



FRENCH POLYNESIA

SNORKELING & FREEDIVING GUIDE



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BONUS hidden gems, not many people know about.

ABOUT US

We're two freedivers and scuba divers who have been exploring and living in French Polynesia for over two years. Passionate about the ocean, we always seek out each place's underwater wonders. Often exploring on our own, we realized how helpful it would be to know the best spots, how to reach them, and what to expect to see. That's what led us to create this guide.

It's a compact collection of our experiences, favorite places, and honest tips.

We made it with love, and all the photos are ours, true to the beauty of what we describe.



 [@JOHAN_OCEAN_EXPLORER](https://www.instagram.com/johan_ocean_explorer)

 [@MEG_SLMN](https://www.instagram.com/meg_slmn)

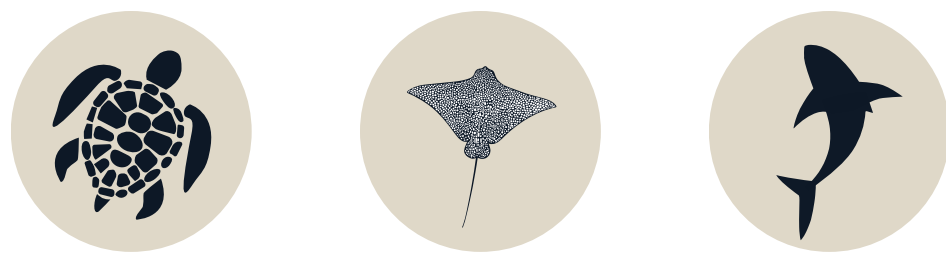


LA SOURCE

TAHITI

La Source is the snorkeling spot we've visited the most since moving to French Polynesia. We live just nearby and are intimately familiar with every part of it.

SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS



ACCESS



THE SPOT MAP



La Source is a top **snorkeling** and **freediving** spot in Tahiti, accessible by boat or by swimming for **experienced** swimmers. There are two spots where you can stop.

The first one, starting from the shore, is in the false pass visible on the map. That's where you might spot a **school of eagle rays**.

It's also not uncommon to come across resting whitetip reef sharks on the seafloor. Schools of parrotfish also gather here regularly to spawn.



The second spot is located on the outer reef drop-off. It gets its name from a freshwater spring that flows into the ocean.

It's a **turtle paradise** : they hide among the corals and regularly come up to the surface. Most of them are green turtles, but a few hawksbill turtles can also be seen.

This is also a perfect **freediving training spot** up to 30m deep.



An unforgettable encounter, in total, more than 20 turtles feasting on jellyfish. See it for yourself in the [video!](#)



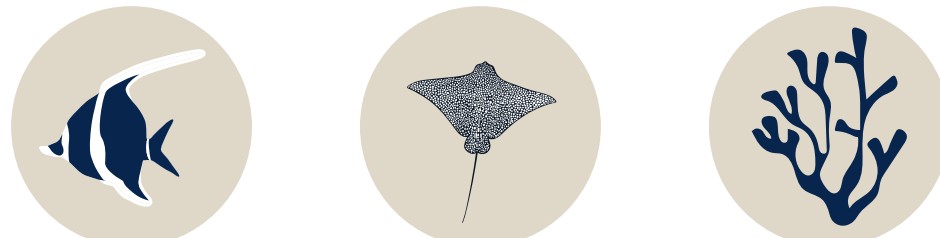


AQUARIUM & MONT RERE

TAHITI

These two spots are quite unique and definitely worth seeing. You never get tired of them!

SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS

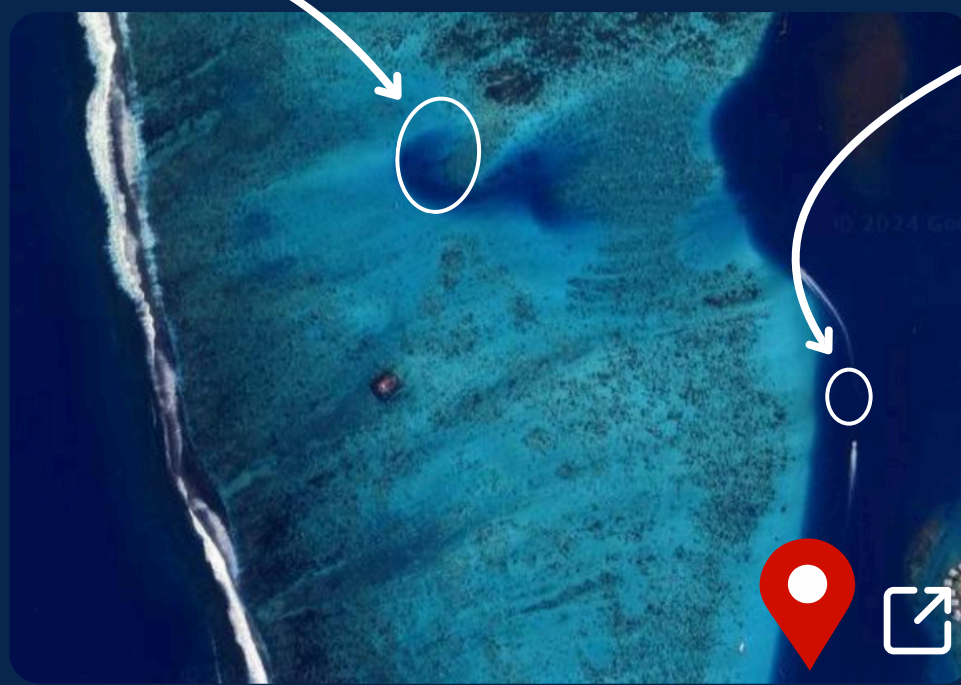
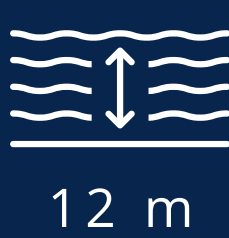


ACCESS

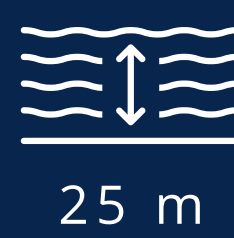


THE SPOT MAP

Aquarium



Mont Rere



While the aquarium is well-known to most snorkelers and divers, Mount Rere is more of a hidden gem and not accessible to everyone.



The aquarium is truly a must-see for all ocean enthusiasts. It's a dive site featuring **various ship and plane wrecks**, as well as other unique elements like a desk, for example. This is the perfect playground for creative photos and videos.

On top of that, schools of fish often gather there, much to the delight of visitors.

As for Mont Rere, you need to head into the channel to find the exact spot marked on the map. A group of over 50 **eagle rays** can gather at this specific location.

We recommend renting a kayak from Tahiti Jet Ski to get there and asking for clear directions on where to go to find them. You'll know you've arrived when you see a large cluster of rocks like a mound at the bottom of the water.

Always signal your presence, as boats frequently pass through the area.



