

The Marquesas

Paul Gauguin, Herman Melville, Robert Louis Stephenson, Jack London, Thor Heyerdahl, Jacques Brel... For the past 170 years, the Marquesas have offered an escape for artists, writers, adventurers and musicians.

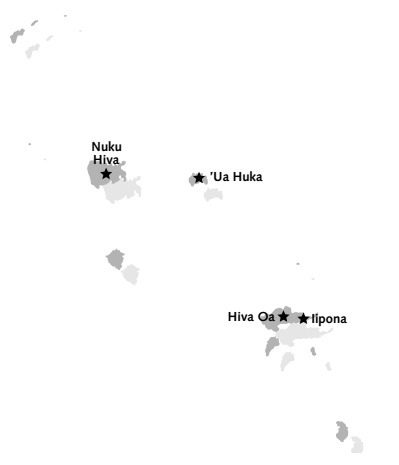
With a language considerably different from Tahitian and cultural variances in everything from cuisine to dance, the Marquesas would be considered a separate country from Tahiti if it were not under the same blanket of French power. Marquesans don't see Tahiti as the centre of their world as do the inhabitants of the other archipelagos of French Polynesia.

The dramatic landscapes of the six inhabited islands are drier and steeper than the Society and Austral Islands. With no barrier reef and no protective lagoon, the feeling here is wild and earthbound. In the northern group of Nuku Hiva, 'Ua Pou and 'Ua Huka, the land is a desert of low shrubs surrounding sharp basalt peaks and pinnacles; only the river valleys are lush and habitable. South, Hiva Oa, Tahuata and Fatu Hiva are carpeted by fruit trees, ferns and flowers. With few introduced invasive insect or bird species, fruit such as mangoes, oranges, limes, tamarind, papayas and bananas load down the trees, and colourful birds, often unique to their island, soar low in the branches. Horses and goats run wild over the entire archipelago.

The Marquesas is *not* a beach destination. There are a few enticing stretches of sand, but they are invariably infested with *nono*, a small, aggressive biting fly that the locals will tell you is fiercer than a lion. It's best to stay in the mountains and valleys where there are endless opportunities for hiking, horse-riding, exploring the almost overwhelming number of archaeological sites or simply discovering this mysteriously wonderful culture.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Piecing together Marquesan history through archaeological remains, such as **lipona** (p225)
- Riding horseback through the jungle valleys of **'Ua Huka** (p216) to find hidden petroglyphs
- Following the trails of Melville in **Nuku Hiva** (p209) and Gauguin in **Hiva Oa** (p224)
- Hiking across windswept ridges and into ancient volcanic craters in **Nuku Hiva** (p211)
- Diving with the **Pygmy Orcas** (p62) at Nuku Hiva



History

Among the first islands to be settled by the Polynesians during their great South Pacific migrations, the Marquesas served as a dispersal point for the whole Polynesian triangle from Hawaii to Easter Island and New Zealand. Estimates of the islands' initial colonisation vary from prehistory to between AD 300 and 600.

The Marquesas' isolation was broken in 1595 when Spanish navigator Alvaro de Mendaña y Neira sighted Fatu Hiva by pure chance. This initial, unexpected contact ended in the death of several islanders. Mendaña's fleet then sailed along past Motane and Hiva Oa, and anchored for around 10 days in Vaitahu Bay on Tahuata. Mendaña christened these four islands Las Marquesas de Mendoza in honour of his sponsor, the viceroy of Peru, García Hurtado de Mendoza, Marquis of Cañete.

In 1774 Captain Cook lingered for four days on Tahuata during his second voyage. Fortunately, he formed a more cordial relationship with the islanders. Ingraham, the American commander of the *Hope*, 'discovered' the northern group of the Marquesas in 1791, arriving slightly ahead of Frenchman Étienne Marchand, whose

merchant vessel took on fresh supplies on Tahuata and then landed on 'Ua Pou. In 1797 William Crook, a young Protestant pastor with the London Missionary Society (LMS), landed on Tahuata. Although his attempts at evangelism were unsuccessful, he recorded some irreplaceable impressions of Marquesan society.

French interest in the region grew as a means of countering English expansion in the Pacific. After a reconnaissance voyage in 1838, Rear Admiral Abel Dupetit-Thouars took possession of Tahuata in 1842 in the name of King Louis-Philippe.

The Marquesas were quickly marginalised in favour of Pape'ete for geographical, economic and strategic reasons. Only the Catholic missionaries, who had been active since their arrival on Tahuata in 1838, persevered. Their evangelising endeavours were more fruitful than those of their Protestant rivals and Catholicism became, and still is, firmly entrenched in the Marquesas.

Upon contact with Western influences, the foundations of Marquesan society collapsed. Whaling crews brought alcohol, firearms and syphilis. In a stunning decline the population plummeted from around 18,000 in 1842 to 5264 in 1887 and 2096 in 1926.

MARQUESAN HANDICRAFTS

If there is one place in French Polynesia where it's really possible to spend some cash, it's the Marquesas. *Ti'i* (sacred sculptures), pestles, *umete* (bowls), adzes, spears, clubs, fishhooks and other items are carved from rosewood, *tou* (dark, hard-grained wood), bone or volcanic stone. These treasures are pieces of art, items you will keep for a lifetime. Less-expensive buys include seed necklaces and *umu hei*, an assortment of fragrant plant material such as ylang-ylang, vanilla, pieces of pineapple covered in sandalwood powder, and various other fruits and plants, held together with a plant fibre. You can use *umu hei* to perfume a room or tie in your hair. Fatu Hiva prides itself on being the only island in French Polynesia to have perpetuated the manufacture of *tapa*, cloth made from beaten bark and decorated with traditional designs.

In most villages there is a small *fare artisanal* (craft centre) where you can shop around. It may open only when requested or when the *Aranui* is in port. It's also well worth approaching craftspeople directly. With a little luck you may see them working in their studios but be aware that the amount of stock they carry is variable. Twice a year, usually in June and November, they participate in Marquesan craft exhibitions in Pape'ete and it takes some time to replenish their stocks. Some work is done to order only, so if you stay several days on an island it's worth making a visit as soon as you arrive.

Bring enough cash because you cannot pay by credit card. Prices may be relatively high but they're still lower than in Pape'ete and are really worth it for the time and artistic effort put into the works. Expect to pay at least 1500 to 2000 CFP for a small *tapa* piece (up to 10,000 CFP for a piece 1m long), 3000 CFP for a small 15cm *ti'i* (and up to 60,000 CFP for a large one) and 5000 CFP for a bowl or plate of about 50cm. Bargaining is not a Pacific tradition so don't expect to be able to beat the prices down very much.

In the 20th century the Marquesas were made famous by Hiva Oa residents Paul Gauguin and Belgian singer Jacques Brel. Slow but sure development of local infrastructure has helped lessen the archipelago's isolation, while archaeological surveys are uncovering a culture that was lost only a comparatively short while ago.

Culture

A visit to the Marquesas is a cultural experience that is rivalled by few other destinations. This is the only place in French Polynesia where the past is almost palpable thanks to the wall-to-wall archaeological remains. Stone *tohua* (meeting places), *me'ae* (Marquesan equivalent of *marae*, where religious ceremonies were performed), *pae pae* (stone platforms that were used as foundations for ancient Marquesan houses) and *ti'i* (stylised statues known elsewhere as *tiki*) are found lying hidden in the undergrowth, gracing gardens and, occasionally, neatly restored for tourists. If you find a good guide, fascinating details such as *ua ma* (pits that stored and fermented breadfruit), ancient prison pits, tattooing areas, sacrificial bone dumps, hidden petroglyphs and much more will be pointed out to you.

Ancient Marquesan society was based around the *uru* (breadfruit), which provided the dietary staple. The bark was used to make *tapa* (for clothing) and all the tree's parts were used medicinally. *Ma*, the dough of fermented *uru*, was pounded into a purée called *popoi*. This was a provision during times of scarcity but was also mixed with fresh *uru* pulp in more abundant times to

add flavour. Today, *uru* is still a dietary staple although *popoi* is eaten more rarely. The significance of the *uru* is clearly seen in modern churches where nearly every statue of the baby Jesus is seen clutching an *uru*, the symbol of life.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are direct flights between Pape'ete and Nuku Hiva and Hiva Oa, and a once-weekly direct flight from Rangiroa in the Tuamotus to Nuku Hiva – there is no return flight back to Rangiroa from the Marquesas. Flights to 'Ua Huka via Nuku Hiva, Hiva Oa or 'Ua Pou run three days a week and 'Ua Pou has flights five days a week via Nuku Hiva, Hiva Oa and 'Ua Pou.

Don't forget that the Marquesas are a half-hour ahead of Tahiti time.

BOAT

The *Taporo VI* and *Aranui* service the Marquesas, departing from Pape'ete and travelling via the Tuamotus (Takapoto and/or Rangiroa). The *Aranui* does about 15 trips a year while the *Taporo VI* departs every two weeks. See p265.

Getting Around

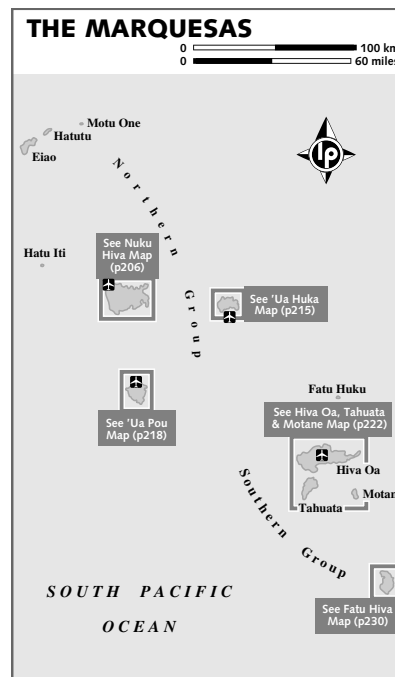
Getting around the Marquesas is difficult. The valleys are isolated and connected only by dirt tracks that require a 4WD; prepare yourself for a sore bottom. Some villages have no quay and rough seas make landings difficult. The introduction of helicopter shuttles within the northern group of islands has improved inter-island transport, although this is very expensive.

HAAKAKAI O TE HENUA ENANA: THE CREATION MYTH OF THE LAND OF MEN

At the dawn of humanity, two deities, Oatea and Atuana, ruled over the vastness of the ocean. One day Atuana expressed the wish to live in a house. Oatea, her husband, decided to draw upon his divine powers and promised the house would be built by dawn the following day.

He devoted himself to incantations and chose a site on the ocean. He put up two posts and exclaimed, 'This is 'Ua Pou!' He then took a roof beam and placed it on the two posts. After tying it with coconut-fibre rope he cried, 'This is Hiva Oa!' When fitting the rafters he said, 'This is Nuku Hiva!' He made the roof from nine coconut-palms and cried, 'This is Fatu Hiva!' To bury the leftover vegetation strewn over the ground, he dug a hole.

Atuana saw the glimmer of dawn on the horizon. 'This is Tahuata!' Oatea shouted. When Atuana added impatiently, 'I can hear the morning birdsong!' Oatea replied, 'This is Motane!' He quickly threw the scraps into the hole and said, 'This is 'Ua Huka!' He felt his divine powers leaving him with the sunrise and with his last breath he murmured, 'This is Eiao!'



BETWEEN ISLANDS

The easiest and quickest way to island hop is by regular Air Tahiti flights. Helicopters in the northern islands are a more-expensive and less-frequent option, *bonitiers* (from the term 'Boston whalers') can be individually chartered and you can hop on the cargo ships *Taporo VI* and *Aranui* if your timing is right. Tahuata and Fatu Hiva are only accessible by boat and it takes some ingenuity to organise this. See the individual islands' Getting There and Away sections for more information.

ON THE ISLANDS

Guides and taxis are the main modes of transport for getting around the islands' web of unpredictable and often dangerous 4WD tracks. It is possible to rent your own vehicle but with few signs and markings it can often be hard to find your way; it can also be dangerous if you're not used to bad roads or if it's muddy. *Bonitiers* and speedboats usually link the villages more rapidly than 4WDs, although it can sometimes be difficult to find one (especially if the seas

are rough) and, unless you are travelling in a group, this can be a very expensive option.

Boat

Bonitiers can take up to 15 people; ask at your hotel or *pension* or go directly to the boat owners and inquire about finding other visitors to share the costs. Tahuata has a communal *bonitier* that runs a twice-weekly ferry service to Hiva Oa.

Hitching a boat ride is possible; ask boat owners in the marinas or passing yachts. Another possibility is to hitch a ride with the medical or administrative personnel who regularly do a one-day round of the remote valleys by speedboat or 4WD.

Cargo ships pass at more or less regular intervals and may let you make a few short hops. Ask about arrival dates of the *Aranui* or *Taporo VI*.

Car

The Marquesas are a bumpy ride. Although you are able to rent your own vehicle, this is not really recommended unless you emphatically prefer not to travel with a guide, are an extremely capable and careful driver, and are happy to miss important sites. Distances are measured in hours, not kilometres, and drivers proceed with infinite caution at an average of 10km/h to 15km/h.

