

Marquesas Islands

Island Explorer PIRI Expedition

The Marquesas, named by their Polynesian discoverers “*Te Henua Enata*” or the land of men, are located about 700 miles north east of Tahiti, about a three and an half hour flight away. The archipelago is formed by a string of islands that extend approximately 230 miles from the north east to the south east and is located between 8° to 11° south latitude and between 138° to 141° west longitude. Two distinct separate island groups divide the archipelago : Nuku Hiva, Ua Pou and Ua Huka and the two uninhabited islands of Ei’ao and Hatutu, comprise the north west group. Hiva Oa, Tahuata and Fatu Hiva, and uninhabited Fatu Huku and Motane form the southern group. (See figure 1) Total land area is about 1300 square kilometers.

The Marquesas islands are of volcanic origin with ridges towering up to 3700 feet above sea level. Geographically they are divided by jagged peaks, deep and narrow valleys and step mountains that fall sharply into the rough ocean; the islands are breathtaking but appear inhospitable to the first time visitor. Due to the absence of protective coral reefs, the islands offer relatively few calm bays for safe anchorage. Several perennial rivers, streams and waterfalls cut through the dense vegetation on the eastern and south coasts of the islands. This lush forest region is in stark contrast to the arid desert area on the western and northwestern sides of the islands. The medium temperature is of 75 F and the climate is sub tropical. The rainy season generally falls between January and July, through the island are also subject at times to long periods of drought.

Cultural and linguistic materials indicate that the first settlers of the Marquesas were people originating from Western Polynesia whether by accident or intent. These settlers may have arrived as early as the second century BC. It is speculated that the Marquesas Islands were the first islands to be settled in Easter Polynesia and that they became a dispersal point from where the Polynesians spread out and settled Easter Island and Hawaii, the northern Tuamotu group and probably at one time their cultural sphere could of extended as far south as Pitcairn and Mangareva. Ethnological evidence also indicates contact between these islands in the past, and some important oral traditions are similar to all islands. Rock art, specially petroglyphs were very common in the Marquesas, Easter Island and Hawaii and some of the most common motives in the Marquesas, are also those most represented on Easter Island and Hawaii. Over the ages the Marquesan’s developed a very complex culture with a highly developed art with sophisticated decorative designs. Tattooing attained artistic perfection and is still practiced today.

The Marquesas were the first of the Polynesian Islands to be discovered by the

western world. The Spanish Admiral, Alvaro de Mendaña, sighted the southern group in 1595. He named them “Islas de Marquesas” in honor of his patron wife Don Garcia Hurtado de Mendoza, the viceroy of Spain. The islands were later visited by Captain Cook, and other Russian explorers, but the Northern group was only discovered in 1791 by Captain Joseph Ingraham on board a Boston based whaling ship. In the following years the island was visited by numerous whalers and Herman Melville after deserting from one of them spent some time living in Taipi valley. His stay gave origin to the book named “Taipee.” In 1813 the island were visited by Captain Porter on the US naval ship Essex, who built Madisonville on the bay of Taiohae on Nuku Hiva and later petitioned the American Congress to annex the islands to no avail. A year later the settlement was abandoned. After his leave several sandalwood traders visited the island, but by then the indigenous population was declining dramatically by the effects of introduced disease’s and epidemics. In 1842 the islands were annexed to France who built a new settlement in the same bay. The French enforced Catholicism that is the prevalent religion practiced today.

Its present population is of 7000 inhabitants, living upon six islands, but another similar number of Marquesan’s live in Tahiti. The predominant language is French and Marquesan, although a large number of its inhabitants understand Tahitian and a few English. The Islands feel very proud of their history and traditions, and have enhanced in the later years their cultural identity through a cultural organization named Motu Haka and by the organization of festivals which strengthen all traditional aspects of their culture, such as dance, weaving, wood carving, chants, traditional story telling, tattooing, , etc. The Marquesas is still one of those few remaining unspoiled places in which you are safe at all times, and you will feel absolutely relaxed to enjoy the knowledge and the excitement of discovery.