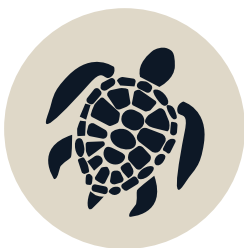


TEMAE

MOOREA

It's a very easily accessible spot that also allows you to combine beach time with snorkeling : a great bonus for Temae!

SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS



ACCESS

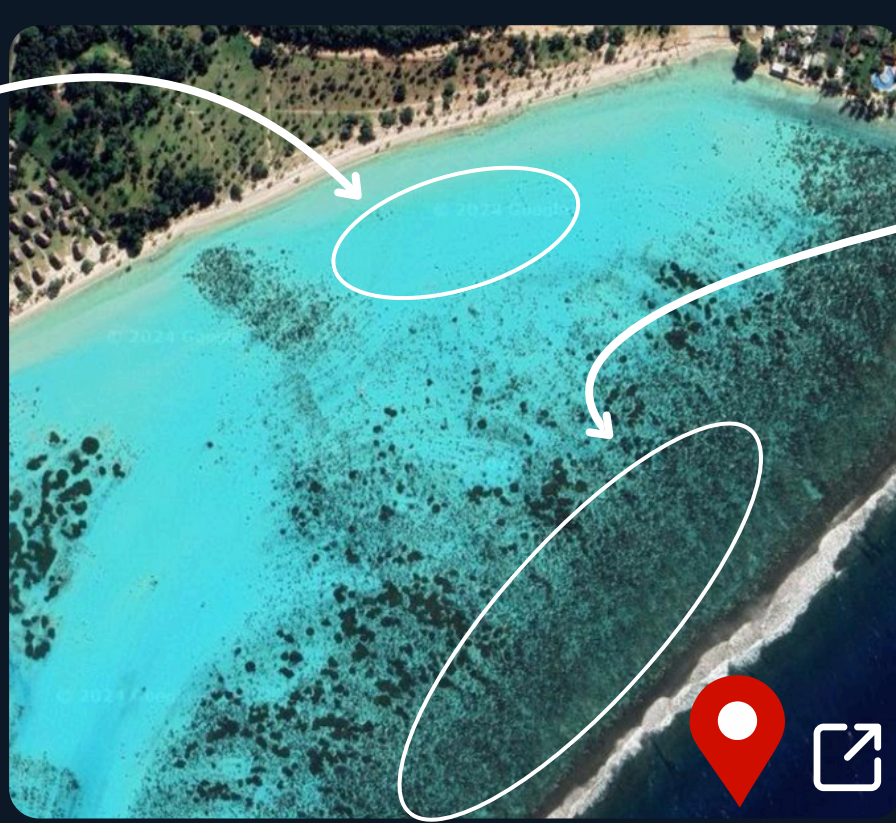


THE SPOT MAP

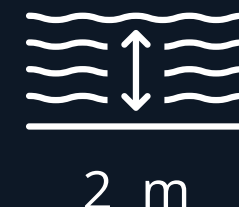
Sand bank



3 m



Reef



2 m

This spot has something for everyone: from underwater white sandbanks to some of the most beautiful coral reefs in Moorea.

To start, you can venture over long stretches of sandy seabed, where it's not uncommon to spot cowfish, easily recognizable by their horns.

Visibility is generally excellent, and **rays, sharks, or turtles** may pass by, so keep your eyes open!



Next, continue toward the reef. The **corals are stunning** (probably the most beautiful in Moorea), and marine life is abundant.

Take your time exploring between the coral heads, but be careful not to touch your surroundings, the water isn't very deep in that area.

Schools of convict surgeonfish swim through these waters, and moray eels often poke their heads out.

Head back to the beach when you see the Sofitel's overwater bungalows, the current gets stronger further out.



Before getting in the water, we recommend walking about 100 meters along the beach to the left. This is important to avoid having to swim against a strong current that flows to the right most of the time.

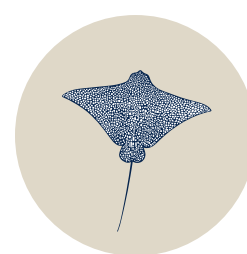
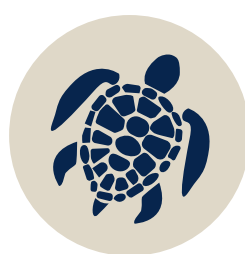


TIPANIERS

MOOREA

It's impossible to visit Moorea without spending a whole day around Les Tipaniers!

SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS

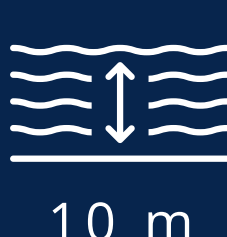


ACCESS



THE SPOT MAP

Eagle rays



Sand bank



There are two main spots to explore in this part of the island.



The first, which has an international reputation, is the **ray and shark sandbank**. It's a shallow sandbar where dozens of stingrays and blacktip reef sharks gather.

This is a ray feeding spot, which explains their presence. It might be something that can take away a bit of the magic from the encounter. That said, it's still incredibly impressive to come face to face with these animals. Please, do not touch them, no matter what anyone tells you!

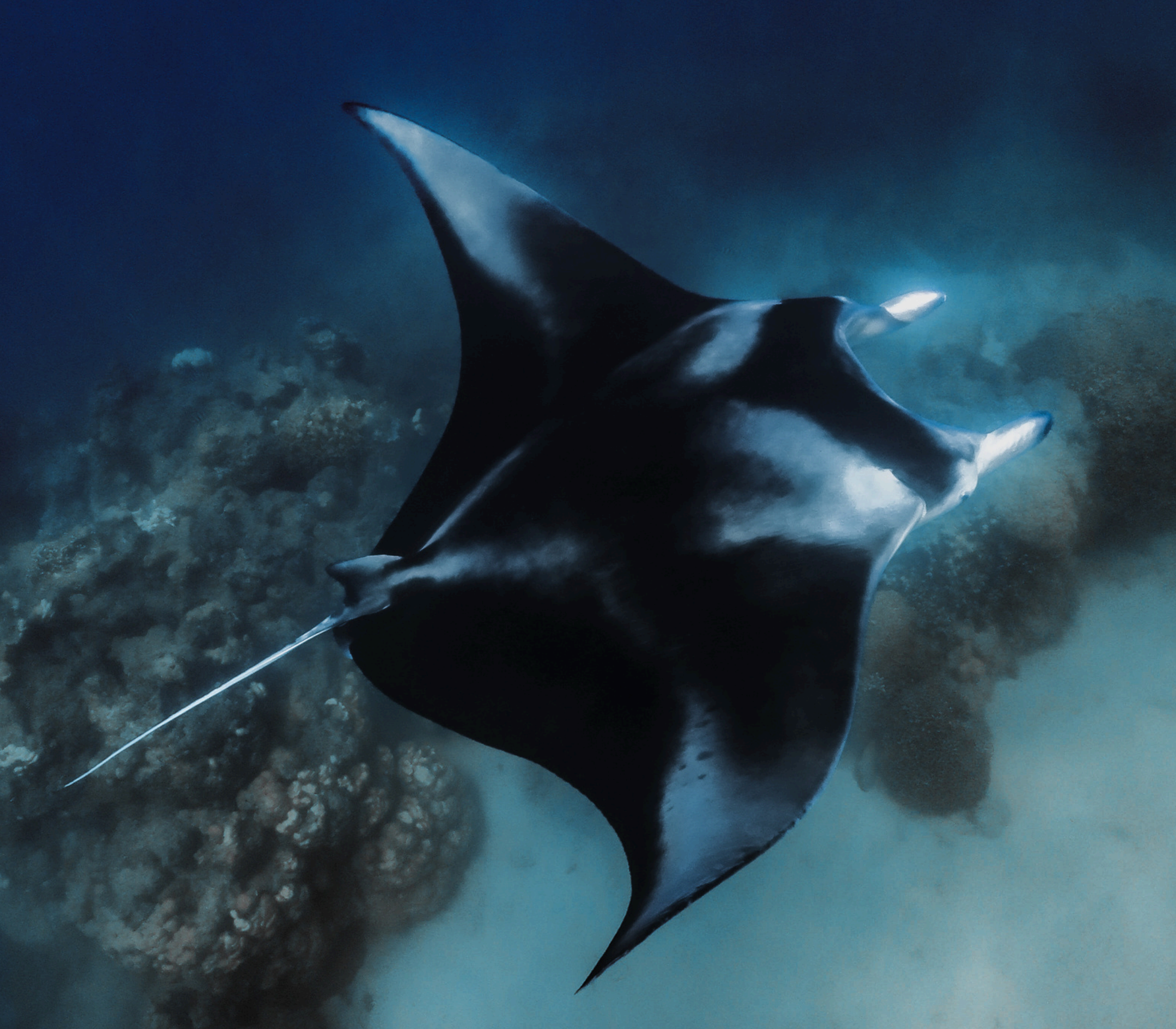
The second spot is directly in the channel.