The rental rates are for the vehicle rather than per person, and are astronomical if you're by yourself, so try to get a group together. Excursions are almost always organised through the *pensions* and some will work together to fill up the vehicle. Tours often take a full day so check that the 4WD isn't too crowded.

Helicopter

Based at Taiohae (Nuku Hiva) there are three flights a week to 'Ua Pou (the trip takes only a few minutes) and there are flights to 'Ua Huka on demand. It's a convenient but costly service.

Hitching

Although the traffic volume is very small, hitching is possible and for some solo travellers this is the only way to avoid the high cost of renting a 4WD. All the usual cautions apply.

THE NORTHERN GROUP

The northern group consists of three main inhabited islands – Nuku Hiva, 'Ua Huka and 'Ua Pou – and the deserted *motu* (islets) further to the north: Hatu Iti (Motu Iti), Eiao, Hatutu (Hatutaa), Motu One (Sand Island) and the Clark Sandbank.

NUKU HIVA

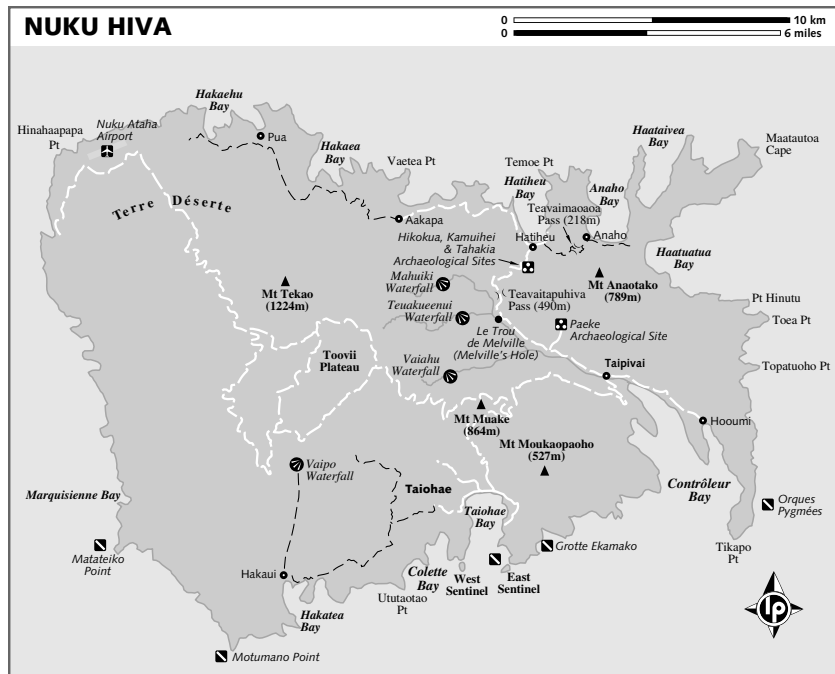
pop 2632 / area 340 sq km

It's a shock to fly into Nuku Hiva and see that every visible part of the island below is desert; no trees, no houses, just grass and low bushes. Don't despair! Although about a third of the island is actually called Terre Déserte, this huge (the second largest in French Polynesia after Tahiti), sparsely populated island offers an astonishing range of terrain, ranging from windswept cliffs to lush river valleys and deep bays. The main town of Taiohae, which acts as the administrative and economic capital of the Marquesas, offers an enticing atmosphere of both a colonial port and Stone-Age art hub.

The topography and lack of good roads make the smaller villages of Hatiheu on the north coast, Taipivai in the east, and tiny hamlets such as Anaho, Hooumi and Aakapa feel isolated and fresh – this is what Tahiti and the Society Islands most have been felt like some 50-odd years ago. No-one passes without at least giving you a smile.

The American Captain Ingraham was the first Westerner lucky enough to see Nuku Hiva in 1791. During the first half of the 19th century sandalwood merchants and whalers put into port in Taiohae Bay. Catholic missionaries reached the island in 1839 and the religion took hold when the archipelago was seized by the French in 1842. During the second half of the 19th century the island was ravaged by disease.

With several flights a week from Pape'ete, Nuku Hiva is an easily accessible, active destination for hiking, horse-riding and diving. The archaeological sites are some of the most impressive in French Polynesia and local art and culture is alive and well. There are some beautiful handicrafts available of carved hardwood, sandalwood and bone.



Information

The following are all found in Taiohae.

Banque Socredo (☎ 92 03 63; 🕒 7.30-11.30am & 1.30-4pm Mon-Fri) There's an ATM inside; currency exchange is also available.

Hospital (☎ 91 20 00) Around 100m from the post office. Each village also has basic medical services.

Post office (📧 7am-3pm Mon-Thu, 7am-2pm Fri) On the eastern side of the bay, opposite the *gendarmerie*.

Tourist office (☎ /fax 92 03 73; marquises@mail.pf; 🕒 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) Currently next to the Héli-Inter Marqueses office and soon to move to a new building at the marina, this friendly office can help organise activities throughout the Marquesas.

Yacht Service (☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) Easy to find on the quay, the yacht service offers a laundry service for 600 CFP and fax services (250 CFP local, 300 CFP international). It also has Internet access for 15 CFP per minute, 15-minute minimum.

Sights

TAIOHAE

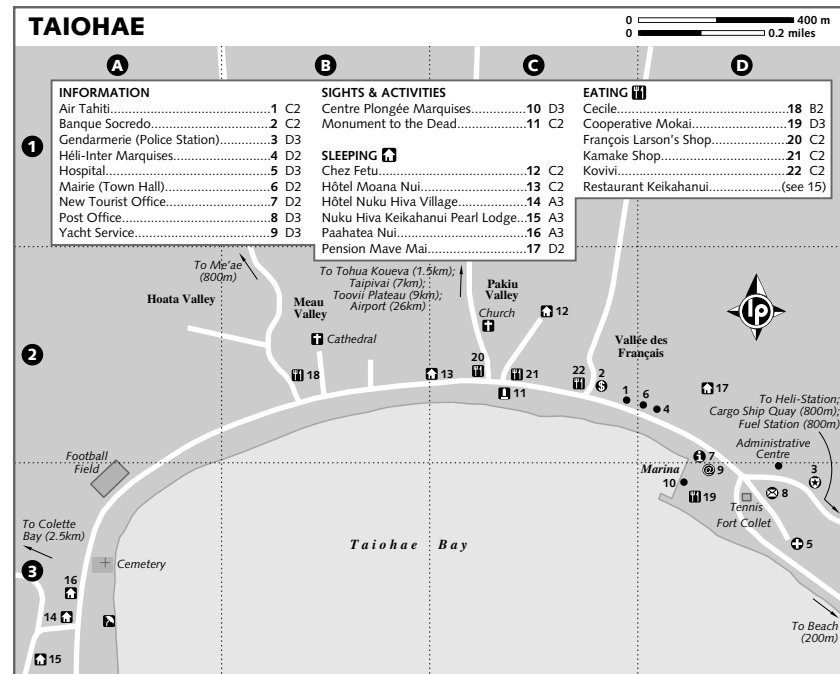
Fronting a perfect bay and nestled at the base of soaring mountains, Taiohae has about 1700 inhabitants and is the economic and administrative capital of the archipelago.

Nearly all the town's hotels, restaurants, shops and services are clustered together on the 3.5km seashore (for places to eat and stay here, see p212 and p213).

Three roads run back from the seafont and climb into valleys, one crosses the Pakiu Valley and continues to Taipivai. The entrance to the bay is flanked by two islets, the East Sentinel and the West Sentinel.

Marking the centre of town is the **Piki Vehine Pae Pae**, also known as Temehea. Rebuilt for the 1989 Marquesas Festival, this *pae pae* contains modern sculptures and a dozen magnificent *ti'i* made by the island's sculptors and by artisans from Easter Island. Its central, breezy location makes it a popular hang-out for local kids.

About 100m east stands a stone cross at a crossroad that marks the entrance to the Catholic mission. This road leads to the striking **Notre-Dame Cathedral of the Marquesas Islands**, built on the Tohua Mauia, a sacred place venerated by the ancient Marquesans. The stone used in the construction of the church comes from the archipelago's six inhabited islands.



THE ARANUI

For nearly 20 years, the *Aranui* has been the umbilical cord between Tahiti and the Marquesas, an integral part of life in the archipelago. A real favourite with tourists, this 104m cargo and passenger vessel does 15 trips annually. Its 16-day voyage, departing from Pape'ete, takes it to Takapoto in the Tuamotus and the six inhabited islands of the Marquesas (some of them twice) before returning via Fakarava in the Tuamotus. At the end of 2002, the *Aranui 3* was put into service; it's essentially the same as its predecessor but a bit more comfortable.

The *Aranui* is a real cargo vessel; it has been supplying the remote islands of the Marquesas since 1984 and that is still its primary mission. Unless you're on a yacht, there's simply no other way to visit so many islands in the Marquesas (along with two Tuamotu atolls thrown in as a bonus). Furthermore the prices aren't excessive. Of course, 15 days to visit six islands and two atolls without a whole day (often only a half-day) on any of them can seem rushed, but it does give visitors enough time to get a feel for the archipelago. However, it's worth noting that this is an organised journey. If you don't like to be tied to a schedule or forced to live with a group, it may not be for you.

The front half of the *Aranui* looks just like any other cargo boat of its size, with two cranes and holds for all types of goods. The back, however, is more like a cruise ship, with cabins, several decks, a mini-swimming pool, sundeck, dining room, bar, small lounge and library, and a video room. There's nothing luxurious about it – everything is simple and functional. Foreign currency and travellers cheques can be changed and credit-card advances made, with appropriate commissions of course. There's a doctor permanently on board and an infirmary but no telephone service.

There are four classes of accommodation. The suites are large cabins with balcony, double bed and bathroom; A-deluxe cabins have double beds and bathroom with bath; A-standard cabins have two single beds and bathroom with shower; and the C-class accommodation is 30 dorm-style beds in groups of two with a locker, a curtain for some privacy and shared bathroom facilities. All the accommodation has air-con, towels are provided and there's a laundry service twice a week. In the restaurant there's a buffet breakfast and a set lunch and dinner with French and Polynesian dishes in copious quantities and, since this is French Polynesia, lots of wine.

There's also a rather spartan deck class used by islanders, for whom the ship is their local transport.

The stops are tied up with the loading and unloading of freight, a major event on the islands. You can watch the unceasing ballet of cranes offloading pallets of cement, crates of beer, children's

On the seafront, opposite the Kamake shop, is the **Monument to the Dead**, an obelisk fronted by a cannon constructed in honour of Étienne Marchand.

The **Tohua Koueva** is just over a kilometre up the Pakiu Valley on the Taipivai road, and 700m along a dirt track. Turn east from the main road at the gravel-making machine then go past the poorly placed garbage dump by the river. It's believed that this communal site, with its paved esplanade, belonged to the war chief Pakoko. During a confrontation with the French in 1845 he killed five soldiers on this *tohua* and was subsequently executed by the French. Today it is a peaceful spot full of banyan trees and flowers. All the stone carvings are contemporary and you'll see a small *moa* that was donated from the people of Rapa Nui (Easter Island).

COLETTE BAY

Colette Bay is also called Haaotupa, a derivative of Haaotupa (House of Tupa). Legend has it that the enormous diamond-shaped rock on the hill between the bay and Taiohae was the house of Tupa, a great builder and a sort of Marquesan Hercules. The bay is 3.5km from Taiohae and served as the base camp for *Survivor Marquesas* (2002). A carved stone *ti'i* marks the rocky bay's brush with fame.

To get here take the track going up to the Nuku Hiva Keikahanui Pearl Lodge, at the western side of the bay. Instead of branching left to the hotel, keep right and continue for about 2km. The track climbs along the western side of the cove and descends to the beach at Colette Bay. It's ideal for a picnic but bring plenty of insect repellent.

bicycles, drums of fuel, loads of timber and even cars and motorcycles. Locals will be waiting with their 4WDs to load the goods ordered from Pape'ete the previous month. In turn copra, sacks of citrus fruit and *noni*, the new wonder fruit, are loaded aboard.

There are no nights ashore; all the shore visits last just a day or half-day and include multilingual guides. There are only three places – Nuku Hiva, 'Ua Pou and Hiva Oa – where the *Aranui* can tie up at a wharf. Elsewhere it has to transfer passengers and freight to *bonitiers*, hefty open whaleboats that can carry about 30 people. Getting on the whaleboats can be tricky if the seas are rough but the crew are strong, efficient and well practised. The longest period at sea without a stop is three days.

While the ship is unloading and loading, passengers make excursions ashore, which may vary from one trip to the next but typically include picnics, visits to pearl farms, scuba diving, snorkelling, glass-bottom boat excursions, 4WD trips to archaeological sites and remote villages, and horse-riding excursions. Stops are made at craft centres where you can meet craftspeople and make purchases. Bring cash – nobody will accept credit cards. There is a demonstration of *tapa*-making on Fatu Hiva. Passengers also get to make culinary visits and participate in a gargantuan *kaikai enana*, a traditional Marquesan meal with 10 or more dishes. European and North American art-history experts, archaeologists and ethnologists are invited on the cruise, providing cultural insights.

