

# Fakarava & UNESCO Biosphere Reserve - French Polynesia

## Itinerary

The following is a description of the dive sites we may visit during your liveaboard safari on board M/V French Polynesia Master. We will explore 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. We wish to show you the very best diving possible but a number of factors can determine where we visit. Weather, tides, currents and other factors play a part in the Cruise Director's decision of which route the yacht takes. Whilst we attempt to ensure the number of dives we have scheduled is fulfilled, bad weather can hinder the yacht's ability to reach a specified dive site in good time. The safety of all on board is paramount and we always do our best in offering diving at alternate locations should we be unable to visit those sites listed below.

Your Cruise Director will schedule up to 3 dives per day, or alternatively 2 day dives and 1 sunset or 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,
- Dinner - if we offer a night/sunset dive, the schedule will be slightly amended

## Important information about diving in French Polynesia

The diving regulations aboard French Polynesia Master vary slightly from our other vessels due to a combination of the challenging nature of the diving and specific French Polynesian local governmental diving rules and regulations:

- Maximum of 3 dives per day for all divers whether diving on air or nitrox.
- PADI Open Water divers, or equivalent, are limited to a maximum depth of 18m (60ft) on all dives. If you only carry this certification then we advise that you complete the Advanced Open Water course before joining to enjoy the diving to the full, as the structure of dive groups will not always accommodate for shallow divers. If this is not possible or you do not wish to take the course prior to joining then we can also provide the PADI Advanced Open Water and/or Nitrox course on board, please just let us know in advance and we can organise this for you to ensure you can join all dives. CMAS\* divers are limited to 20m.
- Advanced Open Water divers and above can dive to 30 metres maximum depth (98ft), This is irrespective of whether you carry a Deep Diver certification.
- All divers must complete a medical declaration and submit it on the boat. You can find this form here. Any divers submitting a form on board that has 'yes' as the response to any medical question will also require a doctor's certificate if

they wish to dive. This is mandatory and so we ask that you complete this form in advance and obtain the required medical clearance if circumstances dictate it.

Diving in French Polynesia can be challenging, even for the experienced diver. To get the most out of your trip, we highly recommend our guests be:

- qualified to a minimum of Advanced Open Water, or equivalent
- minimum of 50 logged dives
- Nitrox certified
- preferably with some experience in diving in current

Due to French Polynesian law restrictions, we do not offer unguided diving from the boat.

**\*\*\*Please ensure that you bring all your certification cards, including any certifications that you currently hold for diving on Nitrox.**

Kindly note that there are regular checks by the authorities that these limits are being maintained, so our guides will be very strict with them.

## Fakarava Atoll

**Garue 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.

**Tetamanu Pass** - 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 blackfin sharks can be seen in the deeper water while along the shallower reef black tips dart about. Manta rays and eagle rays 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, while mantas, blackfin sharks, eagle rays and the occasional hammerhead make up the larger visitors.

Water temperatures in French Polynesia range 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 [info@masterliveboards.com](mailto:info@masterliveboards.com) who will be pleased to assist and advise you.