By letting yourself drift, you may spot a small school of rays with stunning patterns and also big green turtles.

The current usually pulls to the right. Be careful to make yourself clearly visible at all times : there's quite a bit of boat traffic!



We highly recommend going on these spots early in the morning or late in the afternoon to avoid both boats and people.

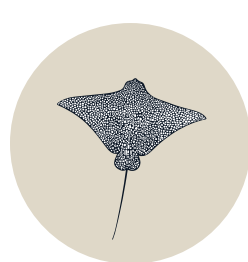


POINTE TA'IHI

BORA BORA

An easily accessible spot to encounter these majestic creatures : one of the biggest fish in the world.

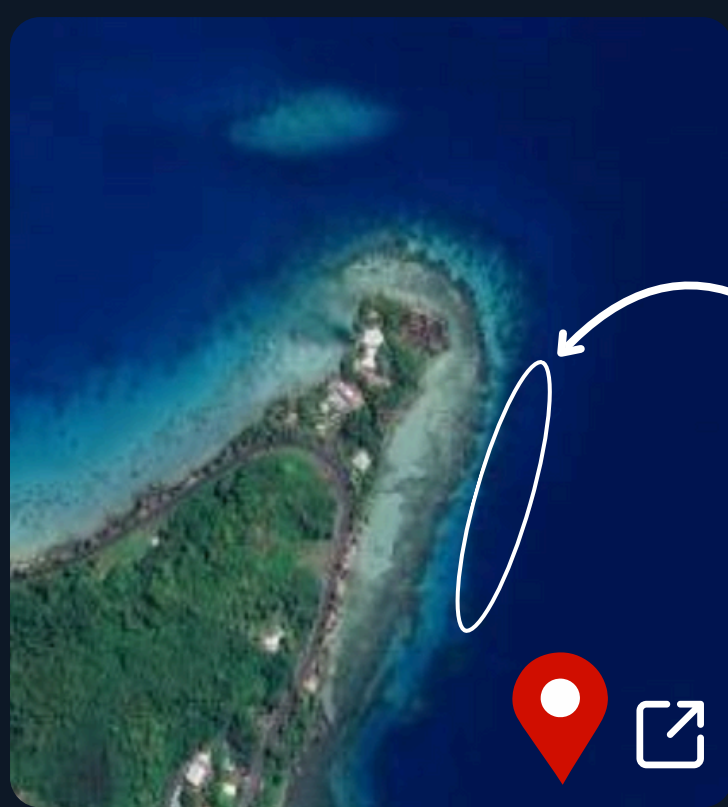
SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS



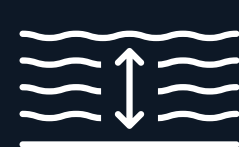
ACCESS



THE SPOT MAP



Manta spot



3-15 m

A very famous spot for seeing **manta rays**. It's a cleaning station that stretches along a drop-off.

There are several ways to get there. If you choose a boat tour, just let yourself be guided. If you prefer to go on your own, park along the road and cross the small lagoon for a few dozen meters.

Be careful when crossing the lagoon, as there may be stonefish, and avoid stepping on the coral. The best approach is to swim slowly but steadily. Once you're in the blue, keep to your left and start your search.



Most of the time, visibility isn't great, but still, early in the morning, you might be able to see **several rays swimming beneath you**.

In some areas, the water is very shallow, and the rays won't hesitate to brush right past you : a guaranteed thrill.

They swim back and forth from left to right. Stay calm around them, and you'll be able to enjoy the experience for several hours.



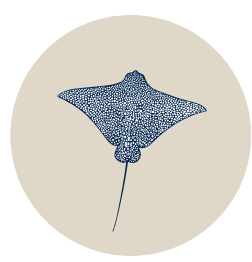


MOTU FAN FAN

BORA BORA

A less accessible spot, but one that combines a paradise view with dream-like snorkeling.

SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS

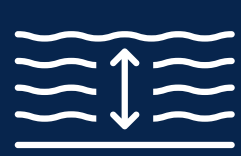


ACCESS

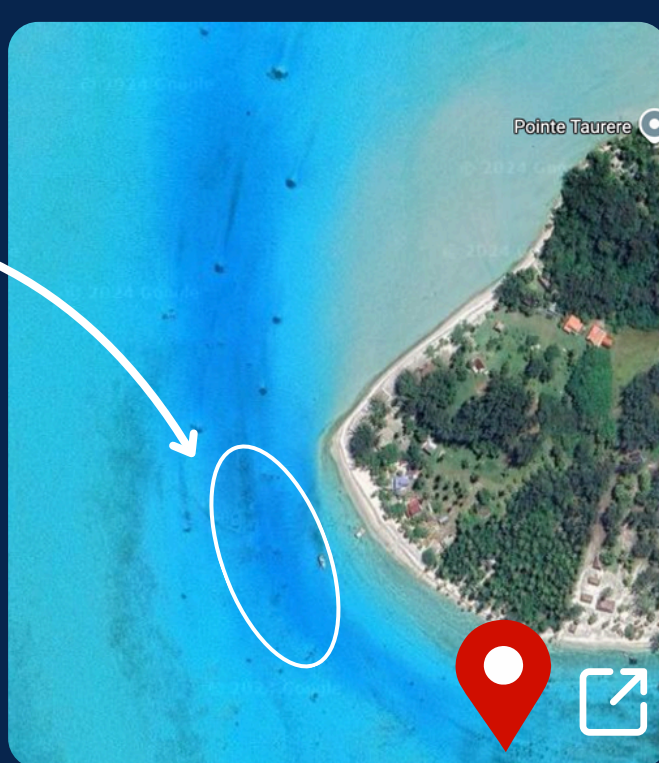


THE SPOT MAP

Eagle rays



5 m



To reach Motu Fan Fan, you must take a water taxi. It's a private island located in the lagoon of Bora Bora.



