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# *Finding Love in Paradise:* FRENCH POLYNESIA BY SEA

Words by John Roark

I found love. She's beautiful, intelligent, sophisticated – and she moves like a dream. Confidently she led me through exotic, faraway lands. With her, I experienced things I had only read about in books and she has left her imprint on my heart.

I fell hard for a girl named Paul.

Photo courtesy of: Intercontinental Bora Bora Resort & Thalasso Spa







Intercontinental Bora Bora Resort &amp; Thalasso Spa



Intercontinental Bora Bora Resort &amp; Thalasso Spa

### The m/s Paul Gauguin

Whether you're blushing cruise virgins (as I was), or seagoing veterans, ocean travel is redefined by the m/s Paul Gauguin. Specifically designed to navigate the shallow waters of the South Pacific, she harkens back to a time when the romance of travel by sea was the prerogative of the very privileged. The Gauguin's smaller footprint grants you closer access to ports of call – exploring hidden coves impossible for larger ships.

From the moment you step on board you are won over by her genuine hospitality. Accommodating only 332 guests, the Gauguin is a stunner radiating warmth and informal luxury with personalized five-star service you won't find on large ocean liners. In 2012, a seven-million dollar renovation updated the vessel with exquisite woods, textiles, flooring and furniture. Seventy percent of the spacious staterooms feature private balconies. Every intuitive detail has been designed with your comfort in mind.

Your voyage can be as active or relaxed as you choose. The Gauguin offers an array of customizable romantic amenities

and excursions which celebrate the beauty of the ship and the islands. For an over-the-top evening, surprise your partner with "Dinner Under the Stars." You'll be chauffeured into the lagoon by private Zodiac for your own Technicolor sunset; a feast for two (with Champagne) follows on the ship's marina. This is what they meant when they created the word "romance."

Offering a variety of seven to 14-day cruises, the Gauguin was made for romantic getaways. They also offer a honeymoon gift registry. Create a "wish list" ranging from shore excursions to dining and spa options. Friends and family can visit the registry to select the gift (or gifts) they would like to give. Paul Gauguin Cruises takes care of the rest!

### The Society Islands

You see pictures of French Polynesia and think, "Yeah, right." You'll discover the islands really are that beautiful, the colors that vibrant, the vistas that stunning. Photography doesn't begin to capture these welcoming lands. (But still bring your camera!)

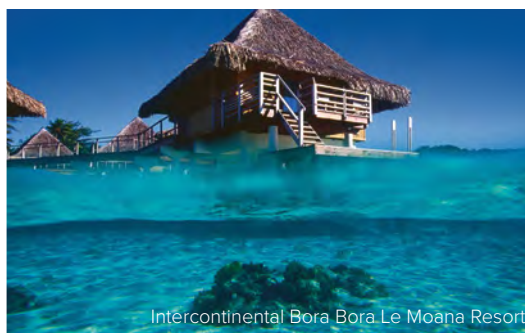




Intercontinental Tahiti Resort



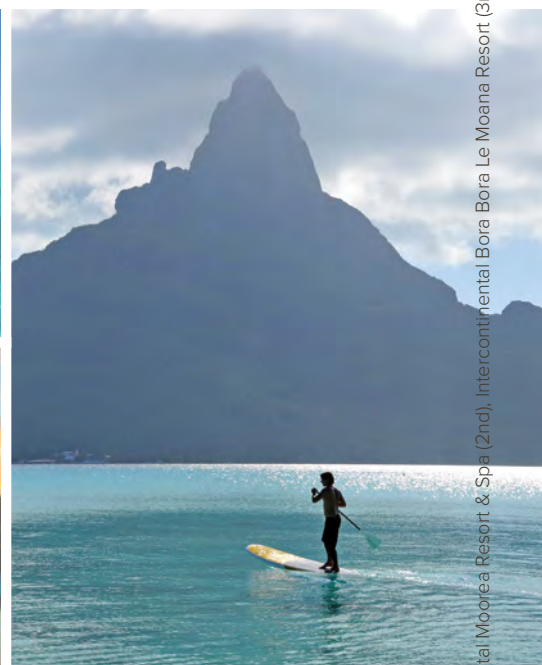
Intercontinental Moorea Resort &amp; Spa



Intercontinental Bora Bora Le Moana Resort



Intercontinental Tahiti Resort



## Tahiti - The Queen of the Pacific

Do you like your travel bustling with tourists, or prefer something more private? More people go to Hawaii in one week than go to Tahiti in an entire year! STAY: Pre or post-cruise, enjoy a day room at the spectacular Intercontinental Tahiti Resort. With unbelievable views of the Eden-like landscape and aquamarine waters, it's the perfect sanctuary to unwind and refresh.

## Raiatea - The Secret Island

The second largest of the Society Islands, charming Raiatea is encircled by a coral reef which provides excellent diving and snorkeling. DON'T MISS: Black Pearl Farm Adventure. Learn why Tahitian cultured pearls are prized throughout the World for their flawless beauty.

## Taha'a - The Vanilla Island

Sharing the same barrier reef as Raiatea, on Taha'a the rich scent of vanilla lingers in the air. Intimate, lush, exclusive and tranquil, spend the day on Motu Mahana, a private islet accessible only to passengers of the Gauguin.

## Bora Bora - The Romantic Island

Known as "the Pearl of the Pacific," this island showcases the

eroded cone of an extinct volcano surrounded by crystal blue waters. The mountain Bali Hai in the movie "South Pacific" is actually Bora Bora's majestic Mount Otemanu. (Try looking at it with your mouth closed. Can't be done.) PLAY: Intercontinental Bora Bora Le Moana's Matira Beach was named "The World's Most Beautiful Beach" by CNN in 2011. STAY: Ranked first on TripAdvisor's 2011 "Best Rooms with a View" list, Intercontinental Bora Bora Resort and Thalasso Spa features the World's first glass-floored chapel. During your stay, have breakfast delivered to your bungalow by canoe.

## Moorea - The Magical Island

One of the area's most stunning tropical islands, with a palette of deep greens and brilliant blues, Moorea embodies the South Pacific. The panorama encompasses volcanic ridges, velvet green vegetation and turquoise lagoons. STAY: Like an exquisite gem set between mountains and sea, Intercontinental Moorea Resort & Spa features over-water bungalows and an intimate indoor/outdoor spa with indulgent couples therapies.

Call it fate. I discovered unconventional love in the South Pacific. Our affair was brief, but unforgettable. Will we be together again? Without a doubt.

i do!

Photos courtesy of: (top to bottom, left to right) Intercontinental Tahiti Resort (1st & 4th), Intercontinental Bora Bora Le Moana Resort (3rd) and Intercontinental Bora Bora Resort & Thalasso Spa (5th)