The following prices include all meals and taxes for a 15- or 16-day trip ex-Pape'ete (cabins are usually for two people, so there is a 50% surcharge for solo occupancy): a suite costs US\$5310, an A-deluxe cabin US\$4560, an A-standard cabin US\$3860 and a dorm bed US\$2340. Children aged three to 15 sharing a cabin with adults pay US\$935. It is also possible to join the *Aranui* on Nuku Hiva for eight days in the Marquesas: dorm beds cost US\$1580, A-standard US\$2550, A-deluxe US\$3000 and suites US\$3580.

Tourists are dissuaded from using deck class, but if you are just going from one island to the next and there's room, there shouldn't be a problem. Contact the tour guides at the stopovers and count on paying about 4000 CFP from one island in the Marquesas to another. Meals are included but are not taken in the dining room with the other passengers. Excursions are not included. Only a mattress is provided, so bring a sleeping bag.

Bookings are essential and peak periods (July, August and December) are booked out months in advance. Contact your travel agency or go directly to the shipowner, the **Compagnie Polynésienne de Transport Maritime** (CPTM); ☎ 42 62 40, 43 76 60; www.aranui.com; BP 220, Pape'ete; 📞 7.30-11.30am & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri). CPTM's Pape'ete office is at the entrance to the Motu Uta port.

TOOVII PLATEAU

Toovii Plateau, crossed by the Taiohae-Terre Déserte (airport) track, has an average altitude of 800m. Toovii supplies the whole archipelago with meat, dairy produce and timber. There is a *ferme-auberge* (a farm offering accommodation) here (see p212).

HAKAUI VALLEY

About 8km west of Taiohae as the crow flies, the Hakau Valley is one of the most imposing sights on Nuku Hiva. On either side of the river, vertical walls rise to nearly 800m and **Vaipo Waterfall**, the highest in French Polynesia at 350m, plummets into a natural swimming pool; during prolonged droughts it can be reduced to a mere trickle.

The valley was once the fiefdom of King Te Moana and Queen Vaekehu, and the an-

cient royal road follows the river past **pae pae, tohua** and **ti'i** hidden behind a tangle of vegetation.

From Taiohae, the valley can be reached by speedboat (about 20 minutes), and on foot or on horseback by a 12km bridleway. From the bay where the boat anchors, you should allow two hours to reach the waterfall on foot. This path, which is not particularly difficult except for a few fords, follows the river and includes stretches of the ancient paved royal road. At Hakau Bay, walk 100m east to the magnificent **Hakatea Bay**.

TAIPIVAI

This intriguing village carpets the floor of a river valley and its single street follows the river's course for nearly 2km. At the

NONO A GOGO

Even the hardiest of adventurers can be brought to their knees (and the edges of their fingernails) by the nearly invisible, but undeniably hostile *nono*. Cover yourself in lightweight trousers and long-sleeve shirts and whip out the jungle juice. This little fly's bites can leave welts that itch like no other. Fortunately, they are found almost uniquely on beaches and are not disease carriers.

eastern end of the village the river rushes into Contrôleur Bay.

The majority of Taipivai's inhabitants produce copra, as is evident from the vast number of coconut trees through the valley. Copra-drying platforms regularly grace the roadside. *Nomi* is the island's second most important crop; many villagers are choosing to switch to this much less labour-intensive but lucrative agriculture.

In July 1842 the American whaler *Acushnet* put in at Taiohae and on board was Herman Melville, future author of *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*. Melville jumped ship and spent three weeks at Taipivai. He wrote of his unusual experiences in *Typee*, which was published in 1846. The actual site of Melville's stay, now called Le Trou de Melville, had just been cleared at the time of writing (see opposite).

It takes about half an hour by 4WD on a paved road in reasonable condition to reach Taipivai from Taiohae; take the road towards the mountain from François Larson's shop.

HOUMI

Once inhabited by the fierce Teavaaki, this otherwise charming hamlet is now home to what could arguably be the fiercest *nono* population of the Marquesas. If you do risk your pound of flesh for a visit you'll be rewarded with views of *pae pae* everywhere along the roadside. Some have been left in the bush while others have been put to use as bases for copra-drying sheds – one house has integrated a *pae pae* into its architecture so that the stone platform is now used as a terrace! The track ends at a sandy beach. No matter how tough or untasty you believe yourself to be, if you do not armour yourself in repellent at this point you'll be sorry tomorrow.

HATIHEU

Hatiheu is a graceful little village dominated by a crescent of black sand, spiring peaks and immaculate, colourful gardens; it's no wonder that Robert Louis Stevenson succumbed to its charms when he passed through in 1888. Its focal point is a modern, stone church and, to the rear, the cemetery spreading up the hill. On one of the peaks to the west, at a height of 300m, is a white statue of the Virgin Mary, erected in 1872.

The tiny *mairie* (town hall) on the seafont houses a small museum with a collection of traditional Marquesan artefacts.

From Taipivai, follow the main road 7.5km as it climbs to the impressive Teavai-tapuhiva Pass (490m), from which there are magnificent views. Shortly before Hatiheu, the archaeological sites of Hikokua, Kamuihei and Tahakia meet the track (see opposite).

For information on places to stay and eat here, see p213.

ANAHO

This sublime little village has one of the best beaches on Nuku Hiva and is less than 10 minutes by speedboat from Hatiheu or a little over an hour by foot. A few families make their living harvesting copra among the swaying coconut plantations; there is a tiny chapel and not much else. It's a popular anchorage for visiting yachts and, with the only coral reef on Nuku Hiva, the bay is lagoon-like and inviting. In fact there is a wonderful, warm feeling to the whole place. Back in 1888 Robert Louis Stevenson was inspired to write many pages eulogising its unsettling beauty, and it could well inspire you to kick back and do nothing here for a few days.

To get to Anaho, take the paved road at the end of Hatiheu up towards the valley. About 300m up the hill there's a small clearing and a well-marked trail to the left. There is room here to park a vehicle if you need to.

From the Teavaimaoaoa Pass (218m) there's an unbroken view over Anaho Bay; both the ascent up from Hatiheu and descent to Anaho are quite steep but the track is in good condition and is well marked. Bring mosquito repellent and plenty of water. If you can't stay overnight, you can still call in advance to order lunch at Pension Pua Hinako (☎ 92 04 14).

For information on places to stay and eat here, see p213.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Le Trou de Melville

This little cluster of *pae pae* about 4km from Taipivai on the road to Hatiheu had just been cleared at the time of writing. The site (which translates as Melville's Hole) commemorates the village where Herman Melville stayed when he was trapped by the Typee tribe, and rests on a sloping hillside bordering the Taipivai River. Anyone who has read *Typee* will instantly begin daydreaming about Melville's adventure.

Hikokua

One of the most attractive archaeological sites in the Marquesas, Hikokua was discovered by the archaeologist R Suggs in 1957 and has been restored and maintained by Hatiheu locals since 1987. It dates from around AD 1250 and was in use until the 1800s.

The *tohua*, a vast, central, rectangular esplanade, was used for dance performances at community festivals. It's flanked by tiers of small flat basalt blocks that were once used as steps for the spectators. When the *Aranui* comes in, dances are performed here once again.

On the terrace stand two modern sculptures by Uki Haiti, and a flat rock that was used for various purposes, including solo dances and rituals associated with puberty.

Near the centre of the esplanade are nine Christian tombs. They probably date from the time of the first missionaries' arrival, after the abandonment of the site.

The platform at the bottom, on the northern side of the esplanade towards the ocean, was the *tuu*, or ceremonial activity centre. It was on this *tuu* that sacrifices and display of the victims' bodies took place. The chief's residence stood at the northeast corner of the esplanade.

Kamuihei & Tahakia

About 300m towards Taipivai from the Hikokua site, these two connecting sites make up the largest excavated archaeological area of Nuku Hiva. A team led by the archaeologist Pierre Ottino began restoration in 1998.

The importance and sheer number of these structures testifies to the dense population this valley once sheltered. The site is spectacular and mysterious; its large

moss-covered basalt rocks and enormous banyans, the largest of which has been estimated to be over 600 years old, give the place a feeling of spiritual power.

At the foot of the largest banyan is a deep pit, presumably dug for the remains of sacrifices or for taboo objects. Other pits are scattered about the site; these are mostly *ua ma*, which stocked the all-important breadfruit. A little higher are two large rocks about 2.5m high by 3m wide and decorated with petroglyphs. There are clearly visible representations of turtles, fish and the eyes of a *ti'i*, along with human figures. It's estimated that the valley contains more than 500 other petroglyphs like these.

On the other side of the track is the restored Tahakia *tohua*, one of the biggest in the Marquesas, and some *pae pae*.

It can be difficult to understand the significance of the site, so it's best to hire a guide who can explain it to you. Contact Yvonne Katupa at Chez Yvonne (☎ 92 02 97) in Hatiheu or Jocelyn Henua Enana Tours (☎ 92 00 52) in Taiohae.

Paeke

This site features two well-maintained *me'ae*, flanked by a set of brick-coloured *ti'i*. The *me'ae* further up the hill has a pit into which human remains were thrown.

To get to the site from the little bridge in the centre of Taipivai, take the Hatiheu road (uphill) for about 1.5km until you leave the village. At the blue house on the right, follow the path to the right, which goes up through the coconut plantation. It's a 20- or 30-minute steep walk uphill, so take some mosquito repellent, a hat and sunscreen.

Activities

There are a dozen magnificent diving sites, which are very different from those of the Society group or the Tuamotus. There's a dive centre, Centre Plongée Marqueses (☎ /fax 92 00 88; marquisesdives@mail.pf) in Taiohae. Diving with dolphins, if you are lucky enough to have the right conditions, is a highlight of the region. See p62 for details about sites.

There are good walking tracks all over the island, including the hikes to the Vaipo Waterfall, Colette Bay and from Hatiheu to Anaho. Marqueses Rando (☎ 92 07 13, 21 08 74; www.marquisesrando.com in French; hikes per person from

5000 CFP) offers some amazing guided hikes ranging from half-day walks along the coast to three-day adventures across the island; it also offers a chance to observe some of Nuku Hiva's unique endemic bird species.

From Taiohae, it is easy to reach Colette Bay on horseback. Other popular rides are to the Vaipo Waterfall, along the track between Hatiheu and Aakapa, and on the Taiohae ridgeline.

In Taiohae contact **Sabine Teikiteetini** (☎ / fax 92 01 56; rides per day 7000 CFP) and in Hatiheu contact Yvonne Katupa at **Chez Yvonne** (☎ 92 02 97; rides per day 5000 CFP).

Héli-Inter Marqueses (☎ 92 02 17; helico-nuku@mail.pf) makes scenic tours from 3900 CFP per minute or 232,000 CFP per hour. It's expensive, but you can see an impressive amount of the island in just five minutes.

Tours

Most of the island's taxi drivers double as tour guides and the hotels and some *pensions* also organise tours. Two independent operators are noteworthy.

Jocelyn Henua Enana Tours (☎ 92 00 52; www.marquisesvoyages.com.pf in French) Jocelyn knows just about everything there is to know about Nuku Hiva and leads tours nearly everywhere on the island (by 4WD and speed boat). She is one of the only guides available on Sunday, speaks English and takes credit cards.

Marquises Plaisance (☎ 92 08 75; e.bastard@mail.pf; 5hr tour for 4 people 40,000 CFP) Eric Bastard has a covered speed boat and offers island and fishing tours as well as transfers to 'Ua Pou and 'Ua Huka.

HAVE YOUR KAIKAI AND ASK FOR IT TOO

Don't 'ia orana' or 'maururu' anyone out here – the Marquesan language is surprisingly different from Tahitian. A little effort with some simple words will be greatly appreciated by the local people.

Te Henua Enana ('The land of men') the Marquesan name for their islands

kaoha	hello
apae	goodbye
koutau	thank you
kaikai	food, to eat
kaikai metai	eat well, enjoy your meal
kanahau	good, delicious, beautiful

Sleeping

Taiohae
Chez Fetu (☎ 92 03 66; r per person 2000 CFP) This charming place has one open bungalow with a kitchen, bathroom and three single beds. It's rustic but clean, and the elderly owners make you feel right at home. It's about 200m up a small dirt path that starts at the western side of the Kamake shop.

Paahatea Nui (Chez Justin et Juliette; ☎ / fax 92 00 97; paahateanui@mail.pf; bungalows per person incl breakfast 4500 CFP) Next to Hôtel Nuku Hiva Village, this option has a cluster of basic but large bungalows with bathroom in a garden full of *pamplemousse* trees. There's no restaurant but you can use the kitchen.

Hôtel Moana Nui (☎ 92 03 30; pensionmoananui@mail.pf; s/d incl breakfast 7500/8000 CFP, with half board 11,000/14,000 CFP; 🍴) In the centre of Taiohae, on the seafront, the seven spotless rooms have attached bathrooms (with hot water) and lovely carved wooden doors that open to minuscule terraces. Meals are served in the ground-floor restaurant, credit cards are accepted and there's a laundry service.

