

My VIP Pass to the High Life



Everyone loves Easter egg hunts, candy-filled baskets, and soft, fluffy bunnies. But this Easter, I opted for a different kind of holiday experience. Three of the 130 islands in the South Pacific known as “French Polynesia” were calling my name.

Tahiti, the largest and most well-known island in French Polynesia was to be my base and first stop – you can only fly to the other islands from Tahiti. Since their discovery over 200 years ago, Tahiti conjures up visions of swaying coconut-palmed beaches, and fragrant *tiare* blossoms. It is surrounded entirely by a coral reef contrasted by the two towering volcanic

peaks in the center of the island.

I began my typical “travel writer ritual” to gain access to hotels, activities, and other perks which enable me to travel around the world for little (and sometimes no) money. The travel writer’s life is the best job in the world, but contrary to popular belief, there is work involved. Extensive research before leaving, attention to detail and people while traveling, and of course writing an article editors will love upon return are all vital to getting published, and invaluable in getting perks.

My initial research was to find a resort that looked great and had a central location for exploring other parts of the island. The Intercontinental Resort Tahiti is by far the most luxurious resort on the entire island, and a convenient location close to the airport and bustling capital of Papeete. I contacted the hotel, relayed my unique lede for an adventure travel story, provided three assignment letters, and they offered me their best accommodations with panoramic ocean views including the dazzling sunsets over neighboring island Moorea, for a mere fraction of the normal rack rate.

I fell in love with the resort’s infinity pool area that included a white sand man-made beach and bath-temp water. I confess that I took an entire afternoon off from my travel writing agenda to just chill with good book and renew my energy.



Though tempted to never leave the pool area, with considerable effort, I tore myself away. Time for an adventure! I had also contacted the Tahiti Tourism Board with my ideas for promoting the island; they agreed to host me and my photographer on an open-air 4x4 safari expedition into remote sections of the island, exploring the hidden world of tropical forests, remote mountain lakes, rivers, cliffs, and myriad waterfalls.

Naturally, I told our driver/tour guide that I was a travel writer, which of course led to extra perks. I mentioned Point Venus during our drive (which was on a different tour) and he made it a point to detour there on our way back and give us a short guided tour. I got to walk along the black sand beach where Captains Cook, Wallis and Bligh landed and take in the charming lighthouse at the northernmost point of the island, which I would not otherwise been able to visit due to time restraints.

Tahiti is also rich in free culture making it a travel writer’s dream. A stroll along the waterfront promenade provides endless photo ops and writing material: from luxurious yachts to racing *pirogues* (canoes), Bougainville Park, Le Marché Municipale – the public market which covers a city block with a labyrinth of bargains such as souvenirs, local art, *pareu* – the colorful sarongs worn by just about everyone on Tahiti, and an amazing array of flowers, local fruit, vegetables and fresh fish. Eating at the *roulottes* is a must; these



outdoor “food trucks” roll out after sunset and create a carnival atmosphere along the waterfront, offering inexpensive but delicious local fare like *poisson cru* – a surprisingly tasty concoction of raw fish marinated in coconut milk and lime juice tossed with tomatoes, cucumber and scallions, to *crepes* of every variety.

After thoroughly enjoying Easter in Tahiti, laden with ideas and info for travel articles I proceeded to island hop to neighboring Moorea then Bora Bora.

Tourists pay several thousand dollars for a visit to French Polynesia. Travel writers pay next to nothing. Works for me!