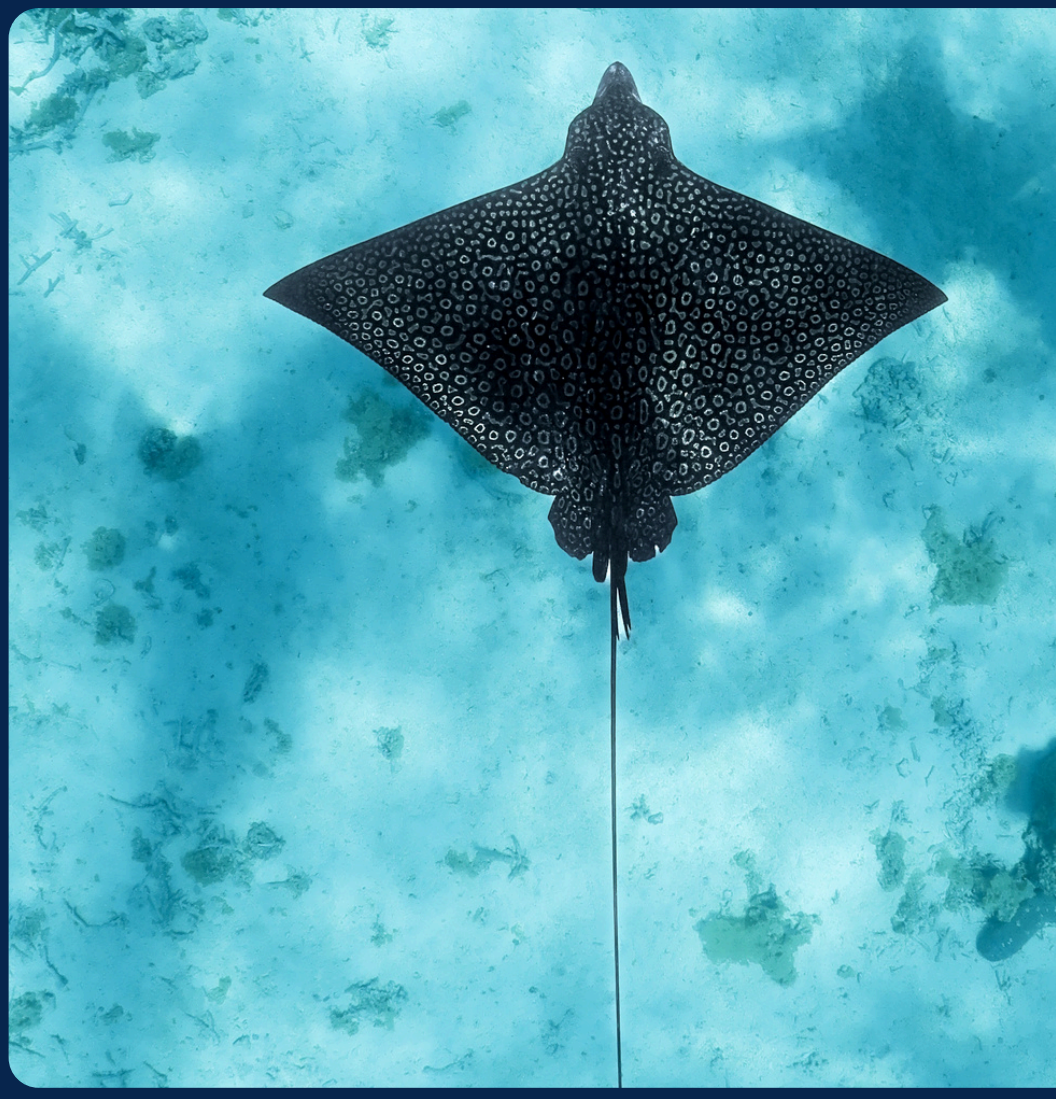
As is often the case, to find schools of eagle rays, you need to head to the channels or false passes. The one in front of the island is no exception.

Throughout the year, a school of sometimes **several dozen rays** can be found in these waters.

Visibility mainly depends on the direction of the swell that fills the lagoon. Sometimes you'll see as far as 5 meters, other times up to 50!

Even though they're the stars of the spot, you might also come across stingrays lingering near the shore or rather shy blacktip reef sharks.

It's a peaceful place where the current is rarely strong which is perfect for relaxing. All of this, with one of the most breathtaking views in the world: the Mount Otemanu rising in the background.



You can stay all day with lunch or just for a half-day. We recommend a short visit, as a few hours are enough to fully enjoy the place, the inhabitants and the view.

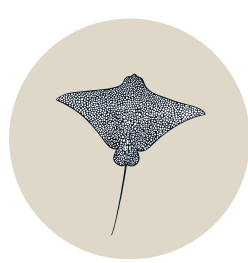


MANTA SPOTS

MAUPITI

For us, Maupiti is the true paradise for manta rays in French Polynesia and we highly recommend it.

