

The Gambier & Australs Compendium

A Compilation of Guidebook References and Cruising Reports



IMPORTANT: USE ALL INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT AT YOUR OWN RISK!!

Rev 2023.1 – Mar 22, 2024

Please send us updates to this guide!

Keep the Gambier and Australs compendium alive by being a contributor. We are especially looking for information on places where we have no cruiser information and new information on existing content. It's easy to participate and will help many other cruisers for years to come.

Email Soggy Paws at [sherry –at- svsoggyaws –dot- com](mailto:sherry-at-svsoggyaws-dot-com).
You can also contact us on Sailmail at WDI5677

The current home (and the most up to date) version of this document is:

<http://svsoggyaws.com/files/#frpoly>

If you found this compendium posted elsewhere, it might not be the most current version. Please check the above site for the most up to date copy and remember, it will always be free!

Revision Log

Many thanks to all who have contributed over the years!!

Rev	Date	Notes
2024.1	Jan 2024	Updates on Raivavae and Rurutu from Elma
2023.2	Aug 2023	Updates on Raivavae and Rurutu from Moana
2023.1	Jan 2023	Various updates on cruiser services in Gambiers. Sugar Shack
2022.2	May 2022	Small update on ATM in Rikitea Sugar Shack
2022.1	February 2022	Kamaka is forbidden and various updates by Sugar Shack
2021.3	July 23, 2021	Air Tahiti "Seniors" discount
2021.2	April 2021	Updates from Ari B, Grace of Longstone, and Sugar Shack. Removed weather section and linked to new French Polynesia Weather document.
2021.1	January 2021	Updates on Ravivae and Tubuai from s/v Chugach
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2019.5	March 2020	Information on the Australs from s/v Pitufa
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2017.3	March 23, 2017	Referencing the new Tahiti Cruiser's Guide online.
	... Many updates...	
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1 Introduction

This guide originally started out as a way for Soggy Paws and a few friends to organize notes and various internet sources about the Tuamotus. Later, it became a way for us to pass on what we've learned to other cruisers. When we got to other archipelagos, we added a compendium for them as well. We have since created over 45 compendiums all the way across the Pacific and in to SE Asia. Plus, we've received updates from cruisers since 2011 (please send us yours!).

This is not intended to replace the guidebooks or charts, but to supplement out-of-date guides with recent cruiser first-hand reports, and fill in information on places that the guides don't cover.

We are indebted to all the cruisers who have sent in updates!

1.1 Organization of the Guide

We have somewhat arbitrarily chosen to organize this information. Everyone must land first in Rikitea, Mangareva to clear into the archipelago with the gendarmerie. It does not matter if you are coming from Pitcarin, Rapa Nui (Easter Island), Marquesas, Australs, or Tuamotus – **everyone must clear in** to the archipelago before going ashore anywhere else. It is advised to call the gendarmerie or port authority on VHF 16 as you round Mt Duff (as the VHF signal cannot reach the town through the mountain) in the channel.

The guide is organized starting with the four main islands: Mangareva, Aukena, Akamaru, and Taravai. The smaller islands and motus are then listed North, East, South, West. If an island or Motu is not mentioned in this guide it is only because we have not received cruiser information on it. If you visit an island or motu not listed, please email us with your information so we can add it.

This guide is NOT intended to replace commercially-available guidebooks (see the section on Printed Sources for recommendations), but to supplement those guidebooks with first-hand accounts from other cruisers.

1.2 Clearance and Visa Guidelines

The official Govt of France website: <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/getting-a-visa/>

1.2.1 Entry Procedures for EU Citizens

As of Dec. 2020: If you are British Citizen, and you have entered French Polynesia on or before 31 December 2020, then you could apply for a carte de sejour between 01 January 2021 and 01 July 2021. The carte de sejour cannot be applied for before or after these dates.

If you are a British citizen, and you arrive after 31 December 2020, then you will be required to obtain a consular visa OUTSIDE of French Polynesia BEFORE your arrival. This is similar to other long stay visa holders. Once you obtain the consular visa (outside of French Polynesia), then arrive in French Polynesia, then you will be required to apply for your carte de sejour on your arrival.

1.2.2 Entry Procedures for non-EU Citizens

Obtain the most current information on Long-Stay Visas and 90-Day Visas:

- Long-Stay Visas for French Polynesia: <https://www.jacarandajourney.com/fplongstayvisa>
- 90-Day Visa for French Polynesia: <https://www.jacarandajourney.com/fp90dayvisa>

The data in the above links is constantly updated to provide you with the most current and vital information. The information in this compendium was only left in as an "example."

Most "first world" nationalities are granted a "Visa on Arrival" good for 90 days. Applying for a 90-day visa is not required and does not help with the bond or your check-in process. There is no way to extend this "visa on arrival". If you wish to stay longer than 90 days in French Polynesia, you must apply for a "Long Stay Visa" (see above link for current visa procedures) **PRIOR** to arrival in French Polynesia.

Note that if you are American or Canadian, and your **90-day visa is running out**, whatever you do, get cleared out of Tahiti before your visa expires.

NO VISA EXTENSION IS POSSIBLE IN PAPEETE. Except under exceptional circumstances... medical issues, severe boat issues, etc., **you cannot get a visa extension on the spot in Papeete**. Getting a little extra time for a legitimate reason is possible, but those situations take a lot of paperwork (not covered in normal agent fees).

Your visa normally starts when you clear in to your first port Marquesas (Nuku Hiva, Hiva Oa, or Ua Pou), Gambier (Mangareva), Australs (Rurutu, Tubuai, and Raivavae), or Tuamotus (Rangiroa). But sometimes that isn't the exact date, so check your passports.

Flying out and flying back in before the end of your allotted 90 days does NOT 'reset' the visa. It merely stops the clock. Your 90-day clock stops (if not used up) and then restarts when you re-enter. You get 90 days every 180 days. The 180-day clock keeps running even if you are not in French Polynesia. At the end of the 180 days you are eligible for another short-term visa (90 days).

The only other way to legally stay longer is to apply for a Long Stay Visa at a French Embassy/Consulate **before** you start your journey toward French Polynesia. Panama is the quickest and easiest embassy to obtain your LS visa. You need to make 2 trips in person to the same French Consulate with your passports, about 1-3 months apart (depending on the country you submit your application), and have a lot of other paperwork done. You may also obtain your LS visa in Mexico, Chile, United States, and Canada.

Renewing LS Visa (Carte de Sejour): You can renew your LS Visa once a year. Paperwork cannot be submitted to the Haute Commissionnaire until two months prior to your expiry date. For example: if your expiry date is 11 April, you cannot submit your renewal paperwork until February 11 (2 months prior). You submit virtually the same paperwork (application, attestation, 3-months financials, proof of health coverage, copies of passport, boat paperwork, CDs, etc...) and you can use an agent for a smoother process. Everyone applying must present themselves to the Haute Commissionnaire at least one time per year.

April 2019 – Renewing Cartes de Sejour (long stay visa): We had Tahiti Crew handling our Long Stay Visa (Cartes de Sejour) renewal, and we had moved on to Raiatea (as planned and as previously communicated to Tahiti Crew) when Tahiti Crew informed us that we needed to make an in-person visit to the HC office in Papeete to complete the visa renewal. After some investigation on our part, it turned out that they were misinformed (thankfully we didn't have to sail or fly back to Papeete!), and we were able to make our appearance at the HC office in Raiatea instead of Pape'ete. – Cool Change

1.2.3 The French Polynesia Bond (Repatriation Guarantee)

Obtain the most current information on the French Polynesia Bond, Long-Stay Visas and 90-Day Visas:

- Long-Stay Visas: <https://www.jacarandajourney.com/fplongstayvisa>
 - The French Polynesia Bond information can be found under Long-Stay Visas
- 90-Day Visa for French Polynesia: <https://www.jacarandajourney.com/fp90dayvisa>

The data in the above links is constantly updated to provide you with the most current and vital information. The information in this compendium was only left in as an "example."

Sept. 2018: This write up explains the types of bonds and what 90 days really means, etc. Hoping that helps clarify some of the question's folks have on the general 90-day visa.

French Polynesia requires all non-EU visitors to either prove that they have a paid way out of the country, or pay a bond on arriving in French Polynesia. This bond basically is the guarantee that the French government doesn't have to pay to fly indigent people home. There are 3 ways to satisfy this requirement:

1. Show an airplane ticket out of the country
2. Pay the bond (roughly the equivalent of an airplane ticket out of the country)

3. Arrange with an agent to “guarantee” you. Essentially the agent guarantees that THEY will pay to fly you out of the country, and so you pay for an insurance policy with the agent.

The bond is refundable when you leave, with time, and paperwork. The agent “guarantee” fee is not. You must pay a bond even if you have obtained a long stay visa.

1.2.4 Long Stay Visa

Non-EU Citizens require a long-stay visa or Carte de Sejour (CD) in order to stay in French Polynesia longer than 90-days. Download the most current information on long-stay visas:

- Long-Stay Visas: <https://www.jacarandajourney.com/fplongstayvisa>
- 90-Day Visa for French Polynesia: <https://www.jacarandajourney.com/fp90dayvisa>

The data in the above links is constantly updated to provide you with the most current and vital information. The information in this compendium was only left in as an “example.”

The official Govt of France website: <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/getting-a-visa/>

There is a separate website for each French embassy/consulate. There is no French embassy/consulate in Hawaii, there are embassies in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, Washington DC, Boston, Atlanta etc.

- A full list of French Embassies in the U.S.: <http://www.mfe.org/index.php/Annuaire/Ambassades-et-consulats-francais-a-l-etranger> (look in the list for Etats Unis for all USA offices)
- Mexico: <http://www.consulfrance-mexico.org/>
- Panama: <http://ambafrance-pa.org/>
- Ecuador: <http://www.ambafrance-ec.org/>
- Chile: <https://cl.ambafrance.org/Demander-un-visa-pour-la-France-au-Chili> another site is <https://France-visas.gouv.fr>

2020 verified (2010): Another cruiser mentioned that as long as you have been out of your home country for 6 months, you can apply in whatever country you happen to be in. Below, Jacaranda recounts doing it in Ecuador. I have also heard (a few years ago) that the consulate in San Francisco is the WORST. – Soggy Paws

1.2.5 Do I Need an Agent?

Technically, no, you do not need an agent to check in and out of French Polynesia. However, having an agent greatly facilitates everything. An agent will provide or help you obtain:

- Bond guarantee
- Activating a long stay visa (renewal of long-stay visa / carte de sejour)
- Duty Free Fuel certificate
- Paperwork for duty free liquor (obtained in Tahiti on checkout from Tahiti)
- Receiving packages/mail in Tahiti before you arrive there

The [Pacific Puddle Jump group](#) negotiates a ‘group rate’ with Tahiti Crew to handle the bond issue and provide the duty-free fuel paperwork.

1.2.5.1 Agents

- **Tahiti Crew** +689 87 23 55 41, www.tahiticrew.com, info@tahiticrew.com, or yachts@tahiticrew.com. Located in Marina Taina, Papeete, Tahiti. [Services and Fees](#).
- **Nuku Hiva Yacht Services** Kevin +689 87 226 872, www.YachtServicesNukuHiva.com or YSNukuHiva@hotmail.com, Located in Nuku Hiva, Marquesas.
- **Hiva Oa Yacht Services**, Sandra, +689 87 232 247, hivaoayachtservices@gmail.com. Located in Hiva Oa, Marquesas.

April 2019: Our first arrival to FP was in the Gambier (from Chile). We hired Tahiti Crew to help facilitate and complete our long-stay visa and fuel certificate. Tahiti Crew provided all of the paperwork, guidance on how to complete it, what to provide and how to get it delivered to Tahiti expediently. Using Tahiti Crew allowed us to enjoy the Gambier and Tuamotus because we did not have to rush off to Tahiti to process the second stage of our LS visa process. All of our LS visa paperwork had to be hand delivered to the Haute Commissionnaire (HC) in Papeete, which was difficult to do from Gambier. Tahiti Crew was very responsive, friendly, and willing to help us with anything. They speak the local language (French and Tahitian), have relationships with the officials in Tahiti, and they have the expertise to assist you with anything you may require during your stay. It was well worth the money to engage them.

If you are arriving into the Gambier, it would be wise to engage Tahiti Yacht Services as they can be located in Papeete where the Haute Commissionnaires office is located. Nuku Hiva Yacht Services and Hiva Oa Yacht Services would have to send documents by freight. In addition to visa assistance, they helped us with our duty-free certificate, shipping items to Tahiti, payment to local vendors (while we were away), money exchange, local marine vendors and more. They made the entire process seamless and easy. – Sugar Shack

1.2.6 Clearing Out of French Polynesia

Noonsite – April 2015, verified in 2021: Best to check in with your agent or the marina office (either Marina Papeete or Marina Taina) to confirm these rules have not changed, especially if you are leaving French Polynesia to another country.

Departure Clearance in Papeete: This is compulsory when you plan to sail more than 50 miles away from Tahiti. The normal clearing procedure in Papeete starts 3 days before your intended departure.

Three days before departure from Tahiti send an e-mail to the harbormaster (capitainerie) with your boat name, captain's name and destination (for example Cook Islands via the Leeward Islands or Tonga). They will request you complete an “Inner Polynesian Islands Clearance Request”

trafficmaritime@portppt.pf

copy to: sp@portppt.pf and marinadepapeete@portppt.pf (if you are staying at Marina Papeete)

If you plan to depart Tahiti and sail to a foreign country via other FP Islands, the harbormaster will prepare your inner Polynesian Islands departure clearance in Tahiti and e-mail it to you. You must however go and meet the Gendarmes in the last FP island touched to do the official final exit from FP. The local Gendarme will give you 24 hours to leave once clearance has been granted.

If you plan to depart Tahiti and sail direct to a foreign country, the harbormaster will send your clearance to the Immigration authorities. The day before departure go to Customs to complete exit formalities with them and then visit Immigration at the airport to pick up your exit clearance. You now have until midnight to depart. With this paper you can get duty free fuel, only on the day of departure.

If you had to pay a bond on entry (non-EU citizens only), ensure that your papers specify which island you will be departing from in order that arrangements can be made to retrieve your bond.

Departure Clearance from other FP Islands

Visit the Gendarmes at the clearance port you are departing from at least a day before departure and complete a Customs declaration form (ticking it for EXIT). This will then need to be mailed by post to the Customs main office in Papeete. Sometimes the Gendarmes will do this on your behalf, however it is your responsibility to ensure the form gets mailed to Papeete. The Gendarmes will also stamp your passports. They will then give you 24 hours to depart.

1.2.7 Vessels Length of Stay

Vessels are allowed to stay in French Polynesia for up to two (2) years. After, two years, you will be required to import your boat or leave French Polynesia.

A vessel may stay up to three (3) years, if the vessel arrived into French Polynesia prior to the new law in 2020 being enacted. In other words, the vessel would be grandfathered in.

1.2.8 Custom Patrols

French Polynesia Customs Web (French): <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/getting-a-visa/>

During “crossing season” there is normally a Customs boat wandering around in the arrival ports. They have copies of the customs declarations that are filed when you arrive, and are spot-checking to make sure everyone is being honest with their customs declarations. They are also making sure people are checking in before cruising the islands.

1.2.9 Arriving and Departing Crew

Air Tahiti www.airtahiti.aero offers domestic flights to other destinations in French Polynesia. Charters flights such as Air Archipel are available on request. Helicopters are another option.

If your friends (or you) want to see more of French Polynesia, be sure to check out Air Tahiti’s multi-island Air Pass. www.airtahiti.com/articles.php?id=69

If you have crew who entered with you, but will leave the boat before you arrive in Papeete, you should ask officials (your agent, if you have one), what you need to do to sign the crew member off your boat, and properly set their immigration status.

Remember, you are responsible for your crew leaving the country if they cleared in on your boat.

Crew trying to fly out from the Tuamotus, through Papeete, were severely hassled at the Papeete airport because the proper leaving formalities had not been complied with.

Likewise, if you have crew flying in to meet you someplace in French Polynesia, who plan to leave French Poly on your boat, you will need to inquire what THEY will need to do get in the country. (see bond discussion above—this will apply to them as well, if they don’t buy a round trip ticket).

1.3 Maneuvering and Anchoring in the Gambier

1.3.1 Marine Protected Areas Guide:

Marine Protected Areas Guide:

<http://www.ressources-marines.gov.pf/cdi/depliants-livrets-guides/>

If you can’t find it there, the 2021 version can be found here:

http://svsoggypaws.com/files/Marine_Protected_Areas_FrenchPoly_Mar_2021.pdf

Aug. 2018: Since we transited through French Polynesia in 2010/2011, the government has made many changes to anchoring areas. The latest copy of the Marine Protected Areas, and the regulations surrounding them, are published in a guide downloadable from the internet. Sorry, I could not find an English version. Time to start practicing your French! – Soggy Paws

1.3.2 Anchoring around Coral

Please float your chain when anchoring near coral. Remember, we are guests visiting this country, islands, atolls, and backyards of the lovely locals. We must take responsibility to protect the lagoons.

Often lagoons are not clear and many times you are anchoring without knowing if there is coral on the bottom. Jacaranda has found the use of a fish finder to locate clear spots on the bottom invaluable in murky situations. We have a cheap one with the transducer stuck to the inside of the hull with silicon.

Each year sail boats cruising in French Polynesia get into trouble at anchor: They get trapped on lee shores after a shift in the wind direction and/or foul their anchor and/or chain in coral. The results are stressful maneuvers to get the anchor back up, bent bow rollers, and ruined or even ripped out windlass. Of course, the fragile coral structures get badly damaged with each of these messed up maneuvers as well.

It is **easy to avoid damage** to the coral and your boat if you:

- Anchor in conditions with **good visibility** (don't drop your anchor blindly)
- Try to find a **big, sandy spot** to drop your hook
- Anchor in **shallow** water...
 - ...where you can see the bottom clearly
 - ...usually fewer coral heads grow on sandy shelves, and
 - ...you only need a short chain.
- **Float the chain** so that the boat can swing around in shifting winds without getting the chain caught in coral heads
- Keep an eye on the **weather forecast** and move to a safe anchorage before the wind shifts

There are many ways to float your chain. Some people set their chain first, then pull back on it to ensure it is set properly. Once set, they will slowly pull up the chain to install the floats and then pull back again. Another way is listed below.

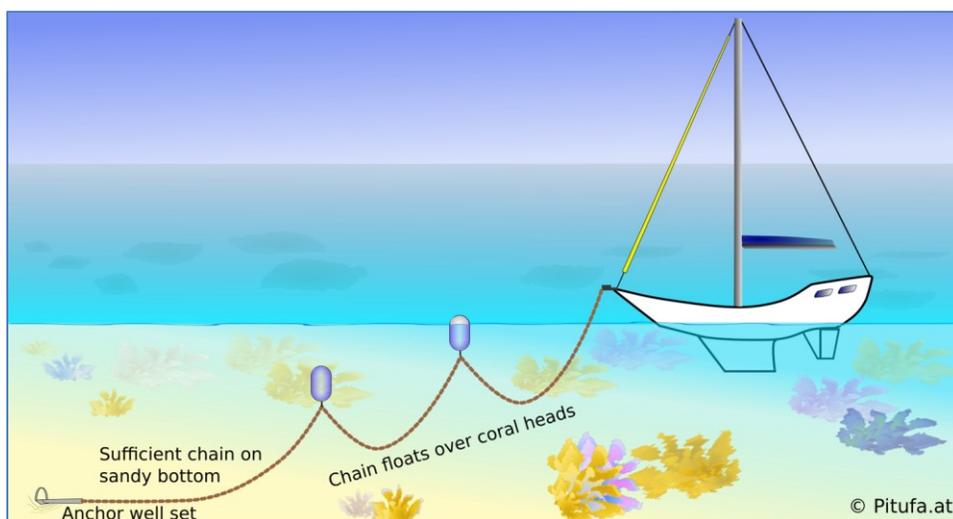
Floating the chain is a simple procedure. You just need:

- (3) or more medium-sized fenders or buoys
- (3) or more carabiners that fit into your chain

1. Drop the anchor in the middle of the biggest sandy spot you can find,
2. Pay out chain while reversing gently,
3. Look around at the surrounding coral heads and estimate your swinging radius,
4. Hook in the first fender/buoy before the chain could touch any of the coral heads,
5. Pay out some more chain and set the anchor gently pulling in reverse,
6. If the scope is still not sufficient, additional floats can be added followed by more chain.

The general rule:

The first float should be inserted at double the depth. If you drop the hook in 5 meters, put the first float on at 10 meters. Then add another float every 7-15 meters. If you have small floats/fenders, then add them every 7-10 meters. If you have a larger float/fender, then add them every 12-15 meters. The goal is to keep the chain off the surrounding coral heads.



For more information, visit www.pitufa.at. Enjoy French Polynesia!

If your chain does get wrapped...

If you are in a storm situation, it is critical to maintain some free chain. Boats have successfully weathered bad storm situations by going to a really long really strong snubber and/or letting out more chain as their chain gets wrapped (having a spare buoy rigged for this would make a lot of sense).

In some deep anchorages inside the lagoon, it can be difficult to see the bottom snorkeling, and therefore difficult to see what's going on when your chain seems stuck. It is USUALLY possible to unstuck your chain without diving on it—patience and calm weather are helpful. A snorkeler in the water can be helpful. But this is a time where having a dive tank can be a big help.

Another very useful resource about Floating Your Chain can be found here:

<https://www.jacarandajourney.com/floatingyourchain>

Not anchoring in coral... After spending several seasons in the French Polynesia, we found that if you can make your way to the windward side of the island or atoll, there are usually spots where the sand has been pushed over the coral reef in big storms, and they make good sandy anchor spots in shallower water with only scattered heads.

1.3.3 Navigation in Areas with Coral

October 2021: Ovital replacements suggested by others...

Android: All in One Offline Maps:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.psyberia.offlinemaps>

iDevices: Guru Maps You get one free week and then can buy the Pro version for \$10 per year. Cheaper to start with the free version than buy the Pro outright, but I heard that maps downloaded for the free version have to be re-downloaded for the Pro version. You can add map types from here: <https://ms.gurumaps.app/>

Alpine Quest:

Both? Zulu Offshore

Sept. 2018: Navigating in French Polynesia (and other areas with poor charts) – Moana

Use high resolution satellite images (down to zoom level 18). E.g. Ovitalmap (Android, iOS, Windows). Please be aware that some cruisers have had issues with Ovital Maps randomly being deleted from the app.

<http://www.ovital.com:8080/en/>

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ovitalmap/id505884327?mt=8>

Make sure you have downloaded all relevant areas before arriving in FP, as Internet is rare and very slow.

SAS Planet: <http://sasgis.org>

Jacaranda has a large number of GE image charts available for free download covering most of FP. These chartlets can be used with OpenCPN. In addition, SV Migration has also made a number of chartlets that cover most of FP. Both can be located at <https://www.jacarandajourney.com/geimagesoffp>.

May 2018: Though we found both the CMAP (CM93 v2) and Garmin charts to be fairly accurate in French Polynesia (not so everywhere, however), your ability to explore coral-laced atolls is greatly enhanced by acquiring high-resolution satellite images.

You can create your own, for use with OpenCPN or other navigation software that permits KAP format charts, using the program GE2KAP (recently renamed Sat2Chart). Using this program, you can get a GoogleEarth or other satellite image (using SasPlanet) and with one click, create a KAP file that your navigation program can use. You do need internet at some point to download the satellite imagery, but once the KAP files are created, you do not need internet. (2019 Update: new format in Sat2Chart and OpenCPN 5 permits higher resolution photos using mbTiles)

There are some KAP files for French Poly posted on our website:

<http://svsoggypaws.com/SatCharts/index.htm>

plus some basic information for people wanting to create their own. At the bottom of that page are links to other people's sites with more Kap/mbtile downloads for various areas of the world.

Help for SasPlanet / GE2KAP / Sat2Chart can be found on the Facebook Group "GE2KAP" – Soggy Paws

1.4 Weather

Thanks to the efforts of Dave Vogel on s/v Perigee, the weather section has been completely updated and made its own Compendium, reducing the amount of redundant information we have to keep up to date.

Please download the full document here: <http://svsoggypaws.com/files/#frpoly>

1.5 Yachtsmen Services

1.5.1 Cooking Gas (Propane/Butane)

Cost: The cost of propane/butane is a set price, by the government in FP. Deposit on the bottle is 3000F Cost of the gas is 2900F.

You can purchase French cooking gas tanks from either of the magasins (see Provisions section). However, there are no services that will refill American cooking gas tanks in Gambier.

You must obtain a fitting for your tank before arriving in FP. The fitting either male or female that connects to your tank. They are not available here. Another cruiser may be able to loan a fitting but it is best to bring one.

Download "[Refilling Your Propane Tanks in French Polynesia](#)" as it is a very helpful instructional document, with photos, on how to fill your American propane tanks in French Polynesia. Fill your tanks 100% full every time using this method.

[Tahiti Cruiser's Guide](#) has a list of suppliers in French Poly that fill non-French tanks (outside of Gambier), see the "propane" section.

Feb 2021: We have read numerous reports about the difficulties in filling gas bottles in all of the compendiums. So, if you plan to spend extended periods of time in the south pacific, we recommend that you carry your own equipment to gravity fill your tanks from a local bottle. We use the GasBoat 4018 Go-anywhere Adaptor Kit from www.whayward.com, which provides connectivity to any gas bottle worldwide. It's not cheap to buy but will save you lots of money in the long term. We pay a deposit for a local gas bottle which we keep for 24 hours to gravity fill our bottles and then return. – Ari B

1.5.2 Fuel (Diesel/Gasoline)

Remember when inquiring about diesel and gasoline that diesel, in French, is called 'gazoil' and gasoline is called 'essence' (eh sans). Make sure you know what you are asking for!

There are no fuel stations in Gambier. You can purchase diesel and gasoline from the supply ship in 200-liter drums and from Magasin JoJo's (which is expensive) using jerry cans.

The supply ship only sells diesel in 200-liter drums (55 gallons). You must bring your jerry cans to the dock and use the one supplied pump to fill your jerry cans. Sometimes you can get multiple boats to go in on one drum. The supply ship does not honor the duty-free certificate and only accepts local currency (XPF). Gasoline usually has to be pre-ordered.

You can rent a drum (either diesel or gasoline) for 5500xpf plus the cost of the fuel. Then you must store it onshore (if you know a local) and refill at your leisure.

Supply Ships that Deliver Fuel

Toporo VIII: Tel: +689 40 42 63 93

You can call or text Ignace on the Toporo (red supply ship) to order a 200-liter drum of diesel (gazoil) or gasoline (essence) at +689 87 28 16 09. He will tell you when the ship will leave Tahiti and then you can assume it will arrive in Rikitea 6-14 days later. Fuel is a lot cheaper from the ship than from a local magasin. Norbert who used to accept reservations is now working on a different ship

Nuku Hao +689 40 54 99 54. This ship will also deliver fuel.

1.5.2.1 Duty Free Fuel

Duty free fuel is available to foreign boats in French Polynesia. There is a form to apply for Duty Free fuel and the form must be processed in Papeete. Having an agent who can do the paperwork for you while you are still in Gambier, means that you can buy duty-free fuel while still in French Polynesia (Tuamotus, Marquesas, Societies). (Some agents, like Tahiti Crew, include this service in their standard clearance package).

The Supply ship that goes to Gambier does not accept the duty-free certificate.

The [Tahiti Cruiser's Guide](#) has a current list of suppliers that honor the duty-free fuel certificate as well as the lat/long location of the government office where get your certificate in Tahiti.

1.5.3 Trash & Recycling

In Gambier, there is a fee to dispose of your trash. The first week is 1000 xpf and additional weeks are 500 xpf. Stop by Le Mairie in Rikitea to pay for your trash disposal. You can only dispose of your trash and recycling in Rikitea, Mangareva. The large trash receptacle is located on the northern end of town (just behind the multi-purpose hall). Le Mairie is located to the left of the main dock about 1/8 of a mile on the left.

Burning Trash: It is recommended to avoid burning your trash in Gambier. There is sufficient trash disposal in Rikitea so make sure to use and pay for those facilities. Many of the motus are private property but the owners allow cruisers to visit. So, do not go ashore, burn your trash, and destroy their property.

Recycling: Located in the same area as the trash. They recycle glass and aluminum (usually in large, white bags). Unfortunately, they are not recycling plastic or cardboard as of March 2021.

Oil Disposal: Usually there is a large drum where you can dump used oil. Ask the locals at the Commune Center which drum is being used for oil (as it changes when it is full). It is located near the trash.

1.5.4 Water

Le Mairie will sell access to potable drinking water. Visit Le Mairie for an access code and use any of the potable drinking stations on Rikitea (near multi-purpose hall)

Jan. 2023: Titouan and Juliette offer free water and Fritz offers it for a small fee. Titouan is located to the right of the main dock across the street from the boulangerie and the Market Keali. Fritz is located in the green house with the flag poles to the far right of the main dock. – Sugar Shack

Feb. 2020: Fritz sells water (located in the blue house at the northern end of the anchorage). In addition, you can obtain access to the drinking water pump at the Mairie for a fee. – Pitufa

June 2013: Fritz is a German man lives in the blue house at the northern end of the anchorage. He sells the water for next to nothing, or you can take an incredible shower with hot water and good pressure in his bathroom. – Irie

1.6 General Services

1.6.1 Air Tahiti

Air Tahiti's main office is located on Rue Edouard Ahnne, Papeete, Tahiti.

+689 40 47 44 00. <http://airtahiti.com>. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0800-1700 and Sat 0800-1100.

From Marina Papeete, turn left on main road, turn right at Rue du 22 September 1914 (street by Papeete Market) and Air Tahiti will be on the corner of Rue du 22 September 1914 and Rue du Pere Collette.

If you are a resident and/or have a long stay visa (carte de sejour) and are over the age of 60 years old, you are eligible for a Carte Marama which will give you up to 50% off all Air Tahiti flights (inter-island flights, not Air Tahiti Nui international flights). You must be a resident (holder of carte de sejour), be over 60 years of age. Bring your passport (not a driver's license), an extra passport size photo, local phone number, local address (we used Marina Papeete). Go upstairs, fill out the Carte Marama form, pay 2500xpf and you will walk out with the card that can be used immediately. Discount only applies to card holder. – Sugar Shack

1.6.2 Bank / ATMs (Money)

The normal currency in Gambier is the French Polynesian Franc, usually abbreviated CFP or XPF. In Feb. 2021, the exchange rate was 92 CFP/XPF per 1 US dollar (in Dec. 2020 it was 102/xpf to 1 US dollar). The post office will give a 100/1 exchange, so a 500-CFP is about \$5.00 USD.

There is one ATM located in Rikitea, Mangareva at the post office. Some local businesses will accept USD, but the exchange rate may be arbitrary.

Titoan will accept wire transfers or bank transfer in exchange for local currency and will not charge the 3% fee. However, you will be responsible for the bank fees typically associated with American banks.

In the Australs, there are several islands with either banks or ATMs:

- Rurutu in the town of Moerai has a bank with an ATM and an ATM at the post office
- Tubuai at the town of Mataura has a bank and ATM.
- Raivavae at the town of Rairua has an ATM at the post office.

General Information on Money

If you are interested in **opening a French Polynesia OPT bank account**, be sure to download “Opening a Bank Account in French Polynesia” from Jacaranda at <https://www.jacarandajourney.com/openingabankaccount>. If you have an OPT account you can withdrawal and transfer money to people and vendors.

Some magasins (markets) will accept credit cards with a minimum purchase of 2000xpf. Artisans and the supply ship accept local currency only (no credit cards).

Remember that diesel is about \$5.50/gallon and gasoline \$6.00/gallon. The cost for a drum of diesel in Feb. 2021 was 24700xpf (\$247) and a drum of gasoline was 25600xpf (\$256). A beer in a store is around \$4 EACH. A typical meal ashore runs from \$11 to \$35. It's pricey.

1.6.3 Marine Supplies (Boat Parts)

There are no marine stores in Gambier. However, Rikitea has several magasins that offer a small selection of hardware items and a few boat parts for the local pangas. Critical items can be shipped in from Tahiti. There is a small hardware store at Magasin Terehere that has some basic marine items.

1.6.4 Importing Parts Duty-Free – Yacht in Transit

For updates on this topic download the [Tahiti Cruiser's Guide](#).

Download “Shipping and Transporting items into French Polynesia”. Latest information on process. <https://www.jacarandajourney.com/shippingitems>.

The basic rules for bringing in goods from outside of French Polynesia is as follows:

If you order and ship without using “Yacht in Transit” you can bring in goods less than 20,000xpf without any tax. For shipments like these, do not label the goods Yacht in Transit.

From values 20.000xpf to 50.000xpf the tax is 20% for EU / 30% rest of the world. You are taxed accordingly based on the total amount.

Goods valued over 50.000xpf, you must go thru custom broker, and the tax is around 45% of value.

If you order & ship as a “Yacht in Transit” you are required to use a customs broker at the cost of approximately 15,000xpf. You will not be required to pay duty (tax).

Total amount includes cost of item + shipping + tax.

The French Polynesia Customs FAQ’s at this line: this is in French but translates well with Google Translate:

<http://www.polynesie-francaise.pref.gouv.fr/Douanes/Section-Particuliers/Questions-frequentes>

March 2017: Many items are now available in Papeete, and the online guide was designed as a reference to finding items or services. Replacement of broken parts for a foreign yacht is duty free but two customs applications are required--one when the item arrives, and another when the yacht leaves FP. This “duty free” exemption does not apply to any new item on your vessel--only replacement parts; therefore, you need to be ready to prove “replacement” when you leave FP (although I doubt this is rigorously enforced).

