

# Magical treat

**Tahiti.** The best and most affordable way to see these majestic islands is on a cruise

DIANE TIERNEY  
For Metro

Tahiti has a magical, mysterious atmosphere that is unlike any island destination in the world. Its haunting beauty has you hearing Bali Ha'i in the breeze, while being mesmerized by the dramatic scenery that suggests you are visiting Jurassic Park.

Tourism hasn't spoiled this destination because it can be expensive to stay on land. So the best and most affordable way to see these intoxicating islands is on a cruise. With some cruise lines offering half-price cruises and free airfare from Los Angeles, this dream trip is more affordable than ever.

PG Cruises' Paul Gaugin ship offers an unparalleled experience. The ship is specifically designed for Tahiti's shallow, secluded lagoons. It recently underwent a \$6-million

## Over-water bungalows

- The Pearl Resorts & Spa features the famous over-water bungalows. Nothing quite prepares you for the romantic atmosphere of these luxurious huts. Glass floors around the bed allow you to see fish and hear the waves lapping at night. In the morning, breakfast is brought to you by outrigger canoe. If you can splurge and spend just one night on land as a shore excursion, this is the quintessential Tahiti treat.

lion enhancement and is rated five stars.

Service on board is excellent because there are 225 crew members to 332 passengers. This high staff-to-passenger ratio means wait-



Enjoy water sports from the drop-down marina at the stern of the Paul Gaugin. DIANE TIERNEY/FOR METRO

ers will know your name and favourite drink by the second day. The food is sumptuous thanks to chef Jean-Pierre Vigato's talent. You will enjoy meals similar to what's served in Apicius, his two-star Michelin-rated restaurant in Paris.

Enjoy dining on board because on land even the most casual restaurant charges \$15 for a cheeseburger. A cocktail at Bloody Mary's, the famous celebrity haunt on Bora Bora, is about \$10. Since so much is imported from New Zealand, costs are high everywhere.

You won't have to shell out cash to rent water sports equipment on land either. Just use the ship's kayaks, windsurfers, banana boats and snorkel equipment from the drop-down marina that opens up at the stern.

Each island offers an unforgettable wow factor. Huahine is made up of two dramatic mountain ranges. It used to be the centre of Polynesian culture so has many rich archeological sites such as ceremonial temples. Also fascinating are the sacred eels. They have bright blue eyes and grow up to six feet long. They are harmless so you can wade into the water and feed them.



There are many different shore excursions to explore each island. DIANE TIERNEY/FOR METRO

Fakarava is the second largest atoll and the ancient capital is filled with numerous unexplored motus (islets). Protected by UNESCO, Fakarava is proud of its rare crustaceans such as squills and sea cicadas. Visit a pearl farm on the water, snorkel around the hut and you will appreciate this island as a mecca for underwater beauty.

Bora Bora's famous Mount Otemanu, remnants of an extinct volcano, is a symbol of

Tahiti for its dramatic peak. Its velvet green slopes drop steeply to the blue lagoon below. Hike or bike around this lush island, or enjoy a multitude of water activities to keep cool.

Taha'a is often called the Vanilla Island for its numerous plantations of what Tahitians call black gold. On this island, PG chefs prepare a delicious barbecue on the beach and offer drinks from a floating bar.

Explore Moorea by jeep

and you will see pineapple, vanilla, banana and grapefruit plantations, visit ancient stone temples and stop at the Belvedere lookout to see Cook's Bay. You can also feed stingrays in the shallow water at Motu Ono.

For more information, visit [pgcruises.com](http://pgcruises.com) or call 800-848-6172. Sailings are currently 50 per cent off and include airfare from Los Angeles. For Pearl Resorts & Spa, visit [spmhotels.com](http://spmhotels.com).



Enjoy a drink at the stern bar on the Paul Gaugin. DIANE TIERNEY/FOR METRO

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