

# Pacific Romance

YOUR GUIDE TO WEDDINGS, HONEYMOONS  
AND ROMANCE IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS



**TAHITI**

## Tying the knot



Both spouses must be at least 18 years old and not currently married. The couple cannot be related by direct lineage or be French nationals or residents of France. The bride and the groom must each choose a witness who must be 18 years of age or older (if the chosen witness is not present, the mayor's office can provide a witness).

### Required documents

- The Marriage of Foreign Citizens in French Polynesia application must be completed.
- A letter signed and dated by both future spouses, addressed to the mayor of the commune chosen for the marriage ceremony.
  - A copy of both spouses' passports.
  - A certified copy of both spouses' birth certificates.
- A Certificate of Non-Marital Status (Certificat de Celibat) signed by a lawyer, translated into French and legalised by the French Consulate.
- Proof of residency for both of the future spouses (a utility bill or any bill noting names and physical address will suffice). A photocopy of bills for both spouses is acceptable.

A romantic scene at sunset. A couple stands on the edge of a swimming pool, holding hands and looking out at a tropical island with a prominent peak. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and soft blue, with the sun low on the horizon. The water of the pool reflects the couple and the sky. The overall mood is peaceful and romantic.

# Passion in *Paradise*



If any Pacific destination has built its reputation on the promise of romance, it is the islands of Tahiti. World-class resorts float above the clearest of lagoon waters. Dramatic volcanic peaks frame picture-postcard vistas. A vibrant French-Pacific culture adds a sophisticated European allure. There is a multitude of outdoor activities a couple can enjoy. And from there, the list of romantic reasons to visit Tahiti goes on and on.

## TAHITI

If you haven't been to Tahiti, your mental image might come courtesy of a glossy magazine or a travel programme you've seen on TV. Regardless, nothing will prepare you for the unmatched blend of peaks, lagoons, luxury accommodation and friendly local hospitality you are about to immerse yourself in. Indeed, Tahiti and its islands have to be seen to be believed.

The glamour locations of Bora Bora and Moorea will be on most romantic itineraries, but first stop for all international travellers is Papeete, the energetic capital city on the island of Tahiti. Some consider this a stopover point 'on the way through', but the island of Tahiti has plenty to offer couples.

To find out a little more about the island, take a trip by car or local transport to the village of Puna'auia to the Museum de Tahiti et des Iles. The museum is dedicated to conserving the archaeology and history of Tahiti. You can also learn about the French Polynesian environment,

history, culture and social life. And then finish off with a stroll around the Atea Gardens.

The Papeete Market (Marche de Papeete) is another sight to pencil into your itinerary. Here you'll have the chance to pick up local handicrafts, like sarongs, shell jewellery and woven knick-knacks. Buy a couple of pareu each to wrap around yourselves like a sarong. And if you're peckish, you can snack on a selection of traditional Tahitian cuisine.

Speaking of food, every couple should head to Place Vaiete down on Papeete's waterfront for some superb casual dining from the popular roulottes (caravans and food trucks). Tuck into a plate of marinated raw fish, known as poisson cru. Try fresh red tuna, caught daily, along with galettes, Asian food, steak and pizza. Drink fresh coconut milk sucked through a straw, or a cold can of the local Hinano beer.

Ladies note, you may want to take your partner to the Robert Wan Pearl Museum. Here you will learn about the mystique of the pearl. How they are grown and harvested, and the incredible array of colours, from purest white to Tahiti's renowned black pearls. Throw in a few hints and you might be taking one home with you!



BORA BORA ©TAHITI TOURISM



SOFITEL TAHITI LA ORA BEACH RESORT



MANAVA SUITE RESORT TAHITI

## PLACES TO STAY

### **Sofitel Tahiti La Ora Beach Resort**

As soon as you walk into the Sofitel Tahiti La Ora Beach Resort, you'll notice the resort's lovely wide-open spaces. Here couples have plenty of 'room to breathe!' From the resort's main building, winding paths lead you down to meticulously maintained gardens and a wide lawn. There's plenty of room to find a quiet spot to relax. If you feel like a cooling dip, there's an equally spacious sand bottom pool. Or you can simply stroll to the beach, where you'll find a stretch of white sand and calm blue waters – the private reserve of resort guests.

