

## 'My Secret Itinerary through the Islands of Tahiti' By Etienne Boutin

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Highly regarded yachting agent, Etienne Boutin of [French Polynesia](#), has written a first-hand account of his 'five special places and their treasures' for luxury yachts visiting the breath-taking [Tahiti](#) yacht charter destination and its islands.



Tahiti Te Pari 'Whale Waving' – Photo credit to Asia Pacific Superyachts Tahiti

*I have been a yacht agent in Tahiti for almost 20 years and have worked with many captains to open new itineraries to some remote and seldom cruised places in French Polynesia – however, I must admit most guests eventually decide to go to [Bora Bora](#). But, for the exploring mind there are other wondrous areas to visit; specifically, five places around French Polynesia which are not commonly known and offer new and enchanting underwater and above ground scenic wonders and thrilling adventures.*

*In my view, the following locales are very much worth a visit.*

### **Tahiti Iti – Te Pari Coast**

Tahiti is made of two islands joined by an isthmus, Tahiti Nui and the smaller Tahiti Iti. The south coast of Tahiti Iti is very isolated as there are no roads. Starting at the worldwide famous surf spot of Teahupoo located at the end of the

west coast tarred road, are miles of long a uninhabited seafront made of rugged black cliff and contrasting layers of tropical lush green foliage. The lagoon offers good protection in several places when some of the deep bays are hit with the remains of large Antarctic swells.

Once a shelter for those seeking a natural environment and escape from the modern world, the 20 mile Te Pari coastline is worth exploring by foot and searching for ancient petroglyphs. Yachts can stop in some superb anchorages where guests are sure to find only undisturbed fish, curious sharks and splendid manta rays. Many humpback whales come to French Polynesia from mid-July to October to give birth to their calves and rest. Recently the owner of a 100m+ yacht dove in these waters and afterwards, saying he was amazed at the number of whales he could closely approach in the protected waters of Te Pari.



Tahiti Te Pari – Image credit to Asia Pacific Superyachts Tahiti and Thierry Zysman

### **Makatea raised atoll**

Makatea, laying half way between Tahiti and Rangiroa atoll, may remain the last bit of the Tuamotu archipelago to be seen out of the water if the worst GIEC predictions of sea level rising becomes a reality. With an altitude between 80m and 120m above sea level, Makatea is safe for the 21st century's adventurers, but the 20th century was not so kind to her.

Like Nauru, Makatea was once an important mining field for phosphate and seriously dug out by thousands of men trying to get all that was possible from the land. Now the remains of this ecological disaster are an astonishing mix of deep holes and caves, scrapped trucks and rusted railways. The population, now down to 50 (in the 1960's a population of 3,000 was at its highest), is enjoying a return to a peaceful environment.

For most yachts Makatea is just a radar print during night passages to Rangiroa as there are no good anchorages in the area to invite stopping. However, a quick halt at the old Temao tender dock will allow guests to stop, climb up the

cliff and explore the island. There they will meet the friendliest of Polynesian people, who will proudly lead visitors through their incredible landscape.



Toau anse amiot 'Beach & Coconut Trees' – Image credit to Asia Pacific Superyachts Tahiti

### **Maupiti – the forgotten leeward island**

The leeward islands of French Polynesia are the most visited and include the famous Bora Bora, magical Huahine, wild Taha'a and the sacred island of Raiatea – the legendary center of Mahoi religion. However, the island of Maupiti, thirty miles west of Bora Bora, is often forgotten when proposing itineraries to this part of our oceanic country.

Is it because the pass can be treacherous with strong south swell? Is it because neighbor Bora Bora has ripped off all the attention? Is it because people in Maupiti are a quiet breed and prefer their peaceful lifestyle to the lures of 'King Dollar'?

Frankly, Maupiti pass is no more difficult than many others to modern powerful yachts, as long as captains take the right advice and do not ignore weather warnings. Once inside the lagoon the manta rays will arrive to a cleaning station just next to your yacht, offering you an unforgettable welcome to this little jewel of our seas and making you feel you have reached the mythical island of 'Bali-hai'.



Tahuata Vaitahu Bay – Image credit to Asia Pacific Superyachts Tahiti and Michel Aubert

### **Toau atoll – Anse Amiot**

The Tuamotu islands are all flat atolls laying a few meters above sea level and covered with coconut trees. Rangiroa and Fakarava are well known dive destinations and have good passes to their lagoons which are vast enough to contain Tahiti Island. With strong winds year round and viewings of vast distances, the feeling is breathtaking but this environment can make some people nervous. In this case, Anse Amiot is just your place.

In the north part of Toau Island, it is a wee piece of colorful lagoon nestled inside the reef with an entrance from the sea protected from prevailing winds and currents. Yachts up to 45 meters can enter and stay until others request to stay. There is only one family living at on Anse Amiot where they harvest the copra, fish and play music. The family members will show you how to fish for the delicious 'Varo', a sort of crayfish with forelegs sharpened like mad razors. You will also have a chance to taste coconut crab meat, a delicacy for those who dare to catch these prehistoric looking animals with finger-cutting claws!



Tahuata Carving Horse Saddle – Image credit to Asia Pacific Superyachts Tahiti and Shigeo Kobaya

### **Tahuata – Marquesas Islands**

The Marquesas archipelago is one of the most remote places on earth. It is a superb group of dramatic islands with skyscraping peaks, vertiginous mountains cascades, wild goats, wild horses and wild people – simply calling their islands 'Te Henua Enana', the 'Land of Men'.

Gauguin has made the island of Hiva Oa famous. Many sailors have enjoyed the outstanding bay of virgins in Fatu Hiva or the sugar loaf peaks of Ua Pou but not many have cruised the gentle coves on the western side of Tahuata. Vaitahu and Hapatoni bays have long black sand beaches bordered with coconut trees and a vibrant seascape of splashing waves with children playing games.



Toau 'Coconut Crab' – Image credit to Asia Pacific Superyachts Tahiti

Laid back villagers can show you fastidiously carved To'u wood made into Tiki statues and dishes. Painted Tapa cloth, patiently created from the bark of the breadfruit tree, can be purchased. The arts and crafts from Tahuata are among the finest in the South Seas.

Slowly Tahuata will bring you down to her pace and you will soon find yourself feeling you have no better place to be in the near future. This is what I call a successful cruise.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Etienne Boutin has lived nearly 30 years in French Polynesia and was the first to service luxury yachts visiting Tahiti and her islands, spending the last 20 years taking care of visiting megayachts.

Boutin established Tahiti Ocean in 1995 as the first agency exclusively for this purpose and in 2014 joined the [Asia Pacific Superyachts](#) network as [Asia Pacific Superyachts Tahiti](#). He and his team have organized many itineraries for superyacht owners and [luxury yacht charter](#) guests in French Polynesia.

Boutin now shares his own story, "My secret itinerary in the islands of Tahiti", remarking: *"I am happy to share these five special places and some of their secret treasures. These are places I would choose for my guests and myself to visit on a luxury yacht holiday in French Polynesia."*