The archaeological survey of the Marquesas Islands

One of our most ongoing studies is the “Marquesas Islands Archaeological Survey”. This study once completed will permit a greater understanding of the ancient settlement patterns, its social organization and subsistence between others. Since 1985 an archaeological team of the Department of Archaeology of French Polynesia led by Edmundo Edwards, has surveyed many Marquesan valleys recording close to 1.000 structures, such as house sites, temples, shrines, dancing platforms on ceremonial centers, burial and refuge caves, agricultural terraces, and tuff and red scoria quarries used in manufacturing slabs, statues and other decorations. Basalt quarries used in tool and adz manufacture have also been documented. Great emphasis has been placed in a survey of its rock art. To date close to 90 stone statues have been recorded together with approximately 7000 petroglyphs. Whole valleys with great areas that were densely occupied in the past remains un-surveyed and not more than 20 structures have been excavated. We hope that new funding will permit us to continue such endeavour.

Expedition Itinerary

Day 1. Tahiti.

Flower lei greeting and transfer from airport to the Inter Continental Resort Tahiti to your lagoon view rooms. If Expedition member's flights come in at different times, we shall meet for dinner at the hotel the night before departure to the Marquesas.

Day 2. Hiva Oa Atuona.

Transfer to local airport to board our early Air Tahiti flight VT832 (06:50 AM) to the island of Hiva Oa (arrives at 11:30)

There is an oral tradition that tells the story of a bird-man, that was born from an egg and who lived with his father god Makemake in Atuona. This story is most interesting, as the creator god in Easter Island is named Make-make, and he was also the god of the bird-man cult. Even the main river in Atuona carries this name. After lunch we will visit the town, Paul Gauguin's tomb, and the Paul Gauguin Museum. Dinner at the Hotel.

Day 3. Hiva Oa, Atuona drive over to Puamau Valley and return to Atuona.

Today we will cross the island by its center and drive over to the valley of Puamau to visit Me'ae Paeke where the largest stone Tiki of the Marquesas are located. A very scenic two hour drive. Lunch at a local house in Puamau valley. We will be able to go swimming at the sandy beach. Return to Atuona. Dinner at the hotel

Day 4. Hiva Oa, Atuona. Visit to the valley of Ta'aoa

This morning we drive over to the neighboring valley of Ta'a'oa (35 minutes drive from Atuona), which has the largest Tohua or communal meeting place in the Marquesas. This giant dancing platform where ancient festivals were held is surrounded by close to 180 stone structures such as house platform, *stidia* for spectators, altars for offerings, storage pits, places of sacrifice, chiefly houses, and warrior dwellings, etc. According to the missionaries up to 10,000 people would congregate there to celebrate the festivals. We will walk up to visit its stone Tiki figures. This site had been partially restored by the Department of Archaeology. Return to Atuona for lunch at private restaurant.. Evening Free, Dinner at the hotel.

Day 5.- Ua Huka Island, visit to Hokatu Valley.

Today we board our Air Tahiti flight

VT 895 at 08:23 AM to the island of Ua Huka, a 35 minute flight. Upon arrival to Ua Huka we will transfer to the valley of Hokatu (population 140) where we will stay in three bungalows and two rooms in a private home, with a superb view of the valley. Our friends and hosts Delfine and Maurice Rootuehine will inform us about their island and offer us a welcome dinner. We will eat special Marquesan treats such as curried octopus ,lobster or suckling goat cooked in coconut milk with local spices and breadfruit, etc.

Day 6.- Visit to the valleys of Hane & Vaipae.