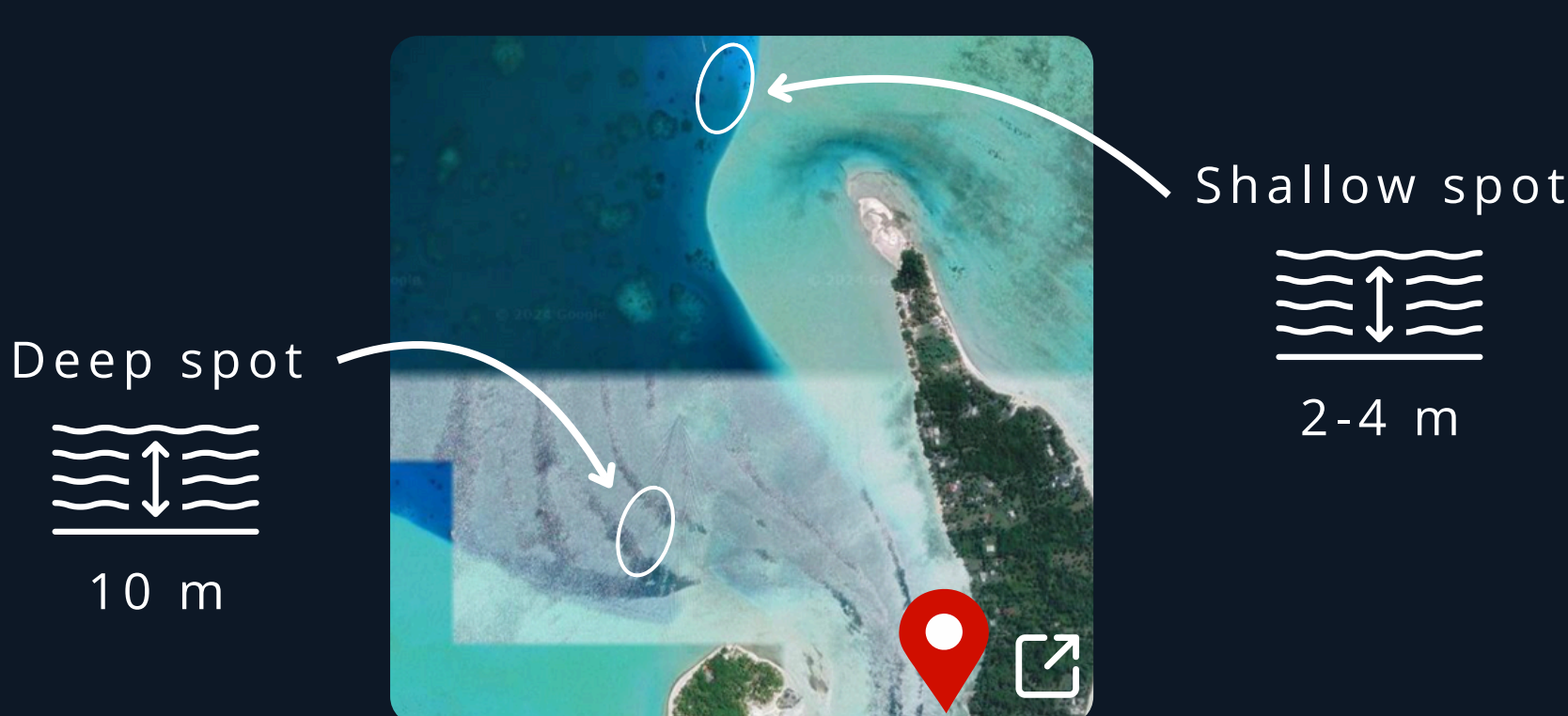
SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS



ACCESS



THE SPOT MAP



Once again, two different spots depending on what you're looking for : one shallow and one deeper.

The shallow spot is located at the boundary between the sandy bottom and the beginning of the pass. Several coral heads serve as **cleaning stations for the rays**. They mainly come to be cleaned in the morning.

Visibility is generally good there, which is rare for this type of ecosystem and that's what makes the place so exceptional.

It's easily accessible from Motu Tiapa, that's where we stay every time we visit Maupiti.



The second spot is less accessible and very different. This is where the dive center goes.

Similarly, it's possible to see mantas there, nearly 10 on the best days at the cleaning stations. However, visibility is generally poorer.

The advantage is that you'll be alone or almost alone, which is definitely a plus.





RIMATU'U

TETIAROA

The closest atoll to Tahiti, only 4 hours by boat, ideal for a day trip or, even better, a two-day escape : our personal favourite.

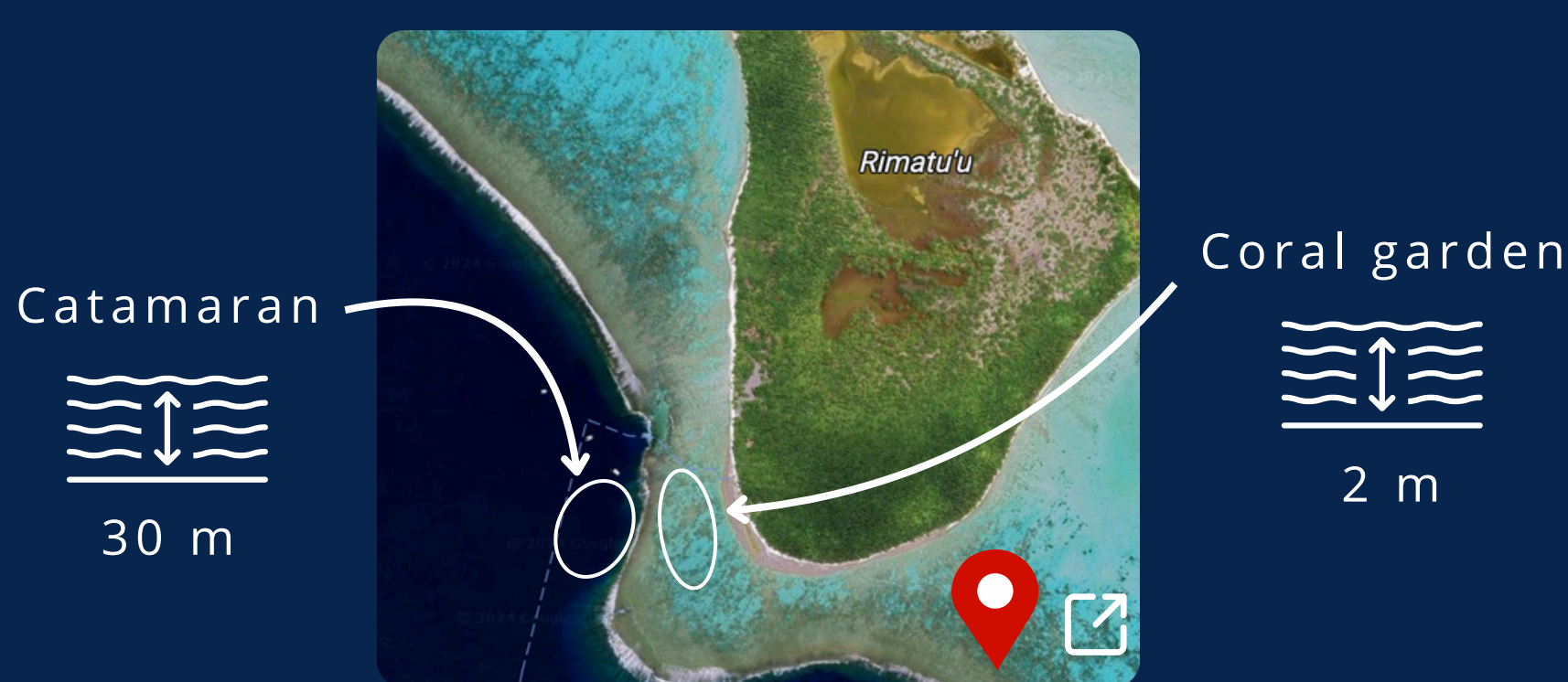
SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS



ACCESS



THE SPOT MAP



Just for the stunning blue color of the water in Tetiaroa, we can only recommend that you go.



The first spot is located directly **beneath the catamarans**, and in our opinion, it's the most beautiful and interesting one.

As soon as you arrive, several blacktip reef sharks will circle around the boat and remain there until your departure. Once in the water, you'll be able to admire them, along with the resident green turtles (we named the one in the photo 'Dentelles'!). It's worth noting that Tetiaroa is one of the main nesting sites in the South Pacific.

