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VALPARAISO TO LAUTOKA - 52 DAY SOUTH PACIFIC LUXURY EXPEDITION CRUISE

Join us as we spend 49 days visiting some of the most remote and beautiful islands on Earth. You'll explore Easter Island, the Marquesas Islands, Tahiti and Bora Bora as we sail in the comfort of Silver Cloud from Valparaiso to Lautoka. Learn about each paradise from our team of expert guides. See remarkable scenery, including black beaches, blowholes, and volcanoes as well as rare wildlife. This adventure will change the way you see the planet.

ITINERARY

Day 1 Pre Cruise

Day 2 Valparaiso

Since time immemorial Valparaiso has inspired writers, poets, musicians and artists alike. If the city is still a little rough around the edges, this only adds to its bohemian ambience; the architecture, style, street art, nightlife, and live music scenes of Valparaiso are some of the best in the world. Add colourful cliff-top homes to the mix and you'll soon see why Valparaiso is many people's favourite Chilean city. The city was founded in 1536 by Spanish conquistador Juan de Saavedra, who named the city after his birthplace. Many of the colonial buildings he implemented are still standing today, despite the rain, wind, fire and several earthquakes (one of which almost levelled the city in 1906). Quirky architecture also abounds; poetry lovers and amateur architects will no doubt want to make the 45 km trip south to Chilean poet laureate (and Nobel Prize winner) Pablo Neruda's ship-shaped house and museum for a taste of the extraordinary. The city and region are also extremely well known for their love of good food and wine. The vineyards of the nearby Casablanca Valley - first planted in the early 1980s - have earned worldwide recognition in a relatively short space of time. However, Chile's viticulture history does date back much farther than that. De Saavedra brought grape vines on his voyage to South America in order to make his own wine and this led to a new grape brandy being created, Pisco. Today give any Chilean a Pisco and wherever they are in the world, they will be home.

Day 3 Day at sea



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Day 4 Robinson Crusoe Island

Robinson Crusoe Island is located 600 kilometres off the coast of Chile. The island is a rugged volcanic speck where 70 percent of its plant species are endemic, and is the largest of the Juan Fernandez Islands, a small archipelago that since 1935 is a Chilean National Park which in 1977 was declared a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. This island has witnessed and played an important role in Chilean and world history. In 1704 the Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk was marooned on the island and stayed for more than 4 years, eventually inspiring Daniel Defoe's novel Robinson Crusoe -hence the name of the island. 1750 the village of San Juan Bautista was founded at Cumberland Bay and by 1779 there were already 7 small fortresses bristling with guns. The island's isolation offered Spain a splendid place for setting up a penal colony, to which high-ranking Chilean patriots were deported in the early 19th century. In 1915, during the First World War, three British ships and a German one, the Dresden, engaged in a sea battle which ended with the scuttling of the German cruiser. Today there are currently around one thousand people living in the archipelago, most of them in the village of San Juan Bautista engaged in fishing for the "spiny lobster", a delicacy exported to the mainland.

Day 5 Alexander Selkirk Island

Think of Daniel Defoe's classic novel Robinson Crusoe and you will be picturing an intrepid castaway, marooned on a paradisiacal island. That image might be ideal for movie lovers, but the actual inspiration for Robinson Crusoe was a salty Scottish seadog who went by the name of Alexander Selkirk. Selkirk was marooned in Chile's Juan Fernandez archipelago for four years and four months, rescued by a British private warship. Despite Selkirk's slightly chequered past, he was greeted as a celebrity upon his return to England. His adventures were given a gloss and immortalised in the much loved 18th century classic. Alejandro Selkirk Island is located 165 kilometres west of the other islands in the archipelago, for a surface area of just under 50 m2. The island was renamed from its Spanish name Isla Más Afuera in 1966 by the Chilean government in homage to the sailor. The topography is very different from the Caribbean dream that Defoe writes about, think dense woodland, rugged coast and peaks, shrouded (more often than not) in cloud. Sandy beaches can be found to the north of the island. Throughout much of its history, the island has been uninhabited, although there is a former penal settlement on the middle of the east coast, which operated from 1909 to 1930. During the summer months, Selkirk welcomes a small community of lobster fishermen and their families who come from Robinson Crusoe. As part of the Chilean National Park, it also holds the UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve title.

