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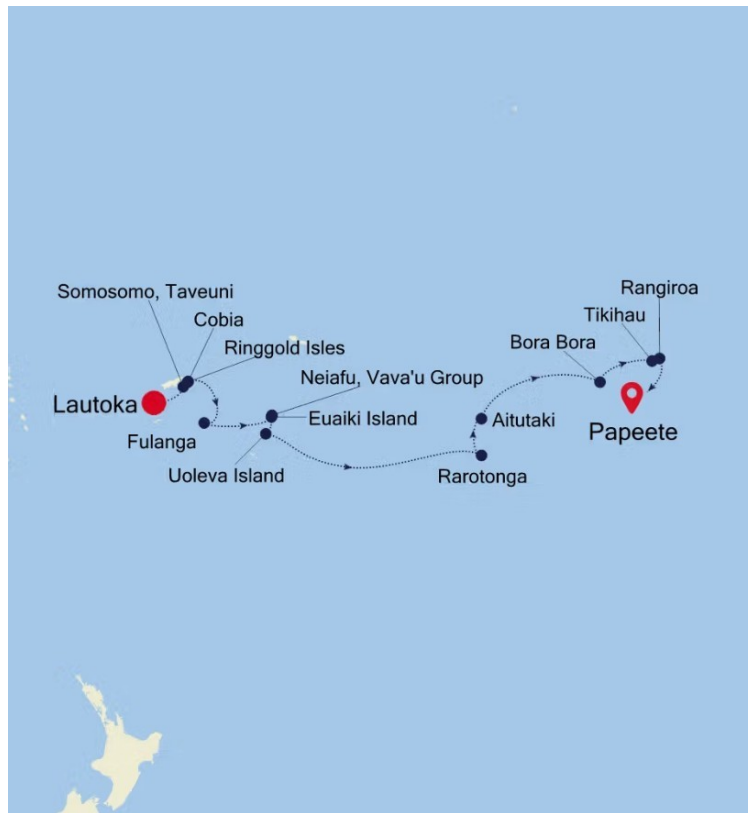


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## 14 DAYS LUXURY FRENCH POLYNESIA CRUISE - LAUTOKA TO PAPEETE

Distant islands of soaring peaks, atolls encircling lagoons, and palm-dotted paradise islands - see the vivid beauty of the South Pacific for yourself. Begin among the stingrays and black tip sharks of Fiji and Tonga, embracing warm welcomes amid white sands and lush volcanic slopes. Celebrate gaining a day as we cross the Date Line - more time to explore the idyllic beaches and crystal-clear waters of the Cook Islands and to scuba dive in French Polynesia.



### ITINERARY

#### Day 1 - Lautoka

It doesn't get much sweeter than arriving on the sun-soaked shores of the Sugar City. Fiji's second-biggest settlement opens up a world of blissful beaches and turquoise seascapes, while its dense jungle lures the adventurous deep into its embrace. Step ashore where the first Fijians landed, and you'll understand instantly why they chose to make this island paradise their

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heavenly home. Experience rich Fijian life, and see dramatic displays like warrior dances, and remarkable local practices like firewalks, which kick up burning embers into the night's sky. Legend says the city took its name after two chiefs faced each other in a duel. A spear pierced one of the chiefs, leading to the shout of 'lau-toka!' or 'spear hit!' Sugar is Lautoka's main trade, but its botanical gardens are a sweet insight into the tropical plant life that thrives here - from pearl white lilies to tall, fragrant orchids. Explore temples, charming cafes and mills - or barter for some of the juiciest mangoes you'll ever taste at the city's lively market. You'll only be able to resist the beaches for so long, and it doesn't get much more stunning than the Blue Lagoon - a heavenly blend of woven together turquoise shades. Remote, wild and unspoiled, these are some of the best tropical beaches in the world. There's more rejuvenating relaxation at the mineral-rich mud pools and spas, fuelled by the volcanic activity below. Savala Island is a teardrop of sand offshore, and another beautiful place to wander with the soft powder between your toes - along sandy spits that peter out into the water. Or swim and snorkel among its envied reefs, thronging with fish life.

### Day 2 - Somosomo, Taveuni

Somosomo is the largest village on Taveuni, which in turn is Fiji's third largest island. The village has had and still has political importance as it is the headquarters for Taveuni's highest chief, the Tui Cakau, and Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs met in Somosomo until 2012. Somosomo and Naqara, its immediate neighboring village with a predominantly Indo-Fijian population, are the commercial center for Taveuni. Slightly west of Somosomo is the 180th meridian and a sign indicating the International Dateline (which has been moved east of Tonga by now) is about 2 miles to the southwest. Somosomo is also

famous for the amount of soft coral in the Somosomo Strait, just west of Somosomo and Taveuni. The reefs along the Somosomo Strait are considered among the best in the South Pacific as tidal currents and constant year-round water temperature create the ideal environment for some 390 species of hard and soft corals and over 1500 species of fish. Other attractions near Somosomo are the Bouma National Park with its waterfalls and Lake Tangimaucia.