A beautiful drop-off also allows you to observe all kinds of fish, usually with good visibility.

Inside the lagoon, there's a coral garden you can explore by drifting along with the current that leads to the pass through which the boat entered.

Swim out a bit to fully enjoy it, the coral heads are well preserved and there's an abundance of fish.





TIPUTA & AQUARIUM

RANGIROA

It's hard to make a guide like this without including a section on the island of Rangiroa.

SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS

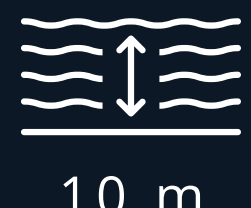


ACCESS



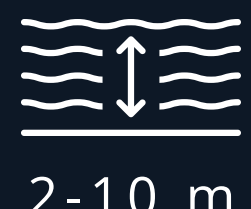
THE SPOT MAP

The pass



10 m

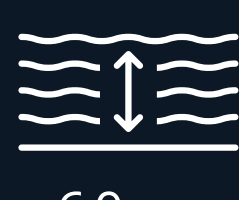
Aquarium



2-10 m



The outskirts



60 m

The best snorkeling in Rangiroa requires going through a tour operator with a boat.

One of the iconic animals of Rangiroa is the **bottlenose dolphin**. It's known for regularly approaching divers. But what many people don't know is that they often behave the same way with snorkelers. If you are lucky enough, you'll get the chance to swim with them in the outskirts, which is truly magical.



In addition, these tours offer the chance to drift with the current through the pass in hopes of spotting large sharks, for the luckiest ones.



Finally, the last snorkeling spot is at the **Aquarium**. There's no current here, visibility is lower, but there are plenty of fish, especially under the boats.

If you get close to the reef, you will also see some blacktip reef sharks hanging around, and fierce titan triggerfish.



As scuba diving enthusiasts, we can't recommend Tiputa Pass enough, one of the world's best, alongside Fakarava South Pass.



SOUTH PASS

FAKARAVA

This place became famous thanks to the french documentary "700 Sharks Into the Night" by Laurent Ballesta.

SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS

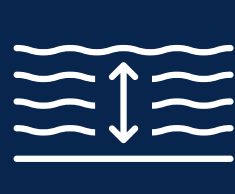


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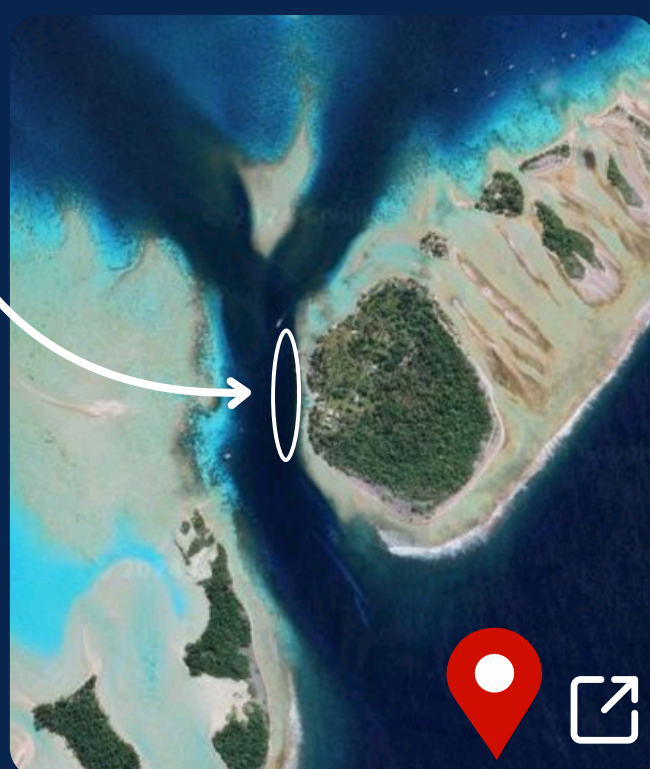


THE SPOT MAP

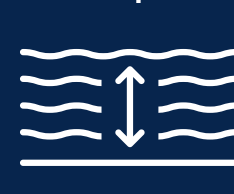
Drop-off



2-25 m



The pool



1 m

This place is very remote and only accessible after a 1.5 hour boat ride from the north of the island.



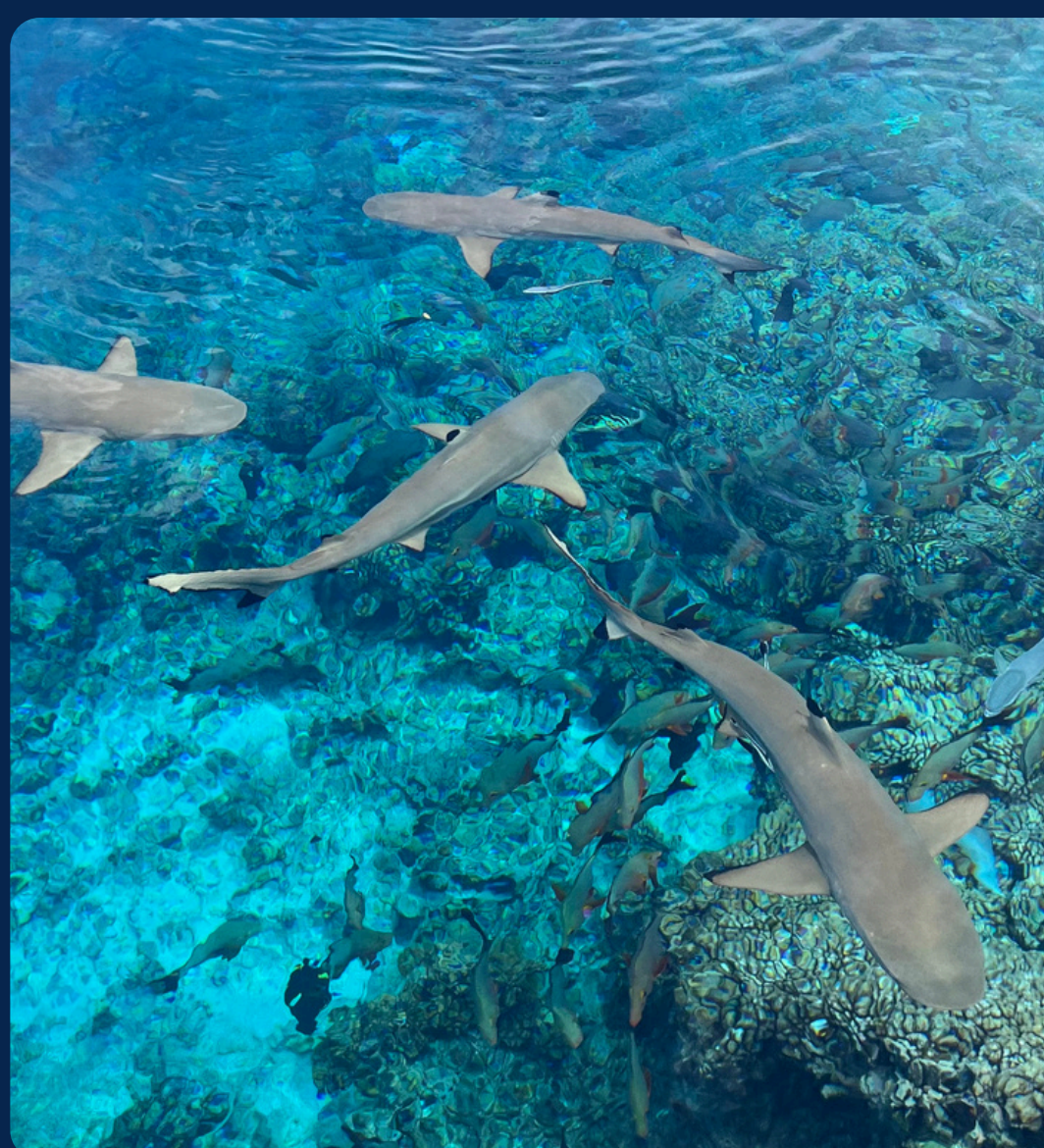
With the help of a boat that will drop you off and follow you, it's possible to **snorkel along the pass**.