Days 6 - 9 Day at sea

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Days 10 - 11 Easter Island

Easter Island, the easternmost settled island of Polynesia, received its European name in 1722 when the island was seen by a Dutch expedition under Roggeveen on Easter Sunday. The triangular-shaped island of 163 square kilometers is famous for the hundreds of statues known locally as moai. Rolling hills covered in grassland, eucalyptus forest and a rocky shore surround Hangaroa, the island's only village on the southwestern coast. This is where Captain Cook landed in 1774, where missionaries built the first church and where ships find the best protection from winds and swells. Small beaches and transparent waters invite swimmers and snorkelers, but it is the cultural aspect which attracts visitors. Since 1935 the island has been a National Historic Monument and today 43.5% of the island is a national park administered by the Chilean National Forest Corporation and Mau Henua, a local community group. The island's national park has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995. Found slightly more than 3,500 kilometers west of Chile, the island was annexed in 1888. Used as a sheep ranch for many decades, the island was opened in 1965 and an airstrip was built. The US Air Force set up a base to record the behavior of the earth's outer atmosphere and by 1987 NASA had the runway extended as an emergency runway for the space shuttle. This never happened, but tourism benefitted from this improvement and today the island receives more than 100,000 visitors a year.

Days 12 - 14 Day at sea

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shore side.

Days 15 - 16 Adamstown (Pitcairn Island)

Home to the original mutineers of the Bounty, Adamstown's is today the capital of all four Pitcairn Islands. The islands – the last British Overseas Territory in the Pacific – include the namesake Pitcairn Island itself, plus the uninhabited Oeno, Henderson and Ducie. Pitcairn is the archipelago's only inhabited island, with the population of just 50 centred in Adamstown. It is no surprise that the nine mutineers along with six Tahitian men, 12 Tahitian women and one child stopped on Pitcairn in 1790; with its sloped and varied landscape, lush tropical promise and equidistant location between Peru and New Zealand, Pitcairn would have seemed an ideal hiding spot for the mutineers to settle. The ship was burnt to avoid detection (the ballast stone remains of the wreck in Bounty Bay). However, the ideal bucolic life that mutineer leader Fletcher Christian had envisaged was not to be. Poor treatment of the Tahitian men led to alcoholism, chaos and carnage and by 1800 only John Adams – who had recently discovered Christianity – remained. Adams taught the women and children to read and write from the bible. The capital is named after him. Not only had the island been misplaced on early maps of the region, but it can also be very difficult to come ashore as large breakers tend to build up just in front of the small harbour of Bounty Bay. The local museum houses the HMS Bounty Bible, the same bible that Adams taught the women and children to read and write from in the early 19th century.

Days 17 - 19 Day at sea

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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 20 Nuku Hiva, Marquesas Islands

Think of French Polynesia and you are automatically transported to the white sands of Tahiti, the blue seas of Bora Bora or, at the very least, the iconic statues of Easter Island. Now, imagine a place that is home to that majestic trinity, but has no crowds and is full of island authenticity that is rare in these global times. You have just imagined Nuku Hiva. The island is the second largest after Tahiti in the archipelago, but is yet to be discovered by tourism. As part of the Marquesas Islands, Nuku Hiva is technically French, but don't expect to find any blue and white striped shirts here! In fact, even though French is the "official" language of the island, a sing-song dialect of Tahitian mixed with Marquesan is more widely spoken. The younger generations also speak English. Undeniably, Nuku Hiva has been blessed by the Gods. With towering mountains, eight magnificent harbours, and one of the world's highest waterfalls, Nuku Hiva is rich with Mother Nature's jewels. The island could lay claim to a great many claims to fame, such as its deep, unpolluted waters, its lush forests bursting with vitality or its fascinating assortment of archaeological interests including tikis (sacred statues) and pae pae (stone platforms that formed the foundations of houses). Yet for those in the know, the island's primary claim to fame is that author Herman Melville deserted his ship in order to live among the natives of the island and his books Typee and Omoo were inspired by his experiences on Nuku Hiva.

