The Gambiers & Australs Compendium

A Compilation of Guidebook References and Cruising Reports

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

Rev 2020.1 – June 1, 2020

Please send us updates to this guide!

Keeping this useful cruising guide up to date is impossible for me all by myself... we have cruised another 20,000 miles downwind, through many other islands and countries (dribbling more Compendia behind us). I’m still happy to edit in updates, but you’re going to have to take a few minutes out of your busy cruising schedule and send me an email with a few updates to help keep the Gambiers and Australs Compendium alive.

Email Soggy Paws at sherry –at- svsoggypaws –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://svsoggypaws.com/files/#frpoly
Revision Log

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

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Christine Mitchell of s/v Sugar Shack for updating and compiling this Compendium

Chuck Hoolihan of s/v Jacaranda for his unfailing dedicated to cruisers’ information in French Polynesia

and

Birgit and Christain of s/v Pitufa for their huge contribution of information for this Compendium
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1 Introduction

This guide originally started out as a way for Soggy Paws and s/v Visions of Johanna to organize notes and various internet sources on the SE Tuamotus. It then morphed into a ‘Compendium’ for all of the Tuamotus. When we got to the Gambiers and added the ‘Gambiers Compendium.’ We have since created over 40 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!).

Rather than making this a web-based wiki-type cruiser’s guide, I wanted to make it fully downloadable, where a cruiser planning to cruise French Polynesia could download all the information in one document ahead of time. You don’t realize how much you rely on the internet these days for information, and when you are in the boonies in the South Pacific, there is no internet, and very weak internet in most of French Polynesia. Often cruisers have no time to do research about where they’re going before they leave—too busy fixing the boat and provisioning to sit down and read guidebooks.

In 2020, Christine on s/v Sugar Shack volunteered to undertake a major revision of this document, both to reorganize the information into something more cruiser-friendly, and to add their own cruising experiences. We are indebted to all the cruisers who have sent in updates!

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.

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.

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 Issues


1.2.1 Entry Procedures for EU Citizens

EU Citizens are not required to get a visa or pay a bond. Your vessel is allowed to stay in French Polynesia for up to three (3) years. After, three years, you will be required to import your boat or leave French Polynesia.

1.2.2 Entry Procedures for non-EU Citizens

To read the most up-to-date and detailed information on Long-Stay Visas, visit [http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff/](http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff/)

At the above website, under “Other Good Stuff” you will find 2 documents related to visas in French Polynesia.

- Long-Stay Visas
- 90-Day Visa for French Polynesia

Please note that the visa information in this compendium is NOT the most current information. Visit the Jacaranda link above for the most up to date information on the French Polynesia Bond, 90-day visas, and long-stay visas.
Most “first world” nationalities are granted a “Visa On Arrival” good for 90 days. Some countries in SE Asia and S. America require a 90-day visa in advance. 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. Some countries (ie Thailand) require a visa ahead of time.

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 PAPETE. 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 the normal agent fees).

Your visa normally starts when you clear in to your first port Marquesas (Nuku Hiva, Hiva Oa, or Ua Pou), Gambiers (Mangareva), Australis (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 Poly. 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.

### 1.2.3 The French Polynesia Bond (Repatriation Guarantee)

To read the most up-to-date and detailed information on Long-Stay Visas, visit [http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff](http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff).

Please note that the bond information in this compendium is NOT the most current information. Visit the Jacaranda link above for the most up to date information on the French Polynesia Bond, 90-day visas and long-stay visas.

**The document found in the above link should supersede anything written below about visas, which is older and less complete. The information below is 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

To read the most up-to-date and detailed information on Long-Stay Visas, visit http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff.

The above link, under “Other Good Stuff” are two documents related to visas in French Polynesia.

- Long-Stay Visas
- 90-Day Visa for French Polynesia

Please note that the information in this compendium is NOT the most current information. Visit the Jacaranda link above for the most up to date information on 90-day visas and long-stay visas.

The document found in the above link should supersede anything written below about visas, which is older, less complete and only left in as an example of the process.


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

- A full list of French Embassies in the U.S.: http://www.mfe.org/index.php/Annuaires/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/

2020 verified (2010): I was told by another cruiser 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. My other cruiser friend did it in Panama. Both have been able to secure a long stay multiple-entry visa (ie you can leave and come back). 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

April 2019: Our first arrival to FP was in the Gambiers (from Chile). We hired Tahiti Crew (agents) 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 Gambiers 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 Commissionaire (HC) in Papeete, which was difficult to do from Gambiers. Tahiti Crew was very responsive, friendly, and willing to help you with anything. They speak the local language (French and Tahitian), have relationships with most of 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 Gambiers, it would be wise to engage Tahiti Yacht Services as they can are located in Papeete where the Haute Commissionaires 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 – Last Updated April 2015, verified in 2020:

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).

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. For more about bonds, see Immigration and Fees below.

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  Custom Patrols


During “crossing season” there is normally a Customs boat wandering around in the arrival ports. They have copies of the customs declarations that are file 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.

1.2.8  Arriving and Departing Crew

Air Tahiti www.airtahiti.aero offers domestic flights to other destinations in French Polynesia, and Air Moorea www.airmoorea.com makes the short hop to Moorea several times daily. Charters flights such as Air Archipel are available on request. Helicopters are one other option.

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

If you have crew who entered with you in the Gambiers, but who 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.

In 2010, some 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 Polynesia 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).

1.2.9  Yacht in Transit – Spare Parts


Nov. 2019 – Very useful information on shipping and transporting items into French Polynesia has been compiled and posted at http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff. – Jacaranda

Sept. 2013:  Spare parts and 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 mid-July 2013, these goods must also 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 Euros = 119.33 CFP/XPF, 1 USD is currently approx. 87 CFP/XPF). DHL can be both your shipper and your agent. – Noonsite
1.2.10 **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 juré, long-stay visas, residency permits, contracts, etc…). Contact her for a quote.

1.3 **Maneuvering and Anchoring in the Gambiers**

1.3.1 **Official French Polynesia Tide Tables**

There is a French site that has tidal information for the North Pass at Fakarava and a few other sites in the Tuamotus (in French) www.SHOM.fr (direct link to tidal page is below). However, they do not account for the ‘wind/wave factor’ in their tide tables either.

http://www.shom.fr/ann_marees/cgi-bin/predit_ext/choixp?opt=&zone=8&port=0&date=&heure=&portsel=map

1.3.2 **Marine Protected Areas Guide:**


**August 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. No English version. – Soggy Paws

1.3.3 **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

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

- (2) or more medium-sized fenders or buoys
- (2) 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.

For more information, visit [www.pitufa.at](http://www.pitufa.at). Enjoy the Gambiers.

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 unstick 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.

**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.

### 1.3.4 Using Out-Island Moorings

As of Jan. 2020, there are no out-island moorings in the Gambiers. However, if you would like to read about proper usage of these moorings please review either the Society Compendium or the Tuamotus Compendium for more information.

### 1.3.5 Navigation in Areas with Coral

**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.


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

SAS Planet:  [http://sasgis.org](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 Migraion has also made a number of chartlets that cover most of FP. Both can be located at [www.jacarandajourney.com](http://www.jacarandajourney.com), then click on “Other Good Stuff.

**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/GECharts](http://svsoggypaws.com/GECharts) plus some basic information for people wanting to create their own.

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

### 1.4 Weather

This includes what we use with internet access, without internet access and instructions on how to get weather emailed to you every day at a specific time.


We found 7 possible sources of weather useful while away from internet.

1. **The French Polynesia text forecast** is available via Saildocs for both 1 day and 3-4-day forecasts.


   The 1-day French Polynesia text forecast available via Saildocs in either French/English
   To: query@saildocs.com
   Body of email: French ‘send fr.poly’ or English 'send fr.poly.en' to request.

   The 3-4 day French Polynesia text forecast available via Saildocs in either French/English
   To: query@saildocs.com
   Body of email:
   (Meteo France Med Range FP weather in French)
   (Med Range FP in English - Not perfect - new service still with some minor bugs)
   Eric from s/v Sarana has graciously made a translator from the French versions to English. If Sarana’s translation is not available, there are French weather terms provided in Appendix A.
The surface analysis of the SE Pacific by meteo.pf

To: query@saildocs.com
Send pf.preiso36
Send pf.preiso60

The French forecast about French Polynesia in quadrants like A35. ‘A’ is 5-10 degrees S latitude, B is 10-15 degrees, C is 15-20 degrees, etc. The ‘35’ is the area of longitude from 135-140, ‘40’ is 140-145, etc. Most of the Societies are in C40 and C45. Here’s an example of the C40 forecast.

EST MARQUISES

SECTEUR EST 13/17KT FRAICHISSANT TEMPORAIREMENT 18/22KT, RAFALES 25/30KT, MER AGITEE, AVERSES ISOLEES.

Figure 1-1 - French Forecast Areas

There is a list of French Weather Terms included as an Appendix to this document. But it is highly recommended that you obtain a copy of French for Cruisers before you leave for French Polynesia.

2. The Fiji Met office

2019 Update: The Pangolin site has disappeared. Below is the Physplot download.

http://www.softsea.com/download/PhysPlot.html

Saildocs request is send fleet.nadi.

Second product is a text version (not coded) saildocs request is send nadi.sopac.

Produces 2 products that cover French Polynesia, one is the ‘Fleet Code’ — a coded text file that can be pasted into a software program that will decode the codes into a surface analysis chart that covers from New Zealand east to about 120W. Download the Fleet Code program before you get out of
internet range. The saildocs request is send fleet.nadi. The second product is a text version that is not coded. The Saildocs request is send nadi.sopac.

The Nadi Fleet Forecast as Decoded by PhysPlot.

2016: We have used OpenCPN plug in for fleet code as a fleet code reader. This plugin is normally part of the newer versions of OpenCPN. You can download it from the OpenCPN Plugin Page https://opencpn.org/OpenCPN/info/downloadplugins.html. – Jacaranda

3. NOAA Hawaii High Seas Forecast.

   Produces a text forecast that covers French Polynesia. It is a ‘High Seas’ forecast and really only gives locations of fronts and such, and major areas of wind. The SailDocs request is send FZPS40.PHFO.

4. GRIB files.

   GRIB files seem to be generally accurate except when stalled cold fronts from NZ run into troughs or convergence zones which lurk sometimes over FP. Then, no one, including the French, Fiji, or NOAA weather offices do a very good job of predicting what the wind will do in any given location.