We have heard of a vessel having to physically destroy their old sails in front of a customs agent before getting their new sails duty-free. The double customs applications will also double the customs brokerage charges. Mary Ann II was charged 6,000xpf times two for an 800 USA dollar order.

You are allowed to receive goods valued up to \$300 duty free without requiring an application to customs (this figure includes shipping cost.)

2017: Yachts have received parcels in this manner at Marina Papeete and at Marina Taina. Shipping via the mail system from the UK takes approximately 5 weeks. DHL, UPS and FedEx will quote the time frames. We have found Parcel Monkey in the UK very reasonable. – Mary Ann II

Sept. 2013: Spare parts/equipment required to repair a vessel under the temporary admission status (“admission temporaire”), may be imported and cleared through customs without paying customs dues. However, since July 2013, these goods must be declared for export when you check out of French Polynesia.

Yachts owners/skippers can import/export goods by themselves, however there is a lot of paperwork involved and the process can be "tricky". Assistance of a yacht agent can be very helpful (which also includes extra services like collecting the shipment at the port/airport and arranging final delivery to the yacht). If the total of the shipment is over 350 Euros you are now required to have an agent under the new law.

Fees involved for bringing in spare parts are those charged by the customs broker (for the 2 Customs declarations / paperwork for "temporary admission" and then "final exportation) and NOT for Customs duties. These fees depend on the shipment's CIF value (goods value + insurance+ freight). On average, fees invoiced by the customs broker for each declaration are between 10 and 25.000 CFP/XPF depending on the CIF value (1 Euro = 119,33 CFP/XPF, 1 USD is currently 100 CFP/XPF). DHL can be both your shipper and agent. – Noonsite

1.6.5 Shipping Items In or Out of French Polynesia

Jan. 2021: – Jacaranda has compiled a lot of useful information on shipping and transporting items into French Polynesia. Visit <https://www.jacarandajourney.com/shippingitems>.

Express Shipping OUT of French Polynesia (services and phone numbers):

- DHL Express: +689 40 83 73 72
- UPS: +689 40 54 57 27
- FedEx Global Air: +689 40 45 36 45

Island Cargo Support Corporate Office
12900 Simms Ave, Hawthorne, CA 90250, USA
888.500.2541 Toll free USA
310.693.8348
310.684.3831 Fax
lax@icargosupport.com

Island Cargo Freight Terminal
12900 Simms Ave, Hawthorne, CA 90250
888.500.2541 Toll Free
team@icargosupport.com

Katherine Warth – Katherine.warth@icargosupport.com

ECU Worldwide

Address: ECU LAX
c/o STG Logistics
2201 E. Carson Street
Carson, CA 90810
Contact: Risa Katoa
katrinajones@ecuworlwide.us
gcabrera@ecuworlwide.us

Jan 2021: I have had *terrible* customer service from ECU and Risa. Repeated phone calls have gone unanswered along with emails. – Jacaranda

Some other people have seen a lack of response with ECU Worldwide prior to Risa Katoa joining the team.

Hazardous materials are limited on the ship. If you are shipping something that is considered hazardous it may get bumped to another ship due to the limitation. There is a hazard fee associated with hazardous items. Be sure to read the section on what is required by the shipped when sending hazardous materials. Details can be found <https://www.jacarandajourney.com/shippingitems>.

Gondrand (Shipping Agent)

+689 40 54 31 54 – <https://www.gondrand.fr>, or compta.1ppt@gondrand.pf

Contact: Heiarii-Vahine Rehia - Logistics.1ppt@gondrand.pf or James at logistics.2ppt@gondrand.pf.

You need to provide passport, ship documentation, and check in documentation. Email all invoices of what is arriving and the Bill of Lading (that you receive from ECU). Gondrand is less responsive, but they are on top of it all and will get in touch when they need to.

Cost: Depends on the cost of the shipment. They requested cash for payment (only). One cruiser reported their entire flat of goods cost 35000xpf for all associated fees on one shipment.

Customs: It can take between 1-14 days to clear packages in and out of customs.

DGX Shipping Company (Dependable Global Express)

DGX is no longer servicing French Polynesia (as of Feb. 2021).

<https://www.dgxglobal.com> or intlrates@dgxglobal.com

+1 888.488.4888 or +1 310.669.8888

Reyna Tausinga contact for coordinator – reyna.tausinga@dgxglobal.com

Cost: \$172 per cubic meter. Weight does not matter at all – price based on cubic meter.

Select the date of your shipment based on the ship's schedule. Departs about every 2 weeks.

Reyna is very responsive and will facilitate and coordinate the shipping address and consolidation.

1.6.6 Flying Stuff into French Polynesia on Air Tahiti

Jan. 2020: If you have large luggage or excess luggage and are flying from Tahiti to another FP island, you can try to check your luggage with Air Tahiti. However, if they say it is over the weight limit or excess bag limit, don't worry because you can check it as freight for cheap through Air Tahiti Freight. At the PPT airport, just past McDonalds is Air Tahiti Freight. They will put your luggage on the same flight or next flight and fly it to your destination for much less than excess baggage. – Sugar Shack

April 2019: We were concerned because we had 80 pounds of luggage over what we initially paid for on our flight from Tahiti to Raiatea. Air Tahiti was very accommodating. We didn't need to take it to Air Tahiti Cargo as I feared, risking the possibility of it not arriving on our flight with us. Instead, we were allowed to check it with our flight and just had to pay an extra \$56. – Cool Change

1.6.7 Shipping Items between islands

There are several ways to ship items / packages between Gambier and Tahiti. You can either place them on the supply boat or you can send them on Air Tahiti.

Air Tahiti

Go to the Air Tahiti office located in Rikitea, Mangareva. See Rikitea, Air Tahiti for location, hours and contact information. Typically, the office is open the morning before a flight and the morning of the flight. Bring your package and identification. They will put your package on the next flight. You have to make arrangements for someone in Tahiti to pick up your parcel (usually the recipient). The price will be depending on the weight and size of the parcel.

Supply Ship

Most supply ships will accept packages to/from Tahiti. Each ship sets up a small booth (where you pay for your fuel, propane, etc....). The booth attendant will weigh your package, set the price, and take your package for the ship to bring to Tahiti. This process takes longer to arrive to Tahiti but it is less expensive.

Picking up packages sent to the outer islands via the supply ship is rather easy. Once your package is on the ship, you retrieve it at the dock. At the booth there will be two trays filled with shipping invoices. Find your shipping invoice. This document will tell you which container your parcel is located. Then you wait until that container is unloaded. The workers will call out your name as the parcel is unloaded. Frozen goods are unloaded last.

Using an Agent

You can have Gondrand assist you with inter-island shipping and/or have items shipped directly to them to forward to you at an outer island. They will do the customs (pay upfront), hold your package if necessary, then forward it to you.

Gondrand (Shipping Agent)

+689 40 54 31 54 – <https://www.gondrand.fr>, or compta.1ppt@gondrand.pf

Contact: James at logistics.2ppt@gondrand.pf

Caddy Express

James - +689 89 65 69 03 (WhatsApp and phone) can collect packages or shop for you in Papeete, Tahiti and then forward your items to you in the outer island. He speaks English and is reasonably priced.

2021: The vendors in Papeete are very familiar with shipping parts all over French Polynesia. You can order the part and have it on the next ship. Shipping parts to the islands is very cheap. We had a solar panel shipped from Papeete to Marquesas and it cost < 1000f. – Jacaranda

1.6.8 Concierge Services (Delivery from Tahiti to outer Islands)

There are several concierge services that can pick up marine parts, fresh goods, and other supplies in Tahiti and either ship or fly your supplies to you in the outer islands. It could cost you less and include higher quality, and more diverse options. You can also contact a few of the local shops in Papeete and have them deliver/ship items to you in the outer islands. If you are looking for staples, it is less expensive to buy those in the outer islands. Staples would include subsidized items and simple imported goods like flour, sugar, rice, beans, etc....

Placing an order with a Coursier (personal shopper): Organize your shopping list by shop. For example, a list for Carrefour, a list for Papeete Market, a list for a marine store. Contact your Coursier of choice, organize payment (usually by bank transfer), and await your delivery by supply ship or air freight.

1.6.8.1 Coursier (Personal Shoppers)

All Coursiers will send your goods to you anywhere in French Polynesia via cargo (much less expensive) or by Air Tahiti freight (\$\$ per kilo and only to islands/atolls with an airport). Refrigerator and freezer freight are normally available with all options (unless they are broken).

Juliette can be reached at rairoaju@yahoo.fr. She charges 2000xpf (\$20 USD) per shopping mission (per shop you ask her to go to) plus freight costs. It is less expensive per shop if you have her go to multiple stores. She will even go to the Papeete market early Sunday morning to buy local organic veggies and put it in refrigerated freight on a cargo ship Monday morning.

Est. Informatique lists their products at www.est-info.pf. You have to arrange for payment and schedule according to the supply ship.

HM Coursier +689 46 82 82 and hmccoursier@gmail.com. Very professional, organized and responsive. Usually the same price as Juliette.

Caddy Xpress +689 89 65 69 03 (Signal/WhatsApp) ask for Thomas. Will assist with shopping and shipping/collecting packages and transport to outer islands. He is reasonable with his prices and is very helpful, fast in responses, has Revolut (easy to pay) and speaks English.

1.6.8.2 Stores that Deliver to Cargo Ships

There are a number of businesses in Tahiti that supply products, food, items to individuals in the outer islands. See the "[Tahiti Cruisers Guide](#)" under Food Distributor / Buyer.

With any of these options, they will send your goods to you anywhere in FP via cargo (much less expensive) or Air Tahiti (\$\$ per kg). Refrigerator and freezer freight normally available with all options (unless it is broken)

Polynesia Trading +689 40 45 62 63 or polynesiatrading@loana@gmail.com. They speak English and have a Facebook page (@Polynesia Trading). Their FB page has photos of their inventory and prices (like online shopping). This is a big box store like "Costco" but with no membership and a smaller variety. They are very responsive during business hours. They can deliver to the cargo ship and will charge freight charges.

Maxi Tahiti can be reached at maxitahiti@mail.pf or on their Facebook page which is @Maxi Tahiti. They offer similar products and pricing as Polynesia Trading as they are a big box store as well.

1.6.9 Online Delivery Service to Outer Islands

Sipac: +689 87 72 80 70 and +689 40 54 05 50. Website: www.sipac.pf or email ressourceshumaines@sipac.pf. Boat schedule: www.sipac.pf/horaires-des-bateaux. This is an online delivery service where you select your items, pay by credit card, and have it all delivered to you in the outer islands. They sell, food, fruits, vegetables, liquor, wine, personal hygiene, etc...Their website lists items alphabetical and not by category so you do have to hunt and peck to find your items. See supply ships (below) to coordinate with their schedule.

Feb 2021: We ordered a delivery online via www.sipac.pf. The actual process of ordering was quite difficult not because of the website which is very good, but due to poor wifi. Make sure you have a good connection when you proceed to the payment page because if it fails you will lose your basket and have to start again. You will receive email confirmation of your order and when the ship arrives you can collect the paperwork from a tray next to the mobile ship office and this will indicate which containers your goods are in. When the container is opened, they will call out names for each package. This can take quite a long time especially if you order frozen goods which gets opened last. The quality and pricing of the goods including fruit and vegetables was very good. Several cruisers ordered from Sipac and all of us received our orders as expected. –Ari B

Jan. 2021: Online shopping for the outer islands and archipelagos in French Polynesia www.sipac.pf. Our experience of this online shopping business, who are based in Tahiti, was relatively straightforward. They sell a range of products including, fruit and veg, refrigerated and frozen goods, household cleaning products plus your usual tins, packets and dried foods. We saw wine and rum but no beer.

The site is in French. We found it fairly logical to navigate with a little bit of translation help from Google. Create an account first. The site details which boats are delivering to which islands. Pick your boat and the site will tell you the last date and time for online orders to ensure your 'shopping' gets picked and packed for the boat. The freight cost is based on the volume of the goods you buy.

When shopping you can come off the site and go back in another day and your chosen items should stay in virtual basket. We did have a glitch paying but that was due to a very thin data connection here in the Gambier, not Sipac's fault. Our card payment timed out which meant our shopping basket disappeared into the ether and we had to start again. We spoke to a very helpful Sipac chap in Tahiti who spoke English who helped us sort this out. Other cruisers we know using the site didn't have this problem, a frustration of thin comms. After paying we received an emailed receipt with confirmation of our order. Today our shopping arrived on the Taporo 8. Our chilled goods and fruit and veggies came out of refrigerated containers, and were in good shape. General goods were in a regular container and all fine too. – Grace of Longstone

1.6.10 Supply Ship Schedules

Le Mairie (the mayor's office in Rikitea) usually has the supply ship schedule posted outside the office.

It is always a good idea to know when the supply ship arrives so you can take advantage of buying diesel, gasoline, cheaper beer by the case, flour, rice, and fresh produce. There are two supply ships that come to Mangareva. The MV Taporo VIII (red boat) or MV Nuku Hau (black boat).

When they have stock, you can purchase diesel, gasoline, flour, and rice directly from Taporo, and you can purchase gasoline, diesel, flour, beer, and propane directly from Nuku Hao. Keep in mind, they don't always have stock (especially when they stop at other islands prior to arriving in Gambier). Diesel and gasoline should be pre-ordered.

The Taporo is much faster than the Nuku Hao. The Taporo alternates routes. One time it will come direct from Tahiti (taking 6/7 days to arrive) and the next time they will stop at all the islands along the way, ending in Gambier (taking 14/15 days to arrive).

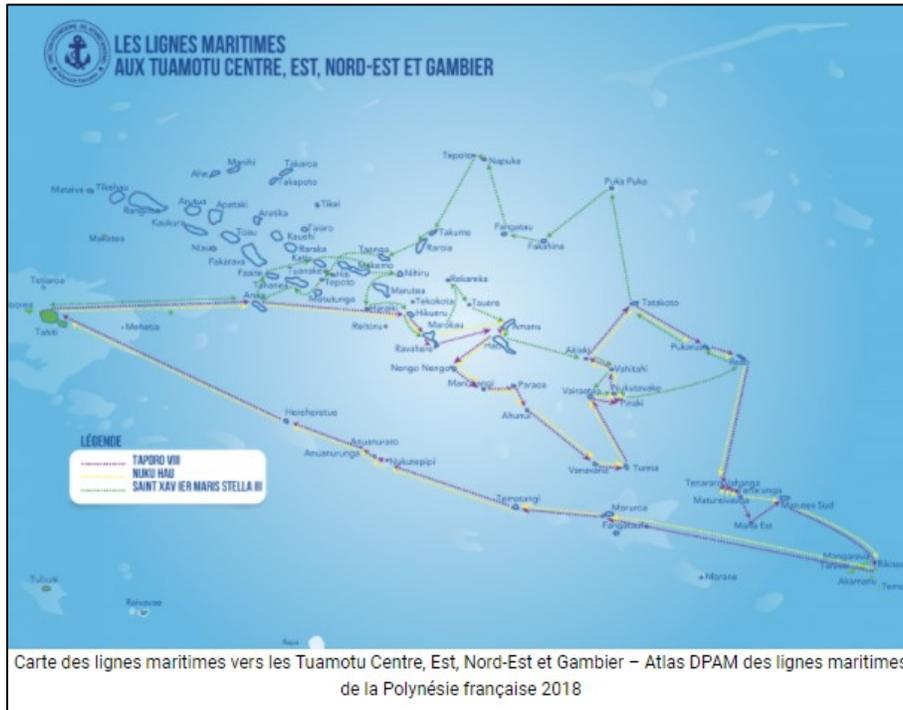
Gambier

- **MV Taporo 8** (Gambier): +689 40 42 63 93 or taporo@mail.pf
 - Call Ignace direct to pre-order diesel and gasoline at +689 87 28 16 09
- **MV Nuku Hau** (Gambier): +689 40 54 99 54 or contact@snp.pf

Australs

- **Stella Maris** (Australs): +689 40 42 23 58 or maris-stella@mail.pf
- **Tuhaa Pae 4** (Australs): +689 40 43 15 88 or info@snathp.com

Route for Taporo 8 and Nuku Hao (Gambier)



You can call Ignace with the Toporo to order a 200-liter drum of diesel or gasoline (sans plomb) at +689 87 28 16 09. He will tell you when the ship will leave Tahiti and then you can assume it will arrive in Rikitea 6-14 days later. The gasoline will be a lot cheaper from the ship than from a local magasin. They do not accept the duty-free certificate and you will have to pay in local currency. Norbert who used to accept reservations for the Taporo VIII, is now working on a different ship and cannot help anyone in Gambier.

Route for Marris-Stella (Australis)



1.6.11 Medical & Prescriptions

+689 40.978.216. Hours: Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri: 0730-1200 & 1330-1530. Tues: 0630-1200 & 1330-1530. From the main dock, turn left, the medical center will be on the right (before Gendarmerie) it is a large white one-story building.

There is a medical clinic in Rikitea, Mangareva. A physician is usually in residence (except when on holiday). Nurses are always available. See schedule posted on clinic door for the arrival of specialists and the dentist.

The dentist only visits every few months. He is based in Hao and visits the surrounding outer islands. See the medical clinic for his next scheduled visit.

Hours vary. Typically, they are open 0800-1200 and 1500-1700. The busiest time is on Monday and Tuesday mornings so avoiding these times is recommended.

The [Tahiti Cruisers Guide](#) has a detailed list of physicians, specialists, and hospitals in Papeete and other locations in the outer islands.

Obtaining Medicine and Prescription Drugs

The physician or nurse on staff at the medical clinic can help you procure prescriptions and medicine. Typically, they will write a prescription, then you go to the post office to pay for it, and then they put your order on the next flight to Gambier.

2017: Patrick Ly (pharmaciedetiarei@mail.pf +689 87 79 16 93) runs his own pharmacy in northern Tahiti, but is available to all of French Polynesia via email, text, phone, and Skype. He speaks English well and is willing to ship medications anywhere in FP. He understands cruisers' needs to order large volumes and is very helpful in finding alternatives. If he can't provide a specific solution, he will say so. – Kandu

1.6.12 Provisions (Groceries)

Rikitea, the main village on Mangareva has several magasins (see the section under Mangareva for details). It is the only island in Gambier with magasins.

There are a number of items that are "red tagged" which means they are subsidized by the government. They are usually "staples" and are offered at a significant discount - so keep an eye out for them and save!

Staples... flour, milk, eggs, butter, rice, canned food, etc are available in almost magasin. But veggies get very difficult to find, especially if the supply ship hasn't been in recently. Locals grow fresh fruit and vegetables and will usually sell them to you with a smile. If you see fresh veggies, buy them immediately--they may not be there when you're ready to re-provision.

Meats: are located in large, top-loading white freezers. Don't be shy to dig through the freezer to find what you want. Also ask—many smaller stores have more stuff out back, or in their house. Much of the meat when frozen is hard to determine what it is, so don't be bashful—ask.

Chicken: Frozen chicken, mostly leg quarters, but sometimes even boneless skinless breasts—easy to find. Chicken pieces (chunks) and legs are usually in stock. They also sell large boxes with 15kilos of chicken legs for around 3000xpf (\$30) which can be shared with your friends or you can purchase a smaller box.

Beef: The beef we found was hard to identify and sometimes only suitable for stew meat. It is also often packaged in larger packages than a normal cruiser would want to deal with.

Lamb: We found nice lamb from NZ, but often the lamb is packaged as a large leg, costing around \$30 USD.

Again, the best time to shop is immediately after the supply boat comes in. Usually the stores will close for a few hours while they restock. As soon as they open, the good stuff is gone in a few hours.

Fruit & Veg: Many locals grow fruit including papayas, mangos, Pamplemousses, avocado, lychee, peppers, bananas, melons, pumpkins, limes, oranges). Do not pick fruit from the trees or take it off the ground without asking permission first. Every tree belongs to someone.

1.6.13 Trading

Jan. 2020: PLEASE think twice about trading booze and gun shells with the local population. Many people ask for alcohol in the islands but there is a VERY high rate of domestic abuse in all of French Polynesia. By trading or giving alcohol you could possibly be adding to the problem. In addition, the gendarmerie (cops) may not react well, either they want some too or they don't want you trading it into their village.

Good items to trade are fishing equipment, school supplies, snorkel gear, women's cosmetics, good quality backpacks, toys, hygiene items (shampoo, nail polish remover, toothpaste).

They aren't trying to steal from you, but they aren't going to give their stuff away either. We always give some little thing in exchange for fruit too. – Jacaranda

1.6.14 Translation Services

Sabine Wissert translates French, English, and German. +689 87 32 55 47 and sabinewissert@yahoo.fr or view her website www.ca-papeete.justice.fr (page 33 and 35). She is a freelance translator and has been providing certified translations to French authorities and public administrations (legal documents, carte de jure, long-stay visas, residency permits, contracts, etc...). Contact her for a quote.

1.7 Communications

1.7.1 VHF Channels

General VHF Advice that applies to all areas: Be aware that on high power, a good VHF will transmit 25 miles line of sight. So, if you are only doing within-anchorage communications, switch to low power. On the flip side, if you are trying to call across island, or to the next island, use high power, and turn your squelch down. Make sure you are aware which channels are automatic low power (i.e. 17, 67 on some radios), and stay away from the low-power channels for long distance conversations.

Though widely spaced in channel number, channels 16, 68, and 18 are very close to each other in frequency. Most VHF antennas are 'tuned' for channel 16, so long distance communications will work best on 16, 18 or 68. Conversely, in a crowded anchorage, transmission on high power on channel 18 or 68 may 'bleed' over to channel 16 (and almost any other channel, if you're close enough). You don't need high power to talk to the boat next to you, so turn your radio to Low Power!!

Also be aware that some channels that Americans use frequently are 'duplex' channels in International mode. So, for example, you may have trouble communicating with a European boat, or an American boat whose radio is in International mode, on Channel 18. (see any VHF guide for the full list of international and US channels and frequencies, but any US channel designated 'a', like 18a, 22a, etc will cause trouble with VHF's in international mode).

Make sure you ask in each port what the local channels are--both so you know how to reach someone ashore and so you know not to use those channels for your off-channel conversations.

Jan. 2019 – VHF Channels. – Taitonga

SAR: 06, 10, 11,
Port: 12
Ship-Ship: 08, 72, 77

1.7.2 SSB Nets

Poly Mag Net (formerly known as the Polynesian Magellan Net): Found at 8.173USB. There are two scheduled net times. The morning net is at 1800Z and the evening net is 04:00Z. For reference, 1800Z is 08:00 Tahiti, 0830 Marquesas, 0800 Tuamotus, and 0900 Gambier. And 04:00Z is 6:00pm Tahiti, 6:30pm Marquesas, 6:00pm Tuamotus, and 7:00pm Gambier.

They track vessels underway, monitor anchorage and weather conditions, and help cruisers stay connected. It is a great way to track your passage and have assistance when needed.

During off season (Nov-March), the morning net is only for emergency traffic and vessels underway. This is a great opportunity to provide your lat/long, sea and wind conditions, and other vital information during your passage. There may be times when the morning net may be suspended until season. However, the evening net occurs daily throughout the year and is open vessels underway and general check ins.

Pacific Seafarer's Net: If you're a ham, for longer passages, we always checked in with the Pacific Seafarer's Net. This is also a good frequency to have saved in case of emergency—the Hams on the PacSea net will move heaven and earth to help any boat with a true emergency—ham operator or not. Even when there is no net going on this frequency, there are often hams monitoring the frequency for emergency traffic.

The Pacsea net operates on 14,300Khz USB at 0300 UTC. They start with a 'warmup session' at 0300, where you can call in and chat, and maybe hook up with someone who will make a phone call to the US for you. The "Roll Call" (boats who have checked in regularly and indicated they are underway) starts at 0310 UTC, and when they finish (30-60 minutes later), they call for boats getting ready to go on passage to get on the Roll Call list for tomorrow's net.

It's always a good idea to listen up on a structured net for a day or so to get the rhythm of the net, before calling in. You can call in for a radio check during the warmup period, or just after the formal net ends. There are usually people on the net who will do a "phone patch" for you—just ask.

Pacific Maritime Radio (formerly Northland Radio) offers a tracking check in service for vessels underway (fee required). Northland Radio is located in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand. Peter recently installed a new large antenna and has been able to work boats throughout most of the South and Central Pacific and as far as Alaska from New Zealand. Learn more and contact Peter Mott at <https://northlandmaritimeradio.nz/products/passage-tracking>. Contact peter@northlandradio.nz.

1.7.3 Telephones and Cell Phones

See Mangareva for internet access. The post office will sell sim cards and Rikitea has a pay phone booth. The French Poly Country Code is: +689

Vini - <http://www.vinispot.pf/index.php?lang=english>

Vini sim cards can be used for both internet and calling. Vini sim cards and top up cards can be purchased at the post office. Be aware: data seems to burn through quickly with the bad connections and some data has "disappeared" off of cards.

Jan. 2021: GoogleFi works in most places with Vini. Vini 2G tended to work in most anchorages. There are two towers in Gambier. The main tower in Mangareva which is bogged down by lots of users (the majority of the population) and the secondary tower in Aukena. Usually, you can reach the Aukena tower from the outer motus and islands. Either way, service is still only 2G and intermittent. – Sugar Shack

2021 verified (May 2017) - VINI Internet/data sim: As reported, the sim cards do sell out - so don't delay in sourcing one if you want one! - They sold out same day I picked up my card - I just made it!

You must take your ID to the post office to purchase SIM cards. (they will ask for your Passport, but I forgot mine and was able to use driver's license).

Top up cards may not be available in all denominations - so again buy when you see them!

If your device takes a smaller SIM than the one provided- ask at post office for them to cut it down to size (they have a special tool).

Default password for SIM is 0000 (not in any documentation - you will have 3 attempts to get this correct)

When first installed you need to recharge at least once in 30 days to keep the card active. After that the card can remain dormant for up to 3+ months before it gets deactivated.

I inserted data SIM in my unlocked iPhone 4S and did not need to change any settings go get internet on my phone. Connection was often 'E' Edge - not even 2G - so be warned!

Personal Hotspot - Inserting SIM into my iPhone - 'personal hotspot' feature was initially disabled (removed from iPhone menu structure - presumably blocked by VINI but I really wanted it so I could get the internet from my laptop too... I managed to get it working on my iPhone by doing:

- I went into settings -> cellular ->cellular data options -> cellular data network -> scroll down and in PERSONAL HOTSPOT section set APN to "internet" and no username or password - then restarted iPhone... (not sure if that was necessary!)
- From 'settings -> Cellular' menu - there should now be a 'Personal Hotspot' option - turn that on

Then the 'Personal Hotspot' option should be available in the main settings menu

Works best (most useful) when connected via USB to laptop (rather than wifi mode).

Due to limited data on SIM (500Mb) and top-ups (100-400Mb), and low speed. I recommend keeping your device phone in airplane mode to be sure to only use data when really needed it (when you can simply turn off airplane mode).

With VINI SIM in - Text the message 'CONSO' to #7100 - and sometime later (maybe up to 20 minutes) you will get a reply text with your balance and end date. – Begonia

2016 verified (2011): You must have a cell phone that can operate on the European frequencies (or a tri or quad band phone). Can be purchased locally but pricey.

We use a cheap BLU all band cell phone we bought for \$17 on Amazon when we were in the US figuring if we had it stolen while traveling in South America it would be no big loss. Still working 4 years later. It has a dual sim card setup that makes it easy to switch between countries or charge our USB dongle SIM card.

We did not find a town that did not have telephone access. Even tiny towns had at least one phone booth at the Post Office/Mairie (Town Hall).

Prepaid cards start at 500F and up. We gave our family our FP cell phone number and they call us on our cell via Skype. Incoming calls are free in FP. – Soggy Paws updated by Jacaranda

1.7.4 Wifi / Internet Access

See Telephones and Cell Phones for updated information on Vini and GoogleFi.

Internet access is 2G and very slow and intermittent in the Gambier.

Vini Wifi Network - <http://www.vinispot.pf/index.php?lang=english>

Reminder: Internet access in French Polynesia is via satellite and is REALLY SLOW. Do your fellow cruisers a favor and turn off ALL automatic downloads (Windows Updates, podcast downloads, etc). Limit your Skype calls and turn off the video. Then we can all get our email, and be able to access important website information!!

You can purchase a Vini sim card and subsequent top up cards (500, 1000, or 2000xpf) which will give you the ability to make calls and text. These are good for 30-days once initiated.

You may also buy a Vini Wi-Fi prepaid card at the post office or from one of the magazines. Cost are not by the megabyte but by the hour and bandwidth can be very narrow. Cost are \$5 per hour for one hour and drop to around a dollar an hour for 100 hours.

Nearly everyone who has used the hourly Wi-Fi system have seen glitches where chunks of time vanish from their account. buying the 100-hour cards is a safer bet as they have been able to recredit users accounts.

Jan. 2020: We purchased a Vini box (in Tahiti) and even this was 2G and worked sporadically. Don't expect much when it comes to internet usage here. There are two towers though. One in Rikitea which is often

slower due to the amount of people using it. The other is located off of Aukena and is a smidge faster, but not by much. – Sugar Shack

1.7.5 News

Here are some sources of news that we used to keep abreast of what was happening in the world.

1.7.5.1 English Language Voice News

After a lot of research on the internet before we left Central America, but I found that what worked best was to dial around on the 9Mhz band at the time of day I wanted to listen to news (morning and evening are the best times for propagation).

We found the BBC on 9695 am at 1600-1700 UTC (mornings) and 12095 usb at 0100UTC (afternoons).

Radio NZ

9.580 AM FP time

11.725 PM FP Time

15.720 PM FP time

30-minute BBC broadcast at 16:00-16:30 Tahiti local time on Radio NZ

Radio Australia

15.240 PM FP Time

17.840 PM FP Time

Voice of America does claim to broadcast to French Polynesia, but all the broadcasts are in the middle of the night in French Poly. 1230-1300 UTC on 9600 and 1400-1430 UTC on 9830.

Sept. 2018: We have not found any BBC news via SSB or anything besides radio New Zealand (11.725) 18:00 local. Radio NZ gives very little or nothing of international news but does cover NZ. Frequencies we have listened to for radio NZ are 7.425, 11.725, 15.720 check around 1700Z-1900Z

We use an app called SWBC Sked that covers the whole world but appears that the freq list has not been updated since we downloaded it 3 years ago. Soggy Paws is right SW broadcasts are being phased out – Jacaranda

2011: As the internet proliferates, English-language voice broadcasts seem to be dwindling. Many of the broadcasts you can find these days by dialing around are either religious-oriented, or anti-American oriented (so listen carefully!). – Soggy Paws

1.7.5.2 News Via Email

2018: We use the NPR (US National Public Radio) news feed when away from internet. It gives a headline with a short 2-3 line of data. <http://www.npr.org/sections/news/>. – Jacaranda

2016: Thanks to Naoma we use the following NPR summary. There is some text that you have to ignore but does give you a basic summary of US News. You can receive this via Saildocs--send an email to query@saildocs.com with this in the body: send <http://www.npr.org/sections/news/>. – Jacaranda

2011: We had success, using Sailmail, in subscribing to a 'daily news email' from Reuters. We set it up so it went to a shore email address, and then we used Sailmail's Shadowmail feature to retrieve the daily emails when we needed news, and had good enough propagation, to retrieve the email, stripped of all the graphics and stuff.

The daily 'US News', coming in through Sailmail, was only 7Kb. It contains the 'top 10' headlines, with a one sentence summary of each. Check out Reuters <http://links.reuters.com>. – Soggy Paws

1.8 Getting Visitors In and Out

All flights into French Polynesia go through Tahiti first, and then to airports in the major centers in the other archipelagos. In Gambier, there are one to two flights per week that come in and out of the archipelago (Tuesday and sometimes Saturday). The airport is located on Totegegie which is about 5nm from Mangareva. There is a shuttle called Tokani, that will transport you to and from the airport for 1000xpf (\$10) each way.

During low season (and during covid), they reduce the flights to one day per week on Tuesday.

If you arrive with crew onboard your vessel, you MUST sign them off the crew list via Immigration before they leave the boat. Likewise, crew coming onboard via air and leaving via boat should be signed onto your crew list. Ask your agent or the Immigration office in your arrival port for current procedures.

Feb. 2021: Check with the Air Tahiti office (in Rikitea) to determine when the flights are operating. You can either pay 1000xpf to take the ferry (Tokani) or you can take your boat over to Totegegie and be dropped off at the main dock by dinghy. They do everything manually at the airport, so they require you to be at the airport 2-2.5 hours before your scheduled flight. There is an Air Tahiti office located in Rikitea if you need to purchase tickets. You will be limited to 10kilo of luggage if you purchase tickets in Rikitea at the local price which is about 70000-80000xpf round trip to Papeete. See Mangareva, Air Tahiti section for hours. – Sugar Shack

1.9 Diving

Diving in Gambier is pretty special. But if you really want to dive here, you will need to have all your own equipment, spares, and a compressor aboard. There are no dive ships in Gambier. However, there are a few good diving spots and lots and lots of great snorkeling spots. Some of the pearl farms use dive gear and may be able to refill your tanks, but we never had the need to ask them.

Diving: There are several places to dive in Gambier (if you have your own equipment). See individual island/motu sections for details on these places:

- Totegegie: False Pass
- Taravai: West pass
- Motu Makarua: SouthEast corner

Snorkeling: There are lots and lots of places to snorkel in crystal clear turquoise waters. See individual island/motu sections for details.