Day 21 Atuona - Hiva Oa, Marquesas Island & Tahuata, Marquesas Islands

The largest of the southern islands, Hiva Oa, the master pillar or final post of the 'Great House' - which represents the Marquesan archipelago in the local mythology - has always been the rival of Nuku Hiva. The island is shaped like a seahorse and has a mountain range running southwest to northeast whose main peaks, Mt. Temetiu and Mt. Feani form a real wall around Atuona. Atuona, a peaceful little port at the head of the Taaoa Bay, also known as Traitors Bay, has emerged from obscurity due to having had the privilege of being the last resting place of Paul Gauguin and of the singer Jacques Brel. The tombs of these famous personalities are on the side of the Calvary cemetery looking out across the bay and are places of great pilgrimage. In the village, the Gauguin Museum displays items related to the painter's stay there at the beginning of the century and has copies of his works. If you're looking for a perfect incarnation of Polynesia's unparalleled beauty, you just found it. Discover mesmerising Tahuata and unveil all its secrets. Part of the Marquesas, this is the tiniest inhabited island of the archipelago, with only 700 inhabitants. This croissant-shaped piece of land was discovered in 1595 by Spanish navigator Alvaro de Mendana de Neira and has been a dreamy destination for many travellers since. Indeed, its spectacular and idyllic scenery, made of contrasts between impressive mountains and sandy beaches, would inspire every poet - and not only! How can't you be impressed admiring Meae Ufa, a 3181-foot volcano and the stunning twin bays Ivaiva Nui and Ivaiva Iti? The island is also nicknamed 'Monoï Island' thanks to the great quality of its tiaré oil, heritage of traditions and secrets orally transmitted generation to generation. Tahuata has a huge reputation across French Polynesia for another savoir-faire, its rich craftsmanship. The craftsmen excel at carving beautiful pieces, spears, puzzles,



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dishes they produce on bone or rosewood. These unique creations are exhibited in the craft centre of the pretty village of Hapatoni and in the Vaitahu Town Hall Museum. Very close to one another (15-min boat ride or 30-min walk), these two tiny villages are absolutely worth a visit with their charming mix of Polynesian and European atmosphere. And don't forget to have a swim at Hana Moenoa beach, the island's most beautiful one. Maybe you'll come across sea turtles in its crystal-clear waters.

Day 22 Hanavave, Fatu Hiva

Situated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, Fatu Hiva is the most isolated island of the most isolated archipelago on the planet. Sometimes called the 'island at the edge of the world', Fatu Hiva is also the greenest, wildest and most mountainous island of the Marquesas. And what mountains! The island's dramatic cliffs and lush valleys, illuminates the extraordinary Polynesian countryside, will give you the impression of being in a Paul Gauguin painting. On your arriving in this tropical paradise, you'll be welcomed with the traditional welcome to the Marquesas Islands, 'Mave Mai', involving ancestral dances. Let yourself be carried away by the Haka rhythm before discovering the charming village of Hanavave. After strolling among the village's picturesque fare houses, the authentic Marquesan constructions, uncover the island's hidden gems and secrets. Stunning waterfalls hurling down from impressive peaks forming magnificent lagoons and rushing fresh rivers. Nothing better than a hike to properly appreciate and admire the fabulous scenery that surrounds you. Real highlight of the island, the spectacular Baie des Vierges is said to be one of the most beautiful bays on Earth. These crystal-clear waters are home to myriad of marine life species like manta rays or sea turtles swimming into a ballet of multicolour fishes. What more do you need to believe Fatu Hiva is a true paradise?

Day 23 Day at sea

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Day 24 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 25 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



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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.

