

2024 Pacific Puddle Jump Rally

Fleet Letter #1

Ahoy, Pacific Puddle Jumpers! This message confirms that your boat is officially registered with the 2024 Pacific Puddle Jump Rally. Welcome to the fleet!

Info-Packed Fleet Letters & Online Resources — This is the first in a series of PPJ “Fleet Letters” that you’ll receive between now and July. They will include important fleet info compiled to help you and your boat become well-prepared for the crossing, and they will keep you up-to-date with French Polynesia’s rules and regulations that pertain to visiting crews and their vessels. (According to our associates in Tahiti, a number of new marine tourism policies are expected to be implemented sometime during 2024.)

In years past, our Fleet Letters contained no photographs or graphics, in order to keep message sizes small. But now that many boats have Starlink subscriptions, we are happy to include low-resolution graphics — which should heighten your enthusiasm for the South Pacific adventures that lie ahead. (Text-only Fleet Letters will still be available if you prefer, however.)

A Very Special Destination — Ever since the first European adventurers returned home from exploring the dramatic, volcano-formed islands that we now call French Polynesia, sailors of all stripes have dreamed of experiencing firsthand the territory’s spellbinding beauty and exotic cultural traditions. Trust us when we say it is a very special place to visit! In fact, once you arrive in the islands, we think you’ll agree that it is truly a privilege to sail these waters.

But along with that privilege comes the responsibility of every visiting sailor to always be respectful of local residents and their property, and to be equally respectful of the region’s delicate underwater ecosystems. Be aware also, that although visiting yachts do contribute to this French Overseas Territory’s economy, we cruisers are not essential to its bottom line. And because France contributes roughly 80% of French Polynesia’s annual budget, tourism in all its forms does not dominate the local economy. Hawaii, by comparison, sees roughly 30 times more tourists annually than does Tahiti and her sister islands.

In contrast to many popular travel destinations that tend to be overrun with tourists, a big part of Tahiti’s allure to both land-based tourists and sailors is that the region’s rich cultural traditions — in music, dance, sport and cuisine — exist in the forefront of everyday life here, while international tourism in all forms exists quietly in the background. And as you’ll soon see, that’s a good thing.

Parlez-vous Français? — Even if you’ve been dreaming about making the Puddle Jump passage for decades, we wouldn’t be at all surprised if your pre-departure checklist is still a mile long, even now, a few months before your anticipated departure date. Buying and stowing spare parts, tools, provisions and safety gear, in addition to installing various bits of new electronic gadgetry, can leave you feeling a bit overwhelmed.

Despite all that, though, allow us to remind you of one additional chore that can enhance the richness of your French Polynesian cruise like no other factor. We’re talking about making at least a minimal effort to learn to speak a little French, the national language of the territory. Yes, you can get by without it, as kids have been learning English in school for decades (along with French and local

In the Marquesas, the jagged volcanic peaks of Ua Pou serve as an unmistakable landmark.



dialects). But we think you'll find that making an effort to speak some basic French will earn you an extra measure of respect from the locals you meet — and perhaps spark the beginning of a lasting friendship.

There are many approaches to learning a foreign language, and any of them can bring you some measure of success. From our personal experiences, we suggest you try the extremely popular (and inexpensive) Duolingo software available via WiFi for use on smartphones, tablets or computers. Or sample one of the long-established courses, such as Babble or Rosetta Stone. We can also recommend the Instant Immersion audiobook courses, which are inexpensive but effective. Two final favorites are *Learn French with Paul Noble*, which is lighthearted, entertaining and available as an audiobook download, and *French for Cruisers* by Kathy Parsons, which features the French names for many common boat parts, maintenance procedures, and sailing maneuvers.

How Long Can You Stay in French Polynesia? — Without having to obtain visas in advance, most European Union passport holders can stay as long as they want in French Polynesia, provided that they do not work. (According to Kevin Ellis of Nuku Hiva Yacht Services, citizens of Switzerland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Iceland are exceptions to this policy; they must obtain visas in advance of arrival.)