There are two guides to diving in French Polynesia (see Printed Sources, below). However, coverage is limited to Rangiroa, Manihi, and Tikehau—where there are established dive operations. See individual islands for diving options.

Diving the false pass at Totegegie and Makarua is supposed to be very good.

1.10 Festivals

Feb. 2020: The Heiva (cultural festival with dancing and drumming) takes place all over French Polynesia in July, also in Gambier. Despite the cool temperatures in July (it's proper winter here), the dancers give their best and food stands and other entertainment are open for a week. – Pitufa

April 2019: We arrived in mid-April and found ourselves at the start of the Gambier Heritage Festival. Every 3 years, Gambier hosts a 3-day event where competitions are held and nightly dances are performed. Artisans set up the wares along the market while the performers from Tahiti, Rapa Nui, and Gambier entertained the crowds. It is a free event and one that you absolutely don't want to miss. – Sugar Shack

1.11 Pearls and Pearl Farms

Gambier is the best place to buy the famous French Polynesian black pearls. They are reputed to be better quality, better color, with lots of luster, and less expensive than anywhere else in French Polynesia. There are several places to purchase pearls, pearl jewelry, and pearl accessories. See the Rikitea, Mangareva section for stores and locations to purchase pearls.

2010: We bought a good quality pearl necklace for about \$350—a similar necklace we priced later in the U.S. was selling in a reputable jewelry store for \$5,000+ USD. – Soggy Paws

Avoiding Pearl Farm Entanglements: There are lots and lots of pearl farms located throughout the lagoon. Most are marked with pearl floats. However, some of the pearl floats are just under water or are covered in muck that makes them hard to see. In addition, not all pearl farms are buoyed.

A pearl farm ‘field’ may be located a long way from any habitation, and typically in very deep water. If buoyed, the buoys are normally at opposite ends of a ‘string’ of buoys, so if you see 2 buoys, assume there is something suspended below the surface between them, and give them a wide berth.

You should avoid going near and through the pearl farms. It can be disastrous for you getting your prop or keel entangled in lines, nets, and floats. In addition, it can be catastrophic for the pearl farm owner having you destroy their lines, nets, and years’ worth of pearl harvesting.

If you are approaching an area that is either marked as a pearl farm area on the chart, or where you see buoys, you must proceed slowly and keep a really good watch. It is also conceivable that the buoys are not visible on the surface, but are 5’ below the surface, so keep an eye out for submerged buoys.

If you see a small boat/panga out in the area inside a lagoon, chances are they are tending pearl buoys. Again, proceed slowly, and keep an eye on the people in the boat—if they are agitated and waving at you, it is likely you are about to get entangled in their buoys.

1.12 Eating the Fish and Avoiding Ciguatera

A comprehensive look at ciguatera can be downloaded from Jacaranda (Look for "You Gonna Eat That Fish?" Info about Ciguatera):

Gambier has the worst case of Ciguatera tainted fish than anywhere else in FP. If you eat local fish proceed at your own risk. Educate yourself about Ciguatera and then make an informed decision. Just because a local can eat a certain type of fish does not mean the tourists can – so be careful.

<https://www.jacarandajourney.com/ciguatera>

Learn about Fishing in French Polynesia: [Fishing in French Polynesia: \(jacarandajourney.com\)](https://www.jacarandajourney.com)

Jan. 2019: Wikipedia: Ciguatera fish poisoning, also known simply as ciguatera, is a foodborne illness caused by eating reef fish whose flesh is contaminated with certain toxins. Ciguatera Fish Poisoning commonly occurs in tropical and subtropical areas, particularly in the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea.

Symptoms may include diarrhea, vomiting, numbness, itchiness, sensitivity to hot and cold, dizziness, and weakness. The onset of symptoms varies with the amount of toxin eaten from half an hour to up to two days. The diarrhea may last for up to four days.

Some symptoms typically remain for a few weeks to months. Heart difficulties such as slow heart rate and low blood pressure may also occur.

The specific toxins involved are ciguatoxin and maitotoxin. They are originally made by a small marine organism, Gambier discus toxicus, that grows on and around coral reefs in tropical and subtropical waters. These are eaten by herbivorous fish which in turn are eaten by larger carnivorous fish. The toxins become more concentrated as they move up the food chain.

Any reef fish can cause ciguatera poisoning, but species such as barracuda, grouper, red snapper, moray eel, amberjack, parrotfish, hogfish, surgeonfish, kingfish, coral trout, and sea bass are the most commonly affected. Ciguatoxins are concentrated in the fish liver, intestines, heads, and roe. The toxins do not affect the taste, texture, or odor of the fish and cannot be destroyed by cooking, smoking, freezing, salting or any other method of food preparation. Outbreaks can occur seasonally or sporadically, particularly after storms. Not all fish of a given species or from a given area will be toxic.

Preventive efforts include not eating reef fish, not eating high-risk fish such as barracuda, and not eating fish liver, roe, or fish heads. Ciguatoxin has no taste or smell, and cannot be destroyed by conventional cooking.

There is no specific treatment for ciguatera fish poisoning once it occurs. Mannitol may be considered, but the evidence supporting its use is not very strong. Gabapentin or amitriptyline may be used to treat some of the symptoms.

The US Centers for Disease Control estimates that around 50,000 cases occur a year. Other estimates vary up to 500,000 cases per year. It is the most frequent seafood poisoning. It occurs most commonly in the Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea between the latitudes of 35°N and 35°S. The risk of the condition appears to be increasing due to coral reef deterioration and increasing trade in seafood. The risk of death from poisoning is less than 1 in 1,000. Descriptions of the condition date back to at least 1511. The current name came into use in 1787.

In the Gambier, the problem is much, much worse—even traditionally “safe” fish can be highly toxic. A friend caught a grouper on his way out of the W pass, and ate it for dinner. He was very sick for the next 3 days as he was sailing single-handed northwards to the Tuamotus.

In addition, some fish may be deemed “safe” by one island/motu and unsafe by another (just 5 miles away).

1.13 Manta Ray Reporting

Citizen science Manta Ray reporting will show you how to identify and photograph manta rays and then submit the data to French Polynesia Manta Research. Visit: <https://www.jacarandajourney.com/citizenscience>

1.14 Cruising Information Sources

1.14.1 Tahiti Cruisers Guide Online

[Tahiti Cruisers Guide Online](#). This is a Cruising Guide for all of French Polynesia (not just Tahiti). Started by Chuck on Jacaranda and Julien Desmont a local French sailor living in Papeete. Julien Desmont built the website and is hosting it as well. Can be downloaded as a pdf, in case you need to try to arrange parts or repairs before you get there. If you find a service/store that is not listed please send updates.

1.14.2 Facebook Groups

The primary groups on Facebook for information on French Polynesia are:

French Poly Cruisers Facebook Group <http://facebook.com/frenchpolynesiacruziers> 3000+ members

The French Polynesia Cruiser Facebook group offers a great way to stay up to date on news and related information. Join the group for free, contribute updates, and stay in the loop. If the above link does not work, search for “French Polynesia Cruisers” in groups on Facebook.

Puces Nautiques is a buy, sell, trade Facebook Group in French Polynesia.

Pacific Puddle Jump <https://web.facebook.com/groups/1102530253191598/> 630 members

Pacific Voyagers 2020 <https://web.facebook.com/groups/PPJ2020fleet/> 903 members

1.14.3 AVP (Sailing Association of French Polynesia)

<https://www.helloasso.com/associations/association-des-voiliers-en-polynesie>

AVP is the Sailing Association of French Polynesia. This is a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting cruisers in French Polynesia. For a minimal fee (\$22/year) you can support them financially as they fight our cruising rights: anchorages, safer moorings, and a more positive cruising experience for you.

If you need translation, go to <http://voiliers.asso.pf>, click on tab “Devenir member” on top right, then click on “creer un compte” fill in your email, your identifier, password, name, boat name, and click “sourmettre”. To pay go to “Payer son adhesion” click adhesion 2020, (about \$18 USD) then “etape suivante.”

They have a Facebook page too: <https://www.facebook.com/DesVoiliers/>

1.14.4 Pacific Puddle Jump Group

<https://groups.io/g/PacificPuddleJump>

This group is where the people gathering in South and Central America meet to share information about crossing the big puddle. Fortunately, many previous years' jumpers come back and share their information with the newbies. A good source of information, but not very organized, and it can be full of bloat from people who ask the same questions without doing any research of their own.

You must be a member to read or post anything on this site, but if you are getting ready for a Pacific crossing, it is well worth a few minutes to sign up for Groups IO and then sign up for this group. Be sure to explore the Files and Links pages, there is lots more information there.

1.14.5 Noonsite

<http://www.noonsite.com>

Originally started by Jimmy Cornell, this site is a great repository of information for all those out-of-the-way places. Made possible by YOUR contributions.

1.14.6 Seven Seas Cruising Association

<http://www.sca.org>

The SSCA is a world-wide organization for cruisers whose primary function is to exchange information about cruising destinations. They have a monthly publication that is mostly letters from cruisers about the areas they are cruising. They also have a good website and a well-attended bulletin board. Membership is reasonable, and the monthly publication is available electronically every month. Indexed back issues are also available electronically.

1.14.7 Stopover Handbook for French Polynesia

June 2020: The old 40-page color brochure created by the French Polynesia Tourism Bureau and the Port de Papeete doesn't seem to still around.

Instead, you can download the Stopover Handbook for French Polynesia from this site:

<https://en.pf.yellowflagguides.com/>

Note: If you can't find it on this website, the latest version I have found will be posted here:

<http://svsogypaws.com/files/#frpoly>

1.14.8 Sea Seek

<http://sea-seek.com/index.php?geo=1480>

A French-maintained site that covers French Polynesia. They have assembled a pretty good harbor by harbor group of information (using Google Earth and Maxsea Chartlets). But it is mostly in French. It is possible to use Google or Babelfish Translate functions.

1.14.9 Cruiser's Reports

We are indebted to the people and organizations below for documenting their experiences and sharing them with us. We can't do this alone. We rely on cruisers sharing updated information. So, please be sure to document and email us your notes.

A few details about the boats are included, where we know them, so you can assess what 'a foot under the keel' means, for example. Every section is a mix of several sources.

Elma (2024). Boat: 39 ft. Bavaria Cruiser. We are four young people sailing in French Polynesia for one year. Skipper is Mathias Gaardsted.

Sugar Shack (2019-2022): Matt and Christine on Sugar Shack arrived in Gambier in early 2019 and have been sailing French Polynesia for several years. They've spent 4 seasons in Gambier and loved it immensely. Sugar Shack is a Catana 471 catamaran: 47' long, 26' wide, 3' draft. They've sailed from Turkey to the Caribbean, through the Panama Canal, to Costa Rica, Galapagos, Chile, Easter Island, and French Polynesia. Sugar Shack has passed through Gambier three different times. <http://www.svsugarshack.com>

Pitufa (2013-2022): Birgit and Christian on sailing yacht "Pitufa" (Spanish for [Smurfette](#)) arrived in French Polynesia in spring of 2013, have explored all archipelagos and are still there as of 2021. They have spent all cyclone seasons (except 2015/2016 and 2020/2021) in the Gambier and have written several articles and cruising guides. Visit their website for more information on cruising in French Polynesia and updates at <http://www.pitufa.at/gambier-islands/>

Jacaranda (2016-2021): Jacaranda with Chuck and Linda aboard spent a year in the Marquesas before moving on to do the Tuamotus slowly in 2016. They have been sending us reports to add to the Compendia, and also posting more information and details on their website: <http://jacarandajourney.com>

Check out their guides here: <https://www.pitufa.at/pitufas-cruising-guides/>

Ari B (2019-2021): Alex and Carla arrived in the Marquesas in early 2019 and have spent the last two years cruising in French Polynesia (Marquesas, Tuamotus, Societies, and Gambier) Ari B is a Trintella 45, a heavy displacement blue water sloop, designed by Van der Stadt and built in the Netherlands. Specs: 45. Length 45', draft 2.2m, width 4m. Alex (Austrian) and Carla (English) left the UK on Ari B in 2014, crossing the Atlantic via Cape Verde to the Caribbean where they sailed extensively from Tobago and Columbia in the south to Cuba in the North. Follow their adventures on www.sy-arib.com.

Grace of Longstone (2020-2021): Helen and Dave left the UK and have been successfully avoiding work since 2016. Grace is a Hans Christian 43. 15m long, 2m meter draft and 4m wide. Originally, they planned to be in NZ in the winter of 2017, but have become easily distracted by other sites (Maine, Newfoundland, Bermuda for America's Cup). They arrived in French Polynesia in July 2020 and have enjoyed exploring the different archipelagos for a year.

Moana (mid-2018): Outremer 5X catamaran MOANA <http://www.rothacher.us>

Irie (2013): Mark and Liesbet, lived, worked and cruised on their 35' catamaran Irie (draft 3.5 feet) for six years, before starting their Pacific crossing. They made their crossing from the Galapagos to the Gambier in May, and were in the Gambier for June and part of July, 2013. Irie is a Fontaine Pajot Tobago, a 35-foot catamaran with a beam of about 19 feet. Follow their adventures on www.itsirie.com

Soggy Paws (2010 - 2011) - Soggy Paws was in the Gambier for the month of April, 2010, and then sailed from there to Hao in early May. From there they went Tahanea – Fakarava S – Fakarava N – Toau – Fakarava N – Fakarava S – Tahanea – Makemo – Raroia, and thence to the Marquesas. In 2011, they came back to the Tuamotus from Hawaii, making landfall at Manihi, and stopping in Toau before moving on to the Societies. In 2010/2011, Soggy Paws was a CSY 44, a 44-foot monohull with a 5.5' draft. Soggy Paws' blog is here: <http://svsoggyaws.blogspot.com>

Visions of Johanna (2010) - Bill of Visions of Johanna pulled together the first version of this 'guide' as they approached the Gambier in early 2010. Visions is a 62' custom racer/cruiser with an 8-knot average cruising speed and a 6'8" draft.

Visions' blog is here: <http://vojf.blogspot.com> Their path through the Tuamotus was Gambier – Hao – Makemo – Katiu – Tahanea – Fakarava S – Fakarava N – Toau (Anse Amyot) – Tahiti.

1.15 Printed Sources

1.15.1 French for Cruisers

[French for Cruisers](#), Kathy Parsons, 2004

This is a fantastic French phrasebook, created by a cruiser for cruisers. Don't leave the U.S. without it, as it is not available once you get to French Polynesia.

For anyone going to a French-speaking cruising ground, French for Cruisers is invaluable. Slightly larger than a 'pocket guide', it is a great reference for French terms for cruising things... like engine repair, dockage, etc.

1.15.2 Top French Polynesia Printed Resources

1. [Tahiti Cruisers Guide Online](#). Cruising Guide for all of French Polynesia –Started by Chuck on Jacaranda and Julien Desmont a local French sailor living in Papeete. Can be downloaded as a pdf, in case you need to try to arrange parts or repairs before you get there (without internet access). If you find a service or store that is not listed please send in an update.
2. [Charlie's Charts of Polynesia](#): Charles and Margo Wood (with updates by Jo Russell and Holly Scott), 7th ed 2011 Holly Scott has taken over the helm at Charlie's Charts and has been updating these age-old cruising guides.
3. [South Pacific Anchorages](#), Warwick Clay, 2nd Edition, 2001, pages 22-33. Covers mostly the islands in the NW section, but does cover briefly a few of the atolls in the SE section (Fangataufa, Mururoa, Tatakoto, Amanu, Hao, Nengonengo)
4. [Guide to Navigation and Tourism in French Polynesia](#), Patrick Bonnette & Emmanuel Deschamps, 2001. This book provides the best coverage for some atolls, but is out of print and is becoming quite expensive to purchase if you can find it (in the \$200 range on Amazon).
5. [The Pacific Crossing Guide](#), published by the Royal Cruising Club Pilotage Foundation in association with the Ocean Cruising Club. Originally edited by Michael Pocock, and Revised by Ros Hogbin. We have the 2nd Edition published in 2003. Amazon has a version dated 2013.
6. [Landfalls of Paradise](#), Earl Hinz, 5th Edition, 2006, University of Hawaii Press. Referring to the 1999 edition...Coverage of the Tuamotus is limited, see pgs. 80-89. Only specifically covers Gambier and Rangiroa, but good coverage of background information about the Tuamotus.
7. [Pacific Crossing Notes](#), Nadine Slavinski, 2015, Rolling Hitch Press
8. [Yachtsmen's Guide to French Polynesia 2011](#) (PDF). This is a 40-page PDF file downloadable from the French Polynesia Tourism Bureau (French & English). (Note, it can be hard to find, and may disappear off their website from time to time. Visit [Soggy Paws website](#) for the latest copy, so I have put the latest copy of the English version on my website at)
9. [Cruising Guide to the Leeward Islands of Tahiti](#) – The Moorings This book is the handbook that the charter company, The Moorings, provides to its charterers. We bought our copy from Bluewater Books in Ft. Lauderdale. Ours looks like it was done in about 2006. It is only 32 pages, but has probably everything you'd need to know about the easy anchorages and passes in the Leewards.
10. [Dream Yacht Charters Guide to the Leeward Islands](#). Downloaded from Dream Yacht Charters site. Copy posted here:

1.15.3 Diving Guides

1. [The French Polynesia Diving Guide](#), Kurt Amsler, Abbeville Press (undated). This is a pretty coffee-table type book. It only covers 3 of the Tuamotus (Rangiroa, Tikehau, and Manihi), but has some stunning pictures, and has a pretty good color section on 'The Fish of French Polynesia'. It also covers the Marquesas (Nuku Hiva) and The Society Islands. Available from Amazon.com.

2. The [Diving in Tahiti, A Diver's Guide to French Polynesia](#), Thierry Ziesman covers diving in Rangiroa and Manihi, plus other sites in French Polynesia. This is less of a coffee-table book, and a more practical guide to how to find dive sites on your own. We had an electronic copy from another cruiser, and I have never been able to find this in print or online.

1.15.4 Books on Underwater Life

1. [Reef Fish Identification](#) by Gerald Allen, Roger Steene, Paul Humann, Ned Deloach 2015.
Or can purchase a download version from [New World Publications, Inc.](#) Jacksonville, Florida
2. [Simon & Schuster's Guide to Shells](#) by Bruno Sabelli. Published by Simon & Schuster.
Very comprehensive guide to shells with more than 1230 illustrations

2 Passage Reports

2.1 To/From Gambier to Tahiti via the Tuamotus

Nov. 2021: Passage Details from Sugar Shack

Passage from Papeete to Tikehau to Toau to Fakarava to Amanu to Gambier

Miles Traveled: 1,202

A direct run to Gambier from PPT would be roughly 900nm, but most people will leave Tahiti, go through the Tuamotus and then head down to Gambier. This is what we have done for three seasons.

- 12 Nov: Left PPT for Tikehau (174nm in 24hr beautiful sail with NE winds, slight swell, avg. speed 7.2kt)
- 14 Nov: Left Tikehau for Toau (173nm in 24.34hrs, with NE winds, 1m seas, avg. speed 6.1kt)
- 18 Nov: Toau to Fakarava
- 22 Nov: Left Fakarava to Amanu (318nm, 49hrs, varied winds, avg. speed 6.5. departed out of N. pass to get better angle. Took south side of Katiu and Makemo, North side of Marutea, then a "straight shot to Amanu.
- 8 Dec: Left Amanu to Gambier (537nm, 99 hours, varied winds, 1-3m seas, all forecasts wrong. Pinched to 40-45° and bashed into waves the entire way. Not ideal

All in all, it took us about a month to make the entire passage. We would have preferred to stay longer in Tikehau and less time in Amanu, but the weather decided our fate. We sailed most of the passages with the exception of the last 26nm to Amanu and 12 hours of the 4 days to Gambier. Total miles travelled 1,202!

Dec. 2020. Passage Details from Sugar Shack:

Passage from Amanu (Tuamotus) to Mangareva (Gambier)

Miles Traveled: 481nm

Max Speed: 10.6kt

Average Speed: 6.6kt

Travel Time: 73 hours

We left Amanu at 0930 with the hope of arriving Gambier in 3 days. We had a nice window which offered North of East winds, little to no rain, and almost a straight shot down the rhumb line. The only downside to this passage were the waves which were 2-3 meters on the forward quarter panel/nose. The routes had us turning left out of the Amanu pass and going between Amanu and Hao. What a mistake! We should have taken the longer route and gone around the NE side of Amanu (8nm longer, but we would have had a better wind angle and we would have avoided the mess between the two atolls). When we hit the area between the two atolls, we found ourselves in the middle of wave chaos. The 3-meter waves were coming from multiple

directions and tossing us around. It was awful and it lasted the entire length of Hao (33+nm). It was a poor start to our passage.

However, once we cleared Hao, the waves settled to one direction (N of E). For the most part, we saw winds coming from North of East at around 070-080T. Waves stayed at 3 meters for the first 2 days and died down to 1 meter on the last day. We did dodge a few squalls, but for the most part had a dry sail the entire way down. We only used the engines to charge the batteries and to assist us with 2 squalls. We were pinching pretty hard to 45 apparent and often trimmed the sails to avoid flogging.

We held a course of 140-150T for the first couple of days and then were able to turn more east when the winds shifted, to a course of 116T.

May 2020: Route: Gambier - Hao

We left Taravai village on 29 May (just after quarantine was lifted and a weather window opened up). It was a short window in between a few maramus, but a good window none the less. Most of the sail would be a downwind run with moderate winds and 2-3-meter seas. We flew several different head sails based on the wind. A large asymmetrical, a small spinnaker, and a parasail. We had 12-15kts of SE wind and 3-meter seas with long intervals for the first 2.5 days. On day 3 we lost the wind and the seas came down to 1.5-2 meters from the East. We left with two other boats: a 38' Leopard and a 50' St. Francis. Both boats left an hour before us. The other two boats stayed on the rhumb line and we veered to the east following Predict Wind recommendations. As it turned out either way would have been fine as we saw similar weather conditions throughout our journey. – Sugar Shack

May 2019: Route: Gambier - Hao -Tahiti

We could not wait for a good weather window as we had a flight to catch in Tahiti. We left Gambier with light winds at 7-8 kts and had full sails up for the first 24 hours. The next day we lost the wind completely and had to motor. On the third day we got a little more wind and motor sailed. We arrived to the Hao pass at 0530 and waited for slack tide to enter the pass. Total of 460nm with a max speed of 8.7kt and an average speed of 5.0kt.

After spending a few days in Hao, we left towards Tahiti. The first two days we had very little wind and motor sailed (mostly motor). The next two days we had a nice downward sail using our spinnaker. All in all, it was an uneventful passage, which we love. Sure, we could have used a lot more wind, but we made it safely. Several other boats got stuck in the Gambier for another 7 weeks waiting for a weather window. – Sugar Shack

April-June 2010: Route: Gambier - Hao – Makemo – Katiu – Tahanea – Fakarava – Toau (Amyot) – Papeete

The Gambier to Hao passage was 450 miles, undertaken in late April with winds from the E at 15-20. They caught a nice tuna by trolling the Gambier western reef on their way out. The only excitement was trying to enter the pass at Hao after days of strong winds (see that story in the Hao section). And the rest of their inter-Tuamotus passages in the next section. – Visions of Johanna

2.2 Direct from the Galapagos to Gambier

May 2013: Many sailboats, heading to the Gambier from further east, change their minds and decide to turn towards the Marquesas a few days into the trip. This is probably a wise decision. The sail to the Gambier is pretty rough, with winds on the beam (in our case 25-35kt) and confused seas. It is not a milk run at all. We arrived on May 28th, 2013. We stayed until June 27th, when we couldn't deal with the cold weather any more.

If you have never crossed an ocean, and 6-8-foot waves are all you've experienced while sailing, the Pacific will be an eye opener. This ocean is not a peaceful one and should not be underestimated. Cross swells of over 12 feet, winds of 30 knots, confused seas, bumpy wind chop and squalls are very common. We were on all points of sail at some time or another and could not stay on course regularly either, when the wind came from dead behind or in front of us. Some days are sunny; the nights are chilly.

The passage can be broken down into 5 parts: a few days of being becalmed in flat seas and barely moving, eleven days of uncomfortable and unsettled conditions, while making good, but bumpy progress, a couple of fair "transition" days, three days of comfortable and peaceful, albeit slow sailing, and two awful days of beating into wind and waves during stormy, squally, windy and frustrating (many wind shifts, constantly varying wind speed, high and rough seas) weather when a front/low pressure system passed overhead.

Trip info and tidbits:

- Route: Galapagos islands - Gambier islands, French Polynesia
- Distance: 2938 miles
- Time: 21 days, 0 hours, 0 minutes (May 7 - May 28th, 2013)
- Hours under engines: 12 (half getting into the anchorage of Rikitea)
- Hours under sail: 492
- Average speed: 5.8 knots
- Wind direction: SSE-SE-E-ENE, when front passes: all directions
- Wind speed: never saw a perfect 15 knots, instead it blew a weak 10 knots or a heavy 25-35 knots!
- Squalls: 42
- Favorable current: 0 knots: a few days + 0.5, a few days - 0.5 early on
- Sail configuration: spinnaker, main (reefed at night and during heavy weather) and jib
- Sail changes: multiple times a day.
- Gallons of diesel used: 9
- Gallons of water used: 47, including 5 gallons to rinse off after showering and 2 gallons for laundry
- Other boats encountered: 2
- Objects encountered: 1 floating pole with a black flag, some garbage, and one whale shark (we think)
- Planes spotted: none
- Fish caught: 1; a smallish mahi mahi, too rough to fish most of the time
- Lures lost: 3
- Sea life "scooped up": 5 squid, 38 flying fish. Flying fish whacking Mark on their way into the cockpit: 3
- Time zones traveled through: 3 * Lat. travel: from 1°S to 23°S * Long. travel: from 90° 58' to 134° 58' W
- Days of having fun: Mark: 1, Liesbet: 4
- Seasickness medicine taken (Liesbet, who was prone to sea sickness): 5 days: 3 preventive, 2 nausea
- Waves hitting the bridge deck: Too many to count
- Books read: Mark 6, Liesbet: 1
- Movies watched: Mark 7, Liesbet: 2
- Casualties ("boat bites"): bloody toes, scratched eye, bruised legs, bumped heads, sore knees, burnt arm - nothing serious or unusual

Things we have learned/realized during this passage:

- There's little time or energy to do the things you like or plan to do, because of exhaustion or sea state
- That this was the longest amusement park ride of our lives (not in a fun way)
- That the wind is never consistent
- That it was much colder than expected, especially at night. Winter clothes and comforter needed!
- A passage to the Marquesas would've been easier / more comfortable (confirmation of what we knew)
- That the days are short and the nights long (Southern Hemisphere winter)
- That the Pacific doesn't harbor as much wildlife (whales, dolphins, ...) as we thought
- That one cannot be in a hurry

The above post and suggestions are from sv Irie.

2.3 Direct from Easter Island / Pitcairn to Gambier

April 2019: We sailed from Valdivia, Chile to Robinson Crusoe Island (4-days) where spent a few days exploring. Then we sailed another (4.5 days) to Rapa Nui (Easter Island). We had planned on spending over a week here, but weather forced us to leave several days early as they have no true anchorage. It then took 11-days to sail to the Gambier. We had hoped to stop in Pitcairn but the wind and waves were such that it was not feasible. We really enjoyed this route as it broke the crossing into several segments and allowed us to see new unexplored islands (Robinson Crusoe and Easter Island). For the most part we had reasonable winds and seas out of the east that allowed us to sail the entire way. We encountered a few squalls but nothing major until we arrived to the Gambier. The day of our arrival we were in a decent size squall that followed us to the NW pass and made it extremely challenging to enter the pass. We had waves crashing over our bow, 3-meter seas and winds blowing over 25kts. Not a pleasant way to enter FP, but we made it safely. – Sugar Shack

March 2010: We left the Galapagos on 1 March 2010, and arrived in Easter Island about 14 days later after a mostly pleasant sail. We stayed in Easter Island for a few days and then were chased out by weather. We had a 10-day passage to Pitcairn, again mostly in good weather (with just one hairy 24-hour period). We stayed 2 full days and one night in Pitcairn, and had a nice 3-day downwind passage to the Gambier. – Soggy Paws

2.4 From New Zealand to Gambier

Several boats we know have actually made the trip from NZ back to the US West Coast via the Gambier. Basically, you leave NZ and head south to the westerlies, and stay in them all the way to French Polynesia. It can be a hairy trip, make sure you know how to heave-to, because the Antarctic lows pass through with regularity. From the Gambier, if they are destined for the US West Coast, these boats then head north on a direct course to the California coast. – Soggy Paws

3 Gambier Archipelago

Guide Books:

- Charlie's Charts of Polynesia: 5th ed 2005; pages 102-103 S. Pacific Anchorages: 2nd ed; page 20-21
- Sea-Seek.com has a downloadable PDF file for Gambier (in French)
http://sea-seek.com/ebook/Les_iles_Gambier.pdf

The Gambier Archipelago is a very unique place, with the combination of turquoise waters, healthy reefs, colorful hills and mountains, pretty beaches and friendly people. They are also becoming more and more popular with cruisers trying to get off the beaten path. For those cruisers who have secured a Long Stay Visa, Gambier is also far enough south and east that it is pretty much out of the cyclone zone.

Warning: Gambier Archipelago has a high incidence of ciguatera poisoning—be very cautious about the fish you eat here, if they are caught in or near the archipelago. Ask the locals!

3.1 Passes

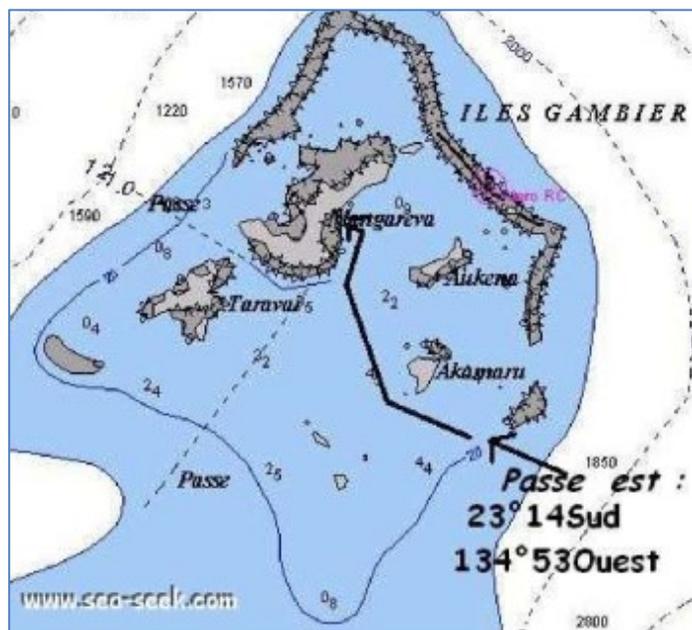
There are three passes into the Gambier:

- NorthWest Pass (Between Mangareva and Taravai)
- SouthEast Pass (near Kamaka)
- SouthWest Pass

The NorthWest Pass leads to the only true channel in the archipelago. All other “marked” channels are not acknowledged by the locals and can be littered with pearl floats. Best to follow the tracks by Pitufa (www.pitufa.at/gambier-islands/), and keep a look out to avoid damaging your boat and the pearl farms.

Remember the red markers should be on your LEFT (red, right, returning = wrong!).

This diagram shows the lesser used South East pass. The Northwest pass is generally the easiest pass to enter into this archipelago. It is wide, well-marked, deep and leads to the channel taking you directly to Rikitea.



The Main Channel

The main channel starts at the NW pass and ends at Rikitea, Mangareva. It is well marked and most, but not all of the buoys are lit at night. Note there is a shallow area at 23°7.885S / 134°57.250W where you cross over a sand bar that is about 5-6 meters deep. The sandbar is less than .1nm in length. Just stay in the center of the channel and passage should be without incident. Just past the sandbar, the last three red markers are known to have pearl floats that breach into the channel area so be careful. The last red marker (indicating the left turn into Rikitea) is not lit.

Dec. 2020: The Northwest pass is wide and deep and makes transit very easy. We entered with no incoming/outgoing tide, no swell, and a light wind pushing us toward the channel. The channel is well marked (both on charts and with channel markers). But do stay within the center of the channel as there are lots of pearl floats just outside (and some inside) the channel which can make a mess of things for you if you were to get caught up in their lines. We anchored in Rikitea with three other boats, to check in with the gendarmerie. Good to be back.

The markers closest to Rikitea are not lit at night. – Sugar Shack.

Feb. 2020: We entered through the Northwest pass (between Taravai and Mangareva) during excellent conditions. We had 6kts of wind coming from the East, no current, less than 1-meter swell, on a nice sunny day. The pass is wide and well-marked. A much different experience than our last one in 2019. Make sure you stay within the channel (with red markers on your left: red, right returning, wrong here). There are lots of pearl farm buoys between the shore and markers so be vigilant and stay in the channel. – Sugar Shack

April 2019: We entered through the Northwest pass during a squall at the tail end of an 11-day passage from Easter Island (Rapa Nui). We were anxious to get to Mangareva, drop the hook and go to sleep. There were gusty winds and huge seas. Our 47' catamaran was severely pitch poling with huge waves coming up and over our bow. It was a frightening experience. Weird conditions and from what I understand not normal. It is a wide pass with markers, but the conditions were \$hit! Thank goodness we made it through the pass successfully, found Rikitea anchorage and dropped the hook. – Sugar Shack

March 2019: It is risky to enter Rikitea anchorage at night, even staying in the official and properly marked channel, because of the numerous pearl farm buoys, sometimes in the channel, many half sunk – Chugach

March 2015: We arrived at the Gambier islands for the first time on May 17th, 2013 (an El Niño-neutral year), after a 24-days passage from Isabela, Galapagos (distance 2900 nm). We slowed down on our last day to avoid arriving at night. The entrance via the west pass was no problem, since it is well marked (IALA buoy system A, like in Europe, so leave red on your left when coming in.), wide and deep (Pitufa's draft is 2.20 meter).