Day 26 Raiatea & Moto Iriu, Raiatea

Known as the "Sacred Island," Raiatea is a fascinating haunt for archaeologists and historians as it's one of the islands in the Pacific where Polynesian culture can trace its roots. Visitors will find many of the older Polynesian structures still in place and are fascinating places to explore. In the 16th century, Raiatea developed a powerful cult dedicated to Oro the God of War and built a large meeting ground, the Taputaputea Marae, which is still intact. Human sacrifice was practiced until around the middle of the 18th century and visitors should look for the sacrificial stone. Several tour operators run visits to the marae (ancient temples) along with some degree of informed commentary—although in fairness Polynesian storytelling can embellish things a little. The Faaroa River is the only navigable waterway in French Polynesia and it can be traveled by powerboat or outrigger canoe. Running through the Faaroa Gorge it passes some spectacular scenery with steep-walled jungle foliage holding dozens of bird species and wild hibiscus. Trekking up Mount Temehani, a well-known landmark that's said to be Oro's birthplace, is relatively demanding. Keep a lookout for the rare, five-petal tiare apetahi. Said to be impossible to grow anywhere else, this white, indigenous flower can only be found above 1,300 feet (396 meters). Look, but don't touch.

It's against the law to pick them. If the Society Islands were a jewel, Motu Iriu would be one of its tiny pearls. Take your mask, your tuba and your sunscreen. It's time to relax and fully enjoy this matu – Polynesian name for the lagoon's tiny islands. This uninhabited little piece of land is facing the 'sacred island' Raiatea, cradle of the Maori people according to Polynesian mythology. The perfect place to slow down time, to chill and to admire the the horizon joining the sea, which comes in every shade of blue. These glittering emerald waters are home to colourful fishes with a coral garden for playground. Entering the ocean, you'll get the opportunity to get to know inoffensive and friendly baby blacktip sharks, the shallow coastal waters being their favourite.

Day 27 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 toping 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 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



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“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 28 Day at sea

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Day 29 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 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 30 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



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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 31 Palmerston Island

The low-lying atoll of Palmerston is inhabited by three families, all descendants of William Marsters (1831-1899). Members of the community are known to greet visitors and guide small boats and Zodiacs into the lagoon through a maze of coral reef to reach the only inhabited islet – commonly called “Home”. Once ashore, the whole community generally turns out to meet visitors as it is a rare occurrence. The island’s highlights include a church, the oldest house, the cemetery, the school, the underground gardens and “Duke’s Pool,” inviting for a swim or snorkel. In the lagoon’s waters it is possible to find colorful reef-fish, sea cucumbers, rays, and sea turtles. Overhead there is birdlife including tropicbirds, boobies, noddies, frigatebirds and terns.

Day 32 Day at sea

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Day 33 Alofi & Date Line lose a day

Alofi, the capital of Niue island, or “The Rock” as it is known to its inhabitants. The island has a population of only around 600 inhabitants, giving it the modest title of being the second

smallest capital “city” in the world. The island does boast an international airport but despite this, tourism is not as rife here as in some of the other, better known Polynesian idylls. Niue has a distinctive beauty all of its own. Think less of the sweeping, romantic beaches for which Polynesia is famous and more sheltered rocky coves, jewel-like reef pools, headlands, tropical forest, coconut plantations and neat, colourful villages scattered throughout the island’s 100 sq.m. The crystal clear waters and limestone caves of beautiful Alofi Bay offer spectacular snorkelling opportunities. The island is sometimes referred to as its ancient name of Savage Island. Niueans’ nature of worship was in the past joyful and ecstatic. Islanders would receive the power of the divine by dancing around a campfire. These ceremonies, called *tugi e mama* (lighting the fires) were especially used before going to war, when a priest or shaman would light a fire and call out to the gods to come to the aid of the troops who were about to enter in battle. As one of Polynesia’s poorer islands, today Niue has no organised religion, although islanders are incredibly spiritual. Thus, there are no real places of worship but rather areas of land – known as *taugas* - marked out and reserved solely for the breeding of birds and crabs. Planet Earth is divided into 24 different time zones and regardless of where you are on the planet, the time and date always changes at midnight. So, for those who travel westwards, time moves seemingly “slower” over the time zones gaining one hour per time zone crossed, but you suddenly find yourself one day older when crossing the date line from the Western to the Eastern Hemisphere since you have to adjust for the time “gained”! Just to confuse matters even further, the IDL (International Date Line) is arbitrary, and countries can request to move it as they please! For two hours of every day (between 10 am and 12 pm GMT), the world has three different dates,



