortly before Le Maitai Polynesia if you're travelling from Vaitape.

Car, Scooter & Bicycle

Cars, scooters and bikes can be rented for two-, four-, eight- and 24-hour periods. The following offer pick-up from your hotel.

Europcar (☎ 67 70 15; www.europcar-tahiti.com; car hire 2/4/8/24hr 7000/8500/9500/10,000 CFP) Europcar has its main office in the centre of Vaitape, as well as desks in several of the main hotels.

Fare Piti Rent-a-Car (☎ 67 65 28; car hire 2/4hr 5500/7000 CFP) In Le Maitai Polynesia.

Fredo & Fils Rent-a-Car (☎ 67 70 31; car hire 2/4/8hr 5500/7000/8500 CFP) Also in Vaitape and at several hotels.

Fare Piti has scooters for hire (two/four hours 4000/4500 CFP). You will find bicycles for rent at Europcar (two/four/eight hours 1300/1500/1800 CFP) and Fare Piti (two/four/eight hours 900/1000/1300 CFP). Many of the larger hotels have bikes available for guests.

There's a Total petrol station north of Vaitape, just before Topdive Bora Bora.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'