South of Mangareva we experienced strong headwinds and choppy waves (which made our previously squall washed, salt-free deck totally salty again)–Mt. Duff creates a noticeable acceleration zone here.

The French charts are detailed and accurate. The passes and channels are easy to navigate. – Pitufa

Sept. 2013: Once you reach the outer most channel markers to get through the wide NW entrance and into the Gambier lagoon, navigation is very easy and the channel has sufficient depths. The shallowest point is around 20 feet, when you go over the inner reef towards Rikitea. That being said, many boats arrived during a squall, the small land mass of the archipelago is often veiled in clouds. In our case, the last 15 miles or so took us 5 hours, motoring into wind and steep waves, the decks getting smothered by salt water. The area did not resemble a lagoon at all to us and it was an unpleasant arrival in paradise after a pretty uncomfortable three-week passage from the Galapagos. – Irie

April 2010: There are 3 passes into the Gambier. We arrived in the Gambier after a long trip hairy trip from Easter Island (with a wonderful short stop at Pitcairn in settled weather). The wind was blowing 15 kts, and we had a very, very large long swell from the south. We entered the SE pass at 23°16.23S / 134-56.05 in the middle of a squall just at daylight, and it was easy.

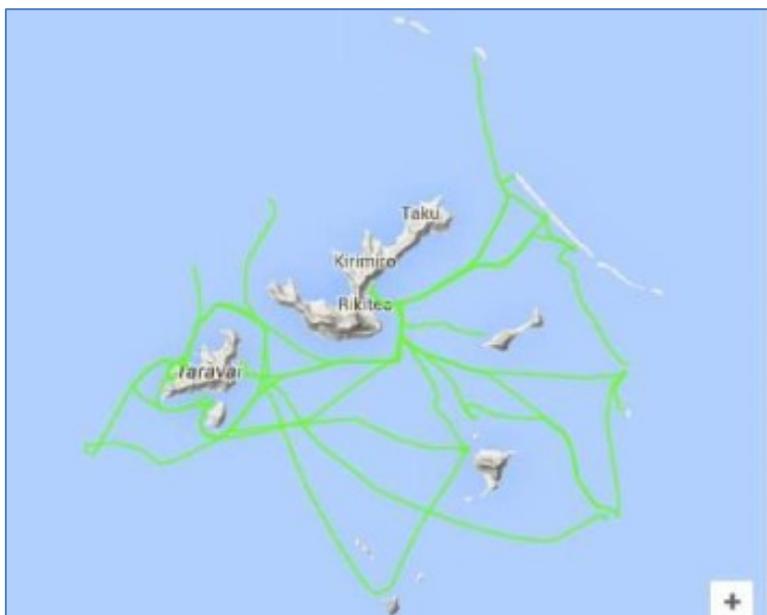
We found the C-Map charts for the Gambier to be extremely accurate, where there was coverage. Later, we went on a fishing expedition out the SW pass, and came in the NW pass. All are deep and easy to navigate in good light. – Soggy Paws and Visions of Johanna

3.2 Navigation Inside the Gambier Archipelago

Pitufa has generously made several files and maps available on their website which makes navigating the Gambier a lot easier and safer. To access these files, visit www.pitufa.at/gambier-islands/.

Pitufa's Tracks around the Gambier Archipelago

<https://www.pitufa.at/gambier-islands/>



March 2021: Navigating inside the Gambier lagoon is tricky in that you have to constantly be aware and avoid the pearl floats and bommies. Most anchorages are very deep (16-20 meters) including Rikitea, Taravai Village, S and W Taravai, and false pass. But you can find shallower anchorages up north (Puaumu, one-pam motu, Tauna, Totegegie, Aukena, and Akamaru).

The shallower anchorages are peppered with bommies which prevent you from putting out full scope without pearl floats or fenders to float your chain. However, if you follow Pitufa's tracks, keep a look out on the bow, and plan wisely, you will enjoy some of the most beautiful anchorages in French Polynesia.

You will find that weather changes frequently causing you to move about more often than you like. Either gusts will come up, swell will wrap around, or the wind direction will change. But it is a small price to pay for perfection and true beauty. – Sugar Shack

March 2020: We use Navionics, CM93 2011, and Garmin Bluechart charts and found them mostly reliable. We will mention some inaccuracies further below. – Pitufa

June 2013: We could never stay as long as we pleased in any of the outer anchorages, because of the changing wind, heavy gusts out of different directions or incoming swell. Most bays are pretty deep, with the exception of Akamaru and Aukena.

The charts, where they exist, are good and reliable, but parts of the region are left uncharted. For example, the south bay in Taravai is a blank spot on the charts, so good sunlight to read the water and detect the many dangerous reefs is imperative.

Don't forget the sun sits in the north, which makes approaching uncharted areas from the south (Taravai's SE anchorage) a bit tricky to enter during the winter months. – Irie

May/June 2013: Navigating in and out of Rikitea is easy with the green and red channel markers (right GREEN return!). Throughout the lagoon it is also relatively easy to find your way, but good light is required when approaching any of the islands. There are many pearl farm buoys (sometimes connected under the water surface) scattered throughout many areas in the lagoon, especially on the way to Aukena and Akamaru. Keep a good eye out for these! When visiting Aukena from Rikitea, it is best to follow the northern edge of the inner reef towards the southern tip of Aukena and keep all floats to port.

One of the red markers into Rikitea is missing and when not paying attention, you may stray into a field of floats. There is a new red marker along the channel to the airport, position (PA) 23°06.124'S, 134°54.511'W. It would appear that the channel to the airport has been moved slightly to the west based on this new marker, and the location of some pearl farm floats.

We found both Navionics and C-Map charts to be very accurate, where the waters were charted. Many of the places you may want to go, there are no soundings, or very limited. We found images from Google Earth to be extremely helpful in planning the trips around the islands and would recommend becoming familiar with Google Earth as an aid to navigation. – Irie

3.3 Formalities

Location: The Gendarmerie is located on the main street in Rikitea, Mangareva. Turn left from main dock and it will be on the left-hand side. There is a large sign on the gate facing street. Hours vary and are not consistent, at least when we were visiting. However, they were very pleasant and helpful.

Clearance: No matter if you arrive from abroad or from another French Polynesia island/atoll, you are required to check in at the gendarmerie with your papers. From there you are supposed to proceed to the Le Mairie to pay the rubbish fees. You have to purchase a 9000xpf (\$90) stamp as part of the clearance process. Cruisers have a bad reputation in FP anyway, don't add to those prejudices by skipping the fees.

Dec. 2020: Upon arrival, we hopped onshore and headed for the gendarmerie. Everyone was at lunch (1400) but two officials came out to chat with us. They remembered us from the last 2 visits and did not need to see our paperwork. They took note of our arrival, welcomed us with a smile and sent us on our way. Super nice and accommodating, especially since we still don't speak French. – Sugar Shack

Feb. 2020: Thank goodness we cleared in when we arrived to Gambier from the Marquesas. I know it is part of the procedure, but there are cruisers who fail to do this important step. The reason we were so blessed to have checked in was because of covid. The officials had a list of all the boats that were already in Gambier prior to the "shut down" of French Polynesia. Boats that were here, but did not check in, had to prove they were here before the shutdown. Any boats that came in after the shutdown had a very different reception. In the end, we were lucky to be in the Gambier as we had a lot more "freedom" than other cruisers in the Society and Marquesas archipelagos. – Sugar Shack

Feb. 2019: We applied for our long-stay visa through the U.S. Consulate in Chile. We hired Tahiti Crew to assist us with our formalities and long-stay visa in FP, and they were wonderful. They provided all of the necessary paperwork before our arrival into FP. When we arrived in Gambier, we headed straight to Rikitea. We provided all of the necessary paperwork (passports, boat registration and forms provided by Tahiti Crew) and they sent us to the post office to buy our "stamp" which was 9000xpf (\$90) per person, but we provided our marriage certificate so we only had to purchase one stamp. We sent our paperwork to Tahiti with copies to Tahiti crew. Within 90-days we received our long-stay visas. The officials were extremely pleasant and willing to assist. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: For EU citizens there's not much bureaucracy involved: the gendarme wants to see passports and ship's papers (he wasn't interested in insurance papers or the zarpe from the last port), we filled in the customs-declaration form and were told to send it to Tahiti. We were told to report to the customs office on arrival in Tahiti, unless we were visited by the custom's boat ahead of that. According to current regulations (new in 2014) EU citizens can stay in French Polynesia unlimited without visa, but have to pay import tax on

the yacht if they stay longer than 3 years. Non-EU-citizens can stay 3 months with a visa, but have to pay a bond (unless they arrange their visit via an agent). – Pitufa

Sept. 2013: There are no check-in fees, except for the stamp to mail the customs form to Papeete. – Irie

April 2010: Check-in was a breeze at the Gendarmerie—and greatly facilitated by our French for Cruisers book. The official who cleared us in was so impressed with the book that he tried to buy my copy!

Once our paperwork was done, we were instructed to go to the Post Office to buy a \$50 stamp and mail the paperwork to Papeete. – Soggy Paws and Visions of Johanna

3.4 Weather in the Gambier

Between June and September, it is Winter. Really! (Okay, no snow of course, but for the tropics it gets cold.)

According to the Gambier leaflet, which we got at the mayor's office in Rikitea, the coldest months are July, Aug. and September with average peak temperatures below 22°C and average minimum temperatures around 19°C. The frequency of depressions moving by further south increases to at least one per week. Each such system shifts the wind direction counter-clockwise around while it passes by and sends fronts with lots of rain and squalls. The wind roses do not show much of a prevailing wind direction during those winter months (see wind roses here: <http://www.pitufa.at/gambier-islands/>). Southerly winds bring chilly air masses. The water temperature dropped from 26°C in May to only 21°C end of July.

March. 2021: We arrived in December and found the weather to be beautiful. Not much rain, sunny skies, warmish water (not as warm as the Tuamotus, but still pleasant enough to be in a bikini). Fruits were in full season especially the tasty Lychee fruit.

When we arrived in February 2020, the weather was a little cooler, but mostly pleasant. The waters get much cooler as you get closer to May/June.

However, when we arrived in April 2019, we had lots and lots of bad weather, heavy rains, thunder and lightning. The water was really cool (required a swim shirt or shorty). – Sugar Shack

March 2020: We left the Gambier at the beginning of Aug. after many weeks of waiting for a weather window to sail north to the Marquesas. The many frontal systems allowed only for very short windows and the mood on Pitufa got worse since we were really stuck on the boat. It was too rainy for hiking, too cold for snorkeling, too splashy for dinghy rides. We learned not to make any elaborate plans anymore, but to spontaneously use the rare and short, calm and sunny periods for activities.

The Gambier Islands are surely a little paradise and we are glad we came here, but we definitely did not expect the weather to be so bad around July.

So, we can only recommend to visit these islands either early in the season and move on already in June or to consider coming here in the southern-hemisphere summer, which is in the cyclone season. We did the latter and returned to the Gambier islands in the beginning of November 2013, again for the cyclone season 2014/15 and again 2019/2020.

November had still a few massive fronts that got stationary around the area and so brought cold and rainy weather for several days. Really beautiful and hot weather started with the beginning of December. The water temperature was already up around 25°C when we arrived in Nov. 2013 and climbed to 28°C in Dec.

Jan. and Feb. were still hot, but in March the temperature dropped noticeably again. (according to locals that was very early in the year... The following year (2015), we had beautiful and hot weather in March. Summer is ideal to explore here as there's only little swell and exposed anchorages are an interesting option. – Pitufa

June 2013: Aha! And here is the little (little-known?) fact that can change this paradise into something more like hell... Usually, June is still a relatively pleasant month in this southern hemisphere winter, but in 2013 it was not meant to be. We arrived after a cold front and the temperature dropped substantially and would not go up anymore until the spring. For two months, the air temperature was less than 60 degrees F during the day, less at night, requiring a comforter and sometimes extra blanket. We were not in "the tropics" anymore

and didn't realize this before arriving. We did encounter a few sunny days with pleasant temperatures when the wind was down. There are no trade winds during this season and more often than not, the wind comes from the south (Arctic) and is very chilly! During the day we could often wear shorts and T-shirts, but at night long clothes were necessary. Forget showering in the ocean or cleaning the bottom of the boat! Snorkeling was also barely possible, even with a wetsuit. I lasted about 20 minutes in the 60-degree water with a shorty, on the days the sun was present and the wind not.

On top of that, low pressure systems and cold fronts keep passing over the archipelago or close by, messing with the wind speed and direction. Not only did they bring grey clouds and some rain, but fluky winds turning the busy anchorage of Rikitea into a massive chaos, with dragging boats and vessels bumping into each other. It is hard to have enough scope out to be able to turn 360° in 45-60 feet of water with so many neighbors... The other bays could have gusty winds, up to 50 knots (we had N gusts of 40-50 knots in Aukena) and wind shifts that can change 180°! Luckily, most bays are pretty deserted. But, if you don't have to worry about your neighbors, you have to worry about surrounding reefs! When we were tired of not being able to shower the way we are used to, to eat or even sit in the cockpit and to be cold all the time, we waited for a weather window to sail to the Marquesas. If it wasn't for the winter weather, we would have stayed a couple of months longer in the Gambier Islands. Sailors be warned of the Gambier winter! – Irie

April 2010: When we left Mangareva harbor, all we had taken note of was wind SPEED when we looked at the forecast. We had assumed that we were in the "trade winds" and the wind direction wouldn't vary very much.

It turned out that the reason the wind is dropping off is because of an approaching front. Last night the wind backed about 180 degrees. It left us sweating how close we were to a specific coral head. At dusk we had the foresight to swim out a 2nd anchor to help keep us centered--we ended up hanging on that anchor all night.

Fortunately, this 'front' was VERY mild. We had one rain shower and clocked 20 knots, but it didn't last long. Though the wind was most of the night coming from across the atoll, it was under 10 knots and so not a problem. Now, 24 hours after we arrived, it has back on around to the SE, and we are now hanging behind the reef again.

We are still getting used to this 'upside-down' weather. The cold fronts come from the south. And when they approach, the wind goes NE-N-NW-W and then blows hard, with cold air from the South after the front passes. Weird. And there is no Herb/Southbound II, Chris Parker, or Bob McDavitt here to explain the weather to us. Once we get a little further west and north, there are more nets and some weather gurus, but especially in this part of the Pacific, it's just us and the GRIB files.

We are finally in the French Polynesia weather area. But, besides the GRIB files, the weather we can get from Saildocs is sparse, for only 'today and tomorrow', and in French. Here's yesterday's forecast for our area:

GAMBIER SECTEUR EST 11/16KT MOLLISSANT 07/10KT A MI-ECHANCE PUIS REVENANT AU SECTEUR SUDOUEST EN FIN DE PERIODE, RAFALES 25/30KT SOUS GRAINS, MER AGITEE DEVENANT PEU AGITEE, AVERSES EPARSES OU GRAINS ISOLES.

2020 Update: The French forecasts are now also provided in English. See weather section. – Soggy Paws

3.5 Mangareva, Rikitea (Main Village)

3.5.1 Anchorages and Moorings

This anchorage is deep (13-22 meters) and in some areas, has debris on the very muddy bottom. Be careful.

March 2021: 23°06.760S / 134°57.96W in 13 meters of muddy water with 70 meters of chain out. We dropped in front of the reef and pulled back to the shore reef. South side of anchorage, by the sports center.

23°06.899S / 134°58.027W. In 16 meters of mud. This was our 2nd anchor spot and was further away from the channel markers but a little closer to the reef.

Our first anchor spot, **23°06.949S / 134°58.16W** dropped in 17 meters of water, but when we pulled back on 70 meters of chain, we landed in 15 meters of water. We were near the channel and when the wind shifted, we felt we were too close to the channel so we moved to the above spot. When we arrived in Rikitea in April 2019 there were 35 boats anchored here. When we returned in March 2020, there 12 boats

23°06.885S / 134°58.078W. Dropped 16 meters of mud and pulled back to the reef. 11 boats in anchorage.

23°06.789S / 134°58.004W Dropped 15 meters of mud w/ 80 meters of chain. Landed just before the reef.

23 07.004S / 134 58.093W dropped in 15 meters. This spot ONLY works when you have a west wind that keeps you out of the channel. Do not anchor here if the wind is not right as you will block the channel and be in the way of local boats and the supply ship.

We've been in the Rikitea anchorage with as many as 35 other boats and as little as 2. During peak season, when a supply ship comes it can get crowded and with the deep waters, lots of scope, it makes it challenging to get a safe anchor spot.

DINGHY DOCKS: The main, center dock (where the supply ship docks) usually has the Tokani a big steel boat (Commune de Gambier which transports passengers from Rikitea to Totegegie "the airport"). Make sure you do not block the slip for the Tokani or the local fishing boats when you tie your dinghy to the dock.

The Southern dock is behind the post office (near the St. Michael church). Facing the main dock, it's to the left. It can get a little shallow heading to this cement dock. The pangas park here so be respectful of their space.

The Northern dock is behind the Multi-Purpose Hall / Sports Center. Facing the main dock, it is to the right. Usually there is a barge parked here. You can tie up to the barge or the cement dock. It gets shallow around here during low tide. This is the best dock for dumping trash and recycling.

You can also pull your dinghy up to the small beach behind Magasin JoJo's, but watch the tides. And you can temporarily tie up behind the bakery, but this is used as a pickup/drop off spot for locals so do not stay longer than 20-30 minutes. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: The marked entrance to the anchorage off Rikitea runs along a curved channel. It took us a bit to get used to the scale (the legs between the marked gates are shorter than we thought) and to figure out that the first red marker was actually missing... (it was replaced later). When the big supply ships manage to go in and out here, it shouldn't be a big deal for a small yacht either.

The anchorage is well protected from the waves (particularly further N behind the reef marked with cardinal signs), but open to the prevailing winds. It is big enough for at least 30 boats. The depths are around 14 to 20m and the holding is superb. The situation only gets tricky when the anchorage is packed with boats and strong gusts howling down the mountains start shoving them into different directions (usually when there's a strong wind blowing with a westerly component).

Dinghy Landing: There are several possibilities to leave the dinghy. The best-protected option is to leave the dinghy on the floating pontoon of the main pier in the southern end of the anchorage. Further N is a concrete wall to tie up to in front of the bakery—only short term, but handy when you only want to pick up baguettes or do some quick shopping. There's another big pier on the northern end of town (the multi-purpose hall is just behind it) that is quite popular with cruisers, but it can get a bit rough there in winds from the SE. The public garbage bins are located there. – Pitufa

May 2013: We were surprised to count around 30 boats, spread out in the archipelago, the whole time we were there. All of them use Rikitea as a base and when a front comes through, this is where most sailors return to. Most cruisers stand by on VHF #16, others use #77. – Irie

April 2010: The reefs protecting the Rikitea harbor made excellent protection in almost any conditions. In 2010, the harbor easily accommodated around 15 cruising boats, including several 60-footers and one 100-footer. – Soggy Paws

3.5.2 Yachtsmen Services

3.5.2.1 Cooking Gas (Propane / Butane)

You can purchase French cooking gas tanks from either of the magasins (see Provisions). However, there are no services that will refill American cooking gas tanks in Gambier. You need the right fittings to make the transfer.

The [Tahiti Cruiser's Guide](#) has a current list of suppliers that fill non-French tanks.

Download "[Refilling Your Propane Tanks in French Polynesia](#)" as it is a very helpful instructional document, with photos, on how to fill your American propane tanks in French Polynesia. Fill your tanks 100% full every time using this method.

Jan.2023: Titouan and Juliette offer "yacht services" from his house including propane refills. He has moved since Feb. 2021 and has new contact information. Located in front of the boulangerie and Keali market. WhatsApp +336 86 04 71 88 or +689 87 26 2299. You can also reach them on Vini +689 87 76 31 48 or +689 87 26 22 99. Email aubin.juliette30@gmail.com and titouan.fafournoux@gmail.com. – Sugar Shack

Jan. 2022: The process for obtaining cooking gas changes frequently. Sometimes you can buy direct from the supply ships (if you have an empty, they will exchange it and sell you a full one). Usually, you have to drop off an empty bottle to a magasin (we prefer Magasin Leille) and pay up front. They will exchange it with the supply ship. You pick up full bottle the day after the ship leaves. – Sugar Shack

Mar. 2021: For some weird reason, propane has been very elusive this season. We did not have the same issues the last two times we were in Gambier, but this season, many cruisers had a difficult time purchasing and refilling propane tanks. Many stores would only take reservations with an empty bottle (not many cruisers have more than one tank onboard). Some cruisers were able to refill at one of the magasins after they pre-paid for the bottle and put a deposit down. But they still had to wait weeks. So, act on the safe side and think ahead about your propane needs. – Sugar Shack

Feb. 2021: Titouan is offering "yacht services" including propane gas. WhatsApp +336 45 45 65 or Vini +689 87 26 22 99. Filling a 2,7kg camping gas 2000xpf, local gas bottle 13kg = 3500xpf. He may have fittings to fill other types of bottles too. His house is near the gendarmerie and he has a small dock. He will only be on island until Sept. 2022. – Grace of Longstone

June 2013: Propane bottles are available, but they are of the local kind and you will need the right fittings and a lot of patience to slowly fill your own tanks. There are no local propane fittings available in Rikitea, so filling a bottle is impossible unless you meet another boat that has the FP fitting you can borrow. – Irie

3.5.2.2 Fuel (Diesel / Gasoline)

Pre-Order Fuel to Arrive on the Supply Ship:

See Fuel (Diesel / Gasoline) section 1.5.2 for supply ship contact info to pre-order fuel.

You can call or text Ignace who works with the Toporo VIII Supply Ship (red bottom boat) to order a 200-liter drum of diesel or gasoline (essence) at +689 87 28 16 09. He will tell you when the ship will leave Tahiti and then you can assume it will arrive in Rikitea 7-14 days later. Fuel is a lot cheaper from the ship than from a local magasin. They do not accept the duty-free certificate and you will have to pay in local currency. If you don't need 200 liters, ask other cruisers to go in with you on a barrel. Norbert, who used to take reservations for the Taporo VIII is now on a different ship and cannot take any reservations for Gambier.

Jan. 2023: Titouan and Juliette offer "yacht services" from his house and will sell small amounts of gasoline. Located in front of the boulangerie and Keali market. WhatsApp +336 86 04 71 88 or +689 87 26 2299. You can also reach them on Vini +689 87 76 31 48 or +689 87 26 22 99. Email aubin.juliette30@gmail.com and titouan.fafournoux@gmail.com – Sugar Shack

March 2021: Magasin JoJo's will sell gasoline. But beware, it is very expensive (\$10 USD per gal). The supply ship did not have gasoline to sell as we did not pre-order.

Diesel (gazoil) is 24600xpf (\$246) and gasoline (essence / sans plomb) is 25700xpf (\$257) can be purchased directly from the supply ships in 200-liter drums. You can fuel up with your boat at the concrete dock, tied to the stern of the supply ship, or you can bring jerry cans to dock and transfer from drum to cans. We recommend using jerry cans to avoid unnecessary damage to your boat.

Titoan is offering "yacht services" including gasoline at 1L = 150xpf. He can be reached: WhatsApp +336 45 45 65 or Vini +689 87 26 22 99. He is only on island until Sept. 2022.

You can "rent" a drum of fuel for 5500xpf (pre-order) plus the cost of the fuel and leave the drum onshore with a local. We were able to "borrow" a drum, get it filled, and stored it at a local's house in exchange for some of the gasoline. This allowed us to refill our jerry cans at our leisure over the course of several months. It helps to make friends. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: For small amounts of gasoline you can ask locals or try to purchase it at the magasins (e.g. Jojo's). Diesel is available in 200-liter drums directly from the supply ships. We saw yachts going alongside the supply ship to fuel up from the pump hose (you have to take at least 200 liter). – Pitufa

June 2013: When the supply ship is in town, you can buy gasoline or diesel from them in quantities of 200 liters or more. Some cruisers get together to split a barrel. – Irie

3.5.2.3 Trash and Recycling

Make sure to pay the rubbish fee of 1000 xpf (for the first week) and 500xpf for subsequent weeks at Le Mairie office. It is a small fee to pay to be able to dispose of your trash and recycling.

Gambier only recycles glass and aluminum. Plastic and cardboard are NOT recycled here so dispose in the trash bins.

Used oil can be disposed of near the trash/recycling area. There will be an unmarked drum (usually white) near the trash/recycling where you can dump your oil. Ask the workers which drum to use before disposing.

Feb. 2020: The main trash disposal area is on the south side of the bay. There is a small concrete dock (with a barge usually tied up to it) you can tie up to the barge or the dock. Walk toward the large commune building and to the right of the building you will see large trash bins. There are also large, white recycling bags where you can dispose of aluminum and glass. They do not recycle plastic, cardboard, or paper. – Sugar Shack

3.5.2.4 Water

Feb. 2021: In addition to the resources below from Pitufa which are still accurate, you can get water from Titoan who is offering "yacht services." WhatsApp +336 45 45 65 or Vini +689 87 26 22 99. Water is free for his clients. He has a small dock by his house to pull up your dinghy with jerry cans. He will be on island until Sept. 2022. – Grace of Longstone

Feb. 2020: You can access the potable drinking water pump by paying a small fee at Le Mairie. The potable water dispenser is located just past the Sport Center and Commune and across the street.

You may also try to purchase water from Fritz, the German who lives in the light blue house on the south side of the bay (with flags). – Pitufa

June 2013: Fritz is a German man. He sells the water for next to nothing, or you can take an incredible shower with hot water and good pressure in his bathroom. – Irie

3.5.2.5 Yacht Services

Jan. 2023: Titouan and Juliette offer "yacht services." They have moved since 2021. Their new contact information: Located in front of the boulangerie and Keali market. WhatsApp +336 86 04 71 88 or +689 87 26

2299. You can also reach them on Vini +689 87 76 31 48 or +689 87 26 22 99. Email aubin.juliette30@gmail.com and titouan.fafournoux@gmail.com. They offer:

Banking	Bike Rentals	Laundry
Fuel (gasoline)	Mechanical Services	Local soaps/washing powder
Propane refill	Bread, juices, smoothies	
Water	Printing Services	Wifi

3.5.2.6 Laundry

Jan. 2023: Titouan and Juliette offer “yacht services” including laundry. He has moved and has new contact information. Located in front of the boulangerie and Keali market. WhatsApp +336 86 04 71 88 or +689 87 26 2299. You can also reach them on Vini +689 87 76 31 48 or +689 87 26 22 99. Email aubin.juliette30@gmail.com and titouan.fafournoux@gmail.com. – Sugar Shack

3.5.3 General Services

3.5.3.1 Air Tahiti

Mar. 2021: +689 40 86 42 42. Hours (in Jan-April): Mon, Wed, Fri: 0930-1130 in Rikitea. However, we understand those hours to fluctuate based on season. The Air Tahiti office is located left from main dock, past the Gendarmerie, on left hand side, before St. Michael’s church. You can call reservations (Hours: Mon-Fri 0700-1700 and Sat. 0800-1100). Visit the website www.airtahiti.pf.

There are 1-2 flights per week. Every Tuesday and sometimes on Saturday. Flights vary when school ends and starts. Usually, they will offer a Saturday flight around holidays and when the children fly home from school.

The airport is located on Totegegie. There is a shuttle on the Tokani (1000xpf per person, per trip) that will take you from Mangareva to Totegegie. However, you can also anchor your big boat by the motu and shuttle your passengers by dinghy to the airport. – Sugar Shack

3.5.3.2 Bank / ATM

Feb. 2022: The post office now has an ATM located on the outside patio. — Sugar Shack

Mar. 2021: There is no bank or ATM in Gambier. However, the post office gladly exchanges USD for XPF/CFP at the usual 100 xpf for \$1 USD. The Post Office no longer accepts Euros. They will only exchange local currency XPF for the U.S. dollar. Most magasins will accept credit cards with a 2000xpf minimum purchase (ask before you shop). – Sugar Shack

March 2019: The post office in Rikitea no longer changes euros, only US dollars. It seems there has been some laundering issues with Euros. – Chugach

3.5.3.3 Construction Materials

Mar. 2021: Quincaillerie Vaituatai offers construction materials. +689 40 97 83 47 or +689 87 74 04 73. Located on main street. From main dock, turn right, walk .9 miles and it is on the right. – Sugar Shack

3.5.3.4 Gendarmerie

Location: The Gendarmerie is located on the main street. Turn left from main dock and it will be on the left. There is a large sign on the gate facing the street. Hours vary and are not consistent, at least when we were visiting. They are closed during lunch hours of 1200-1400. However, they were very pleasant and helpful.

3.5.3.5 Hair Salon

Feb. 2021: Hair Salon / Coiffure” Salon Poehere Coiffure et esthetique +689 87 74 43 44. Location: From main dock, turn left on main road, take right on road before the church and go up and over the mountain to the other side.

Also, Valerie on Taravai will cut or color your hair at a much-reduced price. – Sugar Shack

3.5.3.6 Laundry

Mar. 2021: Magasin JoJo’s has a laundry service which takes 2-5 days to wash, dry, and fold. Their prices were said to be reasonable (we did not use them). – Sugar Shack

Feb. 2021: Titoan offers “yacht services” including laundry. WhatsApp +336 45 45 65 or Vini +689 87 26 22 99. Washing 800xpf, drying 200xpf, folding 500xpf. Provide your own soap or use his homemade without perfume (100xpf). Located near the gendarmerie. He will be off island after Sept. 2022 – Grace of Longstone

Feb. 2020: Fritz the German lives in the blue house at the northern end of the anchorage. He came here with the foreign legion about 30 years ago and runs an open house for yachties. He has a washing machine and helped us to get kerosene for our stove. He’s always happy to have some company (but you have to abide the German “schlager” music he’s playing non-stop at full volume). – Pitufa

June 2013: Fritz is a German man has a good-working European-style washing machine and lines to hang wet clothes, and a water spigot. – Irie

3.5.3.7 Le Mairie

Le Mairie (mayor) is located on the main street (left from dock) on left before Gendarmerie. They accept payment for trash and recycling disposal. In addition, they provide access to drinking water for a small fee. They usually have the supply ship schedule posted outside.

March 2020: Le Mairie offers an info brochure with some history and walks described. – Pitufa

3.5.3.8 Mechanics

Jan. 2023: Titouan and Juliette offer a variety of “yacht services” including basic mechanics, fiberglass, and sail repair. He has moved since 2021. New contact: Located in front of the boulangerie and Keali market. WhatsApp +336 86 04 71 88 or +689 87 26 2299. You can also reach them on Vini +689 87 76 31 48 or +689 87 26 22 99. Email aubin.juliette30@gmail.com and titouan.fafournoux@gmail.com. – Sugar Shack

Feb.2021: Hetata is the island’s generator mechanic (he works for the Le Mairie). You may reach him through Le Mairie or you can call Stephan (also known as Tanavai) at +689 87 27 91 41. Both are very friendly and willing to assist cruisers. Please offer to pay for services rendered!

There is another outboard mechanic called Manawa who can be reached at +689 87 74 04 73. He does not speak English, but we heard he is does good work.

April 2020: We needed to do some welding and found two places after asking around On the Southern dock by the trash/recycling is a work shop area called the “Commune”. They did some welding for another boat, but the cruiser said the work was “mediocre” and recommended seeing James (speaks English) at Magasin Terehere.

We needed a wire feed and an additional support bracket welded. We found some metal to fabricate the supports and went to shore to weld using another cruiser’s welding equipment and our portable generator. However, the Honda could not provide enough power for long welds. So, we ended up going to the Commune and asked to power up. They were great! They opened up their welding shop, let us use the welding table, power, and even brought over welding gear (which we did not use). – Sugar Shack

3.5.3.9 Medical Center

Mar. 2021: +689 40.978.216. Hours: Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri: 0730-1200 & 1330-1530. Tues: 0630-1200 & 1330-1530. From the main dock, turn left, the medial center will be on the right (before Gendarmerie) it is a large white one-story building. As of late 2019, there is a full-time physician on staff (except when he is on holidays). Nurses are always in office. They will post on the exterior wall when specialty physicians (dentist, gynecologist, etc...) swill be on island. Be sure to avoid Monday and Tuesday mornings and Friday afternoons as they tend to be the busiest hours. – Sugar Shack

3.5.3.10 Printing

Jan. 2023: Titouan and Juliette offer “yacht services” including printing documents. New contact: Located in front of the boulangerie and Keali market. WhatsApp +336 86 04 71 88 or +689 87 26 2299. You can also reach them on Vini +689 87 76 31 48 or +689 87 26 22 99. Email aubin.juliette30@gmail.com and titouan.fafournoux@gmail.com. – Sugar Shack

Mar. 2021: RKT Print +689 87 73 06 49. Hours: Mon-Fri: 1300-1600 and Sat: 0800-1200. Located directly across the street from Magasin Jojo’s. From dock, turn right down the main road and it is on the left. There is a sign on the fence with “RKT Print” and “Ariimata Production.” They do printing, scanning, photo copies, photos (passports, Carte de sejure). – Sugar Shack

3.5.3.11 Post Office (OPT)

March 2021: Hours: Mon-Thurs: 0730-1500; Fri: 0730-1400 (hours will vary depending on season). The post office is located just off the main street. Turn left from dock, pass the Gendarmerie and make your next left. It is a yellow building with large satellite dish on your left. You can easily spot the post office from the anchorage, it’s the building with the big satellite dish and high antenna.