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meaning that when it is 11.30 pm on Sunday in American Samoa (GMT-11), it will be 6.30 am on Monday in New York City (GMT-4) and 12.30 am on Tuesday in Kiritimati, Line Islands (GMT+14)!

Day 34 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 35 Day at sea

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Day 36 Leleuvia Island

Leleuvia is a small low-lying island southeast of Ovalau with a length of barely 500 meters. Situated between the chiefly island of Bau, Moturiki and Ovalau, almost equidistant from Ovalau and the Central Eastern coast of Viti Levu, this lush, green island hosts a small resort. An easily accessible reef with many colorful

reef fish 10 meters off of Leleuvia's western beach invites to be explored. Resident sea kraits are often seen resting ashore north of the small pier. Despite its small size and the resort on its southern side, the island still has quite an extensive forest of tamanu (Alexandrian laurel), lantern trees, fish-poison trees and beach gardenia. There are also local clusters of beach hibiscus, beach heliotrope and Pacific rosewood where Sacred Kingfishers, Orange-breasted Honeyeaters, and Pacific Swallows have been recorded.

Day 37 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 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



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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 38 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 39 Rotuma

Jutting sharply from blissful turquoise waters, almost 400 miles north of Fiji, beautiful Rotuma rises like a verdant green fin from the sea. This remote island group is a true tropical paradise, resplendent with chalky blue waters, dense jungle, and romantic arcs of heavenly white sands. Experiencing minimal tourism, visiting these islands is a rare privilege and a chance to explore 20 square miles of wild, tropical landscapes, where beaches beg to be strolled and trees bend under the weight of juicy mangos and pineapples. Feast on local dishes made from taro root and refresh with swigs from sweet coconuts on this island, which brims with natural resources. Embark on mountain hikes or seek out snorkelling above thriving coral reefs. In this protected bird area, you might also see plenty of fluttering in the leaves and hear the lilt of protected birds like the Polynesian triller. The hospitable locals, known as the Rotumans, are descended from settlers from Tahiti, and their traditions bear more similarities to Polynesian culture than to typical Fijian culture. Approximately 2,000 continue to live here in Rotuma,

while 10,000 descendants have found their home on Fiji's main island.

Day 40 Day at sea

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Day 41 Funafuti

Day 42 Nukufetau

Barely registering on the map, only the committed travel far enough to seek out Nukufetau's far-flung drop of loveliness, which is as refreshing and rejuvenating a place as you will ever find. This tranquil, bell-shaped atoll - where gentle waves unfold and rustling palm trees are the only distractions - invites you into a real-life desert island daydream in full technicolour. With only around 500 people inhabiting this attractive atoll, it is one of the least populated in the distant nation of Tuvalu, and this unspoiled island receives just a handful of annual visitors. Visit to be immersed in turquoise waters, deserted beaches, and shallow lagoons, forming seascapes of astonishing natural beauty. Remnants from World War II, including runways now reclaimed by the thick grasp of nature, linger among the coconut plantations. As you might expect, exceptional snorkelling opportunities await this far out into the remote waters of the South Pacific. You might experience colourful encounters with tropical fish, turtles, and even octopuses dancing below as you swim through the beautiful waters.



