

# Take me to Tahiti



---

*Paradise is a shape-shifter. She assumes many forms and appears in various guises. However none is so alluring or so at ease with her natural beauty than the bountiful island of Tahiti. Diane Fraser and Patricia Codere of Fraser Yachts reminisce about their recent voyage of discovery to this beautiful island.*

---

*Words by Julia Brandon*

For thousands of years humpback whales have migrated to this tranquil Pacific haven to mate and give birth. While original human migrants discovered this tropical gem by outrigger canoe nearly two thousand years ago. Today, travelers continue to be captivated by the isolation of these islands, and an ancient, authentic Polynesian culture that is also infused with a modern French culture.

The sea pervades everything in Polynesian life. Its oceans are a government-protected sanctuary where Polynesians and the sea live in harmony. It's an oasis where turtles represent longevity and wisdom, fish symbolise life and dolphins are guardians.

The islands are an ideal water playground, where no other nation celebrates its marine life in this manner. And for superyacht owners and charter guests, it's simply paradise.

Tahiti is the largest island in the Windward group of French Polynesia. Formed by volcanic activity, it is high and dramatic with surrounding coral reefs. Its capital Papeete is located on the northwest coast along with Faa'a International Airport, the only international airport in the region. Tahiti is amongst the Society Island chain, one of the most popular of the five different archipelagos within French Polynesia. Tahitian hospitality pervades the moment you disembark the plane with a welcome of a fresh tiari flower lei. Its beguiling fragrance permeates the air and represents the beginning of sweet things to come. The lei also beckons you to discover Papeete, your starting point for a beautiful cruising itinerary.

Papeete is a wonderful place to shop for Tahitian pearls, sarongs and the traditional monoi oil, a very pure, natural oil extracted from the tiare flower and coconut shavings. It is also a fantastic place for dining, from the more relaxed outdoor tables at the downtown wharf, where customised catering trucks known as Roulottes prepare everything from the freshest fish to the most delicate crepe, to the more acclaimed restaurants like Le Coco. A wonderful place to rendezvous for cocktails is at Le Retro bar, located near the waterfront. Decorated like a Parisian café, this bar is a great place for a cool, tropical drink at sunset.



*The islands are an ideal water playground, where no other nation celebrates its marine life in this manner. And for superyacht owners and charter guests, it's simply paradise.*



We boarded the M/Y *Askari* on the island of Moorea, which lies 10 miles west of Tahiti and serves as its dramatic vista. The sweet smell of the infamous Moorea pineapple permeated the air. Riding the tender through Cooks Bay was like entering into a beautiful postcard. We wanted to pinch ourselves to see if we were dreaming. There peacefully anchored in the short distance was our home away from home.

Originally built as a fishing vessel, destiny had better things in mind for the 107-foot *Askari*. Before ever catching any fish, she was reconfigured into a five-stateroom yacht to include all the comforts expected by the most discerning guests. Her solid steel bones have allowed her to complete 15 ocean crossings, including a 13-month charter with guests aboard the entire time. Especially unique is the ample full-beam galley, a large crew quarters for her full-time crew of seven and a sense of 'wow' as to how beautifully she fits into the Polynesian environment. The crew's endearing smiles, the refreshingly chilled coconut welcome drink, the pristine bright shine of the yacht's woodwork and the well-appointed wicker furniture all invited us to sink in.

After our safety briefing we were led to our respective staterooms, each with ensuite facilities. The five staterooms include the king size, full beam master

with an adjacent convertible bunk bed cabin, which by closing a hidden door can turn the bow of the yacht into a two-room master suite. Amidships is an ample queen berth stateroom. The two aft staterooms are convertible from queens to two twins as needed by the charter guests.

The lunch that followed continued our blissful introduction. We were served a delicious, traditional Poisson Cru, which is tuna 'cooked' in fresh lime, then enhanced with coconut milk, and a Banana Po'e for dessert.



PREVIOUS PAGE:  
The dramatically scenic Bora Bora.

THIS PAGE:  
(Left) A tall ship sails through Cook's Bay. (Above) M/Y *Askari* is available to charter through Fraser Yachts.



Afterwards we were anxious to discover Moorea's interior, so off we went for a quad bike or ATV exploration of the island. Leave your elegant clothing on board and don a helmet, for you're off on steep and narrow dirt roads exploring craters, pineapple farms and learning some of the folklore of the island. Returning exhausted but happy, the cold cloth and cool drink was a welcome respite.

*Askari* is a heavy full-displacement yacht, so to slip anchor for a sunset cruise over cocktails and canapés outside the reef is effortless. We cruise quietly to our next destination.

Following a blissful sleep we awoke in Opunohu Bay, a breathtaking and dramatic anchorage that beckons an early morning paddleboard. It's an island

where watersports predominate, so today we're in the water. Diving and snorkelling is a must. To dive anywhere in Tahiti, you must hire a professional dive guide. It can be a dive shop, or a more customised company like Tahiti Private Expeditions, which offer a tremendous experience. Their guides have unsurpassed knowledge; they specialise in private yachts and introduce the marine life in a positive way. Before we dive, we are given an in-depth lesson about sharks and the reef by Rodolph, one of our dive guides and owner of the company. Rodolph is very passionate about life below the sea.