The post office will exchange U.S. dollars for XPF/CFP at the rate of 100/1. The post office no longer accepts Euros. The post office will also accept payment for pharmaceuticals with a doctor’s order, will sell Vini top up cards, and assist you with shipping items. – Sugar Shack

3.5.3.12 Shipping items to/from Gambier

See section 1.6.6 for shipping parcels on Air Tahiti and on the Supply Ship (Taporo 8 and Nuku Hao).

3.5.3.13 Transportation

Mar. 2021: Kirimiro Cars Location +689 87 75 09 or merevai.hereiti@gmail.com. Sandrine Gooding will rent a nice four door SUV/truck for about 10000xpf / day or if you rent by the week 60000xpf / day. – Sugar Shack

3.5.3.14 Wifi

Jan. 2023: Titouan and Juliette offer “yacht services” including wifi. New contact: Located in front of the boulangerie and Keali market. WhatsApp +336 86 04 71 88 or +689 87 26 2299. You can also reach them on Vini +689 87 76 31 48 or +689 87 26 22 99. Email aubin.juliette30@gmail.com and titouan.fafournoux@gmail.com. – Sugar Shack

Mar. 2021: You can get Vini 2G in Rikitea and around Aukena (when the 2nd tower is working). GoogleFi works when and where Vini works. Keep in mind internet is poor in Gambier, try to enjoy the beauty of the archipelago and disconnect (it’s hard, I know!). You can also purchase goods or lunch at JoJo’s and use their internet. Do not linger or congregate at JoJo’s as they will shut down the internet. Be polite, buy something, use the internet quickly and leave. – Sugar Shack

Feb. 2020: JoJo’s has two routers and they will “allow” you to use the one in the back (closest to the anchorage) if you purchase something. The other router (for the magasin and café) is used for the credit card machine at JoJo’s and they don’t like cruisers using that access point.

Magasin JoJo's is no longer offering free wifi at the café because too many cruisers took advantage of their generosity. If you purchase a lunch, they "may" provide the wifi code during your lunch visit.

Vini and GoogleFi worked sporadically. It works better when you were on the Aukena tower and not using the Mangareva tower. It is a 2G signal and is best late at night or early in the morning. – Sugar Shack

March 2019: The best internet connection we had was at Kirakira Jojo's, the grocery/ hardware/snack bar. If you are a customer, you can use their wifi for free. Simple and good cooking, decent prices. – Chugach

3.5.3.15 Wood Working Shop

Menuiserie is located on the main road. From the main dock, turn right, walk .6 miles and it will be on the left.

3.5.4 Provisions

There are several magasins and a bakery in Rikitea, Mangareva. No other island in Gambier has magasins.

Bakery Hours: Mon-Sat: 0530-0630 and 1330-1430. Location right from the main dock, next to Magasin Keali on the right (before JoJo's). It has large wooden doors. Baguettes are delicious (80xpf). If you buy more than 5 you might be given a reusable baguette bag.

- **Jan. 2023:** Titouan and Juliette bake and sell fresh bread three days per week. It is best to order ahead of time. Located in front of the boulangerie and Keali market. WhatsApp +336 86 04 71 88 or +689 87 26 2299. You can also reach them on Vini +689 87 76 31 48 or +689 87 26 22 99. Email aubin.juliette30@gmail.com and titouan.fournoux@gmail.com. – Sugar Shack
- **Jan. 2022:** The Magasins started carrying baked goods (early in the morning) including baguettes, croissants, and other sweet treats. I found them at Jojo's, Terehere, and Leille. – Sugar Shack
- **Mar. 2021:** You can reserve baguettes at Magasin Jojo's and Magasin Terehere the day before and pick them up in the morning from that magasin.
- **March 2015:** Walking up the main road to the right you reach a minimarket with an attached bakery. The bakery no longer accepts reservations, but switched to a first-come-first-serve system. It's only open around 5 in the morning and around 3 in the afternoon—that's when the baguettes get out of the oven and can be picked up warm. – Pitufa
- **June 2013:** The bakery has delicious baguettes for around 80 US cents and croissants and pain au chocolate during the weekends. You have to reserve what you want beforehand. – Irie

Magasin – JoJo's: Hours: Mon-Fri: 0800-1800, Sat: 0800-1200 and Sun: 1000-1200. Location: right from main dock, right hand side with red awning, no sign. You can also access JoJo's from the anchorage by beaching your dinghy. There is a café attached to the magasin. The magasin offers a good variety of food, frozen meats and beverages. They usually have fresh produce out the day after the supply ship comes, but they run out quickly. In addition, to the café and magasin, JoJo's offers the following services:

- Baked goods (early in the morning) including baguettes, croissants, sweet treats
- Gasoline for sell (\$10/gallon, yep!)
- Propane (French bottles) for sell
- Laundry service for very reasonable pricing. Takes about 2-3 days.
- Internet is sometimes offered, but they request you purchase food when using their wifi.
- **Mar. 2021:** We shopped primarily at JoJo's because we could walk amongst the products, pull what we needed, find items we didn't know we needed and browse (like in the U.S.). It was easier for us than pointing across the counter at the other magasins. Plus, the prices were about the same and the variety of product was good. – Sugar Shack

Magasin Terehere +689 40 97 83 11. Hours: Mon-Sat: 0530-1200 & 1500-1800. Sun: 0530-1200. Located across from Gendarmerie and Post Office street (left main dock, on right hand side). As you face the counter, to the right is a small hardware store. James who works here speaks good English and is very cruiser friendly.

- **Mar. 2021:** They have a good selection of meats, liquor, snacks, cheeses. Sometimes they will allow you to go behind the counter to browse more easily (when locals are not around). They have a good selection of produce and are the first to put it out after the Taporo visits. – Sugar Shack

Magasin Leille +689 40 97 84 83. Hours: Mon-Sat: 0800-1800. Left from main dock, on left hand side, under a huge tree. Some people refer to this store as the “Chinese store” or the “Tree Store.” They have home goods and some hardware items. They also sell propane by reservation.

- **Mar. 2021:** You stand behind a counter and tell them what you want which is odd and difficult when you don't speak French or Mangarevan. They often have a good selection of produce and frozen meats. They have one small area for home goods and assorted hardware items. You have to trust them to select your produce which can be good or bad. They are very large and have a large selection of food if you can just ask for it. – Sugar Shack
- **March 2015:** If you take the main road to the left (south) coming from the main dock you'll find the biggest mini-market on the left-hand side (it's a bit set back from the road under a big tree). – Pitufa

Magasin Keali: +689 40 97 83 73 magasinkeali@gmail.com. Located next to the baker. Main dock, turn right, on right. Small supply of provisions.

- **April 2021:** Next to the bakery. Open throughout the day with no closure during lunch. They are best stocked after the ship comes in. They're not as well stocked as the other magasins. – Sugar Shack
- **March 2015:** The shop next door to the bakery is usually open from morning till evening without lunch break. On Sundays it's closed during church and in the afternoon. – Pitufa

Magasin Kirimiro (about 1.2 miles from Rikitea). +689 40 97 84 29. Hours: Mon-Thurs: 0630-1130 & 1500-1800. Fri-Sat: 0630-1130 & 1400-1800. Sun: 0630-1100. From dock, turn right, take Kirimiro Trail (across from JoJo's) and hike up over the hill. Or you can go left, take road just before St. Michael, go up over hill, past Mt Duff/Mt Mokoto entrance, continue down road (about 2.3 miles) but along a road, not a trail.

- **Dec. 2020:** They offer a little less expensive products, liquors and beers. For example, a case of 20 beers at JoJo's is 7200 and at Kirimiro it is 6500. It is a bit of a walk or hike (depending on which way you go), but good way to get exercise and see a different magasin. – Sugar Shack

Moana Café: Located on main road. From main dock, turn right, walk .4 miles on the right. Small sign out front. It is not actually a café, but they do sell ice (glace) and fresh fish when they have it. Very nice people.

Fresh Eggs: March 2020: There's a local chicken farm where you can purchase eggs directly. Walk up the road towards the pass, after 5 minutes you'll probably smell it (on the left side of the road, next to the geophysical station). You can also call Yves on VHF 16 and ask him to meet you at the main dock. He sells 20 eggs for 800xpf – Pitufa

Titouan and Juliette: Located in front of the boulangerie and Keali market. WhatsApp +336 86 04 71 88 or +689 87 26 2299. You can also reach them on Vini +689 87 76 31 48 or +689 87 26 22 99. Email aubin.juliette30@gmail.com and titouan.fafournoux@gmail.com .

- **Jan. 2023:** In addition to tasty loaves of bread, they are also selling juices, lemonade, smoothies and milkshakes. – Sugar Shack

3.5.4.1 Cruiser Reports on Provisions

Mar. 2021: The red-labeled items are still the best deal in town as they are subsidized by the government. Usually includes staple items. Best time to get fresh produce is the day of or day after the ship arrives. However, you can make friends with the locals to buy or trade for fresh produce including lettuce, avocados, oranges, limes, papaya, mango, peppers, watermelon, potatoes, etc...

The supply ships do not come during the holidays so there is a period of 6/8 weeks with no deliveries. If you arrive in December/January be aware that the magasins may run out of everything including basics like flour and rice (which has happened during our stay). – Sugar Shack

Feb 2021 – We ordered a delivery online via www.sipac.pf. You can order groceries and wine for delivery to the islands. Payment is online by credit card. The website also details the ship schedules and cutoff order dates. The actual process of ordering was quite difficult not because of the website which is very good, but due to poor wifi. Make sure you have a good connection when you proceed to the payment page because if it fails you will lose your basket and have to start again. You will receive email confirmation of your order and when the ship arrives you can collect the paperwork from a tray next to the mobile ship office and this will indicate which containers your goods are in. When the container is opened, they will call out names for each package. This can take quite a long time especially if you order frozen goods which gets opened last. The quality and pricing of the goods including fruit and vegetables was very good. –Ari B

March 2015: The red-labeled prices are subsidized by the state and usually the cheapest.

The shops are stocked with basic food, but even these items can run out when the supply ships are delayed. After the arrival of the supply ship you have to be quick to get fresh vegetables (cabbages, potatoes, carrots, sometimes tomatoes, apples, cucumbers, or even grapes) and fresh dairy products.

The vegetables in the markets are sometimes half-frozen when they arrive and don't last very long. Local produce isn't available in the shops, but when you talk to people and make friends, you'll find that many grow their own fruits and veggies. This way we got Pamplemousses, lemons, papayas, bananas, manioc, reddish, breadfruit, tomatoes, green peppers, bok choy, lettuce, string beans, etc. – Pitufa

June 2013: When you arrive in the Gambier Islands with a stocked-up boat, all you need money for is some produce, eggs and baguettes. Staples like rice, sugar, flour, pasta, tomato sauce and chicken is subsidized and affordable. Eggs are expensive, about 60 cents apiece. Beers are expensive, about \$4 a bottle.

If you eat as the locals do, you'll be totally fine and actually have some cheap months while being here.

There are a few stores with basic staples in Rikitea, but don't expect much.

There is a good supply and assortment of frozen meat, the chicken being subsidized and quite affordable. In regards to fruit and vegetables, onions, garlic and potatoes are ever-present.

Fresh produce when one of the two supply ships arrives (they each visit once a month), cabbage, carrots, apples, pears, oranges, kiwis, and sometimes lettuce and other goodies (once ginger!) are for sale. The best time to go and purchase these items is the morning after the supply ship leaves. The local supply is gone within a day or two of the ship arriving.

Your best bet is to befriend a local near town with a vegetable garden and trade fresh veggies for things they might desire. We baked goods and brought them as a thank you for the heaps of vegetables we collected over the weeks we were there. – Irie

3.5.5 Restaurants

Rikitea has a few "snacks" and restaurants. There are no eateries on the other islands.

Magasin JoJo's Hours: Mon-Sat. 1030-1330. Located: main dock, turn right, on right hand side with red awning, no sign (past the bakery). Sit under a covered patio or under a tree by the shore.

- April 2021: They have a basic breakfast and lunch menu which is pretty darn tasty and they sometimes offer internet. – Sugar Shack

Pension Chez JoJo's: +689 40 97 84 69 or +689 87 75 35 16 or +689 87 76 36 25. pensionchezjojo@mail.pf. Located on main road. From main dock, turn right, walk 2.7 miles on the right. Call head to make reservation or see if they are serving to non-pension guests.

PizzAtomic: CLOSED INDEFINELY. Hours: Fri-Sun evenings only (after 1700). Left from the north dock (by the sport center), on the left-hand side is a great pizza take out. They offer an 8-piece pizza for \$10-\$13. Lots of tasty flavors.

- **Dec. 2021:** The family had to close PizzaAtomic for personal reasons. They may reopen in 2023.
- **March 2021:** We called and ordered our pizza at 1700 and it was ready at 1715, piping hot, smelling good and super tasty! Loads of toppings, tasty ingredients, and nice folks. – Sugar Shack
- **Feb. 2020:** The pizzeria was refurbished last year and is take-away only. – Pitufa
- **March 2015:** The Pizza place is yet further up the road (just before the multi-purpose hall), (open Friday to Sunday from 17.15). – Pitufa

Pizzeria Aro +689 87 76 59 41. Hours: Thurs-Sun: 5:00pm until they sell out (approximately 8:00pm) Location: main dock, turn left, on the right-hand side (across from Snack Choutime). Take out only. Call ahead and order early. They have several types of pizzas with meats, veggies, and fish ranging from 1100-1800xpf.

- **April 2020:** We placed our order at 1730 and it was ready about 50 minutes later. They spoke pretty good English and delivered our pizzas as ordered (we removed items and added other items). The crust could have been cooked a little longer, but overall, it was not bad. More expensive than the PizzAtomic and maybe not as tasty, but not bad. – Sugar Shack

Snack Choutime: +689 87 20 61 67. Turn left from main dock and it will be on the left-hand side. Located across from Pizzeria Aro. They offer to-go meals including fried chicken and chicken chow mein.

Snack Teavaa: +689 40 97 83 10 and +689 87 75 04 01. Hours: Mon-Tues: 0930-1300. Wed-Sat: 0930-1300 & 1730-1945. Located to the left of the main dock, on right hand side (at the Artisan market). Take out and eat in with a decent menu that changes frequently. Very tasty food.

Snack Moemoea: +689 40 97 84 40. Hours: Mon-Fri: 0900-1400. Location: Main dock, turn left, past Gendarmerie, turn left toward Post Office, make next right onto 2nd road, eatery is on the left side. Offers really delicious meals at reasonable prices.

Chez TinTin: +689 87 77 74 863. Located on main road, left hand side.

Snack SGR: Hours: Mon, Wednesday, Friday lunch and to go orders only. Location: Turn left on main road from dock, turn right on road that goes between Mt. Duff and Mt. Mokoto (just after St. Michael Church. Plates are 500xpf each.

3.5.6 Activities

3.5.6.1 Diving and Snorkeling

March 2015: Rikitea: Interestingly enough, you don't have to go far to find good snorkeling spots. Just outside the anchorage off Rikitea you find a beautiful coral garden with plenty of fish.

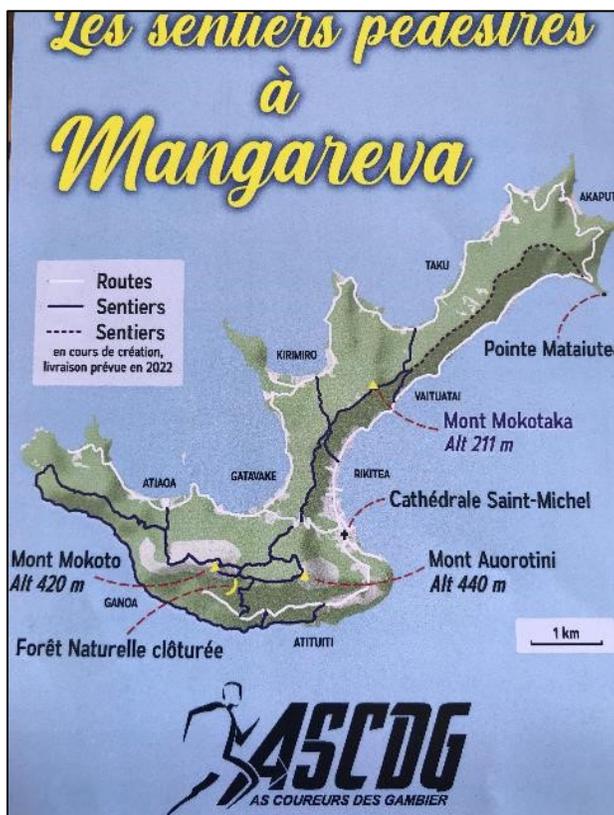
The fish are generally big and not scared of divers. The reason for this behavior is a disease that occurs quite often in subtropical and tropical waters: Ciguatera. Microscopically small Dinoflagellates containing ciguatoxin live on the reefs. The toxin is harmless for fish, but accumulates in individuals and along the food chain (big predators that feed on reef fish contain especially large quantities).

Ciguatoxin's extremely dangerous for humans and other mammals. It's a neurotoxin and the symptoms reach from nausea, tingling sensations in the limbs to cramps and death. People who survived a strong case of ciguatera may suffer from it for the rest of their lives.

Locals know which fish are safe to eat, but the safest solution for cruisers is not to eat any fish caught in the lagoon. That's bad for the menu on board, but guarantees a marvelous underwater world! – Pitufa

3.5.6.2 Hikes and Walks

There are lots of great hiking trails and paths in Mangareva. The map below shows several trails including the ridge line, trail to Mt. Duff (Mt. Auorotini), Mt. Mokoto, Kirimiro, Pointe Mataiutea (Queen's throne) and more.



Mar. 2021: 5.9 miles. We took Chemin Kirimiro to Taku (Pt Teauorogo) to Chemin Ramapiko. We decided to tackle the hardest incline first so we started on Chemin Kirimiro (starts across the street from Magasin JoJo's). It is a steep and consistent incline that leads you to Arc de Triomphe de Kirimiro. From here you can walk the ridge to the left or right. You can also go under and through the arc and continue down to the small village of Kirimiro which is what we did. Once we got to Kirimiro, we turned right and walked along the road for 2.1 miles until we got to another small village (meaning 3 houses) called Apeakava. From here we hiked up and down the Chemin Taku trail which connects with Chemin Ramapiko and leads you back to another road. From there it is was a short 1.2 mile walk back to the dinghy dock.

Walk the Ridge: 5.4 miles. Healthy walk along the ridge in Rikitea. From main dock, turn left. Turn right on the street across from Air Tahiti (just before the main church) and go uphill. At the water tower, turn right and walk to the right of the fence (which is right of the cell tower and water tower). The trail is pretty easy to follow and will have two ropes to go down and 3 ropes to go up. It is best to wait several days after it rains as it is really muddy and slippery (especially with the pine needles). When you reach the Arc de Triomphe de Kirimiro you can decide to continue on the ridge (which we did) or you can descend and end up at JoJo's. If you continue on the trail will descend and put you out on the road. Super nice, mostly in the shade, hike with cool views of the anchorage. – Sugar Shack

Feb. 2021: Mt. Mokoto round trip via Atiaoha From Mokoto there is a trail that continues along the ridge in a westerly direction and then drops down through the forest to Atiaoha on the north side of the ridge. The trail was well marked until the last 200m where the red paint marks on the trees stopped (work in progress

apparently) and it was a bit of a bushwhack to the road. From Atiaoha follow the dirt road to the right and come back on the main road over the pass. – Ari B

Feb 2021: From the top of chemin traverserie Taku or Kirimoro you can walk south along the ridge all the way to the pass on the main road and then take the road back down to the village. – Ari B

Jan. 2021: We spent time walking many, if not all, of the trails here on Mangareva. As a general comment, they were all in pretty good condition and well maintained. Several have ropes attached between to trees providing some security on the steeper ground. The problem they are there to mitigate are the many pine needles on the ground. These can be super slippery and holding onto the rope can provide a bit more security.

The two 'bigger, more iconic' walks, up Mount Duff and Mount Mokoto are easy to follow and have ropes in a few places to aid the ascent and descent. Get off your boat and up a hill! It's definitely worth the physical effort for the views of the archipelago. The walk across the ridge at the back of the anchorage in Rikitea was a little sketchy in a couple of places but still worth doing in my humble opinion!

And the 20km walk on the 'road / track' around the island of Mangareva gives you great views of the extent of the pearl farming here. It's a bit up and down, but start early and you'll still be back in the village for lunch at Jojo's. Or hitch a ride back if you'd had your fill of walking. There are other trails so have fun exploring. Walking is a lovely way to meet locals and we experienced generosity coming home with rucksacks full of fruit. – Grace of Longstone

Jan. 2020: We decided to do a "moderate" hike as we had been hanging in the Tuamotus and needed to warm up. Instead of hiking up Mt. Duff or Mt. Mokoto, we hiked between them and around Mt. Duff. It was a 6.8-mile hike up about 93 floors (according to Apple Health). The trail was recently cleared and super easy to find. From main dingy dock, turn left, pass St. Michael church and make first right up the road. Follow this road past the cemetery, past the convent, and past the recycling area. This is about 3.5 miles from town. You will come across a large sign on your right at the start of the trail (it is a wide, dirt trail). If you follow this trail up you will come across lots of informative signs on the flora and fauna. At the gap, the trail will have an "intersection" where you can go to Mt. Duff or Mt. Mokoto. Veer towards Mt. Duff (right) and you will see the trail heading down. This trail will take you back to the village unless of course you want to continue on to climb either Mt. Duff or Mt. Mokoto. After this hike I was exhausted. Not the "moderate" hike I had anticipated since I was not in shape, but a good hike none the less.

Pt. Mataiutea: Very easy walk/hike about 7 miles round trip. From main dock, turn right and walk along the road all the way to the tip of the island. The road will turn to a dirt road, then back to concrete, then back to dirt. About 3.4m from the dock you will see a sign for "Pt. Mataiutea" where you turn right. Walk down the little trail to the large tree for beautiful views across the lagoon in several directions. – Sugar Shack

There are lots and lots of wonderful hikes on Mangareva including Mt. Duff, Mt. Mokoto, three trails off the Kirimoro trail, the 12 Apostle trail, the hike to the dump and more. Check out WikiLok or Maps.me for trails and see below.

Please note that the locals recommend doing the ALL hikes at least 2 days after it rains. They can be very dangerous if walked after a rain as they are all muddy and slippery. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: Mangareva is great for hiking. A partly paved road leads around the island (leaving out only the mountainous southern tip) and you can do nice round trips via the two 'Chemin traversier', the pass over the saddle and the coastal main road. Hiking tracks were reasonably well maintained when we were there. – Pitufa

May 2013: Mangareva with the capital Rikitea offers many great hikes with amazing views. Most of the trails are well-maintained. You can also follow the paved road around most of the island. You can visit the majestic church in town or the grave of the last king up one of the hills. – Irie

Mt. Kirimoro

- **March 2015:** Walk up the chemin traversier Kirimoro (dirt track opposite the shop with the restaurant clearly marked by a sign) that leads you through a beautiful forest up the ridge and down again to the

west coast of the island. Walking left you then follow the coastal road along the turquoise lagoon. When you reach a crossing take the left road that leads you up the saddle (there's a viewpoint on top, follow the sign "Belle vue") and back over the saddle to Rikitea (ca. 2-3 hours). – Pitufa

Round-trip Taku

- **March 2015:** Walk north along the coastal road, until you reach the chemin traversier Taku (marked by a sign). The track also leads you up the ridge with great views of the anchorage. When you reach the main road on the other side, walk right. You'll soon reach the abandoned village Taku with its pretty church. The main road leads then to the northern cape of the island (two marked viewpoints) and back along the east coast to Rikitea (ca. 4-5 hours). – Pitufa

Mt. Duff or Mt. Mokoto

- **May 2019:** These hikes offers the most spectacular views you will find on the island and anchorage. The trails will take about 1.5-2 hours to hike up and 1-1.5 hours down. – Sugar Shack
- **March 2015:** Walk left from the main dock and up the main road to the pass (viewpoint "Belle vue" on top). Descending on the other side you'll find the clearly marked track to either Mount Duff or Mokoto. The first part of the track's the same for both mountains, approximately a third of the distance up you'll reach a sign that leads you either left up Mount Duff (slightly higher, steep, but not difficult unless it's muddy and slippery after a rain) or on the right to Mokoto (slightly steeper). Both peaks have incredible views all over the lagoon and the islands. It takes 1/2 hour to get to the beginning of the track and then 1.5 hours to the top. – Pitufa
- **April 2010:** Hiking Mount Duff: One of the cruiser things to do here in Mangareva is to hike to the top of Mt. Duff. Without much information about where EXACTLY the path to Mt. Duff was, we set out on the road out of town. One of the storekeepers in town that speaks English drew me a sketch map that helped us get on the right road. But his sketch was rough and turned out to not be quite accurate. He showed a path coming off the left side of a curve in the road, and that was accurate, it was WHICH curve that was the problem.

We walked around the first curve, and there it was, properly marked with a sign that said Mt. Duff. Once on the right path, it was actually a very pleasant walk thru a pine forest--a nice improved path for the tourists. A skinny friendly German Shepherd joined us and had a good time romping with us.

We got to a Y in the path, with 2 signs in Polynesian, one pointing one way and one pointing the other. Neither said Mt. Duff! (this is a British name). If we had actually known when we started WHICH peak was Mt. Duff, it would have been easier. Our dog friend wanted to go to the right. We almost followed him. But Bill said the path to the left looked a little more worn. Hmm... follow the dog who lives here or the cruiser who doesn't?? We followed Bill and went left.

After the Y in the path, we scrambled up, still in pine forest. The slippery pine needles made the going tricky. In a few spots, there were lines between trees with knots in them, placed to help us go up and down the steep slope. At the very end, we got above the tree-line, and the path switched to high grass. Now, Bill was way ahead of us, out of sight, and Jo and Sue and I kept telling each other that there were no snakes in Paradise.

We finally made it to the top and climbed up on the rock outcropping. Wow, wow, WOW! What a view! We could see 50 miles in every direction. Out to the surrounding reef and well beyond. It was a beautiful clear day and we got some great shots of the clear water below. – Soggy Paws



3.5.6.3 Points of Interest

Artisan market: +689 87 71 95 78 tarano.linda71@gmail.com. Hours: Mon-Sat: 0700-1530. Located left of main dock across from the Gendarmerie. On the right-hand side (near Snack Teava) Sells jewelry, hats, carved pearl shells. They have several artisans that sell beautiful pearl jewelry in variety of prices. Locals have set up tables on the porch and sell pearls, jewelry and other local wares.

Carving School “College St. Raphael Rikitea +689 40 97 82 89. The carving school behind the church is worth a visit (free, with a little shop). Take main road past church and enter the school’s main entrance. Ask for a tour of the carving school. The carving teach is Hefara. Hours: Mon: 1300-1600; Tues: 0900-1130; Thurs: 0900-1130 & 1300-1600, Fri: 0900-1130. They do sell carved pearl shells, jewelry, clocks, boxes, and more. Very cool experience.

St. Michael’s Church is beautiful and has a pearl inlaid alter.

3.5.6.4 Buying Pearls and Pearl Shells

Mar. 2021: I’ve been told that people selling pearls change hands a lot, but I felt it was worthy of posting the information current as of March 2021 (and they have been around since April 2019).

Gambier offers the most colorful and reasonably priced pearls in all of French Polynesia. You may purchase pearls from an artisan jeweler or pearl farmer. Below is a list of lovely locals selling pearls. – Sugar Shack

Taina Pearl and Keishi Pearls +689 87 76 26 79, tainapearlandkeishi@gmail.com. Taina (pronounced Ta-ena) sells remarkable, top quality pearl jewelry in sterling silver and 18k gold. You must make an appointment to see her jewelry. She is a very gifted and creative jewelry maker and speaks a little English. She is located left of main dock, past St. Michael’s church, continue straight until street dead ends to Catholic monument. Her 2-story wooden house is located behind the monument. She has a blue vehicle in the driveway when she is home. Be sure to contact her to schedule an appointment to see her remarkable jewelry! I would say some of the prettiest, most reasonably priced jewelry in French Polynesia!

Eric has a nice collection of pearl jewelry, loose pearls, and a beautiful artifact collection. He is located past St. Michael’s church, on right hand side. There is a small sign on his fence post. I found his pearls to be less than perfect, yet very expensive.

Mike at the pension (yellow house seen from Rikitea anchorage) also sells fish and pearls. You need to make an appointment but he will sell loose pearls. – Sugar Shack

Matarereragi Carving (Hand carved and artfully created jewelry, oyster shells and pearls). **CLOSED INDEFINITELY.** Stephan (also known as Tanavai) and Manu sell a variety of pearl jewelry (necklaces, earrings, carved pearls, bracelets), keychains, magnets, and intricately designed and hand carved oyster shells. The shells are some of the most unique, stunning pieces of artwork you will find and they are reasonably priced from \$20-\$75. He will even carve your boat logo and name on a shell. He is located left of the main dock. Turn right on the dirt road, just before the small white/blue church. Cross small bridge. His house is the first house on the left. He has Facebook (Tanavai Paeamara) and Instagram accounts (@GambierCarving) where you can see some of his work.

April 2010: If you are coming through French Polynesia via the Gambier, that’s the place to buy the famous black pearls. They are reputed to be better quality and less cost than anywhere else in French Polynesia. We found lots of pearl farms there, but only one pearl ‘shop’ in Rikitea. The pearl farms in the Gambier do not seem to want to sell directly to the public. – Visions of Johanna

3.5.6.5 Pearl Farm Tours

Feb. 2021: There is a new pearl farm tour called Nanihi Pearl Tour run by Mohea and Heiarii. +689 87 30 96 05. email: teriipaia.mohea@gmail.com. Facebook: Nanihi Pearl. Closed on Sundays. Typically a 3 hour tour between 0900-1200.

May 2020: We found several pearl farms that are great to visit, they spoke English and gave great explanations and instructions on pearl farming.

Dada Keck runs a small, but profitable pearl farm (about 100k sellable pearls annually). Dada speaks fluent English and showed us the entire pearl harvest process. He will sell pearls as well. He has been featured in several magazines and is truly a gifted artist and speaker. We enjoyed his tour several times. We anchored in North Totegegie and took our dinghy across the lagoon (1.2nm) to his pearl farm which in Baie D'Akaputu near Pointe Tapaeture in a blue pearl house. There is a row of 4 houses and his is 2nd from the right (approximate waypoint 23°04.3735S / 134°56.0447Ws).

Michele at Pension Mauri +689 87 77 46 38. He offers a tour for about 1000xpf per person. He is located on the other side of the hill from Rikitea (near Kirimiro). He speaks a little English and is really nice. He sells loose pearls when in stock. – Sugar Shack

March 2019: Excellent pearl farm visit at Pension Maro'I (guest house) in Baie de Gatavake. The owner Michelle also operates a pearl farm. He organizes a visit every week day at 9am (if he has customers). Cost is 1000 CFP/ person. He speaks English. Reaching the pension is a 40 mn walk from the dinghy dock. – Chugach

Eric Sr. and Eric Jr. are located off of Motu Gaioio (south of Totegegie-airport). +689 87 75 91 64. Larger operation (200k pearls annually). They are not fond of doing tours as it distracts from their business. They are a super nice family.

April 2010: We had an opportunity to visit a pearl farm here in the Gambier.

We did an informal tour with Benoit at his pearl farm about a 20-minute walk out of town. s

The first thing we learned is that the pearl farming work is usually done at a little building on stilts built over the water. We had thought those quaint little houses on the water were for living in, but it turns out to be a convenient way to deal with the pearl activities without stinking up the town. And of course, it is easier for the coming and going of the oysters, etc. People commute to work from town every day in launches/pangas.

We arrived on shore and waved. They sent a launch for us and loaded all 9 of us up in the launch and took us out to their building. Benoit's son gave us a nice explanation of the process.

The first step in the pearl farming process is get oysters of the right size and development and implant both a seed pearl and a tiny chip of oyster shell into the gonads. The Japanese perfected this technique and some pearl farmers still use skilled Japanese workers to do this, though the Polynesians are learning how to do it.

Then they tie the oysters into racks and take them out in strings to their open water 'farm'. In the Gambier, you can see many pearl farm buoys scattered around the open parts of the lagoon.

Periodically, they must retrieve the racks and clean the oysters, as clean oysters are happy oysters, and produce better pearls.

Some pearl-producing oysters are recycled, seeded again, after producing a good pearl. Others are saved for their shells. You can also eat the oyster muscle (similar to a scallop).