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Day 43 Day at sea

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Day 44 Mata-Utu, Wallis Island

Mata'utu, known for its stunning coral reefs, is a protectorate of France and lies between beautiful Tahiti and Noumea. It is the largest urban center of Wallis Island, also locally called Uvea. The downtown area is recognised for its Cathedral, a French national monument next to the very modest "Palace of the King of Uvea." In former times the different groups on Uvea built several forts to defend themselves against aggressors from the island or from abroad. The largest of these, the Kolonui Fort, has been partially excavated and restored.

Day 45 Asau

Day 46 Apia

As the first independent state of Polynesia, Samoa is considered the cradle of the nation, a place where the Earth and the heart fuse seamlessly together. Incidentally, were one to translate the word "Samoa" into the traditional Polynesia dialect, they would find that the words "Sa" and "Moa" mean exactly that: earth and centre. Apia, Samoa's only town, is found central north coast of Upolu, Samoa's second largest island. Originally a tiny village of just over 300 inhabitants (c. 1800), the town's population has grown to be just shy of 40,000. While a population of such size might mean forgetting traditional roots in favour of modern life, this has not been the case (too much)

in Apia. The Samoan way of life is still very much the order of the day; traditional open-sided houses with thatched roofs on platforms of coral or concrete, also known as 'fales', can be seen everywhere and nearly all of the population (including the policemen) wear the typical local dress; skirts, or 'lavalavas' for men, and long, mumu-style dresses for women. The markets are bursting with culture and colour, selling everything from handicrafts to cuisine and local produce. If the idyllic setting of aquamarine pools of bluey green water, framed by low fringed palms and huge umbrella trees seems familiar, that's because it probably is. The island, and notably the southern resort of Lefaga, was used in the 1953 Gary Cooper classic Return to Paradise Beach. It is also the last place on Earth to see each day's sunset.

Day 47 Niuatoputapu

Also referred to as Keppel Island, Niuatoputapu (meaning "Very Sacred Coconut" in the local language) is one of the northernmost islands of Tonga, located in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. The highest point of the island is a hill just 515 feet (157 meters) in height, the eroded remnant of a large volcano that erupted approximately 3 million years ago. The island consists of three primary villages with a total population of just over 900 inhabitants. The original Niuatoputapu language has been extinct for centuries; residents now speak Tongan. This island is beginning to recover from a 2009 tsunami triggered by a 8.3 magnitude earthquake. Niuatoputapu is surrounded by a large reef and boasts beautiful white beaches and clear turquoise waters perfect for indulging yourself.

Day 48 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



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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 49 Day at sea

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Day 50 Leleuvia Island

Leleuvia is a small low-lying island southeast of Ovalau with a length of barely 500 meters. Situated between the chiefly island of Bau, Moturiki and Ovalau, almost equidistant from Ovalau and the Central Eastern coast of Viti Levu, this lush, green island hosts a small resort. An easily accessible reef with many colorful reef fish 10 meters off of Leleuvia's western beach invites to be explored. Resident sea kraits are often seen resting ashore north of the small pier. Despite its small size and the resort on its southern side, the island still has quite an extensive forest of tamanu (Alexandrian laurel), lantern trees, fish-poison trees and beach gardenia. There are also local clusters of beach hibiscus, beach heliotrope and Pacific rosewood where Sacred Kingfishers, Orange-breasted Honeyeaters, and Pacific Swallows

have been recorded.

Day 51 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 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 52 Post Cruise

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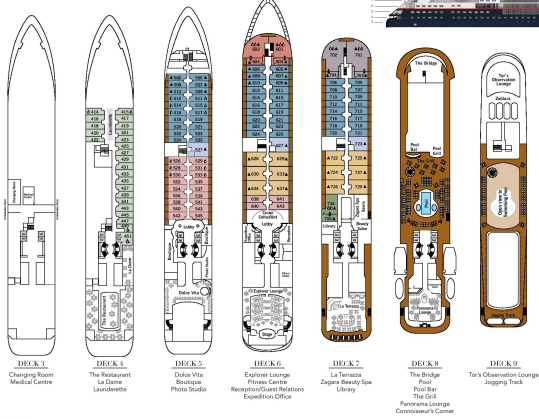


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