Pension Mave Mai (☎ / fax 92 08 10; pension-mavemai@mail.pf; s/d/tr 7000/8000/9000 CFP; 🍴) All the rooms at this clean and inviting *pension* have views over Taiohae Bay. There is one larger family room with kitchenette and there were plans to build a pool at the time of writing. Excursions by boat and 4WD to the main sights are offered and credit cards are accepted. Half board is 2500 CFP.

Hôtel Nuku Hiva Village (☎ 91 01 62; fax 91 01 61; s/d/tr 5500/6500/7500 CFP) The fading, local-style bungalows with bath and fan are perfectly situated on a quiet beach at the edge of the village. With a little TLC it could become a good option. Half board is 4000 CFP.

Nuku Hiva Keikahanui Pearl Lodge (☎ 92 07 10; www.pearlresorts.com; bungalows 20,000-40,000 CFP; 🍴 🍷) Overlooking the western extremity of Taiohae Bay, the 20 bungalows are Nuku Hiva's swankiest choice. Even so, the ambience here is more like a small hotel than a resort. Better deals on activities can be found outside the hotel. It has a tiny pool.

TOOVII PLATEAU

Ferme-auberge de Toovii (☎ 79 07 49; ferme-auberge@mail.pf; bungalows with half board per person 6000 CFP) At 800m altitude, this *ferme-auberge* in the heart of the island's main crater is completely isolated. There are five plain,

clean bungalows with bathroom and terrace, plus there's a dining room and a bar. Meals are prepared using meat from animals raised on the farm and vegetables from the farm's market garden.

HATIHEU

Chez Yvonne (☎ 92 02 97; hinakonui@mail.pf; s/d 5000/7000 CFP, with half board 8000/12,000 CFP) Nuku Hiva's first *pension* (it's 20 years old!) is run by Yvonne Katupa, mayor of Hatiheu – it's kept as clean and well managed as her village. The small bungalows were starting to be torn down at the time of writing to be replaced by new and improved models. All have attached bathroom and face the spectacular Hatiheu Bay. Meals are taken in the excellent restaurant down the road. Airport transfers (4000 CFP one way) need to be arranged in advance and all sorts of activities are available.

ANAHO

These two *pensions* are on the same property and owned by two brothers. Both are at the end of the village of Anaho on a sweeping beach on a coconut plantation. Note that the only way to get here is by boat or on foot.

Te Pua Hinako (☎ 92 04 14; r with/without half board per person 4100/2000 CFP) A favourite weekend getaway for people from Taiohae, this is an ageing house with two rooms and a communal kitchen. It's not glamorous but it's friendly and well located.

Kaoti Ae (☎ 92 00 08; bungalows per person 2700 CFP) Directly behind, this *pension* offers nicer but small bungalows with bathroom and terrace. Prices include breakfast and you can order meals next door.

Eating

TAIOHAE

Cooperative Mokai (🍷 breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri) This little place right on the quay draws you in with the smell of freshly baked local-style pastries. It serves tasty, simple dishes such as *poisson cru* (raw fish). On Saturdays a market forms outside that sells fruit, veggies and more pastries.

Kovivi (☎ 92 03 85; set lunch 1400 CFP, dishes 1500-2000 CFP; 🍷 closed evening Sun & Mon) An excellent restaurant with friendly service and very reasonable prices. Dishes are mostly classic French with tropical influences but there are usually a sprinkling of local dishes on the menu as well. There is a decent wine list

(especially for the Marquesas!) with carafes at 1000 CFP and a good French bottle from 2500 to 3300 CFP.

Hôtel Moana Nui (☎ 92 03 30; dishes 1500-2500 CFP; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) The restaurant at this hotel has OK food in a pleasant setting. Dishes range from sashimi to imported trout and beef in French-style sauces, and at night there is pizza. Credit cards are accepted.

Restaurant Keikahanui (☎ 92 07 10; set lunch 1700 CFP, dinner 1200-3500 CFP) At the Nuku Hiva Keikahanui Pearl Lodge, this place has a varied menu with fish, meat and pasta dishes in a lovely terraced area overlooking the bay. Credit cards are accepted.

In the centre of Taiohae Kamake, Cecile and François Larson are three shops on the waterfront selling everything from food to hardware. They are open 7.30am to 11.30am and 2.30pm to 5.30pm Monday to Saturday, and on Sunday morning after mass. Kamake also serves as a bakery from 5.30am; the entrance is at the side.

TOOVII PLATEAU

Ferme-auberge de Toovii (☎ 79 07 49; set menus 2000-4000 CFP) Enjoy meals made with organic produce, with almost all ingredients grown on the farm itself. Every Saturday night there is a dinner with music and dancing.

HATIHEU

Restaurant Hinakonui (☎ 92 02 97; dishes 2000-2500 CFP) This restaurant has a magnificent terrace that opens directly onto the seafront. The menu includes *poisson cru*, lobster and shrimp. To try the excellent Marquesan oven (pork and fish, cooked in an oven hollowed out of the ground) you need at least 12 people, so contact Chez Yvonne to see if the *Aranui* or some other group will be visiting. Reservations are essential.

ANAHO

Te Pua Hinako (☎ 92 04 14; set lunch 2200 CFP) It's possible to call in advance to order lunch here if you want to make a day trip on foot from Hatiheu.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The office for **Air Tahiti** (☎ 92 03 41; 🕒 8am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Fri) is on the eastern side of the cove at Taiohae and at the **Nuku Ataha airport** (☎ 92 01 45).

There are daily flights between Pape'ete and Nuku Hiva (28,000 CFP one way, three hours). There is also one direct flight per week from Rangiroa to Nuku Hiva but no service going back to Rangiroa (28,000 CFP one way, 2½ hours).

Within the Marquesas there are flights from Nuku Hiva to Hiva Oa (10,000 CFP one way), 'Ua Huka and 'Ua Pou (both cost 6000 CFP one way). There are three Nuku Hiva-'Ua Huka return flights a week, and four Nuku Hiva-'Ua Pou return flights weekly. These flights connect with the Pape'ete flights through Nuku Hiva.

Héli-Inter Marquises (☎ 92 02 17; helico-nuku@mail.pf; ✈ 7.30am-noon & 12.30-4pm Mon-Fri) is just behind the quay on the mountain side of the road. There are regular helicopter shuttle services to 'Ua Pou (13,000 CFP one way) on Tuesdays or you can charter a flight to any of the other inhabited islands of the archipelago. Credit cards are accepted.

BOAT

It is possible to charter a boat to go to 'Ua Pou or 'Ua Huka (from 35,000 to 50,000 CFP for the crossing). Contact **Laurent Falchetto** (☎ 92 05 78), **Marquises Plaisance** (☎ 92 08 75) or **Xavier Curvat** (☎ 92 00 88), the director of the dive centre.

The *Aranui* and *Taporo VI* stop at Nuku Hiva, docking at the end of the bay in Taiohae, as do several cruise ships including the *Gauguin* and the *Tahitian Princess*. The *Aranui* goes to Taipivai and Hatiheu as well as Taiohae.

Getting Around

Slowly but surely the roads of Nuku Hiva are being paved. At the time of writing sealed road ran from Taiohae to the Toovii Plateau and nearly to the Paeke archaeological site.

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

It takes at least two hours to reach the airport from Taiohae along a bumpy, winding track, longer if it has rained and the ground is muddy – and it's only 18km as the crow flies!

Approved 4WD taxis that carry four to six people generally wait for each flight. It is nevertheless wise to book, either through your hotel or *pension*, or directly by contacting the taxi drivers: **Marie-Jeanne Ah-Scha** (☎ 92 01

84), **Rose Utia** (☎ 92 00 56), **Magalie Kimitete** (☎ 47 47 56) or **Leonard Hokaupoko** (☎ 74 44 60).

Héli-Inter Marquises (☎ 92 02 17) provides a helicopter shuttle service coinciding with each Pape'ete-Nuku Hiva flight, going to Taiohae, Hatiheu and Taipivai. The trip costs 7500 CFP per person (half-fare for children under 11) and takes eight minutes. Reservations are essential. This is a very worthwhile trip that lets you avoid the long, winding roads and see the island from above for a reasonable price.

4WD

You can rent 4WDs with or without a driver. Taxi drivers and some lodgings will make excursions. You can book a taxi directly or ask at your *pension*.

From Taiohae, the vehicle (which will take four passengers) with a driver costs around 12,000 CFP to Taipivai, 20,000 CFP to Hatiheu and 25,000 CFP to Aakapa. The hotels in Taiohae will try to group their customers.

Nuku Rent a Car (☎ 92 08 87, 73 51 67; 4WD per half/full day 8000/12,000 CFP, scooter with helmet per half/full day 4000/5500 CFP, bike per day 1500 CFP) is located on the quay. Prices include insurance but not petrol.

'UA HUKA

pop 582 / area 83 sq km

Dubbed the Island of Horses (and there are indeed about as many horses on the island as people), 'Ua Huka could just as easily be called the island of sculptors. The island's only three villages – Vaipae, Hane and Hokatu – are filled with small workshops where rosewood, *tou* and coconut are fashioned into *ti'i*, plates, bowls and the like. Besides being a fantastic place to buy carvings, 'Ua Huka's small size makes it easy to meet the artists themselves and to delve right in to Marquesan life. After a day or two the community seems to absorb you like a giant, friendly sponge; this is the kind of place that tempts you to do like Gauguin and devote your life to love, art and nature.

If all this isn't enough to entice a visit, the ancient 'Ua Hukans were just as artistically driven as their progeny. Tucked away in the jungle valleys are scattered petroglyphs, *ti'i* and *pae pae*; some are easily accessible while others take several hours to reach on horseback. Knowing that it's not everyone's cup



of tea to travel through the bush for hours to see a few etchings, the locals have opened not just one but *four* little museums devoted to their cultural heritage. There's also an arboretum where visitors can explore the island's flora in one neat and tiny package. Amazingly, aside from *Aranui* passengers, the majority of travellers bypass 'Ua Huka's charms for those of its more developed neighbours, Nuku Hiva and 'Ua Pou.

Information

There is no bank on 'Ua Huka. The **post office** (✈ 7.30-11.30am & 1-2.30pm Mon-Fri) is in Vaipae, next to the museum; it also opens when the *Aranui* calls in. If you are in dire need, the mayor's office might let you use its Internet. Each village has phonecard telephone booths and an infirmary or first-aid post.

Sights

VAIPAE

The island's main town is no bigger than the other two villages, but has the privilege to house the mayor's office, main post office and the island's biggest museum. It's at the end of a very deep, narrow inlet, about 1km long and rightly named Invisible Bay. When the *Aranui* comes in, it manoeuvres in a space the size of a handkerchief and ties up to the rock face with hawsers.

The **museum** (admission free), adjacent to the mayor's office, opened in 1987. The collection includes pestles, *ti'i*, finely carved sculptures, *pahu* (drums), jewellery and period

photos as well as a *ha'e* (traditional house). There are also scale reproductions of ancient sites and objects such as paddles, spears and clubs. Donations are appreciated.

The **arboretum** (admission free), created in 1974, is halfway between Vaipae and Hane. The fact that so many species have adapted to the dry Marquesan soil opens up great possibilities for local agriculture. The species best adapted to the climate are used for reforestation where the vegetation has been destroyed by wild goats and horses. Inside the gates of the arboretum is the small **wood museum** (admission free) which displays different types of wood from around the world and those indigenous to 'Ua Huka.

For places to stay here, see p217.

HANE

Experts believe that the first Polynesian settlement on the Marquesas was here, tucked away in a bay protected on the east by the impressive Motu Hane. The local personality is sculptor Joseph Vaatete, whose **workshop** is 200m from the beach.

The white house on the seafront contains the **craft centre** as well as a little **marine museum** (admission free), which opened in 1995. The tiny museum shows the evolution of traditional *pirogues* as well as hooks used for shark fishing. Ask around for someone to help you get the key.

For places to stay here, see p217.

HOKATU

This peaceful village lies about 3km east of Hane in a sheltered bay. The main street leads to the **craft centre**, which is the biggest and best stocked on the island. On the waterfront next to **Pae Pae Vaiupe** is the new **petroglyph museum** (admission free) which displays well-presented photographs of the petroglyphs around the island.

For places to stay here, see p217.

MOTU TEUAUA & HEMENI

Thousands of *kaveka* (sooty terns) nest year-round on the islets of **Hemeni** and **Teuaua**, near the southwestern point of 'Ua Huka. They lay thousands of eggs daily, which the islanders gather during a specific season which is defined as 'before the *uru* ripens'.

Access to Hemeni is prohibited in order to protect the species. Teuaua, the neighbouring islet (also known as Île aux Oiseaux

or Bird Island), is accessible by speedboat when the sea is calm. It's necessary to jump on to a rocky ledge and clamber up the rock using a permanently fixed rope, a good time to unleash your inner Indiana Jones.

The next challenge is the nauseating smell emanating from the thousands of birds. As you approach, the *kaveka* get really, really angry and their cries become deafening. The bravest birds start swooping at you and you'll soon be reliving a scene from Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*. Only an expert eye can spot which eggs are the right age so you'll have to watch while the locals, often children, begin to collect them.

If, despite all this, the experience still attracts you, wear a hat.