What awaits you is truly exceptional: stunning coral in vast quantities, dozens of blacktip sharks and massive Napoleon wrasses. It's a snorkeling experience you'll never forget.

Be sure to also look down into the depths of the pass as hundreds of grey reef sharks live there and sometimes come up toward the reef. They are what make this place so famous.

At the end of this drift snorkeling, stop at the area known as "the pool." The water is very shallow, and it's filled with sharks and **Napoleon wrasses** so large that they break the surface.

You can also watch this incredible scene from above in the crystal clear waters of the south pass. Either way, this is something that is not to be missed.





BIRDS ISLAND

FAKARAVA

For us, it's one of the best snorkelings in whole French Polynesia. It should be on your bucket-list.

SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS

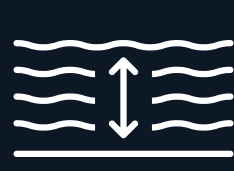


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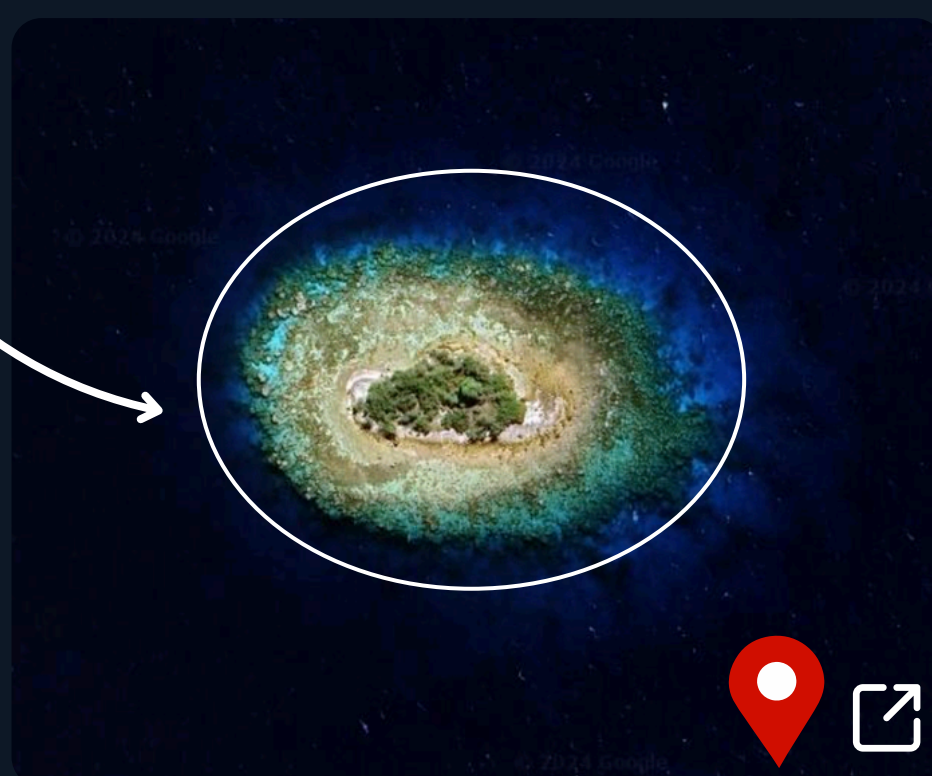