### Day 3 - Ringgold Isles

Idyllic and picturesque with possibly the lightest, clearest blue waters on the planet, the Ringgold Isles are an archipelago in Fiji that is mostly uninhabited, but for one small village. Tree-lined hills slope down onto white sandy beaches lined with palm trees and interesting rock outcroppings in some areas. Three reefs form part of this group: the Budd, Nukusemanu, and Heemskercq Reefs. The waters surrounding these islands are favored for snorkeling and scuba diving because of their visibility down to 120 feet.

### Day 3 - Cobia

Also known as Thombia Island the crescent moon-shaped Cobia Island in Fiji is part of the Ringgold Isles archipelago. The island is teeming with biodiversity on land and underwater. Cobia Island is part of the Budd Reef and has a submerged volcanic crater with its highest elevation on the west side of the island. Considered a "conspicuous landmark" for seafarers at least as far back as 1899 this tropical island embodies a unique combination of wooded areas tropical vistas and diverse sea life. The island is an important component of Fiji's Biodiversity and Action Plan due to its unique geological formations and beach forests.



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### Day 4 - Fulanga

As part of the Southern Lau Group, Fulanga is one of Fiji's easternmost islands. Fulanga has a large central lagoon with a 50-meter wide pass to the ocean on its northeastern side. The crescent-shaped raised limestone island is famous for its numerous islands, mushroom-shaped islets and many sandy beaches in the calm lagoon. Some 400 residents live in three small villages. The two villages of Muana-i-rai and Muana-i-cake are quite close together on the southern exterior side with a very narrow passage allowing access to the ocean, while Naividamu, the third village, is on the interior, i.e. lagoon side. Muana-i-cake is the main village and hosts the kindergarten and primary school, a post office and first aid station. Old-style houses made of corrugated iron are predominant with limited solar power for the odd refrigerator and television set. Although many islanders have left Fulanga to look for work in Suva, traditional crafts are still practiced by men and women. The weavers and carvers producing pandanus mats and wooden bowls for kava ceremonies are not only valued on Fulanga. Their products can leave on the monthly supply vessel and is highly sought after in Suva.

### Day 5 - Neiafu, Vava'u Group

With a population of 6,000, Neiafu is the capital of the Vava'u Group and the second largest municipality in the Polynesian nation of Tonga (a 169-island archipelago in the South Pacific). The city is situated next to a deep-water harbor (Port of Refuge) on the south coast of Vava'u, the main island of the Vava'u archipelago in northern Tonga. The waters of this region are known for their clarity and beauty, and the area attracts many humpback whales between June and November. A popular destination in Neiafu is the 'Ene'io Botanical Garden, a bird sanctuary that promotes the survival of exotic and native bird

species as well as supports and conserves a diverse array of plant life.

### Day 5 - Euaiki Island

A typical tropical island in the South Pacific should have white sand, coconut palms, a calm turquoise sea and coral reefs reaching to the shore. Eueiki has all that. The 19-hectare (48-acre) island is one of the Vava'u island group of Tonga and is privately owned, with a small resort. Eueiki is made of limestone laid down by marine life thousands of years ago and later uplifted. Take a walk from the island's beach to the shade of the island's interior. Listen for birds. The names of the Polynesian Triller and the Tongan Whistler (a Vava'u endemic) give away their identity. The 'coos' are made by fruit-eating Pacific Pigeons or Purple-capped Fruit-doves. Screeches identify Tongan (Insular) Flying Foxes. Fascinating to watch, these large bats are sacred and protected by the King of Tonga. Coral reefs provide great snorkelling, with clear waters giving excellent views of the diverse corals and fish. Healthy corals are mostly green, brown and occasionally blue due to the algae that lives in the flesh of the skeleton-making coral polyps. It is the texture and shapes of the coral that make them fascinating. Some are soft and some are hard. Growth forms include shrubby, finger, plate, massive (round domes) and branched. Small reef fish linger on the reef, none more so than the anemonefish. Small groups of these orange, white, and sometimes black, banded fish find protection amongst the tentacles of sea anemones. Anemonefish are nicknamed Nemos after the Finding Nemo movie. Find Nemo in the word anemone.

