

# Fakarava & UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, French Polynesia

## *Itinerary*

We will dive Fakarava atoll in depth, however your dive team will also provide for dives at the numerous smaller islands in the area including Toau, Kauehi, Faaite, Niau and Raraka, which make up the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. On a typical 7-night itinerary we will offer between 18-20 dives. The following is a description of the dive sites we may visit during your 7-night liveaboard safari aboard the M/V French Polynesia Master.

Your Cruise Director will schedule up to 4 dives per day; 3 day dives and either a sunset or a night dive. The diving day has a typical schedule as follows:

*Light Breakfast followed by a briefing & Dive 1*  
*Full Breakfast, relaxation period, briefing & Dive 2*  
*Lunch, relaxation period, briefing & Dive 3*  
*Snack relaxation period, briefing & Dive 4, where possible*  
*Dinner*

## **Fakarava Atoll**

**Garaue Pass** – This is the northernmost channel of Fakarava atoll and, arguably, the best site in the region for consistent shark sightings. The pass itself is 1600m wide and should only be dived at slack water due to the very strong currents. Starting at the outer wall we encounter the huge “wall of sharks” where hundreds of greys congregate. Black tip, white tip, hammerhead, tiger, silky and oceanic white tip are amongst the other species seen. Napoleon wrasse, surgeon fish and the typical schools of big eyes and yellow snapper swarm over the reefs, joined by turtles, morays and lionfish. In June and July, large numbers of grouper aggregate to spawn, a truly spectacular sight. Manta rays also visit.



**Maiuru** – A submerged plateau on the outer edge of the pass, levels out at 18m into a lovely hard coral garden. At the 'drop off' you can encounter shark activity, whilst over the reef large schools of paddletail snapper and barracuda form. Manta rays and eagle rays come by for cleaning and a quick meal and there are plenty of smaller creatures including nudibranchs and crabs to spot amongst the corals and sponges.

**Ohutu** – The second plateau starts at 12m and drops to 30m with vibrant corals this is a superb place to watch manta rays.

**Restaurant Pier** – This shallow site is perfect for an afternoon dive where schools of snapper, black tip reef sharks and Napoleon wrasse are common with a stunning atmosphere for photography.

**Tumakohua** – The southern pass of Fakarava is just as dramatic as the north, though only 200m across, it can be dived with both ingoing and outgoing tides. Big schools of grey reef sharks can be seen in the deeper water whilst along the shallower reef black tips dart about. Manta rays and leopard whips are also frequently seen.

## **Toau Island**

**Otugi Pass** – The 400m wide channel is best dived on an incoming tide for the schools of grey reef sharks and silvertips.

**Teahuroa** – The outer reef wall is where huge schools of snapper congregate. Reef sharks, Napoleon wrasse, barracuda, surgeon fish and big eyes join them, whilst manta ray sightings are possible too.

## **Kauehi Island**

**Outer Wall** – The sloping outer wall of Kauehi Island is encrusted with huge hard coral formations and sponges. Butterfly fish, surgeon fish, banner fish and snappers all form large schools over the reef. Puffer fish, morays, tuna, barracuda, wrasse and lionfish are a common sight, whilst mantas, grey reef shark, eagle rays and the occasional hammerhead make up the larger visitors. This is a great spot for spotting leaf fish and nudibranchs too.



## Important information about diving in French Polynesia

This itinerary involves some long distance travel and whilst we attempt to ensure the number of dives we have scheduled is fulfilled, bad weather can hinder the boat's ability to reach a specified dive site in good time. Many islands require the yacht to move within the atoll for safe overnight anchorage. Your cruise director and Captain will therefore plan the best route for entry to the atolls and to hit the channel currents at the optimum time for diving. We wish to show you the very best diving possible yet the safety of all on board remains paramount. In the unlikely event we are unable to reach a specified dive site; we always do our best in offering diving at alternative locations.

Diving in French Polynesia can be challenging, even for the experienced diver. As such, we highly recommend our guests to be qualified to a min. of Advanced Open Water level with a minimum of 50 logged dives, preferably in similar conditions. At many sites currents can be strong and whilst visibility is typically 20m+ it may diminish due to an influx of nutrients. Due to strong currents, diving at night is not always an option. We will offer 4 day dives, yet the 4th day dive may be substituted for a night dive where suitable.

Diving regulations within French Polynesia differ slightly from many areas of the world. Please note that Open Water can dive to max. 18m, while Advanced Open Water divers, and Rescue Divers (or equivalent) are limited to 29m maximum, regardless of whether you carry the Deep Diver Speciality. Master Scuba Divers and above are permitted beyond 29m to a maximum of 40m. Please note that there are regular checks by the authorities that these limits are being maintained so our guides will be very strict with them.

In connection with this, you will be asked to sign the following sheet upon boarding: [https://pax.wwdas.com/pax\\_si/downloads/pdf/fpm\\_diver\\_agreement.pdf](https://pax.wwdas.com/pax_si/downloads/pdf/fpm_diver_agreement.pdf)

Water temperature ranges from 24-28°C (75-82°F) with June-October being the coldest months. For most guests a 3mm long wetsuit will be sufficient, however those who feel the cold easily may wish to bring thicker exposure protection.

Should you have any questions or queries concerning the dive sites or whether this itinerary is suitable for your experience level, please contact our reservations team who will be pleased to assist and advise you: [info@masterliveboards.com](mailto:info@masterliveboards.com).