The hope was, at a pearl farm, that not only would we get some insight into pearl farming, but also be able to buy some pearls at a discount. Alas, it seems that all their production is controlled and they are not supposed to sell their pearls from the farm. There is a nice shop in town that has individual pearls and pearls in settings (rings, earrings, bracelets, and necklaces). – Soggy paws

3.5.6.6 Polynesian Dancing

Feb. 2019: We were lucky enough to arrive in mid-April just when the Heritage Festival was starting. This festival occurs once every three years (next one 2022) and it was fantastic. The days were filled with sporting events and competitions while the nights were full of Polynesian dancing with performers from Tahiti, Rapa Nui, and Gambier. – Sugar Shack

July 2013: Since Mark and I arrived in the Gambier Islands, the end of May, the two competing dance groups (troupes) of Mangareva, the main island, have been practicing for their big local festival in July. Every evening

we were anchored in Rikitea, we could hear the drumming echoing over the bay, from two directions. We had dinner on Irie with live Polynesian background music, I did the dishes on the rhythm of the drums and we fell asleep imagining the band and the dancers, the now familiar beats fresh in our minds. A few nights, while being on shore in the evening, we checked out the rehearsals and they were impressive.

The Heiva festivities took place from July 5th through July 14th (Bastille Day in France and the day the Polynesians were allowed to start practicing their dances again after years of them being banned by the missionaries), right behind our boat. The first weekend, the weather was awful. Mark and I managed to make it to shore for the first evening, when the dance groups were being introduced. The event happened in a big hangar, where the impressive sounds were reflected on the walls for an even more imposing effect. The costumes were a bit weak, but the dancing was great. The following afternoon, the sun peeked out for a little while. Most cruisers went ashore for a private performance. One of the groups passed by all the houses and by a location for the boating crowd, to collect some money. The festival usually starts with this tradition, called “tapena”, but the weather was too crappy that first day.

Too much wind and too much rain made us miss out on the Miss and Mister Mangareva elections. We were all stuck on our boats until the following Thursday, when the dance competition started in earnest. That evening, both troupes performed the “Pe’l” dance, a typical Mangarevan dance where stomping on the ground with the feet is prominent. The dances are long and depict a story. The stage is decorated with replica huts and other props for the scenes, bamboo rafts and weapons are carried and the costumes are very exotic. It was an entertaining evening.

On Friday night, the Polynesian dances “Ote’a” and “Aparima” took place. The weather allowed both groups to dance and drum outside again. The costumes were amazing, the drumming fantastic and the performances incredible. It was a cultural experience pleasing all our senses. Taking pictures was hard again because of the low light, but we all enjoyed the performances a lot.

Saturday night, many people stayed home again, because of the cold and windy weather. In the hangar, the best female dancer, best male dancer and best couple dancers competed before the jury, as well as both bands. The effect indoors is very different from outdoors. The participants received a lot of applause, but the results would not become known until the following day.

On Sunday, the 14th of July (14 Juillet), the closing ceremony started at 11 am. Together with most villagers, all dressed up, and cruisers, the sun was present for a few hours. Mark and I rowed ashore to give ourselves more flexibility in the shallows and heading back out later. Our sometimes-unreliable dinghy engine could get us in trouble with the strong onshore wind. The female mayor gave a speech and both troupes showed more dancing and drumming. The award ceremony and prize giving went satisfactory according to our preferences and tastes; we mostly agreed with the jury. The event was concluded with free drinks and snacks, while a group of performers and locals spontaneously started playing music, singing and dancing. This is the only day in the year that alcohol is not frowned upon, but a real party never emerged. By 9pm, the Heiva festival was finished. Forget about fireworks. We have never been anchored so close to shore with festivities going on, while they were barely noticeable and we could sleep at night!

Being here for the Polynesian festival was great (although the one in Tahiti would have been more impressive and livelier) and not to be missed, but the weather could have been better. The cost for this cultural experience – other than some cash to support the groups – was two pairs of flipflops, which were stolen from our beached dinghy last night. From now on Rikitea will be different, without the daily sounds of the drumming... and without shoes! – Irie

3.5.7 Cruiser Reports

Jan. 2021: The population in Gambier are very friendly! They are super generous and kind and often seek you out. Do not pick any fruit from the trees without asking for permission. More than likely, they will give it to you but it is always nice to give them something in return. – Sugar Shack

May 2013: In general, the people on Mangareva are pretty friendly, saying “bonjour” in town and waving while driving their big trucks. Sometimes, during a longer walk, you will encounter locals handing you Pamplemousses (massive grapefruit) or other fruit. The people living in the other islands of the archipelago are even more welcoming, friendly and social. The exception is the pearl farmers in the village of Aukena, where they prefer yachts not to anchor. – Irie

3.6 Ile Aukena (Bernard’s Island)

Bernard’s house is located just below the saddle (between the two mountains) and he prefers and strongly suggests that cruisers do not park within 100 meters of his house (in front or to either side of his house). Please respect his wishes and park outside of his view to avoid an ugly encounter.

The northern side of Aukena is privately owned by Robert Wan (large pearl farmer) and access is strictly prohibited.

3.6.1 Anchorages and Moorings

Feb. 2022: 23°08.0247S / 134°55.0324W dropped the hook in 4 meters of sand free of bommies. Always beautiful here with a nice breeze and pretty waters. – Sugar Shack

March 2020: 23°08.011S / 134°54.976W in 4.9 meters of sand. After weaving around tons of pearl floats from Rikitea to Aukena we arrived to beautiful turquoise water. There were several bommies that we skirted on a bright, sunny, calm day when we made the short motor (as we had less than 3 kts of wind).

23°07.781S / 134°54.374W dropped the hook in 4 meters of sand and floated back in 6 meters of sand. We are a little close to the reef, but found that during a maramu we had no problem. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: 23°07.962’S / 134°55.027’W in good-holding sand. However, anchorages off the southern part of Aukena can be somewhat roly. Better spots can be found further NE just above Pte Puirau.

Aukena cannot be approached directly as thousands of buoys for pearl farming block the way. We were told to stay in a narrow channel between the buoys and the reef that connects Mangareva and Aukena.

Don’t rely on the charts here but use your eyes! A chart inaccuracy seems to be around 23°07.90’S 134°55.46’W, where we navigated even closer to the reef to avoid a wrongly charted coral head as well as the many buoys. The buoys reach very close to the reef so you have to wiggle through at some places... A further complication is the fact that new buoys are set continuously (on the way back we wanted to follow our GPS track which had been blocked by a new set of buoys in the meantime...)

As soon as you’ve reached Aukena you can sail further up north hugging the coast closely. Take great care to navigate around the numerous coral heads along the shore of Aukena. – Pitufa

June 2013: Anchoring is possible in different areas along the south western shore, but not in front of the village at the North. Depending on the incoming swell, one might want to move more to the north, in front of a long beach. Watch the coral heads. – Irie

3.6.2 Activities

June 2013: There are easy trails to the southern point of the island and all throughout the forest to some ruins and a nice beach. There is also a trail to the top of the mountain range, with a spectacular view. Snorkeling on the SE side of the island, protected by reefs, is amazing. – Irie

3.6.3 Cruiser Reports

Feb. 2020: Bernard who lives at the beach below the low saddle in the middle of the island does not want cruisers to anchor in front of his home unless they have asked his permission before dropping the hook (which he rarely grants). The northern side of Aukena is privately owned by Robert Wan (pearl farmer) and is off limits for cruisers. – Pitufa

March 2015: The church of St. Raphael can be found in the southern part of Aukena. Antonio, who takes care of the church and its surrounding gardens, lives alone in the small house at the beach and always appreciates company. Whenever we came by, he gave us dozens of Papayas. – Pitufa

June 2013: Aukena is another beauty. Antonio, who takes care of the church grounds is a good source for info on the trails and is generous with his fruit. He doesn't drink or smoke, but he likes baked goods! – Irie

3.7 Ile Akamaru (Remy's Island)

Remy lives part time on the house boat and part time on island, he speaks a little English. He lives full time on the island but spends a lot of time on his house boat near Ile Mekiro. Remy +689 87 23 89 37 or Louise +689 87 25 22 51.

Yachts with shallow drafts (under 1.4 meters) can carefully navigate the coral heads to get to Remy's house boat where the water is about 2 meters. It makes for a beautiful and peaceful anchorage. However, it can be tricky for boats with deep drafts so be careful. Remy can help guide you in toward the shallow part of the lagoon next to his houseboat (as you have to navigate around many coral heads).

3.7.1 Anchorages and Moorings

Jan. 2022: 23°10.3559S / 134°55.0986W dropped in 1.5m of beautiful sandy, turquoise waters. No bommies, no obstructions, just perfect anchorage conditions. Of course, we have less than 10n of wind and no swell. – Sugar Shack

Dec. 2020: 23°11.904S / 134°55.495 depth 3.5m to sand (SW tip of Akamaru). After carefully maneuvering around large coral heads, we found a beautiful patch of sand. There was a little swell wrap from the opening between the two pieces of land, but negligible. Pretty spot with a nice breeze. – Sugar Shack

April 2020: 23°10.388S / 134°55.079W in 1.4 meters of sand (we draw 1.3 meters). Using the previous lat/long from March 2020 we proceeded around the coral heads during high tide at high noon on a calm day to enter the little lagoon near Remy's house boat. Only recommended during high tide, bright sun, on a clear, calm day as there are lots of bommies to avoid. Really pretty spot next to Remy's house boat which is right in front of Ile Mekiro (which is next to Akamaru). – Sugar Shack

March 2020: 23°10.109S / 134°55.264W. 1.6-meters of pure sandy water. We have a 1.3-meter draft and thought about going in to the lagoon next to Remy's house boat, but could not see a clear path without bommies. Plus, we were had strong winds that would make maneuvering tricky. We have 10-meters of chain and a full 360 degree turning radius and are super happy in the shallow, turquoise waters.

23°10.145S / 134°55.272W in 2 meters of gorgeous water on another visit.

23°10.693S / 134°55.453W in 3 meters, does not go into the sandy shelf (by Remy's boat house) as we noted above. Still a stunning place.

Some friends of ours tried to anchor in the little pass that led to the sandy shelf and found that it was only a thin layer of sand over coral which did not provide good holding in stronger winds. They were up most of the night keeping an eye on their boat and ended up moving the next morning.

Also, a reminder not to use the small mooring ball as it is only for small, local pangas.

Navionics shows a "Pass for boats" at 23°10.379S / 134.54.558W which is NOT a pass – it is a reef and is not passable. – Sugar Shack.

March 2015: To navigate into the inner lagoon N of Akamaru, your boat must draw less than 1.4m (clearly, we did not go there). Best to ask other cruisers who have been around the islands for a while for the way in.

23°09.993'S / 134°55.237'W. We anchored about 0.5nm N of the small island Mekiro in the still deeper basin. The charts are not much use here and coral heads are numerous. We used fenders to float our chain.

23°10.77'S / 134°55.45'W We anchored on a sandy patch in less than 10m on days with little southerly swell (<1.5m according to meteo.pf, i.e., 'fr.poly' from saildocs.com) anchoring is also possible west of the gap between Mekiro and Akamaru. – Pitufa

June 2013: Akamaru has a mooring ball in the deeper water north of the island, which the locals do not recommend. Vessels with a deeper draft can anchor in front of the mooring ball. Shallow draft sailboats can weave their way through dense patches of reef into a beautiful anchorage that is 4-6 feet in depth. Some swell rolls in, over the reefs, at high tide. We anchored there during extreme tides and it was pretty uncomfortable, even on our cat, so we only stayed one night! – Irie

3.7.2 Activities

Feb. 2020: There are lots of fun hikes you can do on Akamaru and Ile Mekiro. Here are a few we found enjoyable.

AKAMARU EASTERN SIDE: Take your dinghy to the beach located on the eastern side of Akamaru (you can see it from the anchorage). There is a small shack and outhouse just off the beach. From the beach you can hike straight up to the ridge. Then from there you can walk up and down the windy ridge trail to the large rock face. It is about an hour hike to the rock face and offers beautiful views.

ILE MEKIRO: You can hike to the top of Ile Mekiro which is just in front of Akamaru. Leave your dinghy on the small beach or tied to a rock. From the beach head straight up. The path is a little hard to find from the beach to the top, but once you get to the ridge, the path is easily spotted. You can walk along the ridge while be rewarded with sweeping views of the bay, Taravai, and Mangareva.

SNORKELING: We snorkeled on the western side of Ile Mekiro. We found this spot from the top of the hill (by the cross) and decided it was too beautiful to be missed. We dinghied around Ile Mekiro and found a nice sandy spot to anchor the dinghy. There are little finger paths that you can snorkel through around the very vibrant and healthy coral. It was so wonderful to see the coral thriving here. – Sugar Shack

3.7.3 Cruiser Reports

March 2021: Remy used to run a pearl farm and may have some loose pearls to sell along with fresh fruit. Remy +689 87 23 89 37 or Louise +689 87 25 22 51. – Sugar Shack

Feb. 2020: Bertrand no longer lives in the boat house. Remy is the new inhabitant and he also has a house on Akamaru. He is super friendly and will help guide you in to shallower waters (if you have 1.4-meter draft or less). Wherever you anchor, be sure to go to shore on Akamaru.

Leave your dinghy tied to the concrete dock and take a stroll down a beautifully maintained, green road. The church is on your right which has a bell tower, sweetly designed interior and pretty exterior. If you follow the road behind the church you will see several abandoned stone houses nestled in the tree line. The road continues on the other side of the church down toward a few more houses, a small vanilla farm, and ends at the beach. Very enjoyable stroll. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: Akamaru features a pretty church, manicured houses and gardens and a handful of friendly people. It's almost too kitschy-perfect to be real. – Pitufa

June 2013: The little village and church are worth a visit, people are friendly. Once anchored, we explored a small beach and jumped ashore near “the village”, where about eight houses are spread out and three or four families live full-time. The church was charming and pretty and the grounds around it, once again, very well-kept. We hung out with a couple of friendly and healthy dogs and met a local family. My French is getting better!

Unbeknownst to us, it was already 5:30pm and extreme low tide. While the sun set, we saw 4.2 feet on our depth meter. Irie has a draft of 3.5 feet. We had never been anchored in water as shallow as this and normally would not be too worried, being anchored in good holding sand, but around us were a few small coral heads. Usually those are not a problem either, unless you have less than a foot under the keels and some of these

corals are over a foot high... It was too late to move, so we hoped the wind wouldn't shift too much at night, which it was not supposed to do, but you really never know around here. We didn't sleep too well and heard grinding sounds during the night. Luckily, it was only our anchor chain rubbing over some coral pieces on the bottom. We should have floated our chain to avoid damaging the coral.

As is always the case, the tide rose and around midnight and it was very high. The higher than normal waves crashed over the reefs that usually protect this anchorage, and the big swell made its way into our anchorage. For about four hours, Irie bounced back and forth, left and right (here we were, in a washing machine again, at anchor!), preventing any sleep. – Irie

3.8 Taravai

March 2015: The charts around Taravai are generally detailed, only the southern side of the island is uncharted. Also, some of our Garmin detail charts were offset. There were some minor chart inaccuracies, such as W of the village around 23°08.97'S 135°00.38'W where it has 9 m instead of the charted 20+ meters, but otherwise the depths were either deeper than or the same as charted.

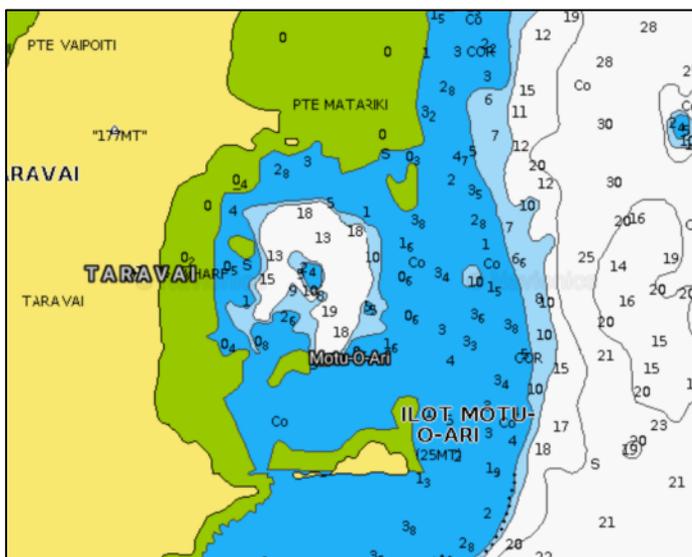
The water clarity around the west pass and W of Taravai was incredible: coral in 15 m depth seemed only a sleeve length away. Such visibility invites to diving and snorkeling. – Pitufa

3.8.1 Taravai Village (East Side: Valerie and Herve's Baie)

Taravai Village is on the east side of Taravai. It is best to enter this anchorage at high tide and with full sun as you have to navigate over a reef with several large bommies to get inside the anchorage. At low tide, we have seen 2.7 meters above the reef (at its shallowest point) and at high tide we have seen 3.5 (at the lowest point).

Valerie and Herve and their sons Alan and Ariki live in the "village" and monitor VHF channel 77. The village is located between Pt. Matariki and Ilot Motu O-Ari. Keep in mind that the 'village' is really just 5 homes and a church. Valerie, Herve, and Alan speak English.

Valerie and Herve will sell fresh fruit and vegetables from their garden at reasonable prices (and they are willing to trade sometimes too). Produce includes: Pamplemousses, avocados, oranges, limes, lettuce, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, bananas, taro root, papayas, mangos, peppers, and herbs (rosemary, mint, basil, lemongrass). They also sometimes have pig and goat to sell during season.



They host a **Sunday BBQ** where Herve will man the grill. Bring enough to share including a main course, a side or desert and drinks. Valerie and Herve are the hosts so be sure to take care of them as well. They like wine, rum, and gin. Call ahead to let them know you plan to attend. Be sure to bring plate, utensils, cups and napkins for yourself as well (and a chair if you have it).

Valerie and Herve also have **compost** and they ask that you bring your organics to them to add to the mound. Please do not toss your organics in the ocean in their baie as it lands on their beach front.

Herve will sell you **pearl floats** for 500xpf each which is the going rate. If you find working pearl floats (that don't have holes or hold water) bring them to Herve as they really appreciate it. Pearl floats are great to hold up your chain when anchoring around bommies in Gambier and the Tuamotus.

Herve will take you spearfishing and will show you which fish are safe to eat. If it is season, he may even take you goat hunting.

Valerie will show you how to make floral leighs or crowns if you get a group together. Also, ask her about her stunning “sand art.”

3.8.1.1 Anchorages and Moorings

The anchorage is deep (12-18 meters) but usually has good holding. Be careful coming into this anchorage (its best if you use Pitufa’s tracks) as you have to cross over the reef to get here and many parts are too shallow for crossing. Come here with good sun, light winds, and high tide for the first time.

March 2021: 23°08.535S / 135°01.4576W dropped in 16 meters of water with 75m of chain. Good stick in mud. This spot offers a great breeze and pretty view of a tiny island. Perfect for North winds.

We came here when the weather predicted super strong NW winds (40-50kts) with 5 other boats. We were all evenly spaced out with good scope. After preparing the boat for these high winds we ended up only seeing 30-35kts but we all did lots of 360’s. Nobody had any problems with the wind or swell. – Sugar Shack

April 2020: 23°08.569S / 135°01.420W dropped in 17 meters of water (near the head of the bay). Came here again to be protected from the westerlies for a few days. There are several reefs in and around this bay so be careful when anchoring.

May 2019: 23°08.73S / 135°13.82W Anchored in 16 meters of water in Feb. 2020. Originally, we dropped the hook at 23°08.735S / 135°01.343W in 12 meters of water on a sandy spot and by the time we let out 70 meters of chain we floated over 8 meters of water. But when we dove on the anchor, we realized our chain could easily get wrapped around several coral heads, so we moved to the 2nd location as noted above. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: 23°08.95’S / 135°01.36’W in good-holding muddy sand, close to Motu-o-Ari. Anchoring in the deeper area (15-20m) of the basin the holding is better. We cannot recommend the shallower (6-10m) fringe area of the basin as there is only a thin layer of sand on coral plates with bad holding.

There used to be three small buoys to mark an entrance about 250m NE of the tiny islet Motu-o-ari. (You were supposed to leave those buoys closely to your port side when going in). In case those buoys have not been reinstalled, you may follow these waypoints: Approach from the east.

- WP1 S23°08.954’ W135°01.111’
- WP2 S23°08.944’ W135°01.149’
- WP3 S23°08.927’ W135°01.175’
- WP4 S23°08.902’ W135°01.193’
- WP5 S23°08.912’ W135°01.230’

Once we had only about 1m under our keel (2.2m draft), so it gets pretty shallow.

Be aware of the many corals in this anchorage and also of debris such as submerged buoys and lines from abandoned pearl farms. In strong E winds this anchorage gets very bouncy. For N winds it is best to anchor in the northern basin S of the tiny islet around 23°08.6’S / 135°01.49’W in about 15m depth in good-holding muddy sand. – Pitufa

3.8.1.2 Activities

Hikes and Walks

April 2020: Take the grassy road behind Valerie and Herve’s house past the church. There is a nice trail (that was recently cleared) that will take you to Edouard’s house or to the top of the hill. The path starts out the same for both and in the middle, you come to a large clearing where you decide to go down toward Edouard’s house or you continue up to the ridge. You can hike to the large rock face with the single tree at the top. The

entire hike from Valerie/Herve's place to the rock face will take about 1:15-1:30. The hike to Edouard's house probably takes about 60-90 minutes. – Sugar Shack

May 2019: You can hike from Valerie and Herve's house to Edouard and Denise's house. We got lost and never made it all the way there, but that was probably because the torrential rains had washed two parts of the trail down the hill. We have since added rope across these areas so you can get across. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: There is a hiking trail connecting the village and the bay in the S (at least 1h one way). Ask for directions. For a not too difficult side trip with great views, you can follow up the SE ridge (mostly under pines) to a peak overlooking the village and lagoon (add another hour for this detour). – Pitufa

BBQs

Valerie and Herve host BBQs at their home, usually on Sundays. Sometimes, they will provide fish, pig, or goat to the main course, but each boat should bring something to grill AND a side or desert to share. You also want to bring beverages (Valerie and Herve like wine, beer, and rum) to share with the hosts. Don't forget to bring plates, utensils, cups for yourself, and a chair if you have it.

Try to remember that this is their home. Help them wash the dishes (in the sea for first rinse) and don't enter their home with sandy feet.

March 2021: Valerie and Herve are still hosting Sunday Funday complete with volleyball, ping pong, and petanque. Everyone always leaves the table with a full belly and it is great fun to try the fine cooking by other cruisers. Always a good time! Call Valerie and Herve on VHF 77 to let them know you are coming. Be sure to sign their guest book and get creative! – Sugar Shack

Feb 2021: We attended the Sunday BBQ/Pot Luck at Herve and Valerie's and were in awe of the friendliness and generosity of this lovely couple and their sons Alain and Ariki. They welcome cruisers into their home every Sunday and on the occasion, we were there they provided fish, a pork stew, a bottle of homemade wine, water, coffee and mangoes. This is what they contributed to the pot luck (way more than the majority of cruisers), as well as hosting on their property and they do not make any charge. Very mindful of this we brought plenty of meat for the bbq, a side dish, some dips and most importantly plenty of beverages to ensure our hosts glasses were never empty.

The ethos of the day is to share whatever you can afford and have lots of fun. Herve and Valerie have set the bar to beat. –Ari B

May 2019: We spent several weeks in Taravai with Valerie and Herve. They are truly unique and special hosts. They have an amazing vegetable garden and fruit trees. They will sell or trade for fresh produce including lettuce, avocados, limes, Pamplemousses, sweet potatoes, bananas and beans.

Sunday BBQ is always a ton of fun so be sure to stop by, bring your food, drinks, a chair, and plates. If you are interested, Herve will take you spear fishing and show you which fish you can safely consume. Valerie taught us how to make floral leis and crowns as well. She is an amazing artist so be sure to ask her to show you some of her sand art – I promise you will be blown away by the intricate designs and beauty. – Sugar Shack

3.8.1.3 Cruiser Reports

March 2021: Taravai was buzzing this year! Valerie and Herve are still the best hosts ever! Marcel has moved next door to Valerie and Herve, Gabriel is now taking care of the old Mairie house (beautiful house just before the church), Edouard and Denise are still offering fresh produce and the church is getting a face lift. Replacing the roof, repairing the interior, fixing the exterior plaster, growing a garden behind and next to the church, and more. Should be complete in a few years. – Sugar Shack

Feb. 2020: We spent many weeks with Valerie and Herve. They are excellent hosts, sell reasonably priced produce, host great BBQ parties, offer tours, fishing, hikes, and hunts. A must visit place! There is great snorkeling, fun and adventurous hikes around this protected anchorage. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: The village consists of a church with manicured gardens and a handful of houses. Only two houses seem to be permanently inhabited: Herve, the caretaker of the street and church, lives at the northern end of the village with his wife Valerie and kids Alan and Ariki. The friendly couple is used to having cruisers around and speaks English. As Polynesians they are obliged to drop everything whenever visitors arrive so keep in mind that they've got work to do as well and don't overstrain their hospitality.

Somewhat separate, further south of the church is another house which belongs to the former mayor of Rikitea. Now, Pierre and Lolo, a French cruiser couple, live there. They have their steel ketch on a mooring in the bay and have an 'open house' for cruisers. They have cultivated a big patch and sell veggies and fruits to cruisers—very convenient, cheap and good quality! – Pitufa

2013: Taravai has different picturesque bays to anchor in. The few families who live on shore are very friendly and enjoy the company of visiting yachts. Snorkeling is pretty good and if you feel up to it, you can bushwhack your way to the top of the hills. – Irie

2010: The 'town' is no longer a town. The church is maintained, but not regularly used. There are 3-4 houses there, and the inhabitants have fruit trees and grow vegetables. Walk on the path both left and right from the church, and introduce yourself. They will trade for or sell bananas, Pamplemousses, sweet potatoes, eggplant, tomatoes, cucumbers, limes, and avocados. If you are heading north through French Polynesia, these will be the last avocados you will see for a long while. – Soggy Paws

3.8.2 Ile Agakaitai (South Side: Eduard and Denise's Bay)

This bay is not safe during westerly or northwesterly winds.

Manu, the local who lives on Ile Agakaitai does not like people coming onto his island without permission. He only speaks French, but he is very friendly. Please be respectful of his property. When the panga is on the beach he is home, so be sure to request permission before exploring the sandy shores. When he is not home, he has several unfriendly dogs guarding his property.



Figure 3-1 South Side of Taravai - Courtesy of Pitufa

The unnamed and uncharted bay south of Ile Taravai and west of Ile Agakaitai, bordered in its E by a reef (hardly crossable with a dinghy, so forget it with a yacht!) is interesting in several ways. It is well protected against prevalent swell and not too strong winds, good holding (sand and mud), nice scenery. Excellent snorkeling on surrounding reefs to the W and N (nice corals, lots of sharks and big groupers).

A local couple, Edouard and Denise, live on the shore of Taravai. They have a self-sustaining community where they will sell you fresh vegetables and fruits for a reasonable price. He offers Pamplemousses, avocados, bananas, limes and a few other seasonal items.

Edouard is knowledgeable on fish you can and cannot eat.

This area is the only Gambier anchorage I would dare enter at night (Rikitea channel area is full of pearl farm buoys, many of them black and/or half sunk), with a caveat: You need to have done it once during daylight and created your own GPS track, or obtain beforehand a reliable GPS track, because on the way you pass between 4 coral reefs. With the appropriate track the depths on the way in were never less than 6m.

3.8.2.1 Anchorages and Moorings

April 2020: 23°09.66S / 135°02.353W dropped the hook in 15 meters of sand hidden behind Agakaitai as an easterly wind was scheduled to blow hard over the next few days.

23°09.672S / 135°02.348W. We anchored in 16 meters with 70 meters of chain. We backed up to the reef and were protected from the strong winds that came blowing through with a 5-day storm. We sat comfortably with 3 other boats in the area even though we were all doing 360s. – Sugar Shack

March 2019: 23°09.6218S / 135°02.2962 W Anchored in sand, 15m. The unnamed and uncharted bay south of Ile Taravai and west of Ile Agakaitai, bordered in its E by a reef. It is well protected against prevalent swell and not too strong winds, good holding (sand and mud), nice scenery. This anchorage is the only Gambier anchorage I would dare enter at night (Rikitea channel area is full of pearl farm buoys, many of them black and/or half sunk), with a caveat: You need to have done it once during daylight and created your own GPS track, or obtain beforehand a reliable GPS track, because on the way you pass between 4 coral reefs.

With the appropriate track the depths on the way in were never less than 6m. – Chugach

March 2016: 23°09'6218S /135°02'2962W. Anchored on sand, in 15 m in front of Edouard and Denise's home.

March 2015: 23°09.63'S 135°02.28'W. There is one shallower patch with around 4m depth on the way in before reaching the large, coral-free area for anchoring. The anchorage is well-protected from all sides but SW, from where some chop may build up. At times with stronger winds, particularly when the wind has a northerly component, it can be very gusty. Once we measured 50kn while it was blowing 20-25kn from the N elsewhere.

Unfortunately, this area is uncharted, but satellite imagery reveals the reefs and shows big, sandy anchorage.

See the screenshot above with reef outlines (thanks to Mark on SY Irie!) and our tracks. We approached from the S to the waypoint 23°10.108'S 135°02.581'W. This location is close to the rocks and at times with big swell waves break on both sides of you. From this waypoint we kept a straight bearing towards the house ashore at 23°09.349'S 135°02.273'W.

There is a house on Agakaitai. It's idyllically placed behind the beach in front of the cliff; however, its permanent residents seem to be only pigs. – Pitufa

2010: 23°09.60 S / 135-02.25 W. We fully circumnavigated the island of Taravai. We found the absolute best harbor in the 'unsurveyed' south bay. You can enter this bay either from the south around the southern tip of Isle Agakani, and inside of Ilots Tekorou at about 23°10.08 S / 135-02.59 W, or from the west at about 23°09.72 S / 135-03.62 W. Good light is strongly recommended for either approach. Once inside, we had 6 or so boats anchored comfortably inside, and nearly 360-degree protection, between the island and the surrounding reefs.

In this anchorage, the house to the north is Eduard and Denise. Eduard was born on Taravai (many years ago). Go in and say hello, they are very friendly and interesting people. They have pigs and ducks and many coconut trees. They also grow their own vegetables and have a fresh water supply they welcomed us to use. The house to the east, on Agakani, was also inhabited by a friendly local. – Soggy Paws

3.8.2.2 Activities

Feb. 2020: We snorkeled the south side of the bay near the reef. It was a remarkable experience to swim in .5 meter of water over the reef while exploring the small fish, crabs, octopus in the little nooks and crannies. Then you will stumble upon a 3-5-meter cavern with 1-1.5-meter angels, napoleons and parrot fish. The deeper areas have beautiful coral walls that fall down to 10-12-meter depths where we spotted a small white

tip shark. There are lots of table corals, staghorn and more. A really nice snorkeling experience with clear visibility. – Sugar Shack

Feb. 2020: We hiked from Eduard's home to one of the peaks on Taravai. It was supposed to be a fairly easy path (easy to find) but we had trouble discerning the path even with people who have hiked this trail before. It was very overgrown and muddy (we had 5-days of rain). But it was truly beautiful. Basically, you follow the beach around the bend until you see an ascending area (incline), then you follow that for about 2.5 miles to the first peak. We brought a machete and had to whack our way through. We did encounter lots of wasps so be careful and bring some lemons with you in case you are stung.

We explored the south side of Ile Agakaitai and walked along the coast ridge which was beautiful. Lots of fun tide pools and "tickles" where you can enjoy the sea life.

We also snorkeled between the reef and Ile Agakaitai and found it very enjoyable with lots of little fish in the shallow reef and lots of large fish along the wall. – Sugar Shack

3.8.2.3 Cruiser Reports

Feb. 2020: Edouard and Denise are really nice and will sell available produce to you. They only speak French. Manu, the local who lives on Agakaitai, speaks French and is very nice. However, he does not like visitors to walk around his island without his permission. When the panga is on the beach he is home, so be sure to request permission before exploring the sandy shores. When he is not at home his pack of dogs patrol the beach. – Sugar Shack

March 2019: Ile Agakaitai: Excellent snorkeling on surrounding reefs to the W and N (nice corals, lots of sharks and big groupers). –Chugach

March 2015: In the house in the southern bay of Taravai, Eduard and Denise made their little paradise. They are used to visits by cruisers and have a guest book.

The water clarity around the west pass and W of Taravai was incredible: coral in 15 m depth seemed only a sleeve length away. Such visibility invites to diving and snorkeling. – Pitufa

2013: You need good light to enter the uncharted areas, especially the southern bay of Taravai. Don't forget the sun sits in the north, which makes this bay a bit tricky to enter during the winter months. There is a dangerous (large) reef in the middle of the bay. Once you are past that, the way into the anchorage is clear. To avoid this reef, round the SE corner of the southern island and move midway between this corner and the rock off shore. (The waypoint for this spot is 23°10.08'S / 135°02.59'W). Once at this midway point (or waypoint), line yourself up with the white house on shore to the north and proceed into the bay. The large reef will be on your port side (but you may not see it until you are past it). Edouard and Denise on shore have a light on in their garden at night, as a bearing for anchored cruisers.

Once settled in the anchorage, we noticed the beauty of this place. The beaches, the hills, the rocky outcrops and the greenery, the different shades of blue in the water and the colorful reefs, visible from above – created a very beautiful picture indeed! The first couple of days, we had to stay onboard, unfortunately, because the wind was gusting from different directions. Being surrounded on three sides by very shallow reefs and being anchored in deep water, we wanted to make sure the anchor re-set correctly, every time, we made a violent 180° turn. When the wind mellowed out a bit, we managed to explore the area and meet some friendly locals.