MOTU PAPA

This island, ideal for picnicking and snorkelling (no *nono*), is just offshore from the airport. It is a large, treeless block of volcanic rock that, at low tide, has a wide rocky ledge where you can sit. Speedboats can't motor up to the side so you'll have to swim about 50m to the edge. Take sunscreen (there are few shady spots) and waterproof sandals because the rock is slippery. It's only possible to visit this islet when the sea is calm.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Like the rest of the Marquesas, most of 'Ua Huka's archaeological sites are unexcavated and uncleared. The difference in 'Ua Huka is that the locals are very interested in their heritage and know where to find small, but interesting sites hidden in the jungle. If you are specifically interested in seeing these kinds of sites, your *pension* can help you arrange to visit them by foot or on horseback.

Meiaute

Less than 30 minutes' walk from Hane, this site is one of the major attractions on 'Ua Huka. It includes three, 1m-high, red-tuff *ti'i* that watch over a group of stone structures, *pae pae* and *me'ae*, which have not yet been restored and are partly overgrown. Two of these *ti'i* have projecting ears, one has legs and a phallus, while the other two have only a head and trunk. The clearing forms a natural **lookout** with magnificent views of Hane Bay on one side and the caldera on the other.

To get there, follow the track for about 200m from the Auberge Hitikau at the edge

of Hane village; head towards the mountain. At the crossroad continue straight; after about 20 minutes you will come to a concrete stairway on your right, 30m after a sharp bend. Leave the main track at this point and climb the steep hill to the *pae pae*. A little higher up, in a clearing, you will find the *ti'i*. From the stairway, arrows on trees indicate the path; you need to look carefully.

Vaikivi Petroglyphs

This little-visited archaeological site on the Vaikivi Plateau is worth the detour, if only for the walk or horse ride to get there.

Activities

WALKING

It's a beautiful three-hour walk inland to the Vaikivi petroglyphs. You'll have to take a guide because the trail is long and unmarked. From Hane, the walk leads you past views of Hane Bay, and even of Fatu Huka if it's clear enough. From thick vegetation to gentle tree ferns and a dramatic finish of hacking through pandanus, the walk is a real adventure. Wear good shoes and bring food and plenty of water. Ask at your *pension* or at the mayor's office for a guide; the usual cost is about 7000 CFP.

There are several shorter walks: any chunk of the coastal route between Haavei Bay to the west and Hokatu to the east offers spectacular views. Up the valley from Hokatu it's about an hour and a half to some unnamed petroglyphs and another half-hour up a very steep slope to see a small *ti'i*. No matter where you go, a guide is essential.

HORSE-RIDING

With so many horses, it's no wonder riding is a popular activity on 'Ua Huka. A fantastic ride is from Vaipae to Hane, passing the arboretum, airport and windswept plateaus before reaching the coastal road, which plunges down towards Hane. If the weather cooperates, this ride will be one of the highlights of your stay on the Marquesas.

Ask at your *pension* about where to find horse owners. A ride typically costs 5000 CFP for a half day or 7000 CFP for a full day, including a guide. Available saddles are a hodgepodge of wooden, leather and confections of old burlap sacks; whatever is available, you'll be offered the most comfortable. The locals often ride bareback.

Sleeping

Considering the small number of visitors, 'Ua Huka has a lot of *pensions*. Airport transfers are 2000 CFP return and excursions by boat, 4WD and horse are often organised. With no bank on 'Ua Huka, no-one could accept credit cards even if they wanted to.

VAIPAEE

Mana Tupuna Village (☎/fax 92 60 08, 92 61 01; manatupuna@mail.pf; s/d 5000/9000, with half board 7000/13,000 CFP) Perched on the side of a flowery hill, this place has three local-style bungalows on stilts, elegantly arranged with covered veranda, mezzanine and bathroom (with hot water). There are beautiful views over the valley below. The restaurant is airy, colourful and inviting.

Le Reve Marquisienne (☎/fax 92 61 84, 71 52 95; revemarquisienne@mail.pf; s/d 9500/12,000) Tucked away in the valley of Vaipae, the bungalows here are the newest and most comfortable (although remote) option on 'Ua Huka. Owner Marie-France really goes out of her way to take care of her guests. Breakfast is 1000 CFP, and other meals 2500 CFP.

Chez Alexis Scallamera (☎/fax 92 60 19; r per person 2000 CFP, with half board 5500 CFP) The home-style rooms with shared bathroom (cold water only) are right in the thick of the sprawling home of this retired couple. Guests can use the kitchen.

Chez Christelle (☎ 92 60 85, 92 60 04; r per person 2500 CFP, with half board 5000 CFP) This place has four sparkling-clean rooms with shared bathroom (cold water only). The busy owner is also the Air Tahiti representative so guests here need to be independent enough to organise their own activities.

HANE

Auberge Hitikau (☎/fax 92 61 74; s/d 2500/3500 CFP, with half board 6000/11,000 CFP) This place has four basic but clean double rooms with shared bathroom (cold water only). The grandmotherly owner will try to fatten you up on her exceptionally good Marquesan cooking, which she serves at the island's only restaurant.

HOKATU

Chez Maurice & Delphine (☎/fax 92 60 55; bungalows with half board per person 6000 CFP) With wonderful views of Motu Hane, this place has three

bungalows with verandas and is perched above the edge of Hokatu. All have a bathroom (cold water only) and fridge and the largest bungalow will accommodate six people. Owner Maurice is also one of the best sculptors on the island. After only a day or two you feel you have been adopted by this charming family.

Eating

Every village has a little shop where you can stock up, mostly on canned goods.

Auberge Hitikau (set meal 3000 CFP) The island's only restaurant is in Hane. Local specialities have pride of place: goat, pork, fish in coconut milk, *kaveka*-egg omelettes (in the right season) and delicious cakes. Bookings are essential.

Snack Christelle (☎ 92 60 34, 70 88 80) The industrious Christelle, Air Tahiti representative and *pension* owner, also runs a little *snack* in Vaipae. Most of what she makes (*poisson cru*, chow mein, sandwiches) is delivered around the island and can be found in the local shops from around 10am. Otherwise you can call in advance to order a meal at the *snack*.

Getting There & Away

Three days a week a 20-seat plane flies from Nuku Hiva to 'Ua Huka (6000 CFP one way) and return, connecting with the Pape'ete-Nuku Hiva flight (31,000 CFP Pape'ete to 'Ua Huka one way). Contact the **Air Tahiti representative** (☎ 92 60 85) in Vaipae.

You can organise transfers to 'Ua Pou or Nuku Hiva by speedboat through Maurice Rootuehine at **Chez Maurice & Delphine** (☎/fax 92 60 55). The *Aranui* and *Taporo VI* stop at 'Ua Huka.

Getting Around

A 13km track links Vaipae to Hokatu via Hane. An amazing feat for the Marquesas, the entire length is paved.

'Ua Huka's airport is on an arid plateau midway between Vaipae and Hane. Airport transfers cost 2000 CFP return at each of the *pensions*.

The *pension* owners have 4WDs and can take you to visit the island's villages (about 10,000 CFP per day) and Chez Christelle, Mana Tupuna Village and Chez Maurice & Delphine will all rent vehicles to their guests for 6000 to 7000 CFP per day.

'UA POU

pop 2110 / area 125 sq km

'Ua Pou is a dry desert island with oasis-like valleys bursting with enough tropical fruit to feed 10 times its population. Twelve pinacles of basalt, once the cores of 12 now-defunct volcanos, create an unforgettable skyline that is often photographed for the classic postcard shot of the Marquesas. The island is only 45km south of Nuku Hiva, but it feels a world away.

Tourism has gone a little backwards in 'Ua Pou; archaeological sites that were once cleared and maintained are now blocked by barbed wire and marked as private property; a museum constructed in the centre of the main village of Hakahau is now used as a temporary office for the mayor who seems uninterested in reopening it. The Marquesas Festival of 2007 is to be hosted by 'Ua Pou, so one can only hope that the island will revive its cultural richness as an appropriate welcome to the rest of the archipelago.

Ironically, 'Ua Pou is noted for its culture and arts. It was the birthplace of the

Motu Haka Association and the revival of Marquesan identity. It is also a breeding ground for talent: the singer Rataro, the Kanahau Trio musical group and most of the well-known Marquesan dance groups are from 'Ua Pou.

Information

A new building on Hakahau's waterfront houses a branch of **Banque Socredo** (☎ 92 53 63; 🕒 7.30am-noon & 1-3pm Mon-Fri), an office for **Air Tahiti** (☎ 91 52 25) and the **post office** (🕒 7am-3pm Mon-Thu, 7am-2pm Fri). A miracle of modern technology found rarely in the islands, the post office has a 24-hour ATM that accepts international ATM cards. Internet access is available at the **town hall** (per min 33 CFP), next to the post office, and there are phonecard telephone booths scattered throughout Hakahau.

A small medical centre with a doctor and dentist is in the south of the village, halfway between the Catholic church and the (temporarily closed) museum. Every village has an infirmary or first-aid post.

Contact **Restaurant-Pension Pukué** (☎/fax 92 50 83) to get laundry done; a machine load costs 1000 CFP.

Sights

HAKAHAU

Hakahau has been 'Ua Pou's capital since the 1950s when the population needed to be centralised in a large valley with a good port. Unfortunately, there isn't really enough water to support the growing number of inhabitants and it feels dramatically drier than the small, lush valleys of the island's other villages.

The Catholic church, **Tepano Peato** (St Étienne), is named after a priest who was en route for 'Ua Pou but was inconveniently consumed by cannibals at Rapa Nui (Easter Island) along the way. The carved doors at the entrance of the church depict this story as well as showing a portrait of the previous church and the *uru* tree that is still in the garden. Inside are some fantastic wood carvings of religious figures with a distinctly Marquesan touch.

As part of the 1995 Marquesas Festival, a team from the archaeological department of the Museum of Tahiti & its Islands travelled to Hakahau to restore the **Pae Pae Tenei** right in the middle of the village.

For a beautiful view of **Hakahau Bay** head east from Restaurant-Pension Pukué along a track until you reach a small pass. At the pass, take the right fork and climb steeply for about 10 minutes until you reach a small flight of steps leading to a white cross, which you can see from the quay. In addition to the jagged profile of Nuku Hiva to the north, you can also see Anahoa Bay and its white border of sand to the east. In clear weather you can see 'Ua Huka to the northeast.

For places to stay and eat here, see p220.

HAKAHETAU

Once the principal village of the island, this tranquil place springs up like an oasis after driving along the desert track. At the northern entrance of the village there's a large flat stone that you can walk out onto to see a view of the village and bay. It's now used to dry copra but in ancient times it had the more grisly job of drying human remains before they were transported in a model *pirogue* up the mountain for 'burial'.

About 150m further towards the village a sign marks a track on the mountainside for **Manfred Cascade**. Follow this 4WD track for 1.5km to a footpath on the right. The good-sized waterfall with a deep round bathing pool is about 300m from here.

The church, near the waterfront, was the former residence of Monsignor Le Cleac'h, known for his translation of the Bible into Marquesan.

For places to stay here, see p220.

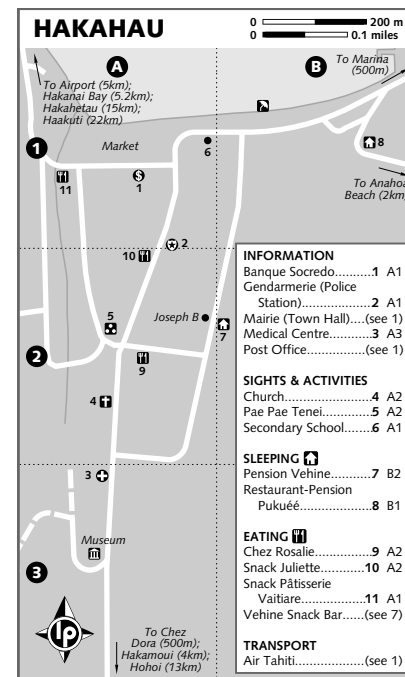
HAAKUTI

One street links the stone **church**, built on a *pae pae* at the top of the village, with the tiny sea-swept quay some 600m below.

HAKAMAI

At the end of the 4WD track, this one-street village stretches along the Kahioa River. The façade of the town's stone **church**, facing the ocean, has unusual yellow, blue and red wooden panels that are meant to imitate stained-glass windows. It's not very attractive close up but seen from the ocean, the illusion is almost perfect.

A path running up the hill next to the church leads up to a ridge for some fantastic views and continues down into the next bay.



HOHOI

A minuscule village on the southeast of the island, Hohoi is about 12km from Hakahau. As you come into town there's a bathing pool in the river, popular with the local children. About 200m further on there is a *pae pae* on the left that was once used to dry out the bodies of dead children before their bones could be taken up the valley. The pagoda-shaped Catholic church a little farther on the right, has an interior painted by French artist Garick Yrondi; the modern paintings of ochre, white and gold leaf seem incongruous out in the sticks of 'Ua Pou. The graceful work depicts mostly Polynesian scenes and includes portraits of the local villagers.

On the beach look for **pierre fleuris** (flowering stones), pieces of phonolite that have crystallised to form amber-coloured flower shapes.