5. New Zealand Weather Faxes

   They only have one transmitter in NZ, so each product is broadcast on a different frequency every 15 minutes starting at xx30 (5Mhz), xx45 (9Mhz), xx00 (13Mhz), xx15 (16Mhz daytime, 3Mhz nighttime). All times are Local Marquesas times (-9:30 UTC).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
<th>3247.4</th>
<th>5807</th>
<th>9459</th>
<th>13550.5</th>
<th>16340.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1200 SW PACIFIC MSL ANAL</td>
<td>0715</td>
<td>0630</td>
<td>0645</td>
<td>0700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800 SW PACIFIC MSL ANAL</td>
<td>1230</td>
<td>1245</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>1315</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSMISSION SCHEDULE</td>
<td>1330</td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>1415</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0000 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 30</td>
<td>1430</td>
<td>1445</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>1515</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0000 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 48</td>
<td>1530</td>
<td>1545</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>1615</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0000 SW PACIFIC MSL PROG H+ 72</td>
<td>1630</td>
<td>1645</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>1715</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0000 SW PACIFIC MSL ANAL</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>1845</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0600 SW PACIFIC MSL ANAL</td>
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<td>0030</td>
<td>0045</td>
<td>0030</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0130</td>
<td>0145</td>
<td>0130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0315</td>
<td>0230</td>
<td>0245</td>
<td>0230</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
6. Hawaii Weather Faxes

<table>
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<th>Local</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Coverage Area</th>
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<td>0754</td>
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<td>30S - 50N, 110W - 160E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1755</td>
<td>0825</td>
<td>STREAMLINE ANALYSIS</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>0919</td>
<td>SW PACIFIC GOES IR SAT PIC</td>
<td>40S - 05N, 130W - 165E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1010</td>
<td>WIND/WAVE ANALYSIS</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>24HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2302</td>
<td>1332</td>
<td>48HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2315</td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>72HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2341</td>
<td>1411</td>
<td>24HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2354</td>
<td>1424</td>
<td>STREAMLINE ANALYSIS</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0524</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>SIGNIFICANT CLOUD FEATURES</td>
<td>30S - 50N, 110W - 160E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0555</td>
<td>2025</td>
<td>STREAMLINE ANALYSIS</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0649</td>
<td>2119</td>
<td>SW PACIFIC GOES IR SAT PIC</td>
<td>40S - 05N, 130W - 165E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2210</td>
<td>WIND/WAVE ANALYSIS</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
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<tr>
<td>0753</td>
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<td>24HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0132</td>
<td>48HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
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<tr>
<td>1115</td>
<td>0145</td>
<td>72HR WIND/WAVE FORECAST</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
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<tr>
<td>1141</td>
<td>0211</td>
<td>24HR WIND/WAVE FORECASTS</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1154</td>
<td>0224</td>
<td>STREAMLINE ANALYSIS</td>
<td>30S - 30N, 110W - 130E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the Web

The full Hawaii schedule is available as a text email via Saildocs or online at
http://weather.noaa.gov/pub/fax/hfhi.txt

The Streamline is available at this URL: http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/stream.gif

And the Significant Cloud Features here: http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/neph.gif

The Sat Photo is here: http://aviationweather.gov/data/obs/sat/intl/ir_ICAOF_bw.jpg

Getting the Hawaii Faxes via Email from Winlink or Iridium email

To get these files, email ftpmail@ftpmail.nws.noaa.gov

Here are the files I've been sampling using NOAA's FTP file server because I don't find these in the Winlink catalog and Sailmail won't offer graphics files/attachments.

This just boils down to sending an email to winlink with some special commands in the body of the email. They require opening up your file size limit (to 40K in some cases) but one or two are practical with a good connection, without using up all one's time. These are the same products available via wxfax IF propagation.
supports getting them in a viewable, usable form, and if the timing fits the crews' other plans. So the FTP option is just another arrow to have in the quiver.

- PJFB10.TIF - Pacific Wind/Wave Analysis 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)
- PWFE11.TIF - 24HR Pacific Wind/Wave Forecast 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)
- PJFI10.TIF - 48HR Pacific Wind/Wave Forecast 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)
- PWFA11.TIF - Pacific Streamline Analysis 30S-30N, 110W-130E (Most Current)
- QYFA99.TIF - Tropical Surface Analysis 40S-40N, 100W-120E (Most Current)
- PBFA11.TIF - Significant Cloud Features 30S-50N, 110W-160E (Most Current)
- PYFE11.TIF - 24HR Pacific Surface Forecast 30S-50N 110W-130E (Most Current)
- PYFI11.TIF - 48HR Pacific Surface Forecast 30S-50N 110W-130E (Most Current)

No subject; use the following format with one or more files listed: open cd fax get PJFI10.TIF quit

I'm finding that connecting to the Winlink Hawaii station must be done the evening before I do a morning weather report (in order to connect). – s/v Whoosh

7. Bob McDavitt’s Weathergram

Subscribe: bob@metbob.com

Bob McDavitt’s weekly TEXT version of his weathergram covering all the South Pacific. Best for Airmail. Best way to subscribe to the text-only version of weathergram.

Bob McDavitt produces a weekly summary of the weather for the entire South Pacific. Current situation and expected weather are sent out each Sunday with more emails depending on cyclones or severe weather activity. Request to be added to his distribution and once a week you will receive a BobGram.

If you have internet, Bob has two sites... one WITH GRAPHICS and one without.

- The site without graphics is http://weathergram.blogspot.com/ (but with translate button)
- His new site (with graphics) is here https://metbob.wordpress.com/

To get his weekly updates EMAILED to you at your Gmail/Yahoo, etc, locate the “follow” button at the bottom of the home page at https://metbob.wordpress.com, and enter your email address.

Note that if you are a non-English speaker, the blogspot version has a “translate” button that can be helpful.

1.4.1 Weather Sources – Voice

2019 verified (2016): Gulf Harbor Radio from New Zealand gives specific location weather on the SSB. This is a free service (donations accepted) but you need to register with them first. We have heard excellent comments about their weather reporting. Usually they do not cover FP but I assume that is because many people here do not know about them. They do give weather for the area between Bora Bora and Tonga and further west. – Jacaranda

- Freq: 8.752 19:15Z
- Alt Freqs: 8.779 & 8.297
- Contact them via email at weather@ghradio.co.nz

Register at Yachts in Transit New Zealand www.yit.co.nz and send in your position reports via YIT.
If you have internet, you can listen to the Gulf Harbor Radio broadcast via livestreaming on YouTube. (May-Dec only, see link on their website).

From the Yachtsmen's Guide issued by the Tahiti Tourism Board - In French only Météo France : tél. : 36 70 08 (forecaster on live) www.meteo.pf.

VHF Channel 26 and 27 (listen for the ‘MSSA Papeete’ announcements on VHF 16 for when the broadcast is).

By BLU (Mahina Radio) on 8803 KHz at 8:45 / 11:00 / 12:00 a.m. and 2:30 / 4:30 / 8:00 p.m.; and on 2182 KHz and then 2620 KHz at 8:03 / 8:33 a.m. and 6:03 / 6:33 / 9:00 p.m. (times are all local Tahiti time, -10UTC)

RFO transmits weather reports on
- FM at 89 and 91,8 MHz, on
- AM at 738 MHz, at 5:55 / 6:57 / 7:57 / 10:30 a.m. and 5:55 p.m.

MRCC Papeete:
8803Mhz 07:30, 16:30, (special bulletins if Bft 7+, 12:30, 20:30)
- VHF 13 (for the societies) 06:30, 12:00, 16:00, 20:00
- VHF 26/27 Iles sous le vent

Radio polynesia 1 (Tahiti-Time, all french)
mon-fri: 05:10, 18:26; sat-sun: 06:10, 18:26
- AM: 738Mhz
- FM: polynesie.la1ere.fr/les-frequences-radio.html

1.4.2 Weather Sources – Internet

Soggy Paws has compiled a bunch of specific South Pacific weather links on their website. These are mainly for French Polynesia, westward to NZ, and northward to Hawaii. These are all the government office forecast products that are useful. (and a few non-govt sites).

You can find the French Meteo text forecast, surface analysis, NOAA surface analysis, Bob’s weathergram, and cyclone activity discussion embedded in one web page for minimal download on https://www.pitufa.at/weather-fp.

Windy.com: Of course, everyone’s go-to internet weather these days is Windy.com. With this tool (either a web page or an app on a mobile device), you can look at both the ECMWF and GFS predictions and overlay additional information.

New Zealand Met

These are great maps in small (PNG) format--about 16K per map. But not easily downloadable via email (appears to be no fixed product name for the graphics, unlike other offices' websites).

Australia Met
There may be a more user-friendly page, but I found this that seems to list all the products:
NOAA Charts in Color from Hawaii

Though these are highlighted in color (much easier reading), they are small files, only about 30K each.

Current Streamline and Streamline Loop:
http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/stream.gif
http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/strea_mloop.gif

24, 48, 72 Hr SFC Prog for Entire Pacific
http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/24hrsfcprog.gif
http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/48hrsfcprog.gif
http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/graphics/72hrsfcprog.gif


Satellite Pictures

This is likely available on a marine weather site somewhere, but here's the link I use for Pacific Satellite:
http://aviationweather.gov/data/obs/sat/intl/ir_ICAO-F_bw.jpg

This picture is updated about every 15 minutes, and if you download and save successive files, you can get a fairly nice moving satellite picture. There are better moving satellite pictures available elsewhere, if you have the bandwidth, but in low-bandwidth situations, this will almost always work.

FIJI Met Office


They have some very good products, but some of them only start coverage west of 155 degrees West.

French Polynesia Met Office


36 Hour Forecast Map http://www.meteo.pf/previsions.php?carte=preiso36


Satellite photo - South Pacific - Updated every 3 hours http://www.meteo.pf/observation.php?carte=ps

Bob McDavitt's Weekly Weathergram

Subscribe by emailing: bob@metbob.com

Bob produces a weekly summary of the weather and is delivered on Sunday mornings. It’s an excellent source of the big picture with more detailed information on various locations in the SP. Bob has two types of weekly "weathergram" emails... one WITH GRAPHICS and one as text only.

For text data that works best with Airmail (Sailmail & Winlink)

Works best with internet email program like Gmail or Yahoo, etc.

Weathergram with graphics is at http://metbob.wordpress.com, Click FOLLOW at bottom right to subscribe. To unsubscribe from WordPress: click the "unsubscribe" link on the bottom of the email. Or, if email wasn’t from WordPress then send a reply email saying LEAVE.

The site without graphics is http://weathergram.blogspot.com/ (but with translate button).

His new site (with graphics) is here https://metbob.wordpress.com/

Gulf Harbor Radio Daily Weather

Page 19
Gulf Harbor Radio “live streams” their daily HF/SSB weather broadcast for the western Pacific. (Mon-Friday, May-Dec only). Find the livestream link on their website: http://ghradio.co.nz

1.4.3 Understanding the Weather Patterns

Several really good sources of instructional material on South Pacific weather exist.