Mark and I also met the family who lives in our bay. They made us welcome with some fresh fruit from their garden and some freshly caught fish from the bay. We chatted for a while in French and brought some things in exchange later. The atmosphere is relaxed, friendly and hospitable. Not a bad place to live! – Irie

3.8.3 Baie Onemea (West Side)

When traveling to Onemea Bay from the NW pass or lagoon, be sure to follow the charts well as there is a channel that has shallow reefs on either side. They are well charted on Navionics, but something to be aware of when traveling to this side of Taravai. – Sugar Shack

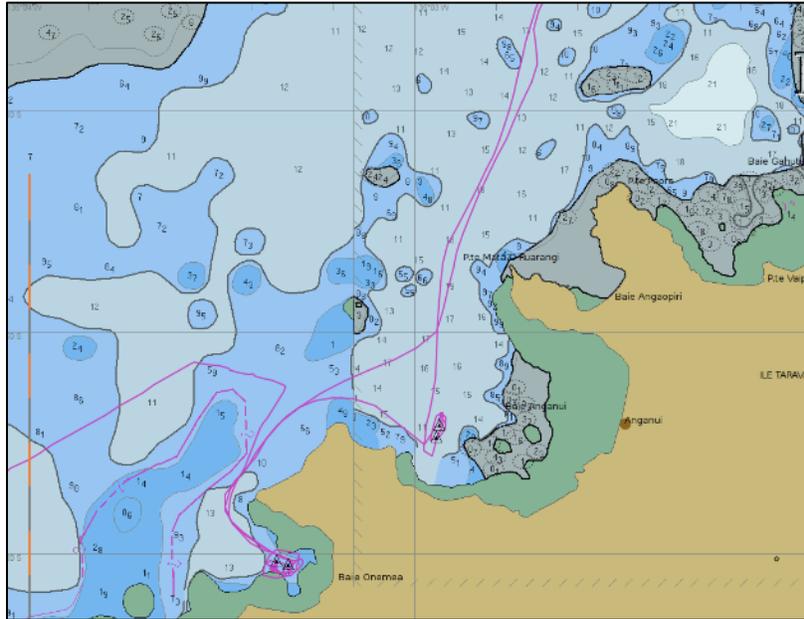


Figure 3-2 NW Side of Taravai - Pitoufa

3.8.3.1 Anchorages

Feb.2022: 23°09.016S / 135°03.302W Anchor set in 7.5 meters of water (could not see the bottom). Super calm, beautiful and peaceful. Blowing about 15-20kts outside the bay and we did not feel a thing. There were a lot of flies at sunset/sunrise, but other than that a perfect anchorage. – Sugar Shack

March 2021: 23°09.015S / 135°03.297W Dropped the hook in 7 meters of water with 45 meters of chain. Pulled back to the reef with strong holding. Perfect for the SE winds and swell. – Sugar Shack

Dec. 2020: 23°09.026S / 135°03.322W Anchored in 8 meters of water, dropped 50 meters of chain and pulled back to the reef. Super pretty and well protected from easterly winds.

23°08S / 135°03W dropped in 10m of water and because there were lots of bugs too close to shore (at our other anchorages). It was roly and not a comfortable night.

2020: 23°08.997S / 135°03.399W. Anchored in 12 meters of sand a little further out than we like because another boat was close to shore. Wide bay that is protected from almost every wind except from the west. Be careful near shore and the edges as there are reefs and rocks that appear during low tide. This bay is protected from almost any swell except from the west. It is very calm, flat, and secluded. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: 23°09.022'S / 135°03.311'W Anchored in 6-8m sand with good holding. This is one of our favorite anchorages in the Gambier islands. Approaching from the N via Baie Anganui is easy through the deep channel close to the shore. The sandy area to anchor between the reefs is larger than shown on the charts. (Double-check with satellite imagery.) On Garmin, the chart was offset. – Pitoufa

3.8.3.2 Activities

Dec. 2020: Snorkeling is really good in this bay especially in the morning. Both corners (north and south), at the entrance have schools of fish, but the southern corner seemed to be more active. The reef in front of the beach had lots of little schools of fish and beautiful branching coral (on the lagoon side vs the beach side). The beaches have beautiful pink sand that caress your feet as you walk across the beach. – Sugar Shack

Feb. 2020: The two beautiful beaches at Onemea with golden and reddish sand are easily accessible at any tide through sandy channels. Also, here we hiked up the ridge to the south, plowing through the shrubs, reeds and ferns was strenuous, but the view over the bay as well as over to the S of Taravai and Ile Agakaitai was stunning. – Pitoufa

3.8.3.3 Cruiser Reports

Dec. 2020: This is a truly peaceful anchorage where you are surrounded by lush, green hillsides. Beautiful reefs are full of sea life (small fish and coral), and there are a few small pockets of beaches. The only downside is that when the wind dies, there are lots of flies and small black bugs that seem to live 24hours and use your deck as a graveyard. But these little guys are all over Gambier. This bay is protected from easterlies and is really pretty. There is no wifi signal at all, ever. – Sugar Shack

2013: Onemea, a small bay on the west side of Taravai holding two to three boats is very pretty, with good protection and a yellow beach lined with palm trees. – Irie

3.8.4 Baie Anganui (West Side)

This is a large baie with a reef in the center.

3.8.4.1 Anchorage

March 2015: **23°08.739'S / 135°02.947'W** in 13-15m depth in sand with good holding. We approached from the North. The bay has two long sand beaches in the E and SE and some smaller ones in the S, separated by rock formations. Dinghy access may be difficult at low tide as we haven't found channels through the coral reefs. At high tide it's no problem to go straight over the coral. – Pitufa

2010: We also anchored in the uninhabited Baie Anganui, on the west side of Taravai, to stage for leaving to head north. This is another very pretty and very protected anchorage. The only downside as a leaving spot is that it is so protected from the east wind that you don't have a good feel for conditions outside. But it is very easy to depart from this bay. – Soggy Paws

3.8.4.2 Activities

March 2015: The snorkeling was great around the reefs further out of the bay at Anganui. Closer to the beaches, the visibility decreased. There were many curious black-tip reef sharks. Close to the beaches, baby reef sharks patrolled back and forth. – Pitufa

3.8.4.3 Cruiser Reports

March 2015: Taravai has beautiful, uninhabited bays on the western side: Baie Anganui and Baie Onemea. We found the sand at the long beach is very soft, sinking in with every step, so we preferred the smaller beaches S with firm, white coral sand. Once we hiked up the ridge S, however, there are no paths (only goat tracks that disappear under the shrubs), so you have to make your own path. What looked like grass to us from the distance, turned out to be 2m-high reed.

After being in Rikitea for a while, where the sun merely disappears behind the mountains, in those two western bays proper sunsets can be enjoyed again. We heard reports that thick swarms of mosquitoes befouled these beaches, but we cannot confirm those reports, even though it rained a lot at times when we were there. Flies might be a nuisance (not only here but all around Taravai). – Pitufa

3.9 Motu Puaumu (NE corner, Private Island)

Puaumu is a small, privately owned island in the NE corner of the reef.... (the Polynesians pronounce every vowel, so this is pronounced Poo-ah-oooh-moo). Stephan (also known as Tanavai) and Manu own the eastern half of the island and another family own the other half.

3.9.1 Anchorages and Moorings

Jan. 2022: **23°01.104S / 134°55.196W** dropped the hook in 2.5m sandy water with 12m of scope, no floats. We clear all neighboring bommies with a 360° radius. Really light N winds, no swell, beautiful. – Sugar Shack

Feb. 2021: **23°01.068S / 134°55.211W** Anchored in 2.6 meters of water in a nice sandy spot in between bommies, with 15 meters of chain and a short bridle and no need for floats. We had very light winds from the

SE so we were not worried. Super clear water, easy access to shore and a nice breeze. During high tide and stronger winds, you are susceptible to wrap around swell.

~~23°01.068S / 134°55.211W~~ This is not a good anchorage. At first, we dropped the hook here as there was more swinging room but we realized the floor has only a light dusting of sand on top of the coral so there is no good holding in this area. You can see the bottom of the sea change color as you move to sand. – Sugar Shack.

May 2020: 23°01.124S / 134°55.265W dropped the hook in 4 meters of sand and floated the chain with two pearl floats to avoid getting tangled in the coral heads. We have a shallow draft of 1.3 meters and weaved our way around the many coral heads to find a large enough sandy spot to drop the hook. We were lucky in that it was medium tide, with little swell, light winds, and the sun high above us. All good weather conditions to navigate this tricky area. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: 23°01.146'S / 134°55.294'W. Anchored 6m with all bommies deep enough within swinging room. And **23°01.226'S / 134°55.147'W** in 4.5m. One of our anchoring spots there for N winds for E-NE winds.

A great deal of eye-ball navigation is necessary to go to the smaller motus, particularly to the ones further N of the airport. It is a good idea to talk to cruisers who have been around the Gambier for a while and they might be able to provide you with GPS tracks.

Anchoring off Puaumu may be tricky as sandy spots between the countless coral heads are small. Many of those coral heads reach up to the surface. We highly **recommend to either buoy your anchor chain or to use a Bahamian mooring to avoid fouling your chain and damaging corals.** – Pitufa

2010: When we arrived at the island that our French friends had put an anchor waypoint on, we worked our way into shallow water. It turned out to be a little harder than we anticipated to find a good anchor spot. There are too many very shallow coral heads. We picked the largest open area and dropped our anchor in what we hoped was the middle. The depth was only 10 feet, nice sand, so we didn't need a lot of scope. When Visions and Infini arrived, they didn't like the shallow coral-studded area and went back out into deeper water.

With encouragement from a French catamaran we met, we explored the unmapped zones in the north of the atoll pretty thoroughly. In good light, it was easy to proceed NE from the Rikitea Harbor to the airport, and then turn north and work your way NNW along the reef. Pick your spot. We spent several days anchored up by the Puaumu atoll in the NE corner of the lagoon.

There is a solid reef all along the eastern side of the Gambier atoll, with periodic 'motus'... little sand/coral islands. few have – Soggy Paws

3.9.2 Cruiser Reports

May 2020: Puaumu is owned by two families who live full time in Rikitea. They often visit the motu to harvest the coconuts, fish, and camp for long weekends. They do welcome visitors but ask that you only take what you came with and leave their island the way you found it. It is a gorgeous island with lots hermit crabs and beautiful turquoise water for swimming and snorkeling. The white sandy beaches are perfect for lounging and hanging out after a nice, long swim.

During King Tide (low tide during a full moon) you can walk from Puaumu to Teapuri across the reef which is a 1.5-mile walk. Discover the beautiful sea critters exposed during low tide. Super cool walk across the reef to an uninhabited island. – Sugar Shack

April 2010: When we finally went ashore on the Puaumu motu, we found an old house structure, and some pigs and chickens. They came running up when we came to the beach, looking for food. We found out the next day that someone comes from the 'mainland' every few days to feed them coconuts. – Soggy Paws

3.10 One Palm Motu

Aptly named because it is a really small motu with one palm tree. In 2019, there were 3 palm trees, but one lost its top in early 2020. By late 2020, the 2nd palm tree had its demise which is why this is now called "One Palm Tree Motu."

Jan. 2021: 23°02.286S / 134°54.825W dropped in 5 meters of sand between bommies with 4 floats out as our chain hovered over several bommies. Super pretty spot, good breeze, and great snorkeling. But you need to be here during calm weather as there is not much protection. – Sugar Shack

April 2020: 23°02.331S / 134°54.814W Anchored in 5 meters of sand between bommies on a return visit. Floating the chain is highly required to avoid getting tangled on bommies. – Sugar Shack

3.10.1 Cruiser Reports

Jan. 2021: Still love this spot! Not many places where you can feel this remote and yet still have a wifi signal (as slight as it is, there in 2G). The bommies and reef around each motu are full of sea life and the motus are littered with sea shell treasures. – Sugar Shack

April 2020: There is really great snorkeling between the motus with healthy coral, large fish and friendly sharks. Easy to paddle board between the motus during the right weather conditions. Super pretty area, very remote and isolated. Makes you feel like it's your very own piece of paradise. – Sugar Shack

3.11 Motu Vaiatekeue

Jan. 2021: 23°03.502S / 134°54.586W dropped the hook in 2 meters of water. It took several tries to get the hook to stick as the sand here is hard. This is south of the motu Vaiatekeue and just in front of another motu with a house. Please be respectful of the locals and do not anchor here if there is a panga in front of the house. This is a pretty spot and can be protected from the south swell. – Sugar Shack

April 2020: 23°03.33S / 134°54.789W dropped in 5 meters of water and floated the chain with 3 large floats. We maneuvered between the many bommies and found a sandy alley perfect for the S / SE winds and waves that were coming. – Sugar Shack

3.12 Totegegie (Airport Anchorage)

Totegegie has the archipelago's airport. You can anchor near the basin (where Tokani picks up and drops off passengers). It is illegal and forbidden to walk on or near the runway.

3.12.1 Anchorages and Moorings

Feb. 2022: 23°05.2104S / 134°53.2219W dropped in 5 meters of sandy water. Close to the airport dock to pick up guests while still getting a nice breeze. We tried to anchor on the north side of the basin but the sand was thin and did not hold well (rock under a thin layer of sand). – Sugar Shack

Jan. 2021: 23°06.028S / 134°52.432W dropped the anchor in 4 meters of water in a nice sandy spot just north of the false pass. We floated our chain at the 15-meter mark and put the bridle on at the 25-meter mark.

23°04.025S / 134°54.305W. Dropped in 2 meters of sand with no need of floats. This is North Totegegie and places you close to shore (swim or SUP). – Sugar Shack

March 2020: 23°06.036S / 134°52.425W. Anchored in 3.9 meters of sand just north of the false pass. Super pretty water, easy access to shore, and short dinghy ride to snorkel the false pass. Good holding and comfortable with a SE wind.

23°04.069S / 134°54.288W. Anchored in 4 meters of sand behind a bank of trees during a north wind. Floated chain to avoid getting the chain tangled in the coral. – Sugar Shack

May 2019: 23°02.456S / 134°54.833S dropped in the midst of several bommies but hit sand at 5 meters. Floated 5 small floats and did not have any problems with the chain dancing with the bommies. We anchored in several places mostly ranging in 5-9 meters of water. Follow Pitufa's tracks as she has several suggestions on where to anchor. Each location had good holding on a sandy bottom. There are lots of bommies so be vigilant and float your chain. A beautiful and peaceful anchorage. A great place to get away from other boats and civilization. We saw tons of sting rays, a few sharks, and lots of fish. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: 23°05.815'S / 134°52.631'W, Anchored in 14m depth with good holding. Totegegie is a long and narrow motu on the eastern barrier reef, the airport of the Gambier islands is located on the northern part. Be aware of pearl farm buoys when navigating up to Totegegie. We encountered buoys even in the charted channel N of Aukena.

23°05.034'S / 134°53.356'W. We anchored in 8m sand (convenient when picking up or dropping off visitors) and further east in a sandy basin after the cleared area of the airport.

We experienced that the holding in the shallower areas of the basin was poor as the ground there comprises of coral or rock plates with only a thin layer of sand on top. The water along this motu has a high coral-sediment content which causes bad visibility and a strong turquoise coloring. Keep in mind when navigating here that depths between around 4m and 20m show about the same color. – Pitufa

3.12.2 Activities

3.12.2.1 Diving and Snorkeling

Dec. 2020: False pass is between Totegegie and Tarauru Roa. Take your dinghy to **23°06.055S / 134°51.944W** where there is a sandy patch to drop the hook. Bring a long painter with your dinghy anchor. Then swim to the west and you will come across a large sandy pit where there are tons of sea life (sharks, sting rays, tons of fish). Be careful diving down or spearfishing as the sharks are curious and are always looking for an easy meal (your catch, not you but why confuse them). It's super fun to drift snorkel on an incoming tide too – drag your dinghy with a long painter and enjoy the ride. – Sugar Shack

May 2020: Some friends told us that there is good diving on the SouthEast side of Motu Makarua and the False Pass near Totetgegie. We do not have a compressor on board so we did not dive either. However, we did snorkel both and they were fantastic.

The false pass is at **23°06.148S / 134°52.58W**. Snorkel the false pass during slack tide. You can take your dinghy up the pass to a nice sandy spot just to the right of where the waves are breaking. If you go on a nice sunny day, during high tide the sandy spot is easily identifiable and good holding for your dinghy anchor (approximately **23°06.48S / 134°51.940W**). Jump in and swim to the right to find a large "pit" where several black tip and white tip sharks' hangout. Coral is starting to grow back and lots of sea life. Fun place to snorkel, one of my favorites in Gambier. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: Close by the basin anchorage there's a cut in the outer reef that's a popular snorkeling spot. When the tide is high enough you can take your dinghy out through this tiny pass (for a drift snorkel). – Pitufa

3.12.3 Cruiser Reports

June 2020: Totegegie is the airport island. There are two planes that are scheduled each week and they come on Tuesdays and Saturdays. However, they periodically have planes come in on other days. It is forbidden and illegal to walk along the runway and to block or hinder planes near the runway so be mindful. If you have guests flying in or out it is an easy place to anchor the big boat and meet them with the dinghy. It will save them 1000xpf (\$10) each way and the hassle of being loaded onto the ferry.

There is a nice dirt path along the island and you can always explore the windward side of the island which is covered in coral and large rocks. Lots of sea treasures to be found. – Sugar Shack

2013: Totegegie or “airport island” offers a walk along a dirt road in the middle of the narrow stretch of land, a view over the outer reef, protected areas to snorkel and some great views of the area while you walk the beaches on neighboring islands. We found the holding less than adequate over there and it is deeper than what is reported on the charts. – Irie

3.13 Tarauru Roa

Feb. 2020: 23°06.653S / 134°51.528W Dropped the hook in 11 meters in a small spot just south of “Eric’s Pearl Farm.” We deployed 5 pearl floats starting at 25 meters to keep the chain off the coral. There are coral heads all over the place so this is not an ideal anchorage, especially if you have anything but super calm weather with no wind or swell. – Sugar Shack

3.13.1 Activities

Feb. 2020: The false pass which is between Totegegie and Tarauru Roa is a beautiful snorkeling site. You can bring your dinghy up into the pass (toward the sea) and drop an anchor in one of two sandy spots. If you swim just to the breaking waves, there is a large “pit” that hosts many beautiful black tip and white sharks along with many large species of fish. Probably one of the best snorkeling spots in Gambier. – Sugar Shack

3.14 Motu Gaioio

Eric’s Pearl Farm is located off of Gaioio (south of Totegegie). Large operation (200k pearls annually) and they are usually happy to show you their harvesting process. Super nice family. – Sugar Shack

3.15 Motu Tauna

Pronounced “town-a.” Tiny motu Tauna on the eastern outer reef is a bird-nesting area and popular with locals and cruisers. Be careful coming from Mangareva as there are several active pearl farm installations, some abandoned, and submerged buoys along the way. There are nice anchoring spots in sand with good protection in E winds off the pretty motu, but it gets rolly with southerly swell.

Jan. 2022: 23°08.5752S / 134°51.1384W. Dropped in 4 meters of beautiful sandy, turquoise waters a little further away from Tauna, but clear of bommies. 25 meters of chain, no floats. – Sugar Shack

Dec. 2021: 23°08.647S / 134°51.145W dropped in 3 meters of sand in the middle of the bommies during a NW light wind. Stern to the reef in good holding. – Sugar Shack

April 2020: 23°08.648S / 134°51.157W dropped in 3 meters of sand away from the reef and bommies. We came south from the island of Puaumu and followed our tracks to the false pass. There is a large shallow area from the false pass across to Ile Aukena which has depths ranging from 2.8-5 meters so be careful. After crossing over the shallows, we continued south toward Tauna. – Sugar Shack.

Feb. 2020: 23°08.574S / 134°51.132W and **23°08.948S / 134°51.268W.** As there are numerous bommies in the deeper areas, it is best to anchor on the sandy shelf in 4-5 meters just north of the motu. Tauna is one of the few places left with healthy coral (beautiful snorkeling), so be careful not to cause any damage. The coral is healthy even in deep water, so if you anchor blindly in the deep blue areas you are likely to cause damage even if you float your chain. – Pitufa

3.15.1 Cruiser Reports

Dec. 2021: We left Rikitea with a super light NW wind, passed Aukena to port and weaved very carefully though the multitude of pearl farms. We flew the parasail 3-6kts of wind and averaged 2-4kts boat speed on a super lovely day. There are lots of bommies around Tauna so be sure to drop in a sandy spot with plenty of swing room or use floats. Also, be aware that the reef in the dark blue area is very much alive and thriving, so please anchor in a spot where you can see the sea floor to ensure you do not damage the coral and tangle your ground tackle. – Sugar Shack

2015: The approach of Tauna to the east is relatively straightforward and several nice anchoring spots can be found in well-holding sand with good protection in easterly winds.

UPDATE 2019: the long and magical sandbank that used to extend Tauna to the S has fallen victim to a storm and disappeared. This used to be a popular launching spot for kite surfers. – Pitufa

3.16 Tekava

Mach 2015: 23°09.785'S / 134°51.29'W. 1-nm south of Tauna, has a sandy spot around. We anchored there only for a quick daytime visit as it was too roly to stay overnight. It might be okay there in calm conditions without much southerly swell. – Pitufa

3.17 Ile Kouaku

Just one little motu sticks out from the otherwise submersed barrier reef in the SE end of the archipelago. It's a wild, rough place where southerly swell rolls in with big surf. There are bird colonies ashore so please be careful not to disturb them or their nests. Please also refrain from kite surfing and having beach bonfires here as it would disrupt the bird colonies.

April 2020: 23°12.406S / 134°51.460W dropped in 7 meters of sand between the large coral heads with a southerly wind. During another visit, we anchored at **23°12.391S / 134°51.474W** in about 7 meters of water. Floated the chain to keep off the corals. – Sugar Shack

Feb. 2020: 23°12.414S / 134°51.444W. We anchored on a calm summer day on a sandy spot surrounded by shallow reefs and floated the chain. We trust our anchor, otherwise the nearby breakers would have been quite unnerving. – Pitufa

3.17.1 Cruiser Reports

Feb. 2020: We went snorkeling several times and the coral is superb, even in deeper parts of the bommies down to 15 and even 20 meters, are healthy (very rare now). So, cruisers who anchor blindly in the deep water can be sure that their anchors and chains are wreaking havoc while they enjoy their stay. As there are bird colonies ashore, we only visited briefly to avoid disturbing them. Bonfires and kite-surfing would shy away the parents which might be lethal for small chicks. – Pitufa

3.18 Ile Kamaka (Private Island)

This little, rocky island in the very south of the archipelago is privately owned and cruisers are forbidden to anchor here and are not allowed to go onshore. The barrier reef in the south is deeply submersed, swell is very uncomfortable and anchoring is challenging (noted by a cruiser who received permission to anchor here prior to the closing of the island).

3.19 Ile Makarua

Most cruisers use this anchorage as a "day stop" only due to the extreme depth and poor holding and swell from almost every direction.

April 2020: 23°13.142S / 134°57.978W dropped in 6 meters of sand between a few bommies. We floated our chain (with 4 floats) to avoid tangling with the bommies. Weather was weird and we had a swell which caused the boat to rock and roll. Despite the conditions, we stayed for a few days before moving on. — Sugar Shack

3.19.1 Cruiser Reports

April 2020: East side of Makarua is good snorkeling and diving when there is no swell. – Pitufa

3.20 Motu Tenoko

April 2021: 23°04.66S / 135°00.771 dropped in 4m of sand and it was spectacular. You should come here on a calm day with little to no wind. If you get such conditions you will enjoy it immensely. – Sugar Shack

May 2020: 23°04.649'S / 135°00.751'W. Anchored in 4-5m depth. For the infrequent periods of W-NW winds (or in dead calms of course), visiting Motu Tenoko just N of the NW pass is a nice alternative. The approach from the S is straightforward and a good anchorage can be found on the large sandy area S of the motu.

We can recommend snorkeling right SW of the anchorage along the many narrow sandy channels through healthy coral, clear water and plenty of fish. – Pitufa

4 Australs

The Austral Islands are the southernmost and least visited archipelago of French Polynesia. Unfortunately, the Australs are very unlucky weather-wise: not only do they get seriously cold in winter but a convergence zone moves over the islands every 7-10 days and brings bad weather (troughs, lows and nasty fronts). (E.g. in October in Rurutu we had nights with only 17°-18° Celsius and during the day temperatures rose to 22°-24°...). In summer (Dec.-Apr.) the convergence zone becomes fairly stationary over the Australs and there's a certain risk of tropical depressions and cyclones.

The Australs lie off the usual route passing yachts take from the Marquesas via the Tuamotus and on to the Societies, but those few yachts who make it there are rewarded with spectacular landscapes and a genuinely Polynesian friendly welcome.

Rurutu, Tubuai, and Raivavae are **international ports of entry**, but even yachts who arrive from other Polynesian ports are asked to check in at the gendarmerie on all islands.

The Austral islands are listed below from West to East.

For more information on French Polynesia, cruising guides, weather, and more, visit www.pitufa.at.

4.1 Rimatara

4.1.1 Pass

Rimatara is a small, raised atoll. It has no pass into its narrow fringing reef and no access to a harbor.

4.1.2 Anchorages and Moorings

As Rimatara is almost perfectly round it offers little protection from swell and wind seas.

Official charts indicate an anchorage on the NW side and a minimalistic pass into the reef, but the suggested anchoring spot lies on the coral shelf and landing looks very difficult.

However, satellite images show large, sandy spots on the northern side of the outer reef where anchoring is certainly possible on calm days. Anchor in 10 to 15 m outside the small harbor of Taanini (near the airport) where dinghy access should be fairly easy in calm conditions. – Pitufa

2018: We sailed by in October 2018, but conditions were not favorable to anchor. – Pitufa

4.1.3 Cruiser Reports

2018: We heard rumors that the locals come out to anchoring yachts to fumigate them as Rimatara is still mostly free of pests and agriculture is the main income of the people. – Pitufa

4.2 Rurutu

Rurutu was a volcanic island with a lagoon and a barrier reef before it was raised 150 m by tectonic movements, so now there are rugged makatea (coral) cliffs along the shore divided by flat coastal regions, long white sandy beaches and volcanic mountains inland—a very pretty mixture.

Rurutu is an international port of entry, where yachts who arrive from other Polynesian ports are expected to check in at the gendarmerie on all islands.

The main village is located in Baie Moerai. There are two other small villages Baie D'Avera (which has a small magasin and snack open for lunch) and Hauti (which has a small magasin). – Pitufa

4.2.1 Pass

The harbor on the NE side in the main village Moerai is quite spacious (120 m wide) and deep (5-6 m everywhere), but the entrance is only 20 m wide (watch out for rocks on both sides) and 4.5 m deep. The new supply ship cannot come in, so it is only used by small local fishing boats and occasional yachts. – Pitufa

4.2.2 Anchorages and Moorings

4.2.2.1 Baie Moerai

Jan 2024: The harbour is not very well protected. Especially it is exposed to eastern swell, which create a lot of surge. This makes docking difficult. The mooring is not safe. We were recommended to use the mooring in the middle of the small harbour by the locals. During the night the mooring moved with the swell and we came close to breaking our rudder. In the end we had to make haste for the Society Islands, due to strong southeasterly winds, and we were unable to find any protected anchorage on the island. - Elma

Aug 2023: We are on a cat, 14x8m. We were the first boat to arrive in Moerai, Rurutu this year, no more than 3 yachts visit in a year. There are no restrictions.

We first anchored in a sandy patch a bit south of the harbour, a small pass with a river mouth. In a SE and S wind and swell this should be possible, but close to the reef. Went in the harbour and were advised to anchor inside the basin. It was set up for the supply boats, but is too small, they don't dock there anymore but stay outside.

Right after the harbour entrance to the port side they extended the harbour basin and built a brand new small harbour for small local boats, is not even on the Satellite images yet. There is a floating dock, for dinghys and probably for smaller yachts, with water and power supply.

We entered, harbour entrance about 20m wide, with rocks on stb but wide enough, with S swell going in. Follow the bearing of the leading marks (they are not lit in the night). There is a reef in the middle of the basin, at least 4 m submerged, to hold anchors in case of dragging.

Turn, set the anchor in front of it, reverse and put up mooring lines stern to western harbor wall. There are coral rocks right by this wall, so no tying up there. It may also be possible to tie up a boat sideways to the South wall. Tidal range in basin about 50cm. – Moana

Oct. 2018: We stayed for 10 days with a bow anchor and 2 long stern lines to the quay, bow facing the entrance. We were only the third boat(!) of the year. The harbor is perfectly calm in any wind direction but E (it gets bouncy) and NE. The entrance is open to the NE and in strong winds from that direction (or east) the harbor becomes dangerous—make sure to leave before you get trapped. - Pitufa

4.2.2.2 Baie Avera

Aug 2023: On Navionics there is another anchorage indicated on the west coast, in the Bay of Avera . There is a pass indicated with two red marks in the bay. We saw it from the bay and from the mountain in otherwise calm conditions. In a swell even from E and S there is a big surf with breaking waves even all along the pass. – Moana

Oct. 2018: Before the wind shifted from E to NE we moved to Avera bay on the western side: Looking down at this bay from the mountains the week before we thought it was impossible to anchor there (in SW swell over 3 m there was incredible surf breaking all over the bay), but when we arrived the swell was down to 1.5 and it

was rather calm. We anchored on a big sandy patch in 14 m depth just outside the boat pass. Later on, the wind picked up to 30 kn from the ESE, gusting 50, and it got somewhat rolly and bouncy. - Pitufa

4.2.3 Yachtsmen Services

Moerai has a surprisingly well-developed infrastructure.

4.2.3.1 Fuel (Diesel and Gasoline)

Oct. 2018: There is a petrol station in Moerai. You can rent a car from the petrol station as well. – Pitufa

4.2.4 General Services

4.2.4.1 Banks / ATMs

Aug 2023: There are 2 ATMs in Moerai. – Moana

Oct. 2018: In Moerai, there is a bank with an ATM and an ATM at the post office. – Pitufa

4.2.4.2 Gendarmerie

Oct. 2018: Moerai is a port of entry. Even when arriving from within French Polynesia, the gendarmes expect you to report in. The gendarmerie building is at the southern end of Moerai. - Pitufa

4.2.4.3 Medical

Aug 2023: There is a new pharmacy, the second in the Australs (the other is in Tubuai), and a hospital. – Moana

Oct. 2018: There is a hospital at the main village of Moerai. – Pitufa

4.2.4.4 Post Office

Oct. 2018: There is a post office that has an ATM in Moerai. – Pitufa

4.2.4.5 Transportation

Aug 2023: Bike, scooter and car rental by the airport. One road goes around the island, also one across. All 5 villages are small, with only a few houses except for Moerai.

Oct. 2018: There are 2 car rental places in Moerai (at the petrol station and Sinn supermarket) with daily rates of about 10.000 CFP. First, we planned to rent a car, but hitch-hiking turned out to be so easy that we didn't bother getting our own vehicle. Soon everyone on the island seemed to know that we were the 'sailboat people' and they took us directly to the dock. Even the gendarmerie car gave us a ride once.

There are 4 to 5 flights a week connect Rurutu with Tahiti. – Pitufa

4.2.5 Provisions

Aug 2023: There are four magazines / supermarkets, well stocked. Here you also get baguette in the morning. Also a good patisserie. – Moana

Oct. 2018: We found a few great resources for provisioning.

- Several well-stocked supermarkets
 - Sinn Supermarket will also rent you a car.
- Daily veg and fruit market just next to the little harbor
- Coffee is locally grown and roasted, the little 'Manureva' factory at the northern end of Moerai gives tours and sells the freshly ground product (cheaper than the supermarkets).
- The supply ship comes every 2 weeks.

The other two villages (Avera and Hauti) each have a small magasin. – Pitufa

4.2.6 Restaurants

Aug 2023: There is a good patisserie, a good snack right by the harbour, a pizzeria (orders only) and a Chinese restaurant. – Moana

Oct. 2018: We found a few great restaurants and snacks. – Pitufa

- The snack just opposite the harbor is open for lunch on weekdays
- Restaurant Tiare Hinano (a few streets north of the harbor) offers Chinese and Polynesian dishes every day but Monday (lunch and dinner).
- In Avera there is a little snack open for lunch.

4.2.7 Activities

Jan 2024: Rurutu Whale watching: Local whale watching boats told us that we were not allowed to swim with the whales, unless we pay to go out with their boats. We asked the Gendarmerie, and they did not know of such regulation. There were many whales around the boat in both bays. We would see them around the boat every day, and at night we could hear them singing through the toilets.

Aug 2023: There is some tourism for whale watching August to October, people come by plane. Rurutu has family pensions, no hotels. Good hikes up the mountains. We saw a new pito (center of the island) similar to a marae. Amazing caves of coral rock, famous so called monster cave, it takes a guide to get there. Some steep climbing, but well doable. Whales can be seen every day even from the land. Local licensed boats take you to snorkel with whales, we were only one boat with 5 visitors. – Moana

Oct. 2018: The road around the island is 36 km long and it's dotted with look-outs from steep cliffs and caves that were once coral and are now covered in stalactites and stalagmites. There is just little tourism on Rurutu so the sights have no signs, but friendly locals directed us to all of them. Not many yachties make it here, so people are genuinely interested and hospitable. Hitching rides, we found that every car stops for a raised thumb and the locals usually set us off right at the beginning of the trail to the cave/hiking trail. We only had a rather sketchy map, but we found most sights. Taking a local guide makes exploring much quicker and simpler. The interior of the island is crisscrossed with trails and dirt tracks and you can spend days walking along the ridges and up the peaks.