BEACHES

A 30-minute walk east of Hakahau takes you to deserted **Anahoa Beach**. From the Hakahau quay, follow the sign for Restaurant-Pension Pukué and continue along the paved road

beyond the restaurant. After about 10 minutes' climb to the pass, there's a hill with a superb view of Hakahau Bay and its peaks.

Shortly after the airport at Aneou, 11km from Hakahau below the track leading to Hakahetau, is **Hakanai Bay**. It's a popular local picnic spot but has been named Plage aux Requins (Shark Beach) because of (surprise!) the many sharks seen in the cove.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

'Ua Pou is covered with fascinating archaeological remains, ranging from simple *pae pae* (ancient house structures) to what could be one of the largest *tohua* (open-air gathering places) in the Marquesas. Unfortunately, no site that has been cleared or studied is currently open to visitors. Most of what you are allowed to see nowadays are crumbling piles of rock half lost in the bushes.

Activities

There are many opportunities for walking, including simply following the tracks from one village to another. There isn't much shade outside the valleys so be sure to go well prepared with a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water. If you intend to leave the tracks it's advisable to take a guide since there are numerous pig traps that you could easily fall into. For guides, contact **Pension Vehine** (☎ 92 53 21; per person 10,000 CFP).

Contact **Restaurant-Pension Pukué** (☎/fax 92 50 83; tours per person 15,000 CFP) to tour the island by 4WD, or ask at your *pension*. For shorter excursions contact **Pascal** (☎ 92 51 28), who is also the guide for the *Aranui*.

If you're interested in horse-riding, contact any of the *pensions*.

Sleeping

Restaurant-Pension Pukué (☎/fax 92 50 83; r with half board per person 6000 CFP; 🍴) This airy, artistically designed place has views over Hakahau Bay. Rooms come with shared bathroom (with hot water) and there is a small pool. The restaurant serves exceptionally good food and the owners, well versed in Marquesan history and culture, organise excursions for 15,000 CFP per person. A load of laundry costs 1000 CFP.

Pension Vehine (☎/fax 92 53 21; r/bungalows per person 3500/4500 CFP) Not far from the centre of Hakahau, this place has two simple rooms in a house and two newer bungalows. The

owner is the president of the Federation of Marquesan Culture, and the family can organise a variety of guided hiking excursions for around 1000 CFP per person. Meals are served in the family's restaurant. Half board is 2000 CFP per person.

Chez Dora (☎ 92 53 69; r or bungalows incl breakfast/half board per person 4000/6000 CFP) Chez Dora is about 800m up the valley in Hakahau; the gardens here look up at 'Ua Pou's famous spires. The bungalows are the better bargain.

Pension Leydj (☎ 92 53 19; r incl breakfast/half board per person 3500/5500 CFP) On the hill in quiet Hakahetau, this clean, attractive *pension* has four rooms with two shared bathrooms. Various excursions can be organised.

The smaller villages on 'Ua Pou will occasionally lodge people on tight budgets in the old chiefs' buildings, which now serve as public areas. Ask at the mayors' offices.

Eating

The only real eating places are in Hakahau; there are also a few grocery shops here where you can stock up.

Restaurant-Pension Pukué (☎ 92 50 83; meals 2500 CFP) Serving a variety of well-prepared dishes using mostly locally produced ingredients, this is the most gourmet option in 'Ua Pou. The setting overlooking the bay is wonderfully relaxing. It's best to reserve a few hours in advance.

Vehine Snack Bar (☎ 92 53 21; dishes from 800 CFP; 🍴 lunch Mon-Sat) Pension Vehine, opposite the Joseph B store, offers cheap eats. Traditional dishes will be prepared on request but otherwise it's steak and chips, chow mein or *poisson cru*.

Snack Juliette (dishes from 800 CFP) Just beyond the police station, this good little place serves basic *snack* fare.

Pâtisserie Vaitiare (☎ 92 50 95) The place to go if you are longing for a pastry. It has a pleasant little terrace with a view over the coconut plantation by the sea.

Chez Rosalie (☎ 92 51 77; Marquesan meal 2500 CFP) This place only opens when the *Aranui* is in port. Don't hesitate to join in for a feast.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There is an office for **Air Tahiti** (☎ 91 52 25; 🕒 9am-noon Mon & Tue, 2-4pm Wed, 9am-noon & 3-4pm Fri) in Hakahau. There's another branch at the **airport** (☎ 92 51 08).

There are flights five days a week on a 20-seater plane from Nuku Hiva to 'Ua Pou (6000 CFP one way), connecting with the Pape'ete-Nuku Hiva flight (Pape'ete to 'Ua Pou costs 31,000 CFP one way). There are also five weekly flights from Atuona on Hiva Oa to 'Ua Pou, sometimes via Nuku Hiva (7500 CFP one way).

Based on Nuku Hiva, the **Héli-Inter Marqueses** (☎ 92 02 17) service between Taiohae and Hakahau is on Tuesday (13,000 CFP one way, 15 minutes).

BOAT

The *Aranui* and *Taporo VI* stop at Hakahau; the *Aranui* also stops at Hakahetau.

Getting Around

One dirt 4WD track runs most of the way around the island, the only inaccessible bit being between Hakamaii and Hikeu.

The airport is at Aneou, about 10km west of Hakahau. Your hosts will come to collect you if you have booked accommodation; it usually costs 2000 CFP per person return.

Ask at your *pension* about hiring a 4WD; expect to pay 15,000 CFP to go as far as Hakamaii or Hikeu. Each route takes nearly a full day round trip from Hakahau with stops at points of interest.

THE SOUTHERN GROUP

The Marquesas' southern group comprises three inhabited islands – Hiva Oa, Tahuata and Fatu Hiva – and the four deserted islands of Motane (Mohotani), Fatu Huku, Terihi and Thomasset Rock.

HIVA OA

pop 1991 / area 320 sq km

Once home to Gauguin's *Maison du Jouis* (House of Pleasure) and the Belgian singer Jacques Brel, Hiva Oa could entice even the most conservative people to want to paint and fall in love. Carpeted in lavish flora, cut by crystal rivers and framed by lofty peaks, this island is the definition of abundance. Wild pigs and goats are hunted in the mountains, tuna and swordfish caught in the fertile waters, and fruit so plentiful that most of it falls to the ground, bursting with ripeness.

Even though you could sit around doing nothing all day and still manage to feed

yourself rather well, the population does work. A good percentage of the inhabitants are imports – teachers and military – lending the otherwise wild island a more orderly and European feel. Most locals occupy themselves with farming *nomi*, copra and fishing. This is indisputably the centre of the southern Marquesas; there's an airport, a hospital, secondary school and even a tourist office.

As in the rest of the Marquesas, it's a hot and bumpy ride to get anywhere. A ridge forms a spine across the length of the island and has an average height of 800m. The only road weaves up and around this spine and leads to the most striking archaeological sites in French Polynesia.

Information

The following are all found in the main town, Atuona. Internet access is available in the lobby of the Hanaké Pearl Lodge (p226) and at the post office.

Banque Socredo (☎ 92 73 54; 🕒 7.30-11.30am & 1.30-4pm Mon-Fri) Changes currency and travellers cheques and you can make credit-card withdrawals. The ATM inside the bank is accessible during opening hours.

Dental surgery (☎ 92 73 58) Behind the mayor's office.

Hospital (☎ 92 73 75) Also behind the mayor's office.

Post office (🕒 7.30-11.30am & 1.30-4.30pm Mon-Thu, 7.30-11.30am & 1.30-3.30pm Fri, 7.30-8.30am Sat) Next to the town hall, the post office has a fax and Internet service and sells phonecards.

Tourism committee (🕒 7.30-11.30am Mon-Fri) In a small roadside office next to the museum.

Sights

ATUONA

This trim, tidy town of 1300 residents has an antiquated air about it, but Belgian singer Jacques Brel (1929–78), who lived here from 1975 to 1978, would no doubt be surprised to see the gleaming 4WDs and opulent commercial vehicles driving through it today. Of all the towns in the Marquesas, Atuona feels the most influenced by Europeans; this makes it both more comfortable but less exotic than elsewhere in the islands. It also has the most developed tourist infrastructure and commodious *pensions* (for details of places to stay and eat, see p226 and p227).

Most of the town's workforce is employed in service industries, particularly local administration, at the hospital, in schools, at



the Service Militaire Adapté (SMA) garrison or in small businesses. The town is spread out along the main road but all the central buildings including the bank, mayor's office and museum are clustered together in the town centre.

Cultural Centre

Atuona's **Cultural Centre** (adult/child 600/300 CFP; ☎ 8-11am & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8-11am Sat) has a display that follows the life of Paul Gauguin through his letters and, of course, his art (which is presented through copies of his work by various 'forgers'). Once you've made a full round of the paintings, timeline and literature, head outside and down a small path to the **Maison du Jour** (House of

Pleasure), a replica of Gauguin's house with works by local artists displayed inside. In the lower storey you'll find an impressively realistic wax statue of Paul Gauguin.

Follow the little path and you'll come to a big airplane hangar that houses the **Espace Brel**. In the centre is Brel's plane, *Jojo*; posters tracing the musician's life adorn the walls and his music plays dreamily over the sound system.

Calvaire Cemetery

Romantics and art-lovers will find this frangipani-filled, hillside graveyard an appropriately colourful place for **Paul Gauguin's tomb**. While most of the tombs are marked with white crosses, Gauguin's is a simple round stone with his name painted in

white. Right behind, a replica of the statue *Oviri* (meaning 'wild') stands guard.

Jacques Brel's grave is in the lower part of the cemetery, near the access steps, on the left. The gravestone, lovingly planted with flowers, is adorned with a medallion depicting the singer with his companion, Madly.

To get there, head north on the road just east of the *gendarmérie*. Continue for about 600m until you reach a fork in the road and follow the sign to the cemetery 100m further on. It takes about 20 minutes on foot.

Tohua Pepeu

Restored for the 1991 Marquesas Festival, this *tohua* faces Banque Socredo in the centre of town. It's used today as a festivities centre for the town where dances and cultural activities are performed.

Jacques Brel Memorial

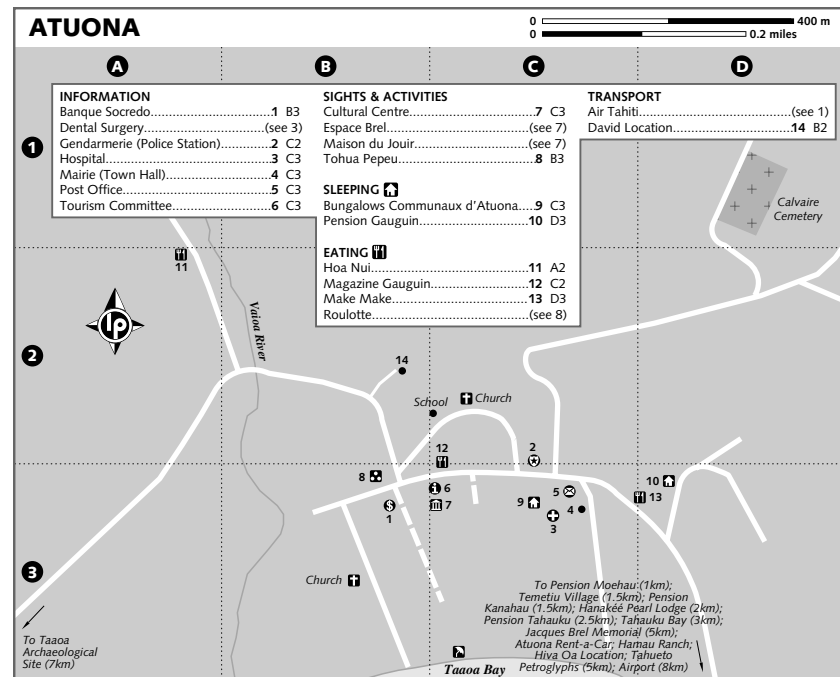
This memorial to the Belgian singer was erected in 1993 at the place where he wished to build his house, a project which was prematurely cut short by his illness. The site, a narrow spit of land not far from the airport

and accessible by track, is magnificent and wild, with a superb view of Atuona Bay – even if you've never heard of Jacques Brel, this is worth a visit just for the walk.

There are two possible routes to get to the hillside site. From Tahauku snack bar, follow the track that goes up to the airport. Pass the small access road to the Hanakée Pearl Lodge, which goes off to the left, and go straight for 400m. You will then see a track on your left leading to a private property. Go up here, past the front of the house (beware of the dogs!) and continue for about 200m. You'll then come out at a small piece of open ground overlooking the Hanakée Pearl Lodge. The path leading to the memorial bends to the left and leads uphill for 2km.

Another possibility, considerably longer, is to follow the main road towards the airport and, 300m before the Rural Development Department buildings, turn left and continue along the path for approximately 2.5km.

It's better to walk to the site than try to get here by 4WD; the tracks are very narrow and some sections are in terrible condition.



PUAMAU

The village of Puamau is a two-hour drive from Atuona, in the northeast of the island. It occupies a coastal plain, bordered by a vast ring of mountains, and boasts the most beautiful archaeological site in the Marquesas, if not all of French Polynesia. See opposite for more information.

