

Tonga

The island nation of Tonga is unique within the South Pacific, as it is still officially a kingdom. Another unique aspect of Tonga's history is that virtually its entire population is devoutly religious. As a result, you'll find that the people you'll meet here dress much more conservatively, and are much more modest than their Polynesian cousins – even when performing age-old cultural dances. Other than visiting yachts, Tonga's largest tourism draw is the opportunity to swim in the wild with humpback whales, but only when accompanied by a licensed guide. Please do not ruin this privilege for others or endanger these wonderful creatures by pursuing them unaccompanied.

- ✳ Commercial activities are extremely limited on Sundays. You may find yourself drawn to a church service by the joyful singing, and you are always welcome to join in (no shorts for men and woman wear long skirts).
- ✳ Giving maps and school exercise books in English is much appreciated.
- ✳ In town men and woman must wear a shirt. Bikini's, even with sarongs over them, are frowned upon unless in a resort.

Fiji

The Republic of Fiji encompasses a vast area with more than 300 islands, which attracts sailors, scuba divers and surfers from all over the world. From its Melanesian heritage the population still honors many generations-old customs. As referenced earlier, when anchoring at a new island arriving sailors are expected to ask for a meeting with the village chief. You will then be invited to a SevuSevu arrival ceremony where you are to give a gift of kava root. Attending such a ceremony