Rodolph's preview of what to expect does not disappoint. The sea life is abundant, the water crystal clear and warm, 27 degrees celsius (81 degree fahrenheit). We see turtles, rays, sharks and an array of colorful reef fish, which only enhance the reefs' colours. We laugh as a clown fish pokes himself out from a sea anemone at our curious sight. A visit to the turtle clinic, the dolphin encounter lagoon, paddle boarding, kayaking, water-skiing and a Jacuzzi dip all create a marvellous day in paradise. Its pièce de résistance is a sunset Tahitian dance performed by the yacht's second stewardess Moevai. The sheer beauty and the magic of her dance transported us all into a state of enchantment.



*Askari's crew have certainly perfected the right formula to achieve a charter guest's happiness. This yacht and crew left an indelible mark on us all.*



THIS PAGE:  
(Clockwise from top) The main saloon aboard *Askari*; Onwards to Moorea with its dramatic vista; The owner's suite.

OPPOSITE PAGE:  
With its open plan, *Askari* allows guests to feel like they are at one with the ocean.



THIS PAGE:

(Top) Water toys are in abundance, allowing charter guests to spend as much time on the water as possible. (Bottom) A seven-day charter allows for ample beautiful sunsets around the islands.

A seven-day charter will not only include Papeete and Moora, but also the islands of Huahini, Raiatea, Tahaa and Bora Bora. Huahine lies 75 miles away from Moorea, so when heading here, an overnight passage is advisable. Known as the 'Garden of Eden' Huahine is the lesser-developed island of the group. Once anchored, guests can take advantage of the many water toys on board. Guests can also go ashore on a private beach for a picnic hosted by a Tahitian family. This is an authentic local experience which is accompanied by traditional Tahitian music. These barbecues are not advertised in tour guides and are currently only known through 'word of mouth'.

The yacht's next stop is the island of Raiatea. Fishing en route you can catch yellowfin, wahoo or mahi mahi; even marlin.

A must-do on Raiatea is the Faaroa River tour, which is the only navigable river in French Polynesia. Its beautiful hibiscus flowers that line the shores create

a tranquil experience to kayak and or paddleboard. Another enjoyable excursion is to snorkel or dive the wreck S/V Nordby, a 100-year old three-masted schooner. Today it's an open shell, but it's the best wreck in French Polynesia, and is located just inside the reef. Sharing the reef with Raiatea is the island of Tahaa. A Vanilla Tour excursion in a four-wheel-drive truck is one of the island's highlights.

*Askari* prefers to leave for Bora Bora late afternoon so we enter the lagoon at sunset. One of most celebrated islands in the Society chain, Bora Bora is unrivaled in her beauty. Barrier island reefs encompass two peaks, Mount Pahia and Mount Otemanu, which form a crystal clear circular lagoon. We had the unique opportunity to spend a day on this lagoon, which didn't disappoint; swimming, diving, snorkelling, paddling or simply floating; anything in the water is mandatory. Our tender ride in the lagoon passed exclusive resorts with over-the-water bungalows. One special spot featured pure pink-white sand, so as you jumped into the water your feet sank into the purist, powdery sand. It's truly a spa treatment in the sea. On the northern end of the lagoon our experienced local guide jumped in the water to feed the stingrays and yellow tipped sharks, which created a feeding frenzy for any thrill seeker. The southwestern side of the lagoon offered a particularly beautiful coral garden, a unique underwater spectacle. At the end of our swim we walked up the beach and were welcomed to a traditional beach BBQ where we were serenaded with lovely traditional songs. It was the perfect end to a perfect afternoon.

*Askari's* crew have certainly perfected the right formula to achieve a charter guest's happiness. This yacht and crew left an indelible mark on us all. We were extremely saddened to leave this pocket of paradise. We were ecstatic though to have navigated a small pocket of *Askari's* wonderful world.

In a typical one-week itinerary, *Askari* usually ends her charters in Bora Bora after starting in Tahiti. The approximate one-hour flight to return to Tahiti is one we took with sadness, for it represented an end to a most magical trip. Tahiti's Society Islands are a tropical destination most people only dream about. Its beauty, its welcoming hospitality, its culture and best of all its ocean playground is all there for one's discovery. You just need to experience it once to be hooked for life.



ONLYYACHT  
superyacht insurance

4,8

BILLION € OF  
PROTECTED ASSETS

12,500

METERS OF  
INSURED YACHTS

320

SECURED  
SUPERYACHTS

VISIT US AT THE NEW YACHT CLUB DE MONACO GALLERY



YACHT CLUB DE MONACO GALLERY  
BOULEVARD LOUIS II  
98000 - MONACO

TEL.: +377 97 97 23 10 - FAX: +377 97 97 23 11  
CONTACT@ONLYYACHT.COM - WWW.ONLYYACHT.COM

mys  
MONACO YACHT SHOW  
an informa business

DARSE SUD / QS77  
24-27 SEPTEMBER 2014