For information on places to stay and eat here, see p227.

HANAPAAOA & SURROUNDING HAMLETS

It's a winding but scenic two-hour journey by 4WD to wild and beautiful Hanapaaoa from Atuona. The track passes the airport

and then, shortly after, splits; the first turn-off goes to Hanaiaapa, and the second leads to Hanapaaoa. Take a guide or arm yourself with a map and ask at the Atuona tourism committee for further information. From Hanapaaoa to Anahi and Nahoe, the track is narrow, winding and steep. If you drive here by yourself, go very, very slowly.

HANAIAAPA

Stretching for more than 1km along a single street, this clean and flower-filled village follows the course of the Teheitahi River. Traditional copra-drying sheds are scattered here and there as well as a few *pae pae*;

GAUGUIN: THE WILD & THE PRIMITIVE

The evocative paintings of Paul Gauguin have become synonymous with Tahiti and are largely responsible for Polynesia's enduring reputation as a paradise lost.

Born in 1848, Gauguin began to paint in his mid-20s. After a childhood in Peru he prepared for naval college, joined up as an officer cadet and, from 1868 to 1871, roamed the seas. He then worked as a stockbroker in Paris and began to paint his first landscapes. Having come to the notice of Camille Pissarro, he exhibited with the Impressionists in 1879. Gauguin gained the friendship of Edgar Degas, who supported him by buying his pictures. The collapse of the stock market in 1882 put an end to Gauguin's business career and, leaving his wife and children, he devoted himself exclusively to painting. Condemned to solitude by poverty, he took refuge in Pont-Aven, a small town in Finistère, before voyaging to Martinique and returning to Paris, where he met Vincent van Gogh.

Gauguin's second stay in Pont-Aven, in 1888, was artistically decisive. Influenced by Japanese prints, he adopted a new, simplified style, characterised by large flat areas of colour with clearly defined outlines. 'Pure colour, everything must be sacrificed to it!' was his credo.

After a two-month stay in Arles with van Gogh – it was during this period that van Gogh mutilated his ear – Gauguin painted a series of masterpieces (*Yellow Christ, Beautiful Angel*), but could think only of escape. In a letter to the painter Odilon Redon in 1890, he wrote: 'I am going to Tahiti and hope to finish my life there. I consider that my art...is just a seed and I hope to cultivate it there for myself, in its primitive and wild state.'

In Mataiea on Tahiti, where the Musée Gauguin now stands, he concentrated on capturing images of daily life and, in 1892 and 1893, experienced an intensely productive period, painting *Te Nave Nave Fenua* (Delicious Land), *Manao Tupapau* (Spirit of the Dead Watching) and *Arearea* (Amusements). Exuberant settings and flamboyant colours, with yellow, red and blue predominating, increasingly pervaded the artist's painting.

Gauguin sold few canvases and was again impoverished. He sailed for France in 1893 and in November of that year a large exhibition devoted solely to his work opened in Paris. He took up ceramics and embarked on writing a narrative, *Noa Noa*, inspired by his Tahitian period and designed to make the public understand his work. But the time was not ripe for his talent to be recognised and he set off for the South Seas once again in 1895.

His most powerful compositions, *Te Arii Vahine* (The Royal Woman; 1896), *Nevermore* (1897) and *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?* (1897), date from this second and final stay in Polynesia, which was marked by illness and distress. After a failed suicide attempt, he took refuge on the island of Hiva Oa in the Marquesas, where he defended the inhabitants against the colonial administration and the all-powerful Catholic Church. Although weakened, he did not stop writing, drawing, sculpting and painting, and it was during this period that he produced one of his most beautiful nudes, *Barbaric Tales* (1902). Gauguin died in May 1903.

some sites have **petroglyphs** easily spotted from the road.

In the centre of the village is a well-maintained **pae pae**. One of its pavements has three cup-shaped structures, which were probably used to hold ink for tattooing. At the back of the *pae pae*, slabs of the island's red tuff indicate that the site was the abode of a chief or priest.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Tehueto Petroglyphs

These petroglyphs are a good walk or horseback ride from Atuona – it's usually quite overgrown and the trail forks several times so it's better to have a guide. There is a signboard at the site, but unfortunately it explains another site nowhere near this one! From the signboard, the trail leading up the hill takes you to an overgrown *pae pae* with several small petroglyphs on the upper platform. If you follow the trail from the signpost down the hill and to the right, you'll find a massive rock with prolific carvings on two sides. This rock fell from the main site a number of years ago, and apparently the side which now faces the ground is also covered in petroglyphs.

Taaoa

This site doesn't have impressive *ti'i*, as at Iipona, but its sheer size makes it as interesting. It is a short 7km from Atuona and very well kept. A few huge banyan trees supply the backdrop, with Mt Temetiu just behind. The remnants of a human skull are hidden in the stone structure next to the banyan that's furthest east.

On arrival to the site, you will find yourself facing a vast *tohua* built on several levels. Continue for 100m and, on the right, is a well-preserved *ti'i* more than a metre in height sitting on a platform. From a distance it looks like a plain block of basalt, but as you get closer you can clearly pick out the contours of the eyes and mouth.

Iipona

Known to ethnologists and archaeologists in the 1800s, the Iipona (Oipona) site, near Puamau, is one of the most important testimonies to precontact Marquesan civilisation. The site has been extensively restored by French archaeologists Pierre and Marie-Noëlle Ottino.

THE LAST SONG OF JACQUES BREL

A fighter against hypocrisy and proudly iconoclastic, Belgian-born singer-songwriter Jacques Brel derided the flaws of society. Wishing to escape media pressure, he set out to sail around the world on the *Askoy*, his private ketch, accompanied by his companion, Madly, from Guadeloupe. In November 1975 they arrived at Atuona and, seduced by its serenity, Brel never left. In 1976 he and Madly set up a small home on the hillside above the village. He equipped himself with *Jojo*, a Beechcraft aeroplane in which he travelled between the islands of the northern group and as far as Pape'ete.

Jacques Brel and Madly became involved in village life and were well liked by the locals. From time to time the artist would perform medical evacuations to Pape'ete in his plane.

Jacques Brel died of cancer in October 1978 at the age of 48. His last song, 'Les Marquises' (The Marquesas), resounds as a vibrant homage to this generous place. His tomb in Calvaire Cemetery, where he rests near Paulo (as Brel referred to Gauguin), is lovingly decorated with flowers.

The site's five monumental *ti'i* are stunning, especially if you've been to many other sites and are used to just seeing stone platforms. As you advance towards the first platform, you'll first notice the reclining **Maki Taua Pepe**, representing a woman lying on her stomach, her head stretched out and arms pointing to the sky. Experts believe she represents a woman giving birth. The petroglyphs on the pedestal represent dogs but their meaning is unknown.

The *ti'i* that will undoubtedly catch your eye is **Takaii** which, at 2.67m, is the largest in French Polynesia; it's named after a warrior chief renowned for his strength. **Te Tovae E Noho ti'i** is to the left of Takaii, on a lower platform. Less finely worked than the others, its upper torso is hard to make out and the head has disappeared. Note that its hands each have six fingers. Further back stands the **Fau Poe ti'i**. Measuring about 1.8m, it is sitting with its legs stretched out, a position typical of women when they work in the fields. Experts believe it to be Takaii's wife. **Manuiotaa ti'i** is in complete contrast

to the others: less massive, its proportions are harmonious and balanced. The hands are clearly recognisable, as is its female sex. It was decapitated but its head has been replaced by archaeologists.

To reach the site from Puamau, follow the track directly back from the seafont, next to the football ground, and continue for about 1.5km. You will need to pay 300 CFP to the person who maintains and guards the site.

Tohua Pehe Kua

In Puamau, on the property of the Chez Marie-Antoinette *pension*, shortly before the Ipona site, is the **tomb** of the valley's last chief and his partner, who died early in the 20th century. They were buried according to Christian rituals, although some pagan elements are present. One of the four tombs at the site is flanked by two *ti'i* and to one side is an imposing *pae pae*.

Ti'i Moe One

About 15 minutes' walk southwest of Hanapaoa stands one of the strangest *ti'i* in the Marquesas, the *ti'i* Moe One, about 1m in height. The statue's head is adorned with a carved crown of ferns. According to legend, the inhabitants used to take the *ti'i* down to the beach every year where they bathed it and coated it with *monoi* (fragrant oil) before putting it back in place. It is almost impossible to find this *ti'i* on your own; ask around the village or hire a guide.

Activities

Around Atuona there are relatively easy walks to the Tehueto petroglyphs and to the Jacques Brel Memorial. For hiking contact **Hiva Oa Rando-Trek** (☎ 20 40 90, 92 74 44; hikes from 5000 CFP), which leads much more interesting hikes than you'll find offered through the *pensions*.

If you're interested in horse-riding contact **Hamau Ranch** (☎ 92 70 57; per 2½hr 7000 CFP), the most professional ranch in the Marquesas. The guide, Paco, is knowledgeable about local flora and legends. Paco can also take you fishing for tuna, *mahi mahi* (dorado), marlin or tazar for 17,000 CFP a day (flat rate), tackle included.

Hiva Oa's first dive centre, **Subatuona** (☎ 92 70 88, 27 05 24; Atuona), opened late in 2005. For details of dive sites in the area, see p63.

All the *pensions* offer excursions around the island and to Tahuata. It's best to get a group together since rates are by vehicle, not per person.

Sleeping

Accommodation is mainly concentrated in Atuona and its surrounding area, with the exception of one *pension* in Puamau. Unless otherwise noted, credit cards are accepted.

ATUONA

Pension Kanahau (☎ 91 71 31, 70 16 26; pension kanahau@mail.pf; s/d 10,000/12,000 CFP, with half board 14,000/20,000 CFP) 'Kanahau' means good, beautiful and delicious in Marquesan and this *pension* is all these things and more. There are superb views from the elegant, spacious bungalows, the food (served under a mango tree) is gourmet and the owners do a spectacular job of taking care of their guests. The only thing they don't do is accept credit cards.

Pension Tahauku (☎ 72 34 73; s/d 6000/9000 CFP) Nestled in a garden of lemon trees, hibiscus and roaming horses, the bungalows here are large and tastefully decorated and the atmosphere is friendly. Meals can be taken at the very good *snack* on the premises. No credit cards are taken here. Breakfast is 1000 CFP.

Pension Gauguin (☎ /fax 92 73 51; pens.gauguin@mail.pf; s/d with half board 7000/13,000 CFP) The most centrally located of all the *pensions*, this place has colonial charm, spotless rooms with big, bright windows and a breezy communal area. The four rooms don't have attached bathroom, but there are four communal bathrooms (hot water) so it's almost as good. There is a relaxed ambience and the excursions are reasonably priced.

Hanakéé Pearl Lodge (☎ 92 75 87; www.pearlresorts.com; bungalows 24,000-40,000 CFP; ☎ ☎ ☎) This is the most luxurious hotel in the Marquesas but it is still distinctly a 'lodge', not a resort. It has 20 air-con bungalows, a swimming pool and an unforgettable view of the bay. Excursions here are more expensive than elsewhere so you're better off organising activities through the tourist centre in Atuona or through other *pensions*. Credit cards are accepted.

Pension Moehau (☎ 92 72 69; moehaupension@mail.pf; s/d 6000/8000 CFP, with half board 9000/15,000 CFP) Four modern, agreeable rooms face an

ocean-view terrace while four more face the dark hill behind. Ask for an oceanside room! The restaurant downstairs is a little expensive for Atuona but the food, especially the pizza, is very good.

Temetiu Village (☎ 91 70 60; heitaagabyfelli@mail.pf; s/d 7000/9000 CFP, with half board 11,000/13,000 CFP) There are great views from this place and although the bungalows are a little faded, the site and the welcome more than make up for it. A few newer bungalows were planned to be constructed at the time of writing.

Bungalows Communaux d'Atuona (☎ 92 73 32; fax 92 74 95; bungalows 3000 CFP) This complex, next to the administrative centre, has seven bungalows (*fares*) with bathroom (cold water only), small kitchen, refrigerator, fan and shower. It's 1000 CFP per additional person. Although reserved for administrative officials, they can be let to tourists depending on availability. Credit cards are not accepted and booking is recommended; phone the *mairie* between 7.30am and 11.30am and 1.30pm and 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

PUAMAU

Chez Marie-Antoinette (☎ 92 72 27; d with half board per person 6000 CFP) The only option outside Atuona, the *pension* has two bare but clean double rooms with shared bathroom (cold water only). There's an archaeological site with several tombs and *ti'i* in its grounds. Credit cards are not accepted.

Eating

In Atuona, you will find several well-stocked grocery stores including the colonial style, picture-worthy Magazine Gauguin. There are two small grocery shops in Puamau.

ATUONA & AROUND

On school days (in the morning) and on Sunday morning after mass, a *roulotte* takes up position near the Tohua Pepeu and sells sandwiches and simple meals at modest prices.

Snack Tahuaku (☎ 72 34 73; mains 800-1000 CFP; ☎ lunch & dinner) Great food, good ambience and even better prices! You have no excuse (except maybe the 2km walk from town) not to eat here.