THE SPOT MAP

The island



1-5 m

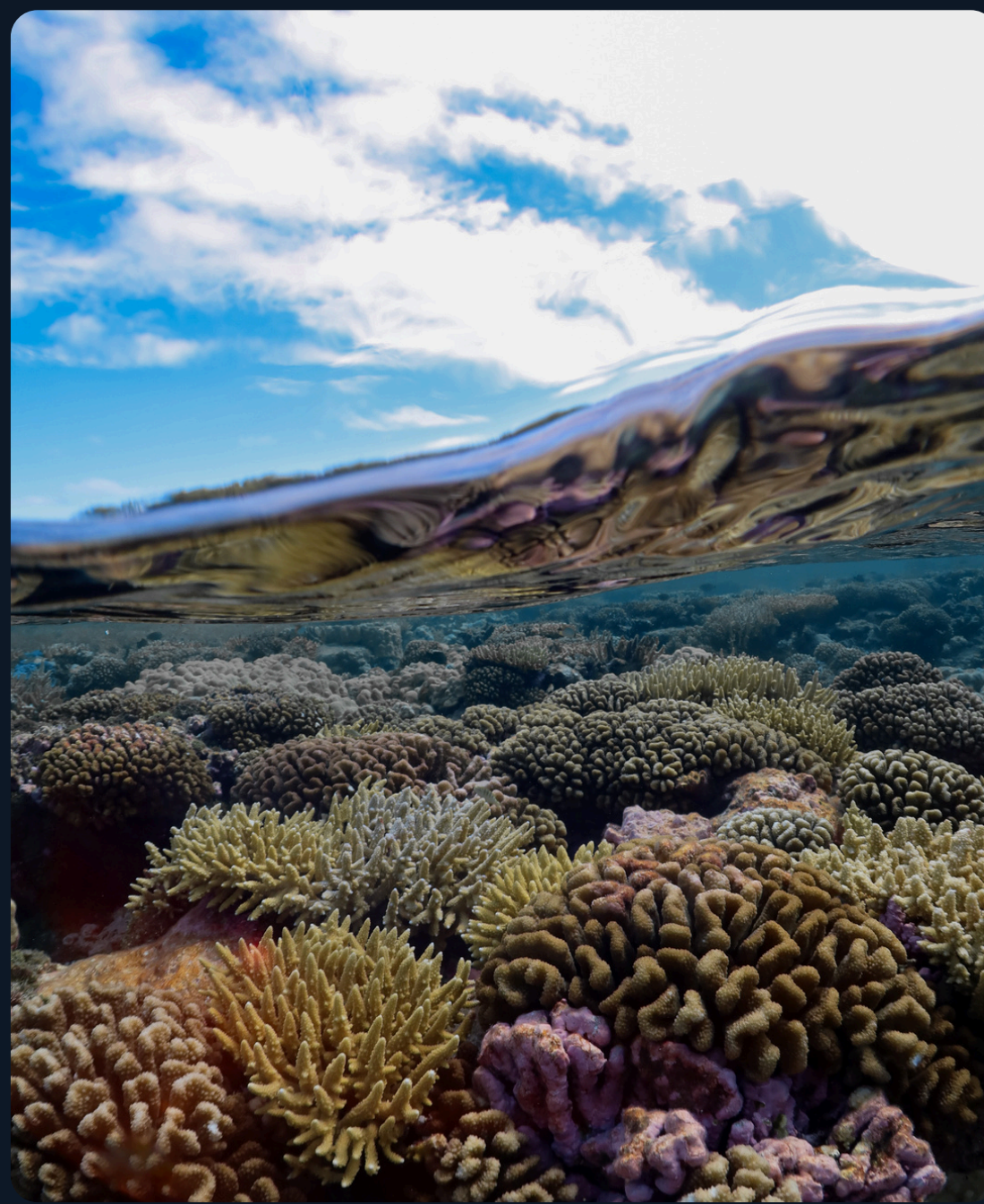


The spot is only accessible by boat, and most excursions to the Green/Blue Lagoon stop there.

The area to explore is relatively small, so take your time, there's no need to rush here. The boat will drop you off on the island's fringing reef, and you can swim around it.

The corals there are the **most colorful** we've seen in French Polynesia. It looks like a true underwater garden.

Be careful, in some areas, the water is really shallow.



And by now, you're probably used to it but when it comes to the Tuamotu Islands, there are always sharks. This spot is no exception.

Many blacktip reef sharks swim in these waters, making the scenery even more remarkable. It's always impressive to watch them with their fins breaking the surface.

In some areas, the drop-off reveals stretches of white sand, and nurse sharks occasionally pass through.





MOERAI

RURUTU

Rurutu is one of the best place in French Polynesia to swim with humpback whales during the season.

SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS

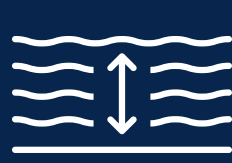


ACCESS

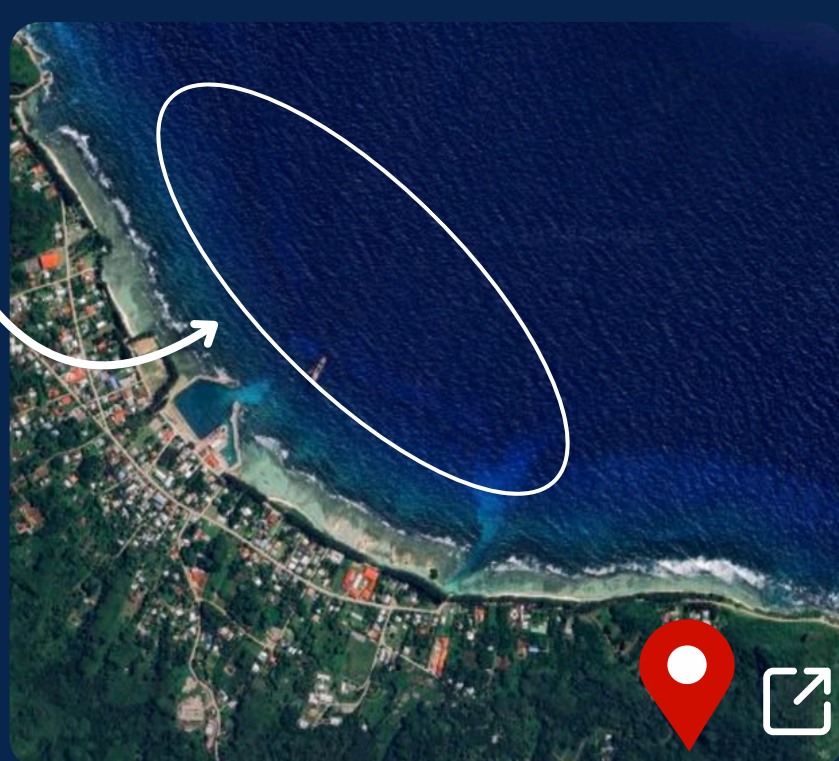


THE SPOT MAP

Open ocean



40 m



Here, even if you don't feel like getting in the water (which we wouldn't understand!), you can still spot the whales because they are easily visible from land.



We tried to outline an area because that's where we usually see whales, but they can be anywhere, that's part of the magic.

Between **July and November**, humpback whales migrate to French Polynesia from Antarctica to mate and give birth.

It's possible to swim with them in the country by following some rules. Coming face to face with these giants in the vastness of the ocean is truly a timeless experience that no one can ever forget.

In Rurutu, encounters are almost guaranteed due to the high concentration of whales, and the number of people allowed in the water with them is limited, which is a huge advantage.

Although most whales in the Southern Hemisphere have a white belly, "black bellies" are common around here.





BONUS

HIDDEN GEMS, NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT...

SAND BANK TAHA'A



Accessible only by boat, this spot is not the most well-known in Taha'a. Most people head to the Coral Garden for a popular drift snorkel that's definitely worth it.

However, if you're a shark enthusiast, we highly recommend this location. Visibility is excellent, boat traffic is minimal, and **sharks** are reliably present. It's an experience similar to Tipaniers in Moorea, but with much more peace and quiet. **Guaranteed bliss.**



TUHEIVA PASS TIKEHAU

Tikehau Pass is only accessible by boat and changes with the tides.

When the current is outgoing, both sides near the moorings are **rich in marine life** like sharks, trevallies, and barracudas are common.

When the current is incoming, you can drift with the clear ocean water entering the lagoon and admire the stunning underwater landscape. It's also the best time to spot large sharks like tiger or hammerheads, sometimes curiously passing through. It's definitely a must do!



FAULT LINES MAKATEA



The best snorkeling spot on the island is located **right by the moorings**, along the outer drop-off of the reef. There, a series of crevices and fractures in the reef create an unusual and striking underwater landscape.

At sunrise and sunset, the light from the sun creates a magical atmosphere as it filters through the water, illuminating schools of surgeonfish. During these moments, you can also witness whitetip reef sharks and grey reef sharks emerging from the depths.

A FINAL NOTE

- ✓ Do not snorkel or freedive alone
- ✓ Always signal your presence
- ✓ Do not touch anything underwater
- ✓ Bring a gopro or underwater camera for the best memories



IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO SWIM WITH YOUR OWN FINS

We truly hope this guide has lived up to your expectations and that you'll have the chance to explore many of the places we've shared.

Feel free to let us know about your favorite spots, or even hidden gems we might have missed!



have fun!

MÉGANÉ & JOHAN