1. Bob McDavitt’s “Mariner’s Met Pack for the Southwest Pacific” ISBN 1-877197-08-04 published by Captain Teach Press, Auckland, NZ. Though Bob is located in NZ and his weather focus is mainly the western portion of the South Pacific, his instruction manual covers a lot of useful information for the South Pacific in general. Purchase online: Waypoint Books, Bluewater Books If you can’t find it, email Bob at bob@metbob.com

2. Jim Corenmans “Letters from the South Pacific” originally published in the late 1990’s in Latitude 38 Magazine. Copies of this series of articles are floating around among boaters, and might be found on Latitude 38’s website. Jim had a great article on understanding South Pacific weather that is still really helpful to newbies entering French Polynesia. Download from here: http://svsoggypaws.com/files/index.htm

3. David Sapiane’s Weather for the Yachtsmen. I downloaded this document from the Gulf Harbor Radio Site http://ghradio.co.nz

4. Some practical tips on planning a passage can be found here: http://www.pacificyachtdeliveries.co.nz/weather.htm

5. The Hacking Family has a great circumnavigation website, and their South Pacific weather page is here: http://hackingfamily.com/Cruise_Info/Pacific/SPacific_Weather.htm

6. Check the Pacific Puddle Jump ‘Files’ section on Weather, there are usually some good, updated documents there. http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pacificpuddlejump/

7. Bruce Balan from s/v Migration wrote a great article in the Feb 2011 Latitude 38 entitled "Fair Weather Sailor - Pacific Weather Simplified". You can find the article here: http://svsoggypaws.com/files/Migrations-PacWxSimplified.pdf

8. Christian from s/v Pitufa wrote a short summary of the South Pacific weather explaining the SPCZ and other phenomena for Cruising World June/July 2019 which can be found at https://www.cruisingworld.com/pacific-weather-routing.

1.4.4 Professional Weather Routing

Generally, the French Polynesia runs are not too difficult, but just to add some info for those of you who worry about weather for the Pacific crossing.

One of the most-mentioned names in the South Pacific when talking about the weather is Bob McDavitt. Professional forecasts can be obtained from Bob McDavitt. Email him for detail at bob@metbob.com

Soggy Paws used a USA-based weather router named Ken McKinley at Locus Weather for the Easter Island to Pitcairn and Gambiers legs of their trip. Ken did a good job for them. http://www.locusweather.com

Another source of Pay-For professional weather routing is Bob Cook at Ocean Pro Weather. (we have not used Bob, but he appears to be a professional world-wide router, check details on his website).

Robert Cook, Weather Router Ocean-Pro Weather & Routing
1.4.5 *Obtaining Free Weather Information from Saildocs (via Low Bandwidth email)*

Most of the information in this subsection was compiled by SY Taitonga in 2019.

Via query@saildocs.com it is possible to get weather information with a low bandwith (e.g. SSB or Iridium or slow internet ...):

- Grib files (displayed on OpenCPN (we use zygrib.org as well for ECMWF-Model)
- Isobar-Charts and Synopsis as Text from NOAA- and Fiji-Meteo-Data
- Currents OSCAR and RTOFFS from NOAA-Data
- Weathergram from Bob McDavitt in New Zealand, weekly
- ENSO-Discussion, etc.

**How to Request an Email from Saildocs:**

email to query@saildocs.com
Subject: blank or your choice (e.g. what, where ...)  
Body: See below

In the body, one line per request. If the request starts with...

- *send* You will receive the requested item once, immediately
- *sub days=10 time=17:00* You’ll receive the item daily for 10 days, automatically at requested UTC time.
- *unsubscribe* Deletes the subscription

You can request from ANY email client (ie Iridium, Gmail, Sailmail, whatever).  The response to the request is returned to the requesting email address.

**Saildocs codes for popular South Pacific Weather, for cut and paste**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>send fr.poly.en</td>
<td>24h FP forecast in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send fr.poly.short.en</td>
<td>Short Range FP in Eng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send fr.poly.long.en</td>
<td>Long Range FP forecast in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send <a href="http://www.meteo.pf/previsions.php?carte=mar">http://www.meteo.pf/previsions.php?carte=mar</a></td>
<td>24h FP in French (sometimes helpful, if the translation is weird)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send <a href="http://www.meteo.pf/previsions.php?carte=ce">http://www.meteo.pf/previsions.php?carte=ce</a></td>
<td>FP in French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send <a href="http://www.meteo.pf/previsions.php?carte=me">http://www.meteo.pf/previsions.php?carte=me</a></td>
<td>Long Range FP in French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send gfs:7S,11S,141W,137W</td>
<td>1,1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- WIND, GUST, WAVES, PRESS, =
- APCP, TCDC, CAPE, HTSGW, WVPER, WVDIR

It is HIGHLY recommended that you experiment with Grib file requests with regular email/good internet before you try them on a limited-bandwidth email device.

| 1,1 Area-Resolution (could be 0.5, 0.5 or 2,2) .5 is more detailed, but produces a much bigger file. |
| 0,6..168 Time Period (could be 3, 6, 9, 12, ...): Now, and then every 6 hours until 168h |
| = "continue", because the whole code does not fit into a single line and would fail |

- WIND, GUST, WAVES, PRESS, =
- Will return Wind in kn, Gusts in kn (imho mostly underestimated), Waves in m, Pressure in mb (Isobars)
- APCP, TCDC, CAPE,
- Rain, Clouds, CAPE (indicator for e.g. lightning-possibility)
- HTSGW, WVPER, WVDIR => sign. Waveheight, Waveperiod in sec, Wavedirection,
- AIRTMP, SEATMP, WIND500, HGT500 => Airtemperature (2m), Sea Temperature (surface), Windconditions in 500m above sealevel

Each of the above codes adds to the size of the file that is sent back to you. If you just want the minimum wind and waves and pressure, WIND, WAVES, PRESS is sufficient.

| send spot: 9.8S, 139.0W | 5,3 | PRMSL, WIND, WAVES, RAIN, LFTX time=17:00 |

If you are very bandwidth-limited, spot forecasts can tell you a lot in a very small message.

| send pf.preiso36 |
| send pf.preiso60 |
| send PYFE11.TIF |
- Note the "TIF" files are quite large, try requesting these with a cheap/good internet connection first. |
| send PYFI11.TIF |
- French Weather fax surface analysis 36 hour for the big picture incl. fronts, ridges, convergence zones etc. |
<p>| French Weather fax surface analysis 60 hour |
| Isobars map N and S-Pacific 24h (shows e.g. weather determined ridges better than pf.preiso..) |
| Isobars map N and S-Pacific 48h |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>send PYFK11.TIF</td>
<td>Isobars map N and S-Pacific 48h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send fleet.nadi</td>
<td>Isobars map in Fleet code from Meteo Fiji includes FP. You will need to open this small text file with a fleet code viewer (e.g. add-on in OpenCPN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send FZPS40.PHFO</td>
<td>NOAA weather for the S-Pacific 0-25S, 120W-160E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send nadi.sopac</td>
<td>Fiji weather for the S-Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send abpw10.pgtw</td>
<td>NOAA, SIGNIFICANT TROPICAL WEATHER ADVISORY (W-COAST OF S-AMERICA TO 135E). A text file indicating any tropical weather as it forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send RTOFS:6S,11S,141W,137W</td>
<td>Ocean current forecast, based on HYCOM, resolution is 0.08 (1/12) deg, and is currently available out 72 hours at 24-hour increments (RTOFS daily files) and available by 12:00z. (in OpenCPN it looks like 0.5deg resolution) (send oscar:6S,11S,141W,137W did not work! svsarana did send an old file)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send RTOFSx:6S,11S,141W,137W</td>
<td>Experimental current forecast available, which goes out to 192 hours: 0-72 at 3-hr increments, and 78-192 hours at 6-hour increments. Available at around 19:00z. (I only get 3 days 24h-increments, 2deg resolution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send tsunami</td>
<td>Where, when and actions to be taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send nz.wgrm</td>
<td>Metbob’s weathergram, which comes out only once a week, mostly sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>send <a href="http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/enso_advisory/ensodisc.html">http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/enso_advisory/ensodisc.html</a></td>
<td>Updated monthly, the ENSO outlook from NOAA.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To get general info about Saildocs send a (blank) email to: info@saildocs.com (auto-responder)

To receive "Available Saildocs Grib Data", send the following one-line request to: query@saildocs.com subscribe gribmodels days=0 ("0" means indefinitely).

### 1.5 Yachtsmen’s Services

#### 1.5.1 Bank / ATMs (Money)

The normal currency in the Gambiers is the French Polynesia Franc, usually abbreviated CFP or XPF. In June 2020, the exchange rate was 87 CFP/XPF per 1 US dollar. However, the post office will give a 100/1 exchange, so a 500-CFP is about $5.00 USD.
There are **no banks and no ATMs** in the Gambiers. However, the post office located in Rikitea on Mangareva, will exchange money (USD for XPF). Like most places, some local businesses will accept USD, but the exchange rate may be arbitrary. The post office is no longer accepting Euros for exchange!

**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 [http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff](http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff).

Some magasins (markets) will accept credit cards with a minimum purchase. The artisan market and the supply ship accept local currency only (no credit cards). Remember that diesel is about $5.50/gallon and gasoline $6.00/gallon. A beer in a store is around $3 EACH. A typical meal ashore runs from $11 to $35. It’s pricey.

**1.5.2 Cooking Gas (Propane/Butane)**

**Cost:** The cost of butane is a set price 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 the Gambiers.

The [Tahiti Cruiser’s Guide](http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff) has a current list of suppliers that fill non-French tanks.

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. [http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff](http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff).

**1.5.3 Fuel (Diesel/Gasoline)**

There are no fuel stations in the Gambiers. You can purchase diesel and gasoline from Magasin JoJo’s (which is expensive) and from the supply ship (when it comes in).

The supply ship only sells diesel in 200-liter drums (55 gallons). You must bring your jerry cans to the dock and use the 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 call or text Norbert on the Toporo (red supply ship) to order a 200-liter barrel of diesel or gasoline (sans plumb) 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 10-14 days later. The fuel is a lot cheaper from the ship then from a local magasin. They do not accept the duty-free certificate and you will have to pay in local currency.

**1.5.3.1 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 the Gambiers, means that you can buy duty-free fuel while still in the French Polynesia (Tuamotus, Marquesas, Societies).

The [Tahiti Cruiser’s Guide](http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff) 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.

**1.5.4 Marine Supplies (Boat Parts)**

There are no marine stores in the Gambiers. 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.
1.5.5 Importing Parts Duty-Free

For updates on this topic download the Tahiti Cruiser’s Guide.


March 2017: 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

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 also doubles the charges of the customs brokerage. 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.)

Yachts in 2017 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

1.5.6 Shipping Items In or Out


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

1.5.7 Flying Stuff in 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. Just past the McDonalds at the Tahiti airport is Air Tahiti Freight. They will put your luggage on the same flight or next flight and fly it to your destination. – 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

1.5.8 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. If you are looking for staples, it is less expensive to buy 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 Carrefor, 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.