Hoa Nui (☎ 92 73 63; set meal 2500 CFP) Open by reservation only, this restaurant specialises in Marquesan cuisine; you need to reserve about a day in advance. Make sure

the food will be Marquesan when you book because the Chinese cuisine is considerably less tasty. The atmosphere heats up when it puts on a feast for *Aranui* passengers.

Restaurant Moehau (☎ 92 72 69; pizzas 1500-2000 CFP, mains 1500-3000 CFP; ☎ lunch & dinner) It's worth stopping in one night (or for lunch if you order well enough in advance) for a pizza fix at this terrace restaurant. There are also good fish and meat dishes available as well as wine (from 2000 CFP a bottle) and cocktails. When it's available, there is lobster for 4500 CFP.

Hanakéé Pearl Lodge (☎ 92 72 27; mains 2000-3500 CFP; ☎ lunch & dinner) Overlooking Tahuaku Bay is this tasty but more expensive option.

Make Make (☎ 92 74 26; dishes 1500-2500 CFP; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Serving mostly Chinese specialities, this place has the most varied menu in Hiva Oa.

PUAMAU

Chez Marie-Antoinette (☎ 92 72 27; set menu 2500 CFP) Tourists staying in Atuona who spend the day at Puamau tend to have lunch here. Even if the archaeological site wasn't nearby, the exceptionally prepared Marquesan specialities would be worth the drive.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are flights from Atuona to Pape'ete, Nuku Hiva, 'Ua Pou (via Nuku Hiva) and 'Ua Huka (via Nuku Hiva). Pape'ete-Atuona return flights go five to seven times a week, nearly always via Nuku Hiva (31,000 CFP one way). There are six Atuona-Nuku Hiva return flights a week (10,000 CFP one way), five Atuona-'Ua Pou return flights a week (7500 CFP one way) and three 'Ua Huka-Atuona return flight per week (8000 CFP).

Air Tahiti (☎ 92 73 41; ☎ 8.30-11.30am & 2-4pm Mon-Fri) is in Atuona next to Banque Socredo, and a branch is at the **airport** (☎ 92 72 31). Credit cards are accepted.

BOAT

The *Aranui* and *Taporo VI* stop at Hiva Oa. The *Aranui* stops at Atuona, Puamau, Hanaiapa and, less frequently, at Hanapaoa.

Leo Rohi (☎ /fax 92 76 57) has a fast, comfortable and secure *bonitier* that can be chartered. It costs 20,000 to 25,000 CFP for an Atuona-Vaitahu/Hapatoni (Tahuata) round

trip, about 15,000 CFP for the Atuona–Motopu (Tahuata) round trip and 45,000 CFP for an Atuona–Hanavave (Fatu Hiva) round trip. Find out which charters are being organised during your stay and you may be able to share the costs.

A communal *bonitier* goes from Atuona to Vaitahu on Tahuata on Tuesdays at noon and on Fridays at 3.30pm. The price is 2000 CFP each way. Atuona *pensions* lead regular day excursions to Tahuata. **Pension Amatea** (☎ 92 92 84) in Vaitahu can help arrange additional transport to Tahuata.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The airport is 13km from Atuona. If you have booked your accommodation, your host will come and collect you for about 3000 CFP return; the journey takes about 25 minutes. It's also possible to hitch a ride.

CAR

David Location (☎ 92 72 87), **Atuona Rent-a-Car** (☎ 92 76 07, 72 17 17) and **Hiva Oa Location** (☎ 73 83 83, 91 70 60) all rent 4WDs for an unattractive 15,000 CFP a day, with unlimited kilometres and insurance included. There's a petrol station at the cargo-ship quay at Tahauku Bay.

Excursions by 4WD cost about 10,000 CFP to Taaoa, 12,000 CFP to Hanaiapa, 20,000 CFP to Hanapaaaoa and 20,000 CFP to Puamau – these prices are for the whole car so it's cheaper to go with a bigger group. For information, contact *pension* owners or **Ida Clark** (☎ 92 71 33).

TAHUATA

pop 671 / area 70 sq km

Just as lush but not as steep, Tahuata (meaning 'sunrise' in Marquesas) is Hiva Oa's shy little sister. Separated from Hiva Oa by the 4km-wide Bordelais Channel, it is the smallest uninhabited island in the archipelago. With more and more day tours being conducted from Hiva Oa, Tahuata's accessibility is increasing, bringing the possibility of more *pensions* in the near future.

The grand church in the main village of Vaitahu, rather big for such a small village, attests to the island's religious convictions. Catholicism established a foothold in Vaitahu between 1797 and 1838, and the island was a bridgehead for the evangelisation of the Marquesas.

In 1842 Captain Dupetit-Thouars forced his former ally, Chief Iotete of Tahuata, to sign the treaty of annexation by France. Realising that he had been duped, Iotete later opposed the transfer, but his rebellion was crushed by the French. It was also during this period that the island's reserves of sandalwood were plundered.

Today the island is known for its artists, particularly bone carvers, who are mostly women. Enchanting Hanamoenoa Bay is a favourite anchorage for yachts from March to August.

Information

For tourist information, contact the **mairie** (☎ 92 92 19) in Vaitahu.

Bring cash, as there is no bank on Tahuata. The **post office** (☎ 7.30–11.30am Mon–Fri) is in Vaitahu, as is the phonecard telephone booth and infirmary.

Sights

VAITAHU

This tiny village, built against the steep slopes of the central ridge, retains a few vestiges of its stormy past. On the seafront stands a modest **memorial** topped by a rusty anchor, recalling the first meeting between Admiral Dupetit-Thouars and Chief Iotete in 1838.

Next to the post office, there is a tiny **museum** (admission free) with some archaeological items including fish hooks and stone pestles.

On the hill that dominates the village to the south are a few remains of a building known as the **French Fort**, which is in an advanced state of decay. There are sweeping views from the ridge.

The monumental stone **Catholic church** is opposite the seafront. Financed by the Vatican and opened with great pomp and ceremony in 1988, it recalls the importance of Tahuata in the evangelisation of the archipelago. The church has beautiful stained-glass windows and some interesting wood carvings.

Vaitahu is a good place to have a wander. Copra-drying sheds are dotted here and there, and brightly coloured traditional *vaka* (outrigger canoes) line the shore. Some top-rate Marquesan sculptors work in the town.

For places to stay and eat, see opposite.

HAPATONI

Hapatoni curves around a wide bay and is accessible by boat in less than 15 minutes from Vaitahu, several kilometres north, or by the bridleway.

The **royal road** is the village's main attraction. Built on a dike on the orders of Queen Vaekehu II in the 19th century, this paved road, lined with 100-year-old tamanu trees, extends along the shore. At the promontory a path leads up to a **lookout**, marked by a cross, with a magnificent view of the bay.

MOPUTU

This village, to the north, has a few dozen inhabitants; it's accessible by 4WD by the vehicle track that crosses the island's interior.

Activities

HORSE-RIDING

The track that joins Vaitahu and Motopu in the northeast, a distance of about 17km, is ideal for horse-riding. Ask the locals about hiring a horse.

Sleeping & Eating

Pension Amatea (☎ 92 92 84; r per person 4000 CFP, with half board 7000 CFP) You won't find a cleaner or friendlier *pension* than this one in Vaitahu. It has five rooms with shared bathroom and is also the only place on Tahuata that serves food, but you'll have to reserve in advance. Marguerite, the owner, can help arrange any activity and also transportation to and from Tahuata.

Every village has one or two small shops.

Getting There & Away

The **Te Pua O Mioi** (☎ 92 92 19), the communal *bonitier*, runs a Vaitahu–Atuona ferry service on Tuesday and Friday (4000 CFP return, one hour each way), departing at about 6.30am. **Pension Amatea** (☎ 92 92 84) can help arrange passage with private *bonitiers*.

It costs between 22,000 and 28,000 CFP to charter a boat between Vaitahu or Hapatoni and Atuona.

The *Aranui* and *Taporo VI* both stop at Tahuata.

Getting Around

A 17km track, accessible to 4WD vehicles, crosses the island's interior to link Vaitahu with Motopu. It costs 15,000 CFP for a day's hire with driver.

Hapatoni is less than 15 minutes from Vaitahu by speedboat. It costs about 6000 CFP to hire a boat between Vaitahu and Hapatoni return, and 7000 to 10,000 CFP between Vaitahu and Hanahevane Bay.

UNINHABITED ISLANDS

The uninhabited island of **Motane** (Mototani) lies southeast of Hiva Oa and east of Tahuata. With an area of 15 sq km and highest altitude of 520m, this inhospitable island is now home to only wild goats but was once occupied by humans. The islet **Terihi** is south of Motane.

Fatu Huku is to the north of Hiva Oa and **Thomasset Rock** lies east of Fatu Hiva. The waters of Fatu Huku and Motane are occasionally visited by fishing vessels.

FATU HIVA

pop 562/area 80 sq km

Fatu Hiva is the island of superlatives: the most remote, the furthest south, the wettest, the lushest and the most authentic. It was also the first in the archipelago to be seen by the Spanish navigator Mendaña, in 1595. He christened it Santa Magdalena after the saint whose day it was.

With no landing strip and only poorly serviced by the *bonitiers* from Hiva Oa (75km), Fatu Hiva's untouched paradise remains, well, untouched. The phallic skyline of Hanavave Bay caused it to be named Baie des Verges (Bay of Penises). Outraged, the missionaries hastened to add a redeeming 'i' to make the name Baie des Vierges (Bay of Virgins). At sunset, the bay is drenched in purple and the surrounding peaks give off bronze reflections – an entrancing spectacle that has intoxicated hundreds of international yachties.

Information

There is a post office in Omoa and an infirmary or first-aid post in both Omoa and Hanavave. There is no bank on the island.

Sights

OMOA

In the south of the island, Omoa is dominated by a **church** with a red roof, white façade and slender spire. Ask someone to take you to the giant **petroglyph** at the edge of the village, near the river: look carefully and you'll see the enormous fish.

HANAVAVE

The village is set on the seashore, at the mouth of a steep-sided valley leading onto the beautiful **Bay of Virgins**. Near the shore, the town's small, sober **church**, white with a blue door, contrasts with the church in Omoa.

Activities

A popular activity is to take a **walk** or **horse ride** to the Bay of Virgins from Omoa along the island's only existing track. The four-hour walk is not particularly difficult except for the climb to the pass separating the two valleys. Wear good shoes and take sufficient water.

The first part of the walk goes up the Omoa Valley along a cliff-top path with beautiful views over the village below. The trail then crosses through the island's interior. It's a steep descent to Hanavave and there's not much shade along the way.

This route can be followed by horse or by 4WD if it's not too muddy.

Sleeping & Eating

The following *pensions* are all in Omoa.

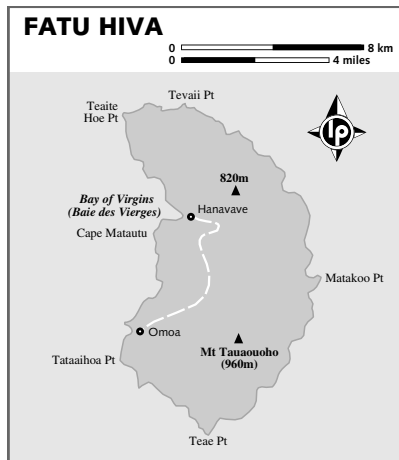
Chez Lionel Cantois (☎ /fax 92 81 84; s/d ind breakfast 5000/6000, bungalow d ind breakfast 9000 CFP; dinner per person 2000 CFP) Chez Lionel is beside the river, in the middle of a beautiful tropical garden. There is a well-equipped bungalow with bathroom (hot water) or rooms in the owner's house. You can also reserve to eat here.

Pension Heimata (☎ /fax 92 80 58; r with half/full board 4000/5500 CFP) This place has two well-kept rooms with shared bathroom (with cold water).

Apart from the *pensions*, eating options on Fatu Hiva are limited to a few small grocery shops.

Getting There & Away

Fatu Hiva is the most difficult island to get to in the Marquesas. Try the *Aranui* and the *Taporo VI*. In Atuona it's possible to



charter a private *bonitier* or to hop on the one that takes the schoolchildren home during school holidays – inquire at the mayor's office in Atuona (☎ 92 73 32). To charter a *bonitier* call **Leo Rohi** (☎ 92 76 57, 70 71 87) in Atuona or contact **Joel Coulom** (☎ 92 81 17) or **Xavier Gilmore** (☎ 92 81 38) in Fatu Hiva. Expect to pay at least 45,000 CFP for the whole boat, round trip (including the boat's return even if you are not on it).

Getting Around

The only dirt road is 17km long and links Hanavave with Omoa. As it is impassable in wet weather, journeys between villages are often by motorised *piroque*.

Inquire at your *pension* about renting a 4WD; expect to pay 12,000 CFP a day with driver.

Speedboats have not yet ousted the traditional outrigger canoes on Fatu Hiva. They take three to four people and the only concession to modernity is the low-powered outboard motors. Expect to pay 6000 to 7000 CFP between Omoa and Hanavave; ask your *pension* for information.