- Non-EU passport holders (including Americans, Canadians, Brits, Aussies and New Zealanders) can stay only 90 days unless they have obtained “Long Stay Visas” for up to a year BEFORE making the crossing. As you may have heard, the LSV application process can be slow and exasperating — often taking up to seven weeks to complete. But we think it's well worth the effort because 90 days is simply too short to explore the many islands and atolls of French Polynesia. As we often say, this is not the sort of place where you'd want to be in a hurry!

- Please note: For a complete overview of the Long Stay

Racing outrigger canoes is the favorite sport.



Traditional music and dancing are highly revered here.

Visa process, please see longtime cruiser Chuck Houlihan's tirelessly updated overview here:

<https://www.jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff>. There, you'll find links to the process of obtaining a Long Stay Visa while in Mexico, generously provided by Bruce and Alene of SV Migration. (We thank them all for their ongoing assistance in helping us, and boatloads of west-bound cruisers, keep current with these mind-numbing bureaucracies.)

- Non-EU vessels can stay in French Polynesia for two years, after which they must stay out of the territory for six months before they can return and begin another two-year stay.

How to Get Duty-Free Fuel — In the past, there've been some misunderstandings about obtaining duty-free fuel in the islands. Because visiting cruisers are “vessels in transit,” they are eligible to obtain a document that allows them to buy diesel fuel in the Marquesas or Society Islands at a deeply discounted rate (30% to 40% savings). If you wait to fill up until you reach Tahiti, you can obtain this document without the help of a yacht agent, but in the Marquesas, you will need an agent to obtain a duty-free fuel document for you. Yes, agents charge a fee for this service, but the savings in fuel costs will normally outweigh the broker's fee on your first fill-up (i.e. \$100 to \$140 savings on 50 gallons). The document will be good for six months before it needs to be renewed.

Helpful PPJ Partners — The Pacific Puddle Jump is primarily focused on building camaraderie between fleet members, providing an additional measure of safety via vessel tracking, and keeping crews accurately informed about current and future government regulations and policies. That said, while offering sponsor discounts is not our primary purpose, we are happy to offer you the following discounts from key supporters:



Lying close to the equator, Nuku Hiva is a popular hurricane hole. Well-protected Tiahoe Bay is capable of hosting more than 100 boats.

- **TahitiCrew yacht agency** has been a key partner of the PPJ for the past decade. The agency offers Pacific Puddle Jumpers a 15% discount on all their services, including bond exemptions and duty-free fuel certificates. In addition, PPJ entrants are eligible for a whole program of tourism-related goods and services, administered by TahitiCrew (i.e. car rentals). PPJ entrants received a password for TahitiCrew discounts in their Fleet Letter #1 or they can email pacific.puddle.jump@gmail.com

- **PredictWind** is one of the world's leading weather forecasting organizations and a longtime supporter of the PPJ. They will facilitate our fleet tracking functions throughout the 2024 PPJ (January to July), which will allow fleet monitors, plus friends and family back home, to track your daily progress. Details will be explained in our next Fleet Letter.

- **STH Marine**, the territory's biggest chandlery, offers 10% off most products, which can save you a bundle.

- We are also proud to have the support of the **South Pacific Sailing Network**, whose members promote sustainable cruising practices throughout the Central South

Pacific, as well as the support of our longtime partners at Tahiti-based **Archipelagoes**, whose free Stopover Handbook for French Polynesia is a comprehensive resource for FP cruising, including contact info for government agencies and yacht services throughout the archipelagos. Download it for free from the PPJ homepage.

Save the Dates — We have partnered with members of the South Pacific Sailing Network to offer two highly informative South Pacific Bon Voyage seminars (free and open to all westbound cruisers):

- **February 16** at Panama's Shelter Bay Marina (the Caribbean side of the Canal), and

- **March 11** at the Vallarta YC in Nuevo Vallarta, Mexico. (We intend to make video versions available afterward.)

Additional info soon to come! Safe travels,

— Andy Turpin, PPJ founder & director

As if it were conjured up in a dream, the Blue Lagoon is one of Rangiroa's most alluring destinations.