After breakfast we will board our cars and drive over to visit the valleys of Hane and Vaipae. There is a very nice Archaeological Museum, that houses some of the artifacts Edmundo has collected since 1982 and then we will drive over to the valleys of Hane that are extremely precious and walk up to visit an ancient altar with four stone Tiki upon a ridge overlooking the bay. During this walk we will see some of the endemic birds of this island such as the Ultramarine Lorikeet. There is also a small Maritime Museum and a Museum of Rock Art, where the modern carvers expose their art. The wood carvers of Ua Huka are considered to be the best in the Marquesas, and many of them have important pieces in renowned collections worldwide. We will lunch at Hane and return to Hokatu for overnight

Day 7.- Nuku Hiva Island, Hatiheu valley

Transfer to airport to board our 09:00 Air Tahiti flight VT887 for the island of Nuku Hiva, a 30 minutes flight. Once we land at Nuku Ataha airport, and collect our baggage, we board our helicopter to fly over to the valley of Hatiheu a 15 minute flight, over the most spectacular landscape which gives us an idea of the greatness and richness of this land.

Day 9. Valley of Hatiheu

After breakfast (assorted fruits such as papaya, mango, oranges, grapefruit, bananas, avocado, etc. Home grown and brewed coffee, with or without vanilla, pancakes omelets, or eggs and bacon, fresh bread & toasts) we will leave in our Land Rovers to visit the interior of the valley and its archaeological sites. We will visit Tohua Pehe Kua and Tohua Kamuiheu with its petroglyphs. Return for lunch.

After lunch we shall visit some other archaeological remains in Hatiheu and drive over to the ridge between Hatiheu and Aakapa for cocktails at sundown. Dinner in Hatiheu.

Day 10.Visit to the valley of Anaho

After breakfast we will leave to visit the valley of Anaho (population 12). Those who want to walk there can follow the small trail that crosses the ridge that divides both

valleys (about 1:30 minutes walk, maximum altitude 320 feet.) Those who prefer to go by boat can do so. (A 20-minute drive). Anaho is one of the only places in the Marquesas where you have a large and beautiful sandy beach and a coral reef, one of the few in the Marquesas. We will be able to explore this valley go snorkeling and we will enjoy a BBQ lunch at a small restaurant on the beach.

Return to Hatiheu Dinner at the restaurant.

Day 11. Visit to the valley of Taipivai.

After breakfast we will drive over the ridge to the valley of Taipivai, that is the valley where Melville supposedly lived and inspired him to write the book “Taipy” Here we will visit the places Melville mentions in his book and see a canon that was left behind by the US Navy during the American – Marquesan war of 1813. I will narrate to you these histories and explain why the Northern Marquesas group was known then as the “Washington Islands” and how they were occupied by Captain David Porter in 1813. We shall visit a ceremonial center with 12 large stone Tiki. From there we will proceed over to Taiohae, the capital of Nuku Hiva for lunch, at an excellent local restaurant, and then visit the Cathedral, the remains of Madisonville and other interesting historical sites Return to Hatiheu for dinner (1:20 minute ride)

Day 12. Morning free, transfer to airport to board our flight to Papeete.

This morning is free, Lunch at the Hotel, Transfer to the airport to board our Air Tahiti flight VT822 to Tahiti at 13:30. Transfer to the Hotel InterContinental Tahiti Resort. Farewell Dinner at the hotel.

End of Program.

Day 13. Transfer to international departure.

Transfer to airport,

General Information

Hatiheu Valley.

This Valley will be our headquarters for the following four days, and from here we will visit some of its neighboring valleys. Hatiheu is probably the prettiest valley of Nuku Hiva, and it was one of the former centers occupied by the Taipi tribe allies, described by Melville in his book “Taipie”.