### 1.5.8.1 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 normally available with all options (unless it is broken).

**Juliette** can be reached at [raioajuju@yahoo.fr](mailto:raioajuju@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. (In Fakarava, Cobia departs Tahiti Monday and delivers at Fakarava Wednesday morning and costs 500-1000xpf for a medium size box).

**Est. Informatique** lists their products at [www.est-info.pf](http://www.est-info.pf). You have to arrange for payment and schedule according to the supply ship.

**HM Coursier** +689 46 82 82 and [hmcourser@gmail.com](mailto:hmcourser@gmail.com). Very professional, organized and responsive. Usually the same price as Juliette.

### 1.5.8.2 Stores that Deliver to Cargo Ships

There are a number of businesses that supply products, food, items to individuals in the outer islands. See the “Tahiti Cruisers Guide” under Food Distributor / Buyer.

Both of these stores 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 normally available with all options (unless it is broken).

**Polynesia Trading** +689 40 45 62 63 or [polynesiatrading@loana@gmail.com](mailto:polynesiatrading@loana@gmail.com). They 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 @ Maxi Tahiti. They offer similar products and pricing as Polynesia Trading as they are a big box store as well.

### 1.5.9 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, and fresh produce. There are two supply ships that come to Mangareva. The MV Taporo (red boat) or MV Nuku Hau (black boat).

- **MV Taporo** - Tel: +689 40 426 393
  - Call Norbert direct to pre-order diesel and gasoline at +689 87 28 16 09
- **MV Nuku Hau** +689 40 54 99 54

You can call Norbert with the Toporo to order a 200-liter barrel of diesel or gasoline (sans plumb) 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 10 days later. The gasoline will be a lot cheaper from the ship then from a local magasin. They do not accept the duty-free certificate and you will have to pay in local currency.
1.5.10 Provisions (Groceries)

Rikitea, the main village on Mangareva has several magasins (see the section on Mangareva for details). It is the only island in the Gambiers 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. Locals will grow fresh fruit, but vegetables are hard to come by, especially if the supply ship hasn’t been in recently. If you see fresh veggies anywhere, buy them immediately—they may not be there next week 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 (it helps to know the French words for beef, pork, and lamb).

Chicken: Frozen chicken, mostly leg quarters, but sometimes even boneless skinless breasts—easy to find. They 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. We bought something expensive that said ‘cube roll’ that we ended up having to thaw and divide into thirds—but it ended up being pretty good steak-like meat. We sliced it 1” thick and treated it as steak with good results.

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.

1.5.11 Trash Disposal

In the Gambiers, 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 big pier on the northern end of town (just behind the multi-purpose hall). They will have trash bins and large white bags for glass, plastic, and aluminum.

Burning Trash: It is not recommended to burn your trash on any of the Gambier islands. There is sufficient trash disposal in Rikitea so make sure to use and pay for those facilities. Many of the smaller islands are private and trespassers are not welcome. So, do not go ashore, burn your trash, and destroy their property.

Recycling: Located in the same areas as the trash. They recycle plastic, glass, and aluminum. Please be sure to separate your trash from plastic (clear and colored bottles), glass, and cans. It appears that the Gambiers do not recycle cardboard or paper.

1.5.12 Water

Le Mairie will sell access to potable drinking water.

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
1.5.13 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 cops may not react well, either they want some too or they don’t want you trading it into their village.

Good items are women’s cosmetics, fishing equipment, snorkel gear, good quality backpacks, toys, school supplies.

It’s best to just take what you have to trade with and see what they will give. 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. We’ve never paid cash for pamplemousse, limes, or bananas.

In general, the Gambiers are fairly wealthy as they produce the most pearls. Most locals will want local currency here rather than trade. – Jacaranda

1.6 Communications

See individual island sections for specifics on communication options in those areas.

1.6.1 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 (ie 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

1.6.2 SSB Nets

Polynesian Magellan Net (also known as the PolyMagNet): Found at 8.173USB. There are two scheduled net times. The morning net is at 1800 UTC and the evening net is 0400 UTC. For reference, 1800 UTC is 08:00 Tahiti time, 0830 Marquesas time, 0800 Tuamotus time and 0900 Gambiers.

During off season, the morning net is only for emergency traffic and underway boaters. 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 underway boaters 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 Pascsea 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.

**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](https://northlandmaritimeradio.nz/products/passage-tracking). Contact peter@northlandradio.nz.

### 1.6.3 Telephones and Cell Phones

See individual islands for internet access. The post office will sell sim cards and most islands have pay phone booths in the main villages.


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

**Jan. 2020:** GoogleFi will work in most places Vini works. Vini tended to work in most major islands and anchorages. – Sugar Shack

**2019 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 (does not seem to be in documentation - you will have 3 attempts to get this correct)

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 - but not 100% sure what did it... but here is what I did:

- 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)

I also managed to get an old MIFI device (from the UK!) working - but only on 2G and painfully slow - such that most web pages simply would not load... so I gave up with that and stuck with the iPhone hotspot.

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.

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).

Nowdays (2016) almost everyone uses cell phones and there are towers spread thru out the Marquesas and the Tuamotus. We have been able to get cell access in some very rural areas. Buy telephone minutes as prepaid cards in the post office or many of the small shops and you can call world-wide. 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.

The cellular operator in French Polynesia is called ‘Vini’. Voice & Data SIM cards are often available in the post offices in Tuamotus. – Soggy Paws updated by Jacaranda

### 1.6.4 Wifi / Internet Access

See individual islands for specifics on internet options in those areas. See Telephones and Cell Phones for updated information on Vini and GoogleFi.


**Vini Wifi Network**

Buy a Vini Wi-Fi prepaid card at any post office Vini store or many small 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. In fact, from about May 2016 to October 2016 a one-hour Vini WIFI card never expired (those
were the days!). In Papeete there are easily accessible Vini shops with English speaking staff, here buying the 100-hour cards is a safer bet as they have been able to recredit users accounts.

**VINI 3G Internet**

If you plan to be in FP for more than nine months then there are two options for 3G internet access either with your smart phone, 3g capable tablet or with a Vini 3g router. This is rather complicated to get as it requires letters from a marina to the Vini company to set up. Again, a detailed account is available at the online Tahiti Cruiser’s Guide.

**March 2017 - Vini Wifi Network (Replaced the old Manaspot)**

Buy a Vini Wi-Fi prepaid card at any post office Vini store or many small 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. In fact, from about May 2016 to October 2016 a one hour Vini WIFI card never expired (those were the days!). – Mary Ann II

**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!!

### 1.6.5 News

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

#### 1.6.5.1 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

1.6.5.2 News Via Email


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: I don’t know of any news service that formulates a customizable daily news email for yachts at sea (if you do, please email me, see email address at front of this guide).

But 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 felt 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

1.7 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 the Gambiers, there are two flights a week that come in and out of the archipelago (Tuesday and Saturday). The airport is located on Totegie which is about 5nm from Mangareva. There is a shuttle that will transport you to and from the airport for 1000xpf ($10).

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.

Jan. 2020: There is only one airport in the Gambiers and it is located on Totegie. There are only two flights a week in and out of the Gambiers: Tuesday and Saturday. You can either pay 1000xpf to take the ferry from Rikitea or you can take your boat over to Totegie and be dropped off at the main dock. 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. – Sugar Shack

1.8 Diving

Diving in the Gambiers 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 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.
1.9 Festivals

Feb. 2020: The Heiva (cultural festival with dancing and drumming) takes place all over French Polynesia in July, also in the Gambiers. 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 Heritage Festival. Every 3 years, the Gambiers 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

1.10 Pearls and Pearl Farms

If you are coming through French Polynesia via the Gambiers, 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 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: Unfortunately, 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.

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 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.

1.11 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):

Gambiers 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.

http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff

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, Gambierdiscus 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, sturgeonfish, 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.

**2010:** I personally know someone who got a severe case in the Bahamas—3 boats shared the same large yellowtail snapper at a potluck. By morning, they were all very sick, and were so sick they could not operate their boats. They called the Bahamas Air Sea Rescue for help, and a couple of people from each boat were so sick that they were airlifted off for immediate hospitalization. They spent at least a month recovering, and even a year later were reporting lingering symptoms. As the toxin is cumulative, they can never eat another fish.

In the Tuamotus, locals told us “bring us the fish and tell us exactly where you caught it, and we will tell you if you can eat it.” However, locals do get ciguatera too!

**In the Gambiers, 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. —Soggy Paws

### 1.12 Cruising Information Sources

#### 1.12.1 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:


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


#### 1.12.2 Tahiti Cruisers Guide Online

[Tahiti Cruisers Guide Online](https://tahiticruisers.com/). 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 (without internet access). If you find a service/store that is not listed please send updates.
1.12.3  **AVP (Sailing Association of French Polynesia)**  

AVP is the Sailing Association of French Polynesia. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting cruisers in French Polynesia. For a minimal fee ($18/year) you can support them financially as they fight to preserve your anchorages, safer moorings, and a more positive cruising experience for you.

If you need translation, go to [http://voiliers.asso.pf](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.”

1.12.4  **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 full of bloat from people who ask the same questions over and over again, without doing any research of their own. This group recently moved to Groups IO. Older information previously found on Yahoo will not be updated, so please visit the Groups IO for new information. (as of Nov. 2019)

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.

1.12.5  **French Poly Cruisers Facebook Group**  
http://facebook.com/frenchpolynesiacruisers

A 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.

1.12.6  **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.

1.12.7  **Seven Seas Cruising Association**  
http://www.ssca.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.

1.12.8  **Sea Seek**  
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.

1.12.9 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 and 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.

Jacaranda (2016-2020): 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 details and photos on their website: http://jacarandajourney.com

Pitufa (2013-2020): 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 2020. They have spent all cyclone seasons (except 2015/2016) in the Gambiers 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/

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

Sugar Shack (2019-2020): Matt and Christine on Sugar Shack arrived in the Gambiers in early 2019 and have been sailing French Polynesia for over a year. Sugar Shack is a Catana 471 catamaran: 47’ long, 26’ wide, 1’ draft. They’ve sailed from Turkey to the Caribbean, through the Panama Canal, to Costa Rica, Galapagos, Chile, Easter Island, and French Polynesia. An active contributor to all of the compendiums and owner/admin of the French Polynesia Cruiser Facebook Group. http://www.svsugarshack.com

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 Gambiers in May, and were in the Gambiers for June and part of July, 2013. Irie is a Fountaine 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 Gambiers 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://svsoggypaws.blogspot.com

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


1.13 Printed Sources

We are consciously NOT duplicating any printed, copyrighted information here. It takes a lot of effort AND money to publish a cruising guide, and we firmly believe that if it is still in print, you should BUY it, not steal it (in electronic form).
We cross referenced which guide covers which island, since none of them cover all the islands.