### Day 6 - Uoleva Island

Uoleva is one of those classic postcards or webpage images of a south sea island. Clean white sand beaches, abundant



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coconut palms, and clear blue shallow waters with the visible shapes of coral bommies and reefs. It is easy to imagine being castaway on such an island without a care. But as with most natural places, there is always an alternative to relaxing, such as beachcombing, swimming, snorkelling and exploring the island. The coral reef has a rich display of marine life to explore with a snorkel. The warm, clear waters promote coral growth which supports animal life like feather stars, fan worms, sponges and sea squirts. Fish of many shapes, colours and habits provide you with unlimited opportunities to watch their behaviour. Some dart in and out of corals while others sit on the bottom waiting for food to pass by. Many fish gather in schools to search the reef for algae to feed on, while other schools swirl in the water column nabbing passing plankton. The island has some visitor accommodation but is still mainly used by locals for coconut growing and pig grazing. If you see a mound on Uoleva it is probably a traditional pigeon snaring trap. The Tongans boat over from the adjacent island of Lifuka, or wade over at low tide. It was at Lifuka that Captain Cook named Tonga the 'friendly islands' after a welcome feast. Little did he know that the feast was part of a plan to slaughter him and his crew that did not quite happen. The name 'friendly' stuck though and is very appropriate today.

### Day 7 - Day at sea

Days at sea are the perfect opportunity to relax, unwind and catch up with what you've been meaning to do. So whether that is going to the gym, visiting the spa, whale watching, catching up on your reading or simply topping up your tan, these blue sea days are the perfect balance to busy days spent exploring shore side.

### Day 8 - Date Line gain a day

Crossing the date line (theoretically the 180-degree line of longitude) from the Eastern to the Western Hemisphere seafaring guests will find themselves in the unusual situation of actually gaining a day and prolonging their holiday - at no extra cost! By crossing the (fictitious) line that dissects the planet exactly in half from Greenwich, you travel over time zones and find yourself with an extra day on board. The phenomenon was used by Jules Verne in his novel *Around the World in 80 Days* when his hero Phileas Fogg finds out he had returned home a full day earlier than calculated having always travelled towards the east. As some countries have decided to change to different time zones than allotted based on longitude, this phenomenon is not strictly linked to the 180-degree line of longitude any longer.

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### Day 9 - Rarotonga

Rarotonga is the essence of Polynesia with its warmth, vibrant tropical plants and some of the happiest and friendliest people on Earth. As the main island of the Cook Islands, Rarotonga supports most of the country's people and services. The island was settled about 1500 years ago by traditional sailing canoes as part of the great Polynesian expansion. Cook Islanders are proud of their culture and happy to demonstrate their traditional skills. Mesmerising dances incorporate energetic posturing of warrior men and seductive gyrations of grass skirts on the hips



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of women, along with graceful hand movements. An ancient eroded volcano bedecked in rainforest dominates the island. Skirting the mountain is a flat coastal strip where most people live. The island is fringed by white coral sand beaches and a shallow coastal lagoon stretching to a protective outer ring of coral reefs. Rarotonga has many modern water and land activities for visitors, but without the tourism hype of more well-known Pacific islands. An easy escape from is to trek across the island's interior past the Needle--an aptly named volcanic rock spire. The decaying volcano on Rarotonga produces fertile soil and captures rain, ensuring lush dark green vegetation. Bird life is headlined by the Cook Islands Fruit Dove, and the Kakerori (Rarotongan Flycatcher). Kakerori were critically endangered with only 29 birds in the Takitumu Conservation Area in 1989. A dedicated conservation program has enabled a recovery of over 500 birds.

### Day 10 - Aitutaki

When Lonely Planet co-founder describes somewhere as "the world's most beautiful island" you can be sure that you are in for a treat. Incredible Aitutaki, inspiring Aitutaki, unbelievable, idyllic and unimaginable, there are simply not enough superlatives to describe quite how amazing Aitutaki is. Brought to light in 1779 by Captain Bligh, the Mutiny on the Bounty meant that Aitutaki has something of a bloodthirsty history. While European missionaries eventually settled on the island in the 19th century (evidenced by the white, coral-encrusted walls of the many churches) the island's Polynesian history dates to around 900AD. Traditional songs and dances from this period still exist (although Christian hymns, known as "imene metua" are also popular), and are performed by islanders with gusto and much pride. The island is part of the Cook Islands, one of

the most secluded and romantic archipelagos in the world. With its powder white sand, warm turquoise waters and sense of casual luxury, it is easy to see why the island has earned itself the moniker of honeymooner's island. However, there is much more to Aitutaki than just fun in the sun. With a reef that completely encompasses a large turquoise lagoon, Aitutaki is considered one of the most spectacular diving and snorkelling destinations in the world. Added to the tropical excitement is that when entering the main village via Zodiac along a narrow channel - travellers will be greeted by a traditional and customary warrior challenge.