Spiral basalt towers enclose its coastal side and give it a majestic appearance. The valley is famous for its rock art and in the interior lay's three large ancient "Tohua" or ceremonial dancing platforms, that have been restored and have a commanding view of the bay below. One of them has 6 stone statues or Tiki, over 80 house foundations plus numerous other structures, petroglyphs and several huge banyan trees grow in its vicinity. These monuments extend between 1.5 to 2 kilometers towards the interior of the valley. Tohua Kamuiheu, the largest ceremonial gathering place of the valley in ancient times, comprises close to 100 stone structures and is located in the midst of a forest of giant trees. Surrounding this site, or in close proximity, there are over 80 boulders covered with petroglyphs. This is also the only place where you will be able to see the Nuku Hiva fruit pigeon, an endemic of this island, which is very large in size and has a very beautiful plumage.

The people of Hatiheu are extremely friendly and some are my best friends. Therefore do not feel surprised if the children come up to you and take you by your hand meanwhile you are strolling around the village, or call you "uncle" or "auntie". They feel very proud about their valley and its monuments and you will be admired by their hospitality. The village is very pretty has 120 inhabitants living in small houses with beautiful gardens and no visible electrical cables or poles to interfere with the photography. Behind the new church there is a very interesting cemetery and at the county hall there is a small Museum that displays all the artifacts we have found in the valley, plus other collections. In front of the County Hall and Museum there is another open building where the inhabitants display their carvings and meet on weekends to eat and celebrate together. At night, all the trees of the bottom part of the village are illuminated together with the coastal garden that surrounds the bay and that has several modern Tiki displayed in between the foliage, a unique and most beautiful spectacle. Also the road leading to the pier is illuminated so it can be safely used by night.

The bungalows where we will be staying are located in the center of the small village (across the coast road next to the church). These five bungalows are Spartan in appearance but shining with cleanliness, and each has a private bathroom with a shower and a bedroom with one double bed, or two or three single beds with good matrices that are quite comfortable. There is no hot water, but the temperature of the water is 90°F, so it is not necessary. A maid will take care of cleaning your room every morning and will also change your towels and do any your laundry you might need done. You can go swimming in the ocean in front of the bungalows

These bungalows, the store and the restaurant where we will take our meals, belong to Mrs. Yvonne Kaatupa, who is also the Mayor of the valley and granddaughter of the last great chief of the valley, a most wonderful and strong woman, who also the best cook's I have met in my life. Her restaurant is probably the best gourmet restaurant of this part of the Pacific. Fresh fish, lobster, or river shrimp cooked in different ways and with different sauces and breadfruit, are an everyday culinary experience. If you prefer beef, she also has

the best New Zealand steaks and an assortment of good red and white French wines.

We will probably arrive at the valley around lunchtime. Once we have settled in the bungalows, we will meet at the Restaurant for lunch, and later visit the village and meet some of its inhabitants and learn about their ways of life.

Welcome dinner and cocktail at 7 PM with Ivonne at her restaurant and probably meet the other local authorities. As I am a good friend of the Mayor of the Island and of other Representatives, they always drive over from Taiohae to see me when I get there to learn about our mutual friends on Easter Island.

Conditions

Limited Availability: Due to limitations of lodgings and transport in the Marquesas, this expedition is limited to a maximum of 12 persons, and a to a minimum of 6 persons.

Expedition Includes: Airfare from Tahiti to Marquesas and return. All inter island flights by plane or helicopter. Car rental and internal transport by car, truck or by motorboat between valleys or during visit to offshore islands. All lodgings and meals during the duration of tour, including those in Tahiti the day of departure and the night we return, beer or soft drinks with meals. Bottled water during excursions. All gratuities for guides, chauffeurs and assistants are included.

Not included: International airfare, wine or cocktails when not stipulated in program.

Cost of Program and Payment: The total cost of this Island Explorer PIRI Expedition in the Marquesas is of US 9,950 Dollars per person. 30% payable upon reservation, the remaining amount to be paid in full 90 days before departure. Any cancellation will be returned in full up to 30 days before departure. After this time there will be a 40 % cancellation fee until 15 days before departure. After this time a 100% cancellation fee will be applied. Travel insurance is recommended.

Guides & Escorts: Edmundo Edwards or another archaeologist will personally guide the tour with an assistant.