Download some of the “out-of-print” cruising guides from Jacaranda. [http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff](http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff). He had the Guide to Navigation on his website, but removed it when he learned it was sold to another publisher.

### 1.13.1 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.

### 1.13.2 Top French Polynesia Printed Resources

1. **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.
2. **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, Nengonongo)
   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).

Dec. 2019: View and download some of the out of print cruising guides from Jacaranda at [http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff](http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff). He had the Guide to Navigation on his website, but removed it when he learned it was sold to another publisher.

### 1.13.3 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.

### 1.13.4 Books on Underwater Life

Or can purchase a download version from New World Publications, Inc., Jacksonville, Florida


Very comprehensive guide to shells with more than 1230 illustrations

2 PASSAGE REPORTS

2.1 Gambiers to Tahiti via the Tuamotus

May 2020: Route: Gambiers - 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 it either way would have been fine as we saw similar weather conditions throughout our journey. – Sugar Shack

May 2019: Route: Gambiers – Hao – Tahiti, Papeete

We left the western side of Taravai in mid-May with easterly winds ranging from 18-22kts and a swell of less than 1 meter. It took us about 4 days to make the 450 nm passage. We had no problems leaving the NorthWest pass in the Gambiers but we struggled a bit on the entrance to the Hao pass. We were uncertain as to how to calculate tides using the guestimator and guessed incorrectly. It was not a horrible entrance, but not a comfortable one. We arrived in Hao early morning and dropped the hook just off the main village (which is not a great anchorage as there is lots of debris in the water). – Sugar Shack


The Gambiers 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 Gambiers 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 Gambiers

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 25-35 knots most days) 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 (as was the case with us, prudent Caribbean sailors, always waiting for a good weather window to move), the Pacific will be an eye opener. Whatever its name indicates or whichever stories you have heard, this is real ocean sailing. This ocean is not a peaceful one (where did that name come from?) 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.

Amongst cruisers, this particular trip west is called "the Milk Run" because it is supposed to be an easy, straightforward, downwind journey. For us it was as much a milk run as there was a milk man around: not. I do have to specify here that Mark and I sailed from the Galapagos to the Gambier islands, instead of the Marquesas, French Polynesia's most popular arrival destination. The route to these more northern islands is said to be less challenging than the one to the Gambiers. Reports of frequent squalls and confused seas reached us from that area as well, though, but no fronts go that far north and you don't sail on a beam reach (uncomfortable wind and waves from the side).

**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
- Sky: blue, grey or black
- Water: deep blue
- Waves hitting the bridgedeck: 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:**

- Why people take planes to cover 3000 miles
- How long one can go without a shower (6 days)
- That it takes a long time of not washing up before one gets smelly (> 6 days) *
• That we really, never ever get bored; I was going to remove my "Boobie blue" nail polish from my toes, one toe every day. I arrived in the Gambiers with 8 blue toes and the trip sure took longer than 2 days.
• Crossing the Pacific is not a leisurely "sit back, relax, and enjoy the weather and the ride" kind of sail
• That this was the longest amusement park ride of our lives (not in a fun way)
• That sailing is not easy
• That the wind is never consistent
• That living in a "stable" house with conveniences must be so nice
• 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)
• There's little time or energy to do the things you like or plan to do, because of exhaustion or sea state
• That the Pacific doesn't harbor as much wildlife (whales, dolphins,...) as we thought
• That one cannot be in a hurry
• in non-sweaty, Southern Hemisphere conditions

The above post and suggestions are from sv Irie.

2.3 Direct from Easter Island / Pitcairn to Gambiers
2018: 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 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 Gambiers. 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 Gambiers. 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

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 Gambiers. – Soggy Paws

2.4 From New Zealand to Gambiers
Several boats we know have actually made the trip from NZ back to the US West Coast via the Gambiers. 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 Gambiers, 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 Gambiers Archipelago

Guide Books:

- Sea-Seek.com has a downloadable PDF file for Gambiers (in French)

The Gambier Islands are 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, the Gambiers is also far enough south and east that it is pretty much out of the cyclone zone.

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

3.1 Passes

There are three passes into the Gambiers:

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

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, and deep.

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. We saw another boat on AIS and hailed them to see how the anchorage was and were assured it was “calmer” inside. 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 in my opinion risky to try enter Rikitea mooring at night, even staying in the official and properly marked channel, because of the numerous pearl farm buoys in the area, sometimes almost in the channel, many of them 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.

Turning north, a shallow, but nevertheless deep enough gap in the bank between Mangareva and Aukena needs to be crossed. 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 Gambiers. We arrived in the Gambiers 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. From there we went north up to the lee of Isle Akamaru, where we anchored temporarily to wait for our friends and better light.

We found the C-Map charts for the Gambiers 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 Gambiers a lot easier and safer. To access these files, visit www.pitufa.at.

June 2020: Utilizing charts with tracks and anchor position is incredibly helpful. The only thing you have to account for are the pearl floats which often move and cannot be noted on a chart. – 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

Interactive Version: http://www.pitufa.at/gambier-islands
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. Turn left from main dock and it will be on the left-hand side. There is a large sign on gate facing street. Hours vary and are not consistent, at least when we were visiting. However, they were very pleasant and helpful.

Feb. 2020: No matter if you arrive from abroad or from another French Polynesia island, you are supposed to check in at the gendarmerie with your papers. From there you are supposed to proceed to the Mairie to pay the rubbish fees. Cruisers have a bad reputation in FP anyway, don’t add to those prejudices by skipping the fees. – Pitufa

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 the Gambiers, 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).
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 is open Monday to Friday from 8 to 4 (no lunch break), you can change USD or EUR for French-Polynesian Franc there (there’s no ATM on the island!). – 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 Gambiers

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

According to the Gambier leaflet, which we got at the mayor’s office in Rikitea, the coldest months are July, August 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/](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 2020:** We left the Gambier at the beginning of August after many weeks of waiting for a weather window to sail north to the Marquises. 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 November 2013 and climbed to around 28°C in December.

January and February were still hot, but in March the temperature dropped noticeably again. (according to locals that was very early in the year… In the following year (2015), we had beautiful and hot weather in March.) Summer is ideal to explore the archipelago 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 anywhere 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 (also hard to come by this time of the year) 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 long.

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 MOLISSANT 07/10KT A MI-ECHEANCE PUIS REVENANT AU SECTEUR SUDOUEST EN FIN DE PERIODE, RAFALES 25/30KT SOUS GRAINS, MER AGITEE DEVENANT PEU AGITEE, AVERSES EPARSE OU GRAINS ISOLES.

Practice your French! (note French weather terms are provided in the Appendix).

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

3.5 Mangareva, Rikitea (Main Village)

3.5.1 Anchorages and Moorings

March. 2020: 23°06.760S / 134°57.96W in 13 meters of sandy water with 70 meters of chain out. We dropped in front of the reef and pulled back to the shore reef. Off to the south side in front of the sports center. – Sugar Shack
23°06.899S / 134°58.027W. In 16 meters of water. 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 were 12 boats.

23°06.885S / 134°58.078W dropped the hook in 16 meters of sand and pulled back to the reef. We had about 11 boats in the anchorage. – Sugar Shack

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 Northern dock is behind the post office (near the St. Michael church). It can get a little shallow heading to this cement dock. The pangas park here so be respectful of their space.

The Southern dock is behind the Sports Center. Usually there is a barge type vessel 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. – 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 20 m 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 harbor itself is covered in other cruiser’s reports, so I will not comment here, except to say that 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 Boat Services

April 2020: We needed some welding done and asked around. We learned of two places. On the Southern dock by the trash/recycling is a work shop area called the “Commune”. They did some welding for another
boat. But when we chatted with the cruisers, they said the work was “mediocre” and recommended seeing James (speaks English) and works at Magasin Terehere. We needed a wire feed and an additional support bracket welded. We ended up meeting another boat who had all of the welding equipment on board. We found some metal to fabricate the supports and went to shore to weld. However, our portable Honda generator 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

3.5.2.2 **Cooking Gas (Propane / Butane)**

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 the Gambiers. You will need the right fittings to make the transfer.

The [Tahiti Cruiser’s Guide](https://www.tahiticruisersguide.com) has a current list of suppliers that fill non-French tanks.

Download “[Refilling Your Propane Tanks in French Polynesia](http://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff)” 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.

**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

3.5.2.3 **Fuel (Diesel / Gasoline)**

**Pre-Order Fuel to Arrive on the Supply Ship:**

You can call or text Norbert who works with the Toporo Supply Ship (red bottom boat) to order a 200-liter barrel of diesel or gasoline (sans plumb) 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 10-14 days later. The gasoline will be a lot cheaper from the ship then from a local magasin. They do not accept the duty-free certificate and you will have to pay in local currency.

**May 2019:** Magasin JoJo’s will sell gasoline. But beware, it is very expensive ($10 USD per gal). The supply ship wouldn’t sell us gasoline. Evidently, you have to pre-order it before they arrive.

Pricing as of 1 June 2020: Unleaded petrol 130xpf/L, Diesel 132xpf/L, Petroleum 97xpf/L and gas 218xpf/kg. Diesel and gasoline (sans plumb) can be purchased directly from the supply ship in 200-liter drums. They only accept local currency and they do not accept the duty-free certificate. 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.– 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 barrels 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

3.5.2.4 **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.

**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 right and you will see
large trash bins. There are also large, white recycling bags where you can dispose of aluminum, glass, and plastic. They do not recycle paper or cardboard. – Sugar Shack

**May 2019 verified, April 2010:** The trash bin is south along the waterfront from the main quay to the small quay in the middle of the west side of the harbor. They do not want you to put your trash bags into the barrels at the main quay. – Soggy Paws

### 3.5.2 Water

**Feb. 2020:** Fritz sells water. You can also access the potable drinking water pump by paying a small fee at Le Mairie. – 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

### 3.5.3 General Services

#### 3.5.3.1 Air Tahiti

**Feb. 2020:** +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](http://www.airtahiti.pf). – Sugar Shack

#### 3.5.3.2 Bank / ATM

**May 2020:** There is no bank or ATM in the Gambiers. 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. Magasin Jojo’s and Terehere both accept credit cards with a 2000xpf minimum purchase. – 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

**June 2013:** There is no cash machine. One store accepts credit cards or can give you a cash advance, more than likely for a hefty fee. The post office changes dollars and euros into CFP, French Polynesian francs. – Irie

#### 3.5.3.3 Gendarmerie

**Location:** The Gendarmerie is located on the main street. Turn left from main dock and it will be on the left-hand side. 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.

#### 3.5.3.4 Laundry

**Feb. 2020:** Fritz the German will do laundry for cruisers. – Pitufa

**May 2019:** Magasin JoJo’s has a laundry service which takes 2-5 days to wash, dry, and fold. Their prices were reasonable. – Sugar Shack

**March 2015:** 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 yachtsies. 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
3.5.3.5  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.