### Day 11 - Day at sea

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### Day 12 - Bora Bora (Society Islands)

If you have ever dreamt up your ideal island holiday, we suspect it goes something like this: Soapy blue seas? Check. Sparkling white beaches? Check. Thatched wooden huts, gently sloping palm trees and kaleidoscopic marine life? Check, check and check. And yet, even by ticking every box, first time viewing of Bora Bora still beggars belief. This tropical hideaway less than 12 m2 in the heart of the South Pacific has been topping travel wish lists for years. Long considered the realm of honeymooners - spectacularly romantic sunsets are a speciality - Bora Bora is not just for wandering with your love. If the prismatic shades of blue of the world's most beautiful lagoon do not fill you up, then perhaps underwater scooters and aqua Safaris will charge your



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batteries. If exploring Bora Bora's lush hinterland is more your glass of tequila sunrise, then trips around the island (often stopping off at the celebrity haunt Bloody Mary Restaurant & Bar) are a must. Bora Bora's peaceful ambience has not always been the case. The island was a US supply base, known as "Operation Bobcat" during WWII. During this time, Bora Bora was home to nine ships, 20,000 tons of equipment and nearly 7,000 men. Eight massive 7-inch naval cannons were installed around the island, all but one of which is still in place. Although little is known of the history of the island, it is known that Bora Bora was called Vava'u in ancient times. This supports belief that the island was colonised by Tongans prior to French annex in 1888.

### Day 13 - Tikehau, Tuamotu Archipelago

Translated from Tuamotuan as "peaceful landing," Tikehau lives up to its name as one of the most breathtaking places in the beautiful French Polynesian Islands. Part of the Tuamotu Islands, the 17-mile coral atoll is made up of two palm tree-lined islands and a number of smaller islets connected by a clear, bright turquoise lagoon. Expect secluded white and pink sand beaches, views of nesting sea birds, and ideal snorkeling conditions as the lagoon is teeming with life underwater. According to the famous marine explorer Jacques Cousteau, Tikehau has the highest concentration of fish than any other lagoon in French Polynesia.

### Day 14 - Rangiroa

Rangiroa is French Polynesia's largest atoll. More than 400 motu (islets) enclose the lagoon, which is so wide and long that one cannot see the southern row of motu from the two main islets in the north -hence the local name Rangiroa meaning wide or long sky, sometimes taken as "immense sky". There are

several passes from the ocean into the lagoon and the two main villages of Avatoru and Tiputa are located next to the passes of the same names. Drift diving and snorkeling the incoming tides looking for sharks and manta rays at these passes is one of Rangiroa's main touristic draws. Government jobs, ecotourism and pearl farming are the main sources of income on the atoll. The lagoon's calm turquoise waters, rich marine underwater world and relaxed atmosphere attract visitors year-round to the many local guesthouses and a few hotels. Both Avatoru and Tiputa also feature schools for the other Tuamotu Islands which have no higher education possibilities. One of Rangiroa's most unusual attractions is the white and rose wine produced on the islet immediately west of Avatoru -the wine has won several awards.

### Day 15 - Papeete (Tahiti)

Papeete is the center of the tropical paradise of French Polynesia, where islands fringed with gorgeous beaches and turquoise ocean await to soothe the soul. This spirited city is the capital of French Polynesia, and serves as a superb base for onward exploration of Tahiti - an island of breathtaking landscapes and oceanic vistas. A wonderful lagoon of crisp, clear water begs to be snorkelled, stunning black beaches and blowholes pay tribute to the island's volcanic heritage, and lush green mountains beckon you inland on adventures, as you explore extraordinary Tahiti. Visit to relax and settle into the intoxicating rhythm of life in this Polynesian paradise.

### Please note:

Itineraries are subject to change.



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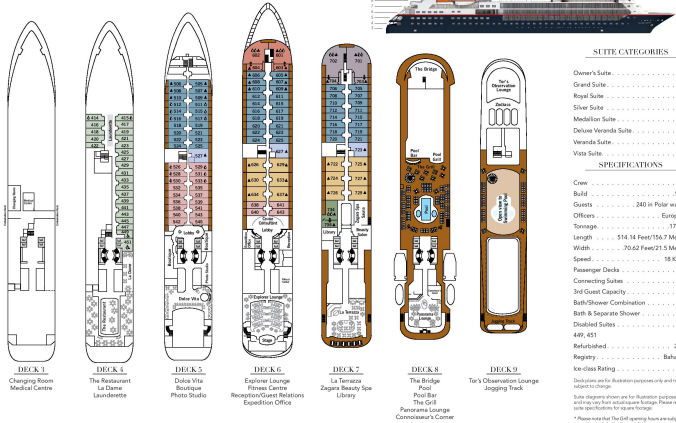


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