On top of the relaxed ambience, the resort has all the facilities and features you would expect in a quality property. Well-appointed rooms with open-air decks that look out across the Punaauia Lagoon. Plus a selection of luxurious overwater bungalows.

### **Manava Suite Resort Tahiti**

When you check into Manava Suite Resort on the island of Tahiti, its best qualities remain hidden. But stroll down the covered walkway towards the lagoon and you'll see why this resort is a favourite stopover for visitors heading to the outer islands. And those going no further than Tahiti. The setting is picture postcard. Silky smooth lagoon waters with views across to Moorea and its mountainous peaks.

There's a recently upgraded infinity pool area with spacious decks – so you can find your own quiet spot and watch the vaka paddlers go by. There's even a sheltered man-made bay where guests can snorkel to their heart's content. Plus the resort has all the other facilities you'd expect, including two restaurants, two bars and the Manea Spa.



## MOOREA

From the western side of Tahiti, you can see the soaring peaks of Moorea in what seems like touching distance. Indeed, this magical island is a mere 30 kilometres away – which translates to an easy 30-40 minute ferry ride from the downtown terminal in Papeete.

Moorea is a paradise for romantics. With its mountains, aqua lagoons, white sandy beaches, lush green gardens and magnificent bays, Moorea has a dramatic landscape on a scale that few South Pacific islands can match. As the ferry nears the island and those jagged peaks begin to tower above you, the sense of anticipation will grow.

As soon as you step foot on the island, you will instantly feel the change of pace. Moorea is home to around 18,000 people, whereas Tahiti has around 10 times that number. The vibe is blissfully laid back. The best way for a couple to start exploring the island is by car. The major rental car brands have their offices directly opposite the ferry terminal, so you can walk across the street and pick up a vehicle in a jiffy.

There is one main coastal road, so it's impossible to get lost! And when you feel the need, simply pull over at a local village and browse the shops, or grab a bite to eat. There are lots of roadside Cafés offering yummy snacks – crepes are a speciality, they're tasty and light, so you don't feel too 'full' afterwards.

For a special occasion book a table at the Moorea Beach Café, run by the relaxed Bruno Jamais, who spent years working in hospitality in New York before seeking a more relaxing lifestyle. The café sits right on the water and it's the kind of place you can settle in for hours, grazing away, sipping on bubbles and gazing across the calm blue

waters. It's easy to find – look out for the café's yellow flags in the town of Maharepa.

There's a lot to see inland too. Like on a tour with Moorea ATV. Their all-terrain vehicles seat two, so couples can share the driving. A guide will lead your squad down unsealed back-country roads through tropical jungle, across gurgling river fords, and up to panoramic lookouts. You might pause in pineapple plantations and taste some local products. You will certainly get dusty, and muddy too, if there's been recent rain, but you can swim and refresh in the pool below one of Moorea's sparkling waterfalls.

Also make time to experience Tiki Parc, where you can hook into a harness and swing across multiple aerial, obstacle courses and zip lines graded according to how brave you think you both are. Then round the headland to Cooks Bay, or Temae, where you can have a picnic under the palm trees.

Alternatively, you may want to try a ubiquitous Tahiti Drink from the Rotui juice factory, a form of fruit punch with a generous serving of rum, sold in cartons.

It goes without saying the water-loving couples will be in their element. Motorboats, jet skis, paddleboards and kayaks are all available for hire, along with fishing and diving charters and lagoon excursions.

Moorea is also home to several beautiful public beach reserves – places where local families get-together to swim and picnic. Check out the palm-tree lined Taahiamanu Beach, one of the most popular on the island. It's an excellent spot for a cooling dip during the day, or catch the glorious sunset later in the early evening. It's a few minutes past the Hilton Moorea Resort and Spa.