March 2015: Le Mairie offers an info brochure with some history and walks described. – Pitufa

3.5.3.6  Medical Center
Feb. 2020: +689 40.978.216. Hours: Mon, Wed-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. Nurses are usually in office. The doctor is only on island for a week every other month. They will post on the wall when physicians will be on island. – Sugar Shack

3.5.3.7  Post Office
May 2020: Hours: Mon-Thurs: 0730-1500; Fri: 0730-1400. 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. The post office no longer accepts Euros. They will only change U.S. dollars for local currency of XPF. – Sugar Shack

3.5.3.8  Wifi
Feb. 2020: Phillipe offers internet Mon.-Sat. between 0800-1000 and 1400-1600 for 200xpf per person, per device, per session. From main dock, turn right, first drive way on the left. You will see a brioche sign as he sells fresh brioche. He will offer you tea, coffee, or water for free with purchase of internet during the stated hours. Do not come early or stay late, please be respectful of his service.

Magasin JoJo’s is no longer offering free wifi 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 best late at night or early in the morning. – Sugar Shack

May 2019: Magasin JoJo’s used to offer the best, or most consistent internet in the Gambiers. They used to provide the password to clients. However, cruisers took advantage of their generosity, got the password once yet continued to use their connection day after day without buying lunch or something from the magasin. So, the owners no longer provide the fast internet to cruisers. – Sugar Shack

March 2019: The best internet connection we had was at at 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

3.5.4  Provisions
There are several magasins and a bakery in Rikitea (Mangareva). No other island in the Gambiers 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 white wooden doors. They are delicious (80xpf). If you buy more than 5 you will be given a reusable baguette bag.

• 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
Phillipe sells brioche. Mon-Sat: 0730-1000 & 1430-1530. Located on main road, right from dock, first drive way on left. In the morning you can purchase the previous batch for 200xpf or in the afternoon you can purchase fresh out of the oven for 500xpf.

Magasin – JoJo’s: Hours: Mon-Sat: 0600-1700 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 same day the supply ship comes (in the afternoon), but they run out quickly. In addition, to the café and magasin, JoJo’s offers the following services:

• Internet is sometimes offered, but they request you purchase food when using their wifi.
• Gasoline for sell ($10/gallon, yep!)
• Propane (French bottles) for sell
• Laundry service for very reasonable pricing. Takes about 2-3 days.

• April 2020 (May 2019): 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.

• April 2020: 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 the best selection of produce and are the first to put it out after the Taporo visits. – Sugar Shack
• March 2015: Walking further south past the Centre Medical and the Gendarmerie you’ll see another shop on the right. Prices seem to vary quite a bit, so it pays off to make some comparisons. – Pitufa

Magasin Leille +689 40.978.483. Hours: Mon-Sat: 0730-1200 & 1500-1800. Sun: 1000-1200. Left from main dock, on left hand side, under a huge tree. Some people refer to this store as the “Chinese store.” They have homegoods and some hardware items. They also sell propane by the reservation.

• April 2020: 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 have one small area for home goods and a small selection assorted hardware items. – 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: +40 97 83 73 magasinkeali@gmail.com. Located next to the baker. Main dock, turn right, on right. Small supply of provisions.

• April 2020: Next to the bakery. Not stocked well when we stopped in several times. – 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

SUPPLY SHIP. Two supply ships visit the Gambiers. The Nuku Hau (black hull) and the Taporo (red hull). Typically, the fresh produce comes on the Taporo. The supply ships arrival dates are posted at Le Mairie “Mayors office.” Or you can ask around. Usually they are every 3 weeks. You can shop at the magasin across
from Gendarmerie/Post office within a few hours of the ship’s arrival. JoJo’s typically shuts down on the day the ship arrives and opens the next day. Best opportunity to get fresh fruits and veggies (cabbages, potatoes, oranges, apples, carrots, pears, onions). They don’t last long in the stores.

**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 about 800 xpf – Pitufa

### 3.5.4.1 Cruiser Reports on Provisions

**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 and are willing to give some away for free or to trade veggies for not so readily available goodies (rum is precious in French Polynesia). 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. Internet was the biggest expense for us. Alcohol is not available in restaurants and is frowned upon. There are no bars. 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. You will find the other islands do not have any eateries.

**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) and behind the magasin. Sit under a covered patio or under a tree by the shore.

- April 2020: They have a rotating menu that changes daily, but they usually serve local food. It is pretty darn tasty and they sometimes offer internet. – Sugar Shack
**PizzAtomic** (No sign). Hours: Fri-Sun evenings only. 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 $11. Lots of tasty flavors.

- **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). The pizzeria has no license for alcohol, but they don’t mind if you bring your own bottle of wine. – Pitufa

**Pizzeria Aro** +87 76 59 41. Location: main dock, turn left, on the right-hand side (across from Snack Choutime). Take out only. Typically, they are only open for dinner. 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. Located on the main street. 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, Fri, Sat: 0930-1300 & 1730-1945. Wed & Thurs: 0930-1300. Located to the left of the main dock, on right hand side (at the Artisan market).

**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.

### 3.5.6 Activities

#### 3.5.6.1 Diving and Snorkeling

**May 2020:** Some friends told us that there is good diving on the SouthEast side of Motu Makaroa 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. – Sugar Shack

**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

**April 2010:** There are no dive shops that we saw in Rikitea. The pearl farms often use tanks to service their pearls, so there are likely compressors around, but we never saw any. We snorkeled and later dove a ‘false pass’ on the south end of Totegegie. In calm weather it was a nice dive and a good way to get wet after a long
hiatus from diving. In early April the water and weather was warm enough that light wetsuits were fine for swimming. – Soggy Paws

3.5.6.2 Hikes and Walks

June 2020: There are lots and lots of wonderful hikes on Mangareva and Taravai. On Mangareva there is Mt. Duff, Mt. Mokoto, three trails off the Kirimoro trail, the 12 Apostle trail, the hike to the dump and more. On Taravai you can hike from the Village to the top of the ridge and over to Edourad and Denise’s Bay and back. See below for hiking details – Sugar Shack

May 2019: It was really rainy when we were in the Gambiers, but we were able to do several hikes. 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

- May 2019: It was a beautiful hike, easier than Mt. Duff but lacks the breathtaking views. – Sugar Shack
- 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 mainroad 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 eastcoast to Rikitea (ca. 4-5 hours). – Pitufa

Mt. Duff or Mokoto

- May 2019: Hike 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. Hmmm... 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. Hours: Tues & Sat: 0700-1400. Located on main road, right hand side. Sells pearl jewelry (see below), local breads and wares. An eatery is located here as well. From the dock, turn left and it will be on the right-hand side. Several stores and a café are located in the same white building.

Carving School The carving school behind the church is worth a visit (free, with a little shop).

St. Michael's Church is beautiful and has a pearl inlayed alter.

3.5.6.4 Buying Pearls and Pearl Shells

May 2020: 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 May 2020.

The Gambiers offer 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

Matareraragi Carving (Hand carved oyster shells and pearls) +689 87 27 91 41 Stefan 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 $25-$75. He will even carve your boat logo and name. He is located left of the main dock. Turn right, 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.

Artisan Market is open Tuesday mornings and every other Saturday. They have several artisans that sell beautiful pearl jewelry in a variety of prices. Located left of main dock across from the Gendarmerie.
s/v Pitufa makes beautiful hand-made pearl jewelry (necklaces, earrings, bracelets) using Gambier pearls. They are stunning and unique and very reasonably priced. If you see them floating around, ask Birgit to show you her inventory.

Tahiani sells remarkable, top quality pearl jewelry in sterling silver and 18k gold. 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.

Eric has a nice, small collection of pearl jewelry 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.

April 2010: If you are coming through French Polynesia via the Gambiers, 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 Gambiers do not seem to want to sell directly to the public.

The Poeiti Shop is located well to the south of town, on the waterfront road. Turn left when coming off the wharf and keep going left until the road dead ends at what looks like a church (it’s not, it is a monument). The shop is there to the left. It is also the neatest nicest grocery store. They took U.S. cash as well as CFP. – Visions of Johanna

3.5.6.5 Pearl Farms

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

Stefan’s cousin, Dada Keck runs a small, but profitable pearl farm (about 100k pearls annually). Ask Stefan to schedule a visit. 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. We anchored in North Totegegie and took our dinghy to his pearl farm which in Baie D’Akaputu near Pointe Tepaeture in a blue pearl house.

Eric Sr. and Eric Jr are located off of Gaioio (south of Totegegie-airport). Larger operation (200k pearls annually) and will be happy to show you their harvesting process and sell you pearls. They will give you a tour of their pearl farm and sell you individual pearls. Super nice family.

March 2019: Excellent pearl farm visit at Pension Maro’i (guest house) in Baie de Gatavake. The owner Michel 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

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

There is no tourism industry here in Gambiers, so no one is really set up for tours. However, if you ask the right person, they may give you a short look around. Bill from Visions of Johanna set up our trip with Benoit at his pearl farm about a 20-minute walk out of town.

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 with outboard motors.

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 French Polynesians are also 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 Gambiers, 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).

On our walk back from the pearl farm, someone invited us into their yard for free 'pampelmousse' (large sweet grapefruit grown on the island). We gathered all that we could carry! – 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 once every three years (next one 2021) 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 Gambiers. – 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’i” 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. It was a short night, so Mark and I still managed to watch a movie warmly tucked in bed, while Irie bounced around at anchor. At least the wind produced enough electricity for our needs.

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

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 pamplemousse (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
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

3.6.1  Taravai Village (Valerie and Herve’s Bay)

Taravai Village is on the east side of Taravai. Valerie and Herve and their son Ariki live in the “village” and monitor VHF channel 77. The village is located between Pt. Matariki and Ilot Motu O-Ari.

Valerie and Herve will sell fresh vegetables and produce from their garden at reasonable prices (and they are willing to trade sometimes too).

They host a Sunday BBQ where they provide the main course and cruisers bring the side, beverages and desert. Call ahead to let them know you plan to attend.

Valerie and Herve also have a compost and they ask that you bring your organics to them to add to the mound.

If you are planning on heading to the Tuamotus you will need pearl floats to float your chain. Herve will sell you pearl floats for 500xpf each which is a great bargain.

3.6.1.1  Anchorages and Moorings

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.