From July to October humpback whales are the biggest tourist attraction in this area and we saw many whales all around the island on a daily basis.

'Manureva' factory (north end Moerai) gives tours and sells freshly ground coffee (cheaper than the magasins).

Hikes and walks. These are just suggestions to explore, get lost and stumble over sights all around Rurutu—like we did ;-) Good luck finding your way! If you don't enjoy adventurous exploring as much as we do there are many local guides willing to show you around.

Area around Moerai

Ana Taneupoto: This cave is just a short walk on the main road south from Moerai. A short path leads up to the cave from the road, just before the lookout at Pointe Arei. We walked a bit further, just after pension Manotel (#6 on map), then took a dirt road up the plateau. Returned in a loop to Moerai (2h round trip + cave)

Grotte D'Otare: Just north of Moerai are some spectacular cliffs with a lookout. We searched for the marked 'Grotte,' but only found a chasm in the makatea cliffs in the forest (take the trail left before the road goes up to the lookout).

Belvedere aux Tava'e: Walking from the town center past the mairie, a dirt road leads up towards the 'Belvedere' lookout. We stayed on the dirt road (it passes two creeks) and then we were lucky just following the basic direction the map indicates (there are a few crossings along the way). Up on the mountain there's a fork in the road: the main trail goes up the plateau, another trail goes down (maybe to a house or garden) and a few meters before that fork another less cleared dirt road goes to the right steeply up the hill—that's the one

you want. It leads up to an antenna and from there a tiny trail leads over the makatea to a belvedere overlooking the village of Moerai and the cliffs (Grotte Otare) (2 h including some getting lost). – Pitufa

NW side

Ana Aeo: This is the only cave with a proper sign... It's just a few minutes' walk from the main road. Behind the pension Teutamatea lies the well-cleared marae (stones from a former temple platform) Tararoa in their garden. Eline, the owner (she's British and married to a local) is a great source for info about history, local insights, etc.

Area around Avera

Ana Puuru: A spectacular cave at the end of a beautiful beach walk: Walk north from Avera along the road, then down to the beach before the road climbs up towards the lookout. Keep walking along the beach (sometimes it's better to stay further up and climb over boulders to keep dry feet) until you reach the cliffs. It takes some rock climbing to reach the cave high up—bring a torch it goes far in (2 h return, 3 with lots of photos). This walk is only possible at low tide when the SW swell is low.

Trou de souffleur and Ana Tupapa'u: Hitch a ride from Avera up the mountains, past a lookout to Narui. A dirt road leads to a few houses down at the beach—the trou du souffleur is a gap in the reef where the waves break. We were there when the SW swell was high (2-3m) but did not see much of a blow hole... Walk along the white beach northwards until you reach the cliffs. We found small caves up in the rocks, but we're not sure if that was already Ana Tupapa'u, but it was a spectacular walk with incredible views. Maybe it takes some rock climbing from there and/or low tide and no swell to find a bigger cave. Or you might start from the Avera side and walk southwards.

Ana Mou'o: Walk from the beach in Auti northwards—there's a trail starting at the picnic area, or you can just walk along the beach (maybe the prettier option) and later climb up to that trail on the coral rocks (just a few meters up from the beach). Where the cliffs start you have to go up on the trail. Follow the path until you reach a big and spectacular cave. Local guides say it's possible to continue on from there to the next cave (Ana Taupe'e), but that would involve rock climbing. We gave up in our sandals and walked to that cave from the other side (see below).

Ana Taupe'e: Where the road from Auti northwards comes down from the mountains there's a little creek in a curve before the road reaches the beach. Right in that curve there's a little bridge (just some rusted metal tubes with a few rotten planks on top) that goes to an abandoned house. Hop over that bridge and walk along the creek. Before the beach, a trail starts to your right up the hill. You reach a deep cave after a few minutes.

Hikes inland

Manureva and north: The pass of the road between Moerai and Avera is a convenient starting point because there's quite some traffic, so it's easy to hitch up. The three highest peaks lie conveniently along one caldera and the trail starts on the ridge off the road from Moerai to Avera. We hiked Mt. Manureva, Taatioe and Teape within 2 hours (they are all between 360 and 390 m high). Just below Ana o Ina (according to locals a small and hidden cave) is located, but we couldn't find it. If you don't return the same way but try to make it down the coast (like we did), be prepared to face a maze of dirt roads (not just the ones on the map, but many more, some of them dead ends that lead to gardens and not further ;-). We tried to find our way towards the W coast and eventually got there—maybe it's wiser to stay on the main path that leads to the Plateau Tetuanui and then down to Moerai (5 h, some getting lost included).

Pito and south: Also, on the pass between Avera and Moerai the dirt road towards Mt. Pito starts (just on the other side). We walked along the ridge (down south the hills are less steep and not so spectacular, it's easy walking) to Mt. Pito and on to Mt. Erai and Taurama. After Taurama a smaller dirt road goes off the main road and down towards Auti. From there you could hitch a ride back to Auti and Avera or walk on to the...

Gauffre Puorotini: Walk a few meters further south until you reach 3 terraces (it looks like 3 houses will be built there in the future). From the lowest terrace a dirt road leads into the bush. Follow the main road, there are a few crossings, we just walked into the direction our incomplete map suggested... At some point a smaller

dirt road goes off to the right (parallel to the coast), take that one and walk until it turns into a footpath. The footpath leads to a maze of high makatea rocks you have to cross without a visible path (just a few minutes, be careful to lay out some markers to find the way back!!) until you reach the edge of the cliff and a viewpoint over the coast and the sea far below. – Pitufa

4.2.8 Cruiser Reports

Aug 2023: People are very welcoming and friendly. Fruit and veg are grown for local use, there is also a local coffee production, no export. Supply with wild fruit is no problem. Everything is very clean and tidy, houses almost all from stone. Gardens well maintained. – Moana

Oct. 2018: We had little info about Rurutu before we got there, so we had low expectations, but the island was a pleasant surprise for us. We arrived mid Oct. 2018 and stayed for almost 3 weeks. – Pitufa

4.3 Tubuai

Tubuai is a high island with two volcanic mountain chains and a lagoon.

Tubuai is an international port of entry, but even yachts who arrive from other Polynesian ports are requested to check in at the gendarmerie on all islands.

4.3.1 Pass

Sept. 2020: Only the north pass is usable. The south pass has been used by small local boats at high tide, but several accidents occurred.

The CM93 and Navionics charts were accurate for the pass. The current is strong in Tubuai. The water gets in the lagoon at the S end, and circulates around the island on both E and W side to exit at the N pass. It can get very strong on the W side, supposedly up to 4kt. Milder on the E side and in front of the jetty. - Chugach

Oct. 2018: Lagoon is easily entered through the wide, clearly marked pass in the NW. - Pitufa

4.3.2 Anchorages and Moorings

Most cruising guides only mention one anchorage east of the main village Mataura on the northern side of the lagoon that can be reached in a marked channel, the rest of the lagoon is mostly uncharted and rather shallow.

Sept. 2020: The main mooring is close to the jetty which is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile E of the village of Mataura. 4 to 5 m of water at jetty, both E and W sides are usable (but not the N side!). The goelette calls in every 10 to 15 days and use the W side.

If anchoring in front of the jetty in 4 to 6 m of sand, rocks and bommies, beware of possible swing with current and wind. The worst bommies are in the E part of the anchorage. Floating the chain is a good idea.

There is always some swell at the anchorage and with N winds, it can get very bouncy as the low reef in front of the anchorage gives no protection.

A good anchorage in strong E wind is described by Pitufa in their 2018 report.

N and W winds can be a problem. It has happened that the goelette had to wait several days before moving into the anchorage. We had NW to SW 20n winds in the anchorage, it got choppy and uncomfortable, we had to leave the jetty to anchor 150m out. We didn't try moving further E of the anchorage as it/s poorly charted and full of bommies. View from the top of the mountain suggests it may be doable on a clear/calm day.

There is a small "marina" adjacent to the jetty, used by small local boats. The entrance is 7 m wide, between reefs. The minimum depth is 2m before the entrance, after that it gets deeper, over 3m, except close to the quays where it is shallower (1.4m). The challenge is the number of small buoys used by the locals. Certainly, a possibility as a shelter from N weather, with permission from the locals and prior scouting. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: 23°21.04S / 149° 30.267W. On the chart a little dent in the fringing reef just opposite the pass looked like it might give protection in easterly winds, so we tried to anchor there right after we arrived. Even

though it was a calm day (light easterly winds, small SW swell) somehow the swell wrapped around the island, built up coming through the pass and we were rolling miserably. The basin further in with a small dock proved too shallow for our 2.1 m draft.

We moved on to the village, but found that the outer reef on the northern side is so deeply submerged, that ocean swell makes it almost unhindered into the bay.

23° 20.53S / 149° 28.55W. First, we anchored behind the breakwater but rolled badly in light easterly winds.

23° 20.34S / 149° 28.18W. Then we moved out and anchored at this second spot, but found it just as uncomfortable. Then we moved to the spot opposite the pass.

We used a sunny day to explore the lagoon westwards from the pass, left the charted area and carefully searched for a navigable channel around the northwestern cape of the island. We mainly rely on satellite images for this kind of exploration.

It turned out that the trickiest and shallowest bit was just in the beginning:

- 23° 21.00S / 149° 30.54W tricky and shallow spot.
- 23° 21.38S / 149° 31.28W (depths around 3 - 4 m), we had to weave our way around some shallow bommies, followed by a generally rather shallow stretch around but then the channel got deeper around the airport (7 - 9 m)

23° 22.54S / 149° 31.74W in about 5 m depth, a thin layer of sand over coral, medium holding. This spot is south of the airport. This anchorage is wonderfully protected in all wind directions from NE via E to SE and we sat out a strong southeasterly there.

NOTE: All of the above WPs are just guidelines for careful navigation on a sunny day with a look-out on the bow!! – Pitufa

4.3.3 Yachtsmen Services

4.3.3.1 Fuel (Diesel and Gasoline)

Sept. 2020: The only petrol station of the island is on the main road 300m from the jetty. So, this is jerrycan filling. Open in the morning on week days. – Chugach

4.3.3.2 Cooking Gas (Propane and Butane)

Sept. 2020: Gas in 13 kg French bottles at the main grocery. – Chugach

4.3.3.3 Water

Sept. 2020: Water (and possibly showers?) may be obtained from the diving center 150m from the jetty. Jerry can fill. – Chugach

4.3.3.4 Trash and Recycling

Sept. 2020: There is garbage disposal at the main road close to the jetty, and also all around the island. Free of charge. – Chugach

4.3.4 General Services

4.3.4.1 Banks / ATMs

Sept. 2020: There are (2) ATMs at the Socredo bank in Mataura. – Chugach

4.3.4.2 Gendarmerie

Nov. 2018: Tubuai is a port of entry. Even when arriving from within French Polynesia, the gendarmes expect you to report. The gendarmerie building is at the southern end of Moerai. – Pitufa

4.3.4.3 Pharmacy

Nov. 2018: The pharmacy (the only one in the Australs, Tuamotus, and Gambier!!) is located near the harbor east of the main village. – Pitufa

4.3.4.4 Post Office (OPT)

Sept. 2020: There is a post office. – Chugach

4.3.4.5 Wifi

Sept. 2020: Internet at the Mairie free of charge (ask for a free 2h voucher). – Chugach

4.3.5 Provisions

Sept. 2020: There are a few groceries (3?), the main one being in town at Mataura. Fruits and veggies can be bought at small stands by the side of the road. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: There is a medium-sized supermarket in the main village. Tubuai is a big, fertile island with lots of agriculture. Stands along the road sell locally grown lettuce, cabbage, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc., but even carrots and potatoes grow in the temperate climate. – Pitufa

4.3.6 Restaurants

Sept. 2020: We know of 3 restaurants, both far away from the anchorage (you need a car or a bike).

The Maa'rai (tel +689 89 73 62 20) on the SE side of the island is open for lunch and dinner 7 days a week. Excellent, both French and Polynesian cuisine.

Pension Taitaa (tel +689 40 95 01 50 and +689 87 22 22 32) run by Nathalie and Narii, located 500m from Mataura on the route traversière. They serve dinner, and Nathalie is a former baker and makes great pastries (try the pavlova).

And Poeni, on the S side of the island, difficult to find (not sign posted!) is only open Friday and Sunday for dinner. Grilled food and raw fish, large portions. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: There are many little 'snacks' that sell lunch. – Pitufa

4.3.7 Activities

Sept. 2020: Bike rental at the pensions de famille (there are 4 on the island). We rented at Pension Taitaa (tel +689 40 95 01 50 and +689 87 22 22 32) run by Nathalie and Narii, located 500m from Mataura on the route traversière. They serve dinner, and Nathalie is a former baker and makes great pastries (try the pavlova).

- Whale watching. Probably as good as Rurutu but less advertised. We saw many whales during our stay, often mother and calf. Antoine from the diving center (www.tubuaiplongee.pf) offers whale watching trips and also diving trips (if the whales are in good mood!). Pension Taitaa also have their own boat.
- Corals. Snorkeling in the lagoon, or drift diving with Antoine.
- Biking around the island.
- Many maraes, but a guide is necessary to find them. Narii from Pension Taitaa guided us.
- Climbing the 2 mountains. Mont Taitaa is easy (except some mild climbing at the end) and track is well marked. L'Homme Couché is steeper. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: Hike: A well-maintained path leads up the highest mountain Taitaa. It is easiest to start at the route traversiere (the road that crosses the island) and walk up the ridge on a forest road. From there the road

gradually rises to the highest peak which features fantastic views. Then you can descend on the other side down a very steep path that reaches the coast near the college (east of the dock). Going in the other direction it is very tricky to find the starting point of the path... In November a marathon event takes place on Tubuai (the 'Lychee raid') and the routes are marked with red arrows that remain all year round and are very helpful when hiking without a guide. – Pitufa

4.3.8 Cruiser Reports

Sept. 2020: We spent a week here in September 2020. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: We spent two weeks here in November 2018. - Pitufa

4.4 Raivavae

Raivavae lies about 380 nm SSE of Tahiti, just south of the tropic of Capricorn. Raivavae is a pretty little island with steep mountains, lush hills that feature a mixture of tropical vegetation and introduced pine trees and numerous banana and taro plantations. It is framed by a narrow, turquoise lagoon and numerous motus. It reminded us of an incredibly quiet and sleepy version of one of the Society Islands with little villages along the coastal road.

Raivavae is an international port of entry, but even yachts who arrive from other Polynesian ports are requested to check in at the gendarmerie on all islands.

Jan 2024: New legislation entails that cruisers are only allowed to stay for 3 days (including arrival and departure day). This is a consequence of what some of the locals view as too many sailors during COVID. In case of bad weather, you may ask the Gendarmerie to stay longer (which is critical, as it is the only island in the Australs with protected anchorages during storms). You can only anchor outside the two main villages. You may not visit the motus unless permission is granted by the owners (we were told we could go to Motu Priscine, which is recommendable on a sunny day). - Elma

June 2023: Very few sailboats call into Raivavae. Since Covid they restrict the duration of stay to 3 days. We arrived before noon and left by noon 3 days later.

To check in at the Gendarmerie, walk from the dock past the mairie to the right. They close 1200-1400. The gendarmes are very welcoming, we received pampelmousse upon arrival from them. – Moana

Jan. 2021: This season Raivavae had 15 cruising boats in the anchorage which left many locals unhappy. One magasin owner and the local priest took particular offense and did their best to make the boats leave. A petition was started and cruisers were asked to leave. The mayor was nice and assured the cruisers that they were allowed to stay, but who wants to stay where they are not welcome? Maybe it's best to make a short stop over and move on to another anchorage or island.

Dec. 2020: The locals have established a 'rahui' (ban) to allow the overfished reef to recover--a great idea to revive this tradition to ensure sustainable use of resources... Fishing is forbidden in zones along the reef and cruisers should of course also respect that ban. A chart with the zones (they will change every 3 years) is available at the Mairie (townhall) in Rairua). – Pitufa

4.4.1 Pass

June 2023: There is a Lagoon around the island, a few motus, too. The pass is wide and well marked, taking you to the dock in Rairua. You can tie up there unless the supply boat is scheduled.

When we arrived we were advised to anchor in front of the dock, which was fine, good holding in sand. We were the only boat. – Moana

Aug. 2020: Entrance to the pass: The "old" Navionics chart (version 34G_N+, latest update in June 2019) in our chart plotter was wrong by 200 m, not a slam dunk if your draft exceeds 2m. The "new" Navionics chart loaded by one of the crew on his cell phone in July 2020 was good. The CM93 chart was OK. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: The pass and the channel to Rairua are clearly marked (even though one of the beacons for the bearing into the pass was missing when we entered).

When sailing through the pass in the north we found that the Navionics charts had a considerable offset, also CM93-2011 seems to have a small offset. Surprisingly, the Garmin Bluecharts 2008 were our most accurate charts. – Pitufa

4.4.2 Anchorages and Moorings

In the rest of the lagoon the charts act more like guidelines, as many shallows and coral heads are not indicated. – Pitufa

Aug. 2020: Many anchorages can be used around the island depending on wind direction, but beware of uncharted (or wrongly charted) fast rising bommies. With good visibility, a bow watch and a draft below 3m, the tricky parts are: The “gate” E of Ile Hotuatua (rocher de la Femme) mentioned by Pitufa in their November 2018 report. And the passage W of W cape that is not recommended to yachts. - Chugach

4.4.2.1 Rairua

Aug. 2020: A goelette (trading boat) calls in every 10 to 15 days and stands at the dock in Rairua. Otherwise, with permission of the mayor, it is possible to stay at the dock (5m deep). Even with trades, there is a little swell at the anchorage (minor). – Chugach

Nov. 2018: The anchorage off the main village Rairua is well protected in winds from SW to S to E, but has fetch from NE to NW. We anchored about 180 m NW of the dock in 12 m sandy bottom. There are some rocks/coral that may foul your chain.

Raivavae has a very narrow lagoon, but along the northern coast there's a deep and partly marked channel that we found free of dangers. – Pitufa

4.4.2.2 Anatonu

Nov. 2018: **23° 51.140S / 147° 37.887W.** We anchored in 6 m sand with fenders to buoy the chain (further in there were a few bommies). In southerly winds there's a convenient anchorage close to Anatonu to hike up Mt. Hiro (it's right in front of the houses where the path starts). – Pitufa

4.4.2.3 Hotuatua

Aug. 2020: **23°51'565 S / 147°36'962 W** In 20kt N winds, we anchored satisfactorily 200m S of Ile Hotuatua in 5.5m sand and occasional gentle bommies. - Chugach

Nov. 2018: **23° 51.543S / 147° 36.983W.** We anchored in 5.5 meters next to Ile Hotuatua with a buoyed chain. The way around the island is deep (minimum 5 m). We had lots of unusual westerly winds and found a protected anchorage right next to the motu with sand bottom between coral heads.

Getting to the anchorage. At the eastern cape around Ile Hotuatua it gets a little bit tricky. When going inside the islet you have to pass over a reef-strewn sandbank with about 2-3 m depth. We went outside Ile Hotuatua instead and found a deep (the minimum depth we saw was 5 m), but narrow channel. We passed a 'gate' between two shallow coral heads along the following waypoints:

WP1 23° 51.287S / 147° 36.884W

WP2 23° 51.350S / 147° 36.825W

Use the WPs as a guideline on a clear, calm day. – Pitufa

4.4.2.4 Southern Lagoon

The southern lagoon is rather shallow (between 5 and 10 m) with lots of steep, small coral heads, so it's wise to sail at noon with blue skies and a lookout on the bow.

Motu Vaiamanu (Motu Piscine) is the southern barrier reef where there's a popular anchorage, with its pretty white beaches. – Pitufa

Aug. 2020: **23°52.667S / 147°37.464W** in 7m with a floated chain. In NNW winds, the anchorage W of Motu Vaiamanu ("motu piscine") was also OK. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: **23° 52.924S / 147° 37.389W** in 6-7 m between many bommies at and used fenders to float our chain (like we always do around coral). All other motus are private and yachts are expected to ask the owners beforehand for permission to visit—finding the owners means quite an effort. The motus on the eastern side are very difficult to approach (countless bommies) and it is even more difficult to find an anchorage.

We did not attempt to sail all around the island, as we were warned about many shallows in murky water off the western cape. – Pitufa

4.4.3 Yachtsmen Services

Services found at Rairua.

4.4.3.1 Fuel (Diesel and Gasoline)

Aug. 2020: One diesel / petrol pump at the grocery in Vairua (opposite Rairua on the island), by Manuela grocery (one of the better stocked). So, this is jerrycan filling. We had 10L (only) of petrol delivered to our boat in Rairua by the petrol station owner at ("only") a 50 pct premium over Papeete prices. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: Vaiura has a small magasin that also sells Diesel (at their pump). – Pitufa

4.4.3.2 Cooking Gas (Propane and Butane)

Aug. 2020: 13kg French gas bottles at some of the groceries. – Chugach

4.4.3.3 Trash

Aug. 2020: Garbage disposal available to yachts in Rairua, no charge. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: The rubbish disposal seemed shaky. – Pitufa

4.4.3.4 Water

Aug. 2020: No fresh water system. At periods, water is scarce, despite the vegetation being lush. At the time of this report, no well has been dug on the island, families mostly rely on rain water collect. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: There's no public water system for potable water. – Pitufa

4.4.4 General Services

Services found at Rairua.

4.4.4.1 Bank / ATM

Aug. 2020 (confirmed 2023): The ATM is still active at the post office. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: There is an ATM at the post office. – Pitufa

4.4.4.2 Gendarmerie

Aug. 2020: Gendarmerie has to be visited (even if already cleared somewhere else in French Polynesia), and a visit to the mayor is useful for tips. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: Raivavae is an international port of entry, but even yachts who arrive from other Polynesian ports are expected to check in at the gendarmerie on all islands. We cleared in at the gendarmerie and got lots of general information about the island as well as tips for hiking from the friendly gendarme (the only source of touristic information we found on the island, ask him for a copy of the island map!). – Pitufa

4.4.4.3 Post Office

Nov. 2018: There is a post office with an ATM and a Manaspot (unfortunately the signal so weak that it only works in the immediate surroundings of the building.) – Pitufa

4.4.4.4 Wifi

Aug. 2020: The usual Vini card at the post office in Rairua. Otherwise from the café “Eco-Snack” in Rairua from 9AM to 3PM, small charge. Free of charge by the mairie after 5PM (until ???) when it works. – Chugach

4.4.5 Provisions

Aug 2023: Fruit and veg are not available in the Magazin, but you get it - and fish- from the locals, just ask. Helpful is also Tamaga, who works in the mairie. – Moana

Aug. 2020: There are 11 groceries around the island, not all of them conspicuous...Except for potatoes, onions and carrots that can be bought at the groceries, vegetables and fruits must be bought with local growers.

We recommend Henri and Bernard who are about 4 km E of Rairua on the N Coast. Honey with Pierre on the S coast close to the E cape (3rd house after the E cape coming around from the N). – Chugach

Nov. 2018: There are a few small magasins around the island. – Pitufa

- Every little village has a small magasin including in Anatonu, Vaiuru, next to the airport and at the southern end of the short route traversiere.
- Vaiura has a small village that also sells Diesel (at their pump)
- Rairua:
 - Two little shops in Rairua.
 - Bakery: We heard that the baker delivers baguettes all around the island in the morning, but when we tried catching him at his stop in Rairua at the post office at 7 we found that he had already passed half an hour before (of course we only were told after waiting until 8...) and didn't try any more to buy bread after this disappointing experience.

4.4.6 Activities

Aug 2023: People are very welcoming and friendly. There are rugged mountains, lush vegetation, and a lagoon. There is a ring road going round, where most of the houses are situated. Two roads are going across. Best to go round by bike, there are no steep hills.

The few tourists come by plane and stay in family pensions. Linda has lovely cabins and a bike rental. She organizes visits to the motus, picnics etc. Otherwise there are no restaurant or tourist facilities.

Hikes are possible, but guides to hike Mt Hiro will not take you in wet weather conditions.

There is one tiki, you may need to ask to find it. Marae are not exposed.

If you ask, you will find locals doing amazing carvings, drums, canoes, rams etc and weaving hats, bgs and fans the traditional way. – Moana

Aug. 2020: Some bikes to be rent at the few “pensions de famille” around the island (not close to the quay). We rented at Magali's.

Clarisse, a little S of the E cape, runs a pension de famille and is a well-known Tifaiafai expert (on order, allow for 3 months lead-time ...), she ships worldwide by post.

Teri is a well-known sculptor in Anatonu. Not cheap.

Climbing the peaks, notably Mount Hiro (450 m). Some mild climbing is required, but the real challenge is to find the starting path through the forest at the start in Anatonu. Without the help of a local guide to show you the right track, it is challenging. Rewarding 360° view on the lagoon at the top.

Snorkeling on the motus, few big fishes except in the main pass. Corals are not outstanding.

Well known Motu Piscine (= swimming pool) by Motu Vaiamanu. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: Biking around the 23 km of coastal road's a nice way to see the island in a few hours. The road's mostly concrete, in the south-east partly coral sand with lots of pot holes.

There are two route traversiere that lead over the ridge of the island from south to north, so you can turn them into round trips by walking back along the coastal road (hitching rides is difficult, because very few cars pass). We also hiked up to the ridge of Mt. Hiro, the highest peak of the island. The path starts in Anatonu (just ask for directions when you're there) and is hard to find in the undergrowth where it starts. Local guides are easily found and will make the hike much easier.

The path leads up through the forest and then along some steep cliffs (this part involves some mild rock climbing). After about 1 hour you reach the ridge and the views over the island and the whole lagoon are just gorgeous. The path then goes along the ridge over several minor peaks to Mt. Hiro.

Fishing in the lagoon is very limited due to ciguatera (only a few species are deemed safe by the locals), but despite that we saw hardly any fish. Sadly, the coral is mostly dead. On the cliffs of the mountain ridge we saw many red-tailed tropic birds, but just a few noddies and white terns on the motus. – Pitufa

4.4.7 Cruiser Reports

Dec. 2020: Everybody here on Raivavae has been very welcoming so far (despite the Covid situation), but yesterday a local boat came over to the popular anchoring spot in Vaiamanu (Piscine) and went from sailboat to sailboat in the anchorage. The three men claimed to represent 'the people of Raivavae' and told everybody that they didn't want so many sailboats (11 were anchored there) off the motu and asked us to leave! Turns out the spokesperson is Naia Teehu, the owner of the shop in Vaiuru. We talked to many other locals (including the mayor) after this incident and were assured that sailboats are still welcome in Raivavae. Thus, reassured we'll stay, but we certainly won't do any more shopping at Magasin Teehu... – Pitufa

Aug. 2020: The real plus on this island, beside the exceptional scenery, are the people. They see very few yachts and are very friendly. But you need to speak French or Polynesian to engage in a conversation.

We had good dinners at Magali's and at Clarisse's (Pension Vaimano, tel +689 87 20 42 33)

For conservation purpose, fishing is not allowed everywhere, and protected sites rotate every 3 year. Inquire with mairie. Be careful! Ciguatera exists. – Chugach

Nov. 2018: Despite the assurances of the mayor that there's lots of tourism going on we saw hardly any visitors apart from the few yachts that stopped by. We spent 3 weeks in April and May 2015 there (mixed weather, lots of NW wind and several lows), came back in November 2017 (1 week of rain without a break) and again in November 2018 (mostly sunny).

Fishing in the lagoon is very limited due to ciguatera (only a few species are deemed safe by the locals).

Despite that we saw hardly any fish. Sadly, the coral is mostly dead.

On the cliffs of the mountain ridge we saw many red-tailed tropic birds, and a few noddies and white terns on the motus. – Pitufa

4.5 Rapa Iti (Oparo)

Rapa Iti is the remotest island of French Polynesia. There is no airport, the cargo ship only comes once a month (sometimes it skips a visit...) and Raivavae, the nearest neighboring island, lies 290 nm away.

The only two villages of the island lie on the sides of the huge bay. Area on the northern shore is just a cluster of houses (a bit more than 100 people live here)

The main village Haurei (about 400 people) lies on the opposite side of the bay. That's where the primary school, the medical centre, post office and townhall are located. – Pitufa

4.5.1 Anchorages and Moorings

The anchorage inside the huge main bay of Rapa is well protected from waves, but gusts howl down from the mountains whenever there are strong winds--and that seems to be most of the time.

The main bay of Rapa Iti is infamous for tricky anchoring. Cruising guides mention 'dead coral rubble' at the bottom, the bay is very deep (20-30 m) and uneven. Many boats have dragged and fouled their anchors and chains here. – Pitufa

Nov. 2018: 27°36.808S / 144°20.034W. GPS location of a 2.5 ton mooring block with a 16 mm chain, 20 mm shackles and strong line available for sailboats in the bay of Haurei, Rapa Iti, that will prevent fouled chains and save the coral from damage :-). More moorings will hopefully follow--check our blog for updates!

Another option is to go alongside the main dock, which is usually free as the supply ship comes only once a month. Depending on the wind direction yachts tie up either on the front side, or on the short western side.

How the mooring saved coral: When we first visited Rapa Iti in December 2017, we found that large areas of the bay are indeed covered in live staghorn coral--especially the shallower parts that are inviting for anchoring as recovering fouled gear is easier in less depth.

As we always try our best not to do damage to any coral, we were horrified to have our chain grinding down the delicate structures. We thought that a mooring would be the best solution for that problematic situation and presented this idea to the mayor, who immediately agreed and got us in touch with Alexandre, the foreman of the community workers here. After some brainstorming and researching they started constructing a 2.4-ton cement block including rebars. During the holidays work stalled, then they had to order more parts from Tahiti, so the mooring wasn't finished when we left. Returning in 2018, we found the project still ongoing, but by then all parts had finally arrived and two blocks were ready to go.

The main problem now was how to deploy the heavy blocks as the island doesn't have a working platform or barge. We built a raft made of 8 gasoline drums (welded together with a frame) and after many attempts and near-disasters we had the block at the marked spot and sank the raft together with the whole mooring arrangement. Once it was down, we cut the raft free that broached like a metal whale. Then we freed the chain, buoys and line--tadah: finished mooring!!

There was lots of working time (thank you, Alexandre!!), expensive material (sponsored by the Commune of Rapa Iti), help from cruiser friends (thanks SY Avatar!) sweat and adrenaline involved and there were quite a few moments when we nearly gave up. – Pitufa

4.5.2 Yachtsmen Services

4.5.2.1 Fuel (Diesel & Gasoline)

Nov. 2018 Rapa Iti has a service station at the main dock where gasoline and diesel are available (2 hours daily, you have to pay for the fuel at the mairie first). – Pitufa

4.5.3 General Services

4.5.3.1 Le Mairie

Nov. 2018 There is a Le Mairie office where you must pay for fuel prior to pumping. – Pitufa

4.5.3.2 Medical Center

Nov. 2018: There is a medical centre in the main village of Haurei. – Pitufa

4.5.3.3 Post Office

Nov. 2018: There is a post office in the main village of Haurei. – Pitufa

4.5.4 Provisions

Nov. 2018: There are 2 magasins in Haurei that have very basic supplies. There's no veg market, but fruit is usually available from private gardens when you ask the friendly locals nicely (make sure to return with presents as a thank-you). – Pitufa

4.5.5 Activities

Nov. 2018: The locals invite visitors to join in their communal activities (making popoi from taro roots, baking bread in the big communal ovens, church festivities, etc.).

Rapa Iti was colonized by Polynesian settlers about 1000 years ago (sources vary on that). The limited resources of the small island (Rapa is only 40 km² big, but most of that land area is rugged and mountainous) led to conflicts among the growing population and the construction of 15 fortresses on the hilltops. The remnants of the fortresses are still visible along the rim of the main caldera and well maintained paths lead to 3 of them, most popular are Morongo Uta and Tevaitahu ((the mountain road starts near the football field in Haurei, where the road ends a path to the left leads to Tevaitahu and to the right to Morongo Uta). Only some stone walls remain, but the impressive views over the main bay are worth the effort of climbing up.

Another easy hike leads from Area eastwards along the coast and then up the ridge. From there, either follow the ridge to the entrance of the bay or up the mountain to the remnants of a fort. – Pitufa

4.5.6 Cruiser Reports

Nov. 2018: The main village Haurei (about 400 people) lies on the opposite side of the bay. That's where the primary school, the medical centre, post office and townhall are located. We went to check in with the (only) policeman who opened his office on a Saturday for us. He told us that 2017 only 11 sailboats stopped in Rapa Iti, so visitors get an extra-warm welcome here, which makes up for the cool climate: in winter the temperature goes down to 10 degrees and even in summer long sleeves and socks are a good idea whenever a cold front brings howling winds and heavy rain to the island.

When the island was discovered by Europeans in the 18th century more than 2000 people lived on the island, but with the European ships diseases and alcohol were introduced and the population dwindled to only 120 by the middle of the 19th century. Today the population is about 500 people, but many islanders have moved to Tahiti or other bigger islands to work there. The people are proud of their history and have managed to keep a special status within the French administration. Rapa is autonomous in many areas and next to the 'maire' (mayor) the 'council of 7' (Tohitu) makes decisions where land or culture are concerned.

At the height of the ancient Polynesian civilization the island was deforested, later on pines and other trees and shrubs were introduced and endemic ferns have regrown as well, so nowadays the overall impression is lush and green again, even though many of the steeper slopes have remained barren. – Pitufa