MOOREA ©TAHITI TOURISM



MOOREA ©TAHITI TOURISM



AIR TAHITI NUI

# Welcome on board our Tahitian Dreamliner



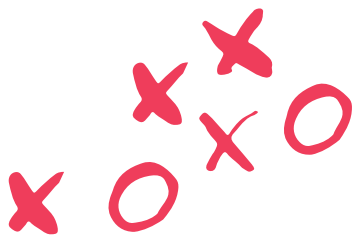
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## PLACES TO STAY

### Hilton Moorea Lagoon Resort & Spa





Sitting between two spectacular bays, Hilton Moorea Lagoon Resort & Spa has a setting that any couple would dream about. It also happens to be Moorea's only five-star experience. This mix of luxury and location make it a wonderful place to wed or honeymoon.

Couples-to-be can choose from three wedding packages. The simple Tiare ceremony includes a Polynesian priest, flower crown, musicians, dancers and champagne sundowner. While the premium Toa ceremony has add-on features such as a procession in a royal chair, couple's massage and romantic dinner. Regardless of which ceremony a couple might choose, the resort will ensure every magical moment will be remembered.

Dining at the Toatea Creperie and Bar is fun. It's French Polynesia's only overwater eatery and bar. As night falls, the local black-tip shark will swim around you! And when it comes time for some serious pampering pop into Moorea Lagoon Spa – an eco-friendly, beachfront spa that uses fresh island ingredients like coconut, coffee, vanilla, ginger and coconut oil, and specialises in couple's treatments.



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### Manava Beach Resort & Spa Moorea

Boasting a sun-soaked location on the northern side of Moorea, Manava Beach Resort and Spa is a place of pure romantic comfort. The resort is handy to the main wharf and airport. And it's a short walk from Maharepa village, which makes it easy for couples to sample fresh-made delicacies (i.e. yummy French pastries) and mix with people who are lucky enough to call Moorea home.

The resort has several wedding packages available, including a variety of traditional Polynesian style ceremonies. Think Polynesian priest, dancers and musicians, flower crowns and leis. On top of that, they have traditional American style weddings too – with classic bridal bouquets and a master of ceremony.

### Sofitel Moorea la Ora Beach Resort

This first-class resort is home to one of Moorea's finest white sand beaches. And being located on the eastern side of Moorea, it's just a hop, skip and jump from the airport and ferry dock. In short, a couple will find supreme comfort and exceptional pampering. Sofitel Moorea la Ora Beach Resort offer a variety of wedding ceremony packages.

Plus couples can choose from a very long list of romantic extras. Would you like a bottle of Bollinger champagne, hors d' oeuvres and macaroons waiting in your room? Or how about a couple's wellness day with a jacuzzi, luscious Polynesian massages and fresh smoothies delivered to the room! And of course, there are many romantic dining options that take in Moorea's stunning natural surroundings. Yes it's decadent, but that's why you're here in the first place.

If you're planning a honeymoon, why not book the largest overwater bungalow on Moorea (83 square metres), or maybe a Horizon View Overwater Bungalow with exclusive features such as private check-in, dedicated 24/7 concierge and priority seating at the restaurants. Either way, you'll both be in heaven.



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## BORA BORA

Bora Bora is a destination that should be on everyone’s bucket list. Known as the Pearl of the Pacific, its turquoise lagoon, low-lying motu (small islets), dazzling white sands and dominant volcano make the island a romantic dream.

If you’re after the classic over-water bungalow experience, this is your nirvana! What could be more romantic than diving off your private swimming platform into the warm, crystal clear waters and then lazing on a sun-drenched deck that looks back toward Mt Otemanu. And of course, you’ll be waited on hand-and-foot by some of the South Pacific’s best-trained staff. It doesn’t get much better. In fact, there’s only one issue with picking Bora Bora as a place to get married or honeymoon - you’ll be spoiled forever.

Bora Bora is that island somewhere over the rainbow – well, actually it lies northwest of the island of Tahiti, and just under an hour away by plane. Indeed, your love affair with Bora Bora will begin as soon as the island comes into view through your plane window. The airport is located on a small motu, and you won’t have to wait long to experience the exquisite lagoon. Instead of a courtesy coach, a water taxi will take you to your resort.

There are several ways to explore Bora Bora lagoon. Relax with some snorkelling, swim from a motu or on renowned Matira Beach, or take in the sights, as you circle the island on your own jetski. The Aquarium Bora Bora diving site is particularly suitable for beginners. You’ll love the dense schools of brightly coloured fish, along with moray eels and stingrays, and majestic coral formations.

You can go on a whale watching experience beyond the reef if your honeymoon is between mid-August and the end of October. If the weather and the sea state are favourable, you can even swim with them. The island itself is easy to explore, with four-wheel-drive vehicles climbing high into the hills for great views. Stop off at local villages and fossick for handicrafts and works of art.

You may wish to see the sunset back at your resort over cocktails, but a sunset cruise on a catamaran is a great alternative. Or take a stargazing tour, and as night falls, your guide will point out how his ancestors used them to navigate their way across vast stretches of open ocean.

Bora Bora’s resorts are known for their cuisine, and lots of Cafés and bistros provide a satisfying meal. But for some local flavour, have dinner at the legendary Bloody Mary’s and savour its relaxed ambience. The catch of the day will be prepared as you like it, and there is crab, shrimp, steak and other options. It’s closed during the weekend and during January.



## PLACES TO STAY

### Conrad Bora Bora Nui

Conrad Bora Bora Nui provides couples with a blissful mix. Pure luxury, relaxation and unparalleled views. The private island location on Motu To’opua is like something out of movie set. Couples can find a secluded spot along the long white sand beaches.

There is a range of accommodations on both land and overwater. From the spacious Garden View Villas with a pool to extravagant Presidential Villas. It really comes down to what you prefer and how much your budget can stretch.

Romantic dining? The resort has six restaurants and bars to suit every taste. And if you think a stay here is just about lazing by the pool – think again. For active couples, there are endless adventures on offer. From hiking to swimming with sharks, a couple can stay as busy as they choose. For a unique experience, spend a day at the resort’s private islet Motu Tapu, enjoy a picnic prepared by their chefs, sip on Champagne, and soak up the surroundings. Hina Spa, located on the hilltop, offers the full range of pampering treatments.

### Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora

The Four Seasons brand is known the world over for its luxury hotels and their Bora Bora property continues this first-class tradition. Numerous A-list Hollywood stars have relaxed in these opulent surroundings – the majestic waters, views to Mt Otemanu and impeccable service are all part of the attraction.

It’s difficult to imagine a more romantic setting. Honeymooners can lap up every moment, enjoying the exceptional dining options and world-class spa treatments. And for those tying the knot, there’s the enchanting Aherenoa Chapel with its jaw-dropping views directly across to Mt Otemanu. It’s doesn’t get much better.

### Sofitel Bora Bora Marara Beach Resort

Sitting on the eastern side of the main island, Sofitel Bora Bora Marara Beach Resort offers guests a different experience from the resorts located on the smaller surrounding motu (islets).

You’ll still enjoy the same stunning garden setting, pure white sand beach and classic overwater experience, but you’ll also have easy access to a host of Bora Bora’s local attractions, including the town of Vaitape and the famous Bloody Mary’s restaurant.

When it comes to weddings, the resort’s motto is “your wedding as per your wishes”. Essentially couples “work” hand-in-hand with Sofitel’s wedding coordinator to create a wedding that reflects their personal passions – and then it is all brought to life in this stunning Bora Bora location. 🌺

## OVERWATER INVENTION

The simple, yet brilliant idea of creating an over-water experience began 50 years ago when three American men took Tahiti’s traditional Polynesian grass huts and set them on concrete stilts on the water. The first three were built at the Bali Hai Hotel on Raiatea, and they quickly built more on Moorea and Bora Bora. Other hoteliers in French Polynesia soon saw their attraction, and Tahiti is now renowned for its hundreds of overwater bungalows or villas, which have evolved from simple huts to palatial suites, with all the amenities of a top-class hotel.



FOUR SEASONS RESORT BORA BORA



FOUR SEASONS RESORT BORA BORA



CONRAD BORA BORA NUI

## Keane and Chiara Keane (Keays)

### Moorea

#### What inspired you to have a South Pacific island wedding?

We really dreamt of having a simple, island wedding with either just us or a few family members, somewhere with a slower pace of life where we could really relax and spend some quality time together. We also love to surf and spend time on the water.

#### What made you pick that specific island ahead of all the others?

French Polynesia has always been a dream destination for us, so when we were looking into islands and found that Moorea was insanely beautiful, had great surf and also holiday houses and vendors that would fit our vision for our wedding, we were pretty excited.

#### What made you pick that specific resort or other wedding venue?

We wanted to have a beachfront wedding but to keep it 'backyard' style with the ceremony and reception held at the same venue and when we found Fare Manahau, it ticked our boxes of having an open beachfront yard with the stunning reef out front and the magical mountains and palm groves out the back. There were also the logistics of having enough space for the dinner tables and beds for our family to stay.

#### What were some of the advantages of getting married in the islands?

Having a really stunning and unique location, being able to combine the wedding trip with your honeymoon and keeping the guest list intimate.

#### If you had a friend planning an island wedding, what would your Top 5 tips be?

1. Keep the guest list small and have the people who really matter to you there.
2. Find a venue or vendor that offers multiple services like food, drinks, decorations to simplify your planning.



3. Ask vendors if they will travel – many photographers, hair and makeup artists, etc. will travel for you if your destination is on their bucket list.
4. Use a wedding website to give your guests travel info so that you're not relaying the same messages to everyone.
5. Plan, plan, plan but once you are there, be in the moment and don't sweat the small stuff.

#### Looking back, was there anything you would do differently?

I would probably make sure we had more time away after the wedding to really decompress and relax!





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## Planning to perfection

**Lise Morel, Events Coordinator  
Hilton Moorea Resort and Spa**

### How long have you had this role?

I joined Hilton Moorea in 2017. I was a concierge, and then I moved into the food & beverage team. These roles gave me a great understanding of our guests' needs before I started as Events Coordinator in September 2018.

### What lead-time do you require to plan a wedding?

It is possible to arrange 'last-minute' weddings at Hilton Moorea, but the sooner we start planning, the better!

### How many weddings do you arrange each month?

We arrange around 5-10 Polynesian ceremonies per month.

### What are some of the unique things you can offer?

Having an Event Coordinator on-property means we can tailor everything, so each wedding is unique! Our location between Moorea's two biggest bays is also a major attraction. Our private white sand beach offers beautiful views at sunset – there are opportunities for barefoot beach cocktail parties, 'feet in the sand' dinners to the sound of ukulele, etc.

### What are the main benefits of getting married in Moorea?

Easy! The main benefit is not needing to fly to your honeymoon destination – you've already made it there!

### What do you enjoy most about your job?

The appreciation of our guests – I know I've helped create an occasion they'll remember forever!

### What are the Top 3 things a planner needs to find out from a couple?

1. What the non-negotiables are. We need to find out what elements a bride and groom absolutely must-have!
2. To build a trusted relationship. Because we are clear with couples, we avoid any misunderstandings.
3. What to prioritise. For example: are they more concerned about the food or interested in decor? The answer will allow us to find out what details we need to concentrate on in the planning process.

### Best advice you would give a couple?

Don't stress too much while planning. I know, easy to say! During the celebrations, take a few minutes to pause and look around as your guests are enjoying the moment.

### What is the best time of the year to get married in Moorea?

To me, the best time of the year is a day that means something for the bride and groom. I do not believe there is a time of the year better than another – even if it is recommended to travel to French Polynesia from March to October. Indeed, from November to March, the weather may be slightly rainier but still warm and with longer days!



Lise Morel



# Your Next Romantic Getaway



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