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 pulled up anchor and moved to the 2nd location as noted above in bold. – Sugar Shack

May 2019: We visited Taravai several times and truly enjoyed this peace of paradise. We anchored in front of Valerie and Herve’s home. It is important to arrive during daylight with good sun as there is a windy path to get to the anchorage avoiding coral heads. See activities for fun things to do at Herve’s house. – 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’
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

**2010:** There is also an anchorage in front of the town of Taravai. It looks exposed to the east but is actually fairly protected by the reef out front. There is supposed to be a channel marking the way in—pearl farm buoys, near Motu-O-Ari. But we didn’t see them or know about them, and made a ‘frontal assault’, coming straight in over the reef towards the church, which shallowed to about 9-10 feet at its shallowest. Good light and visual navigation is imperative. – Soggy Paws

### 3.6.1.2 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 1-1:15. – 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 rain had washed two parts of the trail down the hill. – 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

**April 2020:** Valerie and Herve are still hosting Sunday Funday complete with volleyball and other games and music. They provided the main course while the cruisers brought the sides, desert, and beverages. Always a good time! Call Valerie and Herve on VHF 77 to let them know you are coming or stop on by. – Sugar Shack

**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, pomplemouse, sweet potatoes, bananas and beans.

They host a Sunday BBQ at their house where they will provide the fish and you bring the beverages and sides. During Sunday Funday, you can play bocce ball, volleyball or just listen to local music. 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. – Sugar Shack

### 3.6.1.3 Cruiser Reports

**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, pampelmousse, 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

**3.6.2 South Side Taravai and Agakautai (Eduard and Denise’s Bay)**

This bay is not safe during westerly or northwesterly winds.

Eduard and Denise have a self-sustaining community where they will sell you fresh vegetables and fruits for a reasonable price.

![Figure 3-1 South Side of Taravai - Courtesy of Pitufa](image)

The unnamed and uncharted bay south of Ile Taravai and west of Ile Agakautai, 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 there on the shore of Taravai. 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.

-- Chugach

### 3.6.2.1 Anchorages and Moorings

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

**February 2020:** 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. Beautiful anchorage. – 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 Agakautai, 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. 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 (on the opposite side of the island from Valerie and Herve).

**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 how big the sandy area to anchor is.

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 Agakautai. 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. Denise
speaks some English and good French. The house to the east, on Agakani, was also inhabited by a friendly local. – Soggy Paws

3.6.2.2 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, staghorns 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

3.6.2.3 Cruiser Reports

Feb. 2020: Note, the local who lives on Agakaitai 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. – 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. – Pitufa

March 2015: 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.

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.

As luck would have it, the sun popped out right in time and the correct part of sky turned blue for 20 minutes. With me on the bow and Mark gently moving the boat forward, we slowly entered the reef strewn bay. For some reason, there was a lot of glare in the water and the visibility was poor. Instead of seeing all the dark spots ahead of us, I could just make out the rocky bottom 30 feet in front of us and an area as wide as Irie. Not good; you want the sun high in the sky and behind you to read the water... At that point, we realized or remembered that the sun in the southern hemisphere always sits in the north, even at her highest point, around noon, the time we approached the anchorage. It was the direction we needed to go. We proceeded at
a snail's pace and at some point, when I looked back, I noticed that we had barely missed a shallow reef! Mark made a sharp right to get into less shallow water and we continued deeper into the bay, our hearts racing and our minds in minor shock.

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 – when looking into the right direction – 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 and the weather was playing tricks on us. 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.

One day, we had lunch two bays away with our friends from Pitufa, who were anchored in the third bay to the west of us. This "picnic bay" was a little tropical paradise; uninhabited, golden sand fringed by palm trees, some pretty rocks along shore and reefs in the water. The wind seemed to be coming from only one direction, but that might have been coincidence. Either way, we might check this sweet little spot out one day with Irie, when the weather is right and we feel confident enough to move again.

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. We also took our dinghy, weaving through coral heads, to "the village" of Taravai. Only two families live here full-time now (when the French did their many years of nuclear testing in the neighboring Tuamotus and used Rikitea as their base, many people from the Gambier archipelago moved to "the city" to work, and stayed afterwards) and they maintain the area splendidly; the historic church, the white beaches and the lush yards and gardens look very inviting to visitors, and inhabitants. The atmosphere is relaxed, friendly and hospitable. Not a bad place to live! – Irie

### 3.6.3 NW Side of Taravai

#### 3.6.3.1 Anchorages – Baie Onemea

**Feb. 2020: 23°08.9975S / 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.

*Figure 3-2 NW Side of Taravai - Pitufa*

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

**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. – Pitufa
3.6.3.2 Anchorages – Baie Anganui

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 2 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. 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.

Taravai has beautiful, uninhabited bays on the western side: Baie Anganui and Baie Onemea. 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

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

3.6.3.3 Activities

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 Agakuitai was stunning. – Pitufa

Feb. 2020: There is good snorkeling on either side of the bay Onemea (north and south) with new coral growth and sea life. – Sugar Shack.

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

3.6.3.4 Cruiser reports

Feb. 2020: Baie Onemea is a true heaven. Absolutely beautiful, serene and calm. A perfect anchorage on a sandy bottom, white sandy beaches and surrounded by nothing but nature. The hillsides are incredibly green and lush (especially after their very wet season last year). However, there are lots of bugs and mosquitos. The little bugs seem to only live 24 hours as our deck became a bug graveyard each morning. – Sugar Shack

March 2015: Taravai has beautiful, uninhabited bays on the western side: Baie Anganui and Baie Onemea. 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

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. The village anchorage is deep and has a lot of scattered coral heads. A visit to the village can be made by dinghy from the southern bay as well. Walking around the well-kept grounds and seeing the little church is recommended. – Irie
3.7 Totegegie (Airport Anchorage)

3.7.1 Anchorages and Moorings

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. Gold 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: 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 2019: 23°02.456S / 134°54.833S dropped in the midst of several bommies but hit sand at 5 meters. Floated the chain with 5 small floats and did not have any problems with the chain dancing with the bommies. – 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

3.7.2 Activities

3.7.2.1 Diving and Snorkeling

March 2020: 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. We’ve heard that rays hang out here too but they eluded us. Coral is starting to grow back and lots of sea life. Fun place to snorkel, one of my favorites in Gambiers. – 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 (e.g. for a drift snorkel). – Pitufa

3.7.3 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 1000 xpf ($10) each way and the hassle of being loaded onto the ferry. – 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

3.8 Motu Puaumu (NE corner, Private Island)

Puaumu is a small privately owned island inside the NE corner of the reef.... (the Polynesians pronounce every vowel, so this is pronounced Poo-ah-ooh-moo)

3.8.1 Anchorages and Moorings

May 2020: 23°0 1.124S / 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 in 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.

We left Rikitea harbor yesterday morning to go out to the outer reef and hang out for a few days. Bill on Visions of Johanna had gotten some waypoints from a French boat for going up into the 'unsurveyed' part of the atoll. And we could see a light wind period coming up, for a few days.

So about mid-day, 4 boats all headed out of the harbor, east to the edge of the reef, and north along the reef. We left first and ended up in the lead. It turned out to be a 'no-brainer' for us (we don't need no stinkin' waypoints!)--the water is really clear and easy to read. It is mostly very deep--60-80 feet. There are brown spots that are submerged coral heads at about 20 feet.

There is a solid reef all along the eastern side of the Gambiers atoll, with periodic 'motus'... little sand/coral islands. A few have palm trees... they look JUST like that Windows background with the sailboat and the island. – Soggy Paws
3.8.2 Cruiser Reports

May 2020: Puaumou 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 of 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. – 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

3.9 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 the side of his house). Please respect his wishes and park outside of his view to avoid an ugly encounter.

3.9.1 Anchorages and Moorings

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

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. – Pitufo

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 rolly. Better spots can be found further NE just above P.te 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. – Pitufo

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

3.9.2 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
3.9.3  **Cruiser Reports**

**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.

Further NE, in the middle of the island, the house of Bernard and his family is nicely located behind the long beach. Bernard prefers when cruisers ask for permission prior to anchoring off his beach close to the house. The northern part of Aukena is privately owned and visiting yachts are not welcome. – 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

### 3.10 Ile Akamaru (Remy’s Island)

Remy speaks a little English and can help guide you in toward the island. He lives full time on the island but spends a lot of time on his house boat near Ile Mekiro. This used to be called Bertrand’s island, but he has not lived here for many years.

#### 3.10.1 Anchorages and Moorings

**April 2020:** 23°10.388S / 134°55.079W in 1.2 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 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 is a little deeper and does not go into the sandy shelf 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.

This is NOT a pass into the lagoon. 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 n 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

### 3.10.2 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 top, the path is easily spotted. You can walk along the ridge while being 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

### 3.10.3 Cruiser Reports

**Feb. 2020:** Betrand 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 and Bertrand, who lives in a houseboat, is a great guy to get to know. He sells good quality pearls that are affordable.

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! After a stroll through the neighborhood, we stopped at Bertrand’s houseboat on the way back to Irie and had a chat with his family. His daughters are in school in Rikitea where they learn to carve pearls and shells. The designs and the work are amazing, but unfortunately, only one of the shells was finished and it was not for sale.

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.

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

### 3.11 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, 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.

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. See above note about the birds. – 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

### 3.11.1 Cruiser Reports

**Mach 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 2015:** 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

### 3.12 Ile Kouaku

Just one little motu sticks out from the otherwise submersed barrier reef in the SE 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.

### 3.12.1 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
3.13 *Ile Kamaka (Private Island)*

This little, rocky island in the very south of the archipelago is privately owned and cruisers are required to ask for permission before anchoring here. You can ask Tehoto (or the PizzAtomic (by the sports center) in Rikitea for permission. As the barrier reef in the south is deeply submersed, swell makes it almost unhindered into the lagoon and anchoring is only advisable on very calm days.

**May. 2020:** 23°14.2985′S / 134°57.547W in 8-9 meters of water. This is the one sandy spot where you can anchor without damaging the pristine coral that surrounds the island. It is located on the north coast where 2 boats can fit. The coral plateau on the approach comes up to 4-5 meters, but the anchorage is deeper. At this spot is a thin layer of sand and medium holding. Watch out for old moorings that may foul the anchor.

**3.13.1 Cruiser Reports**

**May 2020:** We spent a few days here during the summer and despite the ideal conditions (light SE wind with less than 1-meter swell), we were still rolling miserably. The above anchoring spots are the best locations to protect your boat and the coral. — Pitufa

3.14 *Ile Makaroa*

The holding is deep and not solid. Most cruisers use this anchorage as a “day stop” only due to the poor holding and swell from almost every direction.

**April 2020:** 23°13.1425′S / 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

3.14.1 *Cruiser Reports*

**April 2020:** East side of Makaroa is good snorkeling and diving when there is no swell. — Pitufa

3.15 *Other Motu Anchorages*

3.15.1 *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 roily to stay overnight. It might be okay there in calm conditions without much southerly swell. — Pitufa

3.15.2 *Motu Tenoko*

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

3.15.3 *Tarauru Roa*

**Feb. 2020:** 23°06.6535′S / 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
3.15.3.1 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 Gambiers. – Sugar Shack

3.15.4 Motu Vaiatekeue

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

3.15.5 Two Palm Island

Aptly named because it is a really small motu with two palm trees. In 2019 there were 3 palm trees, but one lost its top in early 2020.

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 recommended. – Sugar Shack

3.15.5.1 Cruiser Reports

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
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.

As of February 2020, all the information provided below on the Australs was provided by s/v Pitufa.

For more information on French Polynesia, cruising guides, weather, and more, visit their website at 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 harbour.

4.1.2 Anchorages and Moorings

As Rimatara is almost perfectly round it offers little protection from swell and wind seas, but there are large, sandy spots on the northern side of the outer reef where anchoring is certainly possible on calm days.

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.

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, but even 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).

4.2.1 Pass

The harbour 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.

4.2.2 Anchorages and Moorings

4.2.2.1 Baie Moerai

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 harbour 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 harbour becomes dangerous–make sure to leave before you get trapped. - Pitufa

4.2.2.2 Baie Avera

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 Services

Moerai has a surprisingly well-developed infrastructure. All services listed below are located in Moerai unless otherwise noted.

4.2.3.1 Fuel (Diesel and Gasoline)

Oct. 2018: There is a petrol station in the main village or Moerai. You can rent a car from the petrol station as well. - Pitufa

4.2.3.2 Banks / ATMs

Oct. 2018: A bank with an ATM is available. There is also an ATM at the post office.

4.2.3.3 Gendarmerie

Oct. 2018: Moerai 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

4.2.3.4 Medical

Oct. 2018: There is a hospital at the main village.

4.2.3.5 Post Office

Oct. 2018: There is a post office that has an ATM.

4.2.3.6 Transportation

Oct. 2018: There are 2 car rental places in town (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 in the end. Soon everyone on the island seemed to know that we were the
‘sailboat people’ and they took us directly to the dock without even asking. Even the gendarmerie car gave us a ride once ;-) - Pitufa

4 to 5 flights a week connect Rurutu with Tahiti.

4.2.4 Provisions

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 supermarket.

4.2.5 Restaurants

Oct. 2018: We found a few great restaurants and snacks.

- The snack just opposite the harbour is open for lunch on weekdays
- Restaurant Tiare Hinano (a few streets north of the harbour) offers Chinese and Polynesian dishes every day but Monday (lunch and dinner).
- In Avera there is a little snack open for lunch.

4.2.6 Activities

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 searched. We only had a rather sketchy map, but we found most sights. Taking a local guide will make 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 at the northern end of Moerai gives tours and sells the freshly ground coffee (cheaper than the supermarkets).

4.2.7 Hikes and walks

Oct. 2018: 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 locals guides willing to show you around. - Pitufa

4.2.7.1 Area around Moerai

Ana Taneuapoto: 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 (No. 6 on the map), then took a dirt road up the plateau and 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 metres 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).

### 4.2.7.2 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 Teautamatea 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.

### 4.2.7.3 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 you reach the beach, a trail starts to your right up the hill. You reach a deep cave after a few minutes.

### 4.2.7.4 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 Tepe 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 metres 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.

### 4.2.8 Cruiser Reports

**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

**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.

**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: the WP above are just guidelines for careful navigation on a sunny day with a look-out on the bow!!

4.3.3 Services

4.3.3.1 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.

4.3.3.2 Pharmacy

Nov. 2018: The pharmacy (the only one in the Australes, Tuamotus and Gambiers!!) is located near the harbour east of the main village.

4.3.4 Provisions

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.

4.3.5 Restaurants

Nov. 2018: There are many little 'snacks' that sell lunch.

4.3.6 Activities

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.

4.3.7 Cruiser Reports

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.

4.4.1 **Pass**

**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.

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.

4.4.2.1 **Rairua**

**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.

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).

4.4.2.3 **Hotuatau**

**Nov. 2018:** 23° 51.543S / 147° 36.983W. We anchored in 5.5 metres next to Ile Hotuatau 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 Hotuatau 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 Hotuatau 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

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.
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.

### 4.4.3 Services

#### 4.4.3.1 Fuel (Diesel and Gasoline)

Nov. 2018: Vaiura has a small magasin that also sells Diesel (at their pump)

#### 4.4.3.2 Trash

Nov. 2018: The rubbish disposal seemed shaky.

#### 4.4.3.3 Water

Nov. 2018: There’s no public water system for potable water.

#### 4.4.3.4 Bank / ATM

Nov. 2018: There is an ATM at the post office.

#### 4.4.3.5 Gendarmerie

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!).

#### 4.4.3.6 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.)

#### 4.4.3.7 Provisions

Nov. 2018: There are a few small magasins around the island.

- Every little village has a small magasin including in Anatou, 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.

### 4.4.4 Activities

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.

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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 are 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.

4.4.5 Cruiser Reports

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), but despite that we saw hardly any fish. Sadly the coral are 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.

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.

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.

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 do damage 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 Services**

**Nov. 2018 - Fuel:** 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).

**Nov. 2018 - Mairie:** There is a Le Mairie office where you must pay for fuel prior to pumping.

**Nov. 2018 – Medical Center:** There is a medical centre in the main village of Haurei.

**Nov. 2018 – Post Office:** There is a post office in the main village of Haurei.

**Nov. 2018 - Provisions:** There are 2 minimarkets 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).

**4.5.3 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.

**4.5.4 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.
5 Appendix A – French Weather Terms

I copied this from somewhere online (sorry, don’t remember where). All cruisers headed for French-speaking locations should purchase French for Cruisers before they leave!!

....est stable
....remonte
...baisse./...chute
A ... heures Temps Universal (TU)
a la fin
ailleurs
les alizes
I’ amelioration
I’ anticyclone(A)
au debut
I’ averse
Avez-vous la (prevision) meteo?
I’ avis
les bancs de brouillards cotiers
le barometre
bientot
la brise de mer
la brise de terre
la brouillard
la bruine
la brume
le Bulletin cote
le Bulletin grand large
le Bulletin large
le bulletin meteo
le Bulletin meteorologique Special (BMS)
la carte meteo (-rologique)
ce soir
centre
cet apres-midi
cette nuit
le ciel

....is stable
....is rising
....is dropping/....is falling
At ... Universal Time
at the end
elsewhere
trade winds
improvement
high (H)
at the beginning
showers
Do you have the weather forecast?
warning
coastal fog banks
barometer
soon
sea breeze
land breeze
fog
drizzle
fog
coastal forecast
high seas forecast
offshore forecast
weather report
Special Weather Bulletin
weather map
this evening
center
this afternoon
tonight
sky
clair

couvert

clear

le creux
trough

le CROSS
CROSSbroadcasts weather

tropical cyclone
tropical cyclone

le cyclone tropical

dans le nord
in the North

dans le quadrant sud-est
in the southeastern quadrant

dans un rayon de 20 mn autour du
clear

degage

degree

le degre

le deplacement

la depression(D)

devenant

becoming

diameter of the eye

le diametre de l'oeil

ridge

la dorsale

l' echelle de Beaufort(B)

Beaufort scale

ecclaircie

sunny period

les eclairs

lightning

en cours

in progress

en journee

during the day

ensoleille

sunny

epars

scattered

est

East

et au sud du 21 nord

and South of 21 North

la force

lightning that strikes something

la foudre

freshening

fraichissant

warm front

front chaud

cold front

front froid

squall

le grain

hail

la grele

millibars

les hectopascals(hpa)

local time

heure locale

relative humidity

l' humidite relative

The weather is awful.

Il fait un temps de chien

Il fait un temps de chien
Il pleut
Il y a une alerte cyclonique
isole
La mer est agitee
La mer est belle
La mer est calme
La mer est enorme
La mer est forte
La mer est grosse
La mer est peu agitee
La mer est ridee
La mer est tresse grosse
La mer esttres forte
la nuit
le long du 20 ouest
Le vent va fraichir.
la ligne de grains
localement
matin
les millibars
modere
mollissant
la neige
les noeuds (nd) nuh
nord
Nord-est
Nort-ouest
les nuages
nuageux
occasionnel
On attend une gross houle d'ouest vendredi
On s'attend a avoir des grains
On va avoir du mauvais temps
l' onde tropicale
l' orage
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orageux
ouest
parfois
la perturbation
la pluie
plus tard
la position
la position prevue
la pression atmospherique
la prevision metro or just (metro)
prevu
prochain
Quel beau temps !
la rafale
revenant
s'attenuant
s'attenuant
s'etendant jusqu'a 180 mn
s'orientant
se comblant
se decalant vers
se dissipant
se dreusant
se renforcant ...lentement
le secteur
la service de meteo
la situation general
stationaire
sud
Sud-est
Sud-ouest
suivant
sur l'extreme nord-est
la temperature
la tempete

stormy
West
sometimes
disturbance
rain
later
position
forecast position
atmospheric pressure
weather forecast
forecast
next
What nice weather
gust
backing
dissipating
dissipating
extending up to 180 ns
turning to
filling
moving forward
dissipating
deepening
strengthening ...slowly
sector
weather service, met office
synopsis
stationary
South
Southeast
Southwest
following
in the extreme Northeast
temperature
storm
la tempête tropicale
tropical storm
temporaire
temporarily
le temps
weather
le temps a grains
squally weather
la tendance ultérieure
outlook
le thalweg
trough
le tonnerre
thunder
la trajectoire du cyclone
track, hurricane
la trombe
waterspout
valable a partir du
valid beginning
valable jusqu’au
valid until
variable
variable
variable dépressionaire
variable in depression
venant
becoming
le vent
wind
vent - fort coup de vent
strong gale Force 9 41 – 47 kts
vent - bonne brise
fresh breeze Force 5 17 – 21 kts
vent - calme
calm Force 0 0 – 1 kts
vent - coup de vent
gale Force 8 34 – 40 kts
vent - grand frais
near gale Force 7 28 – 33 kts
vent - jolie brise
moderate breeze Force 4 11 – 16 kts
vent - légère brise
light breeze Force 2 4 – 6 kts
vent - ouragan
hurricane Force 12 64(+) kts
vent - petite brise
gentle breeze Force 3 – 5 7 – 10 kts
vent - tempête
storm Force 10 48 – 55 kts
vent - tres légère brise
light air Force 1 1 – 3 kts
vent - vent fraise
strong breeze Force 6 22 – 27 kts
vent - violente tempête
violent storm Force 11 56 – 63 kts
vent assez fort
fairly strong wind Force 6 22 – 27 kts
vent dominant
prevailing wind
virant
veering
visibilité
visibility
visibilité mauvaise
poor visibility
visibilité bonne
good visibility
visibilité entre 2 et 5 milles marins
Between 2 & 5 nm
visibilité inférieure de 2 milles marins
visibilité supérieure à 5 milles marins
la vitesse
la zone de hautes pressions
la zone
la zone de basses pressions

less than 2 nm
greater than 5 nm
speed
high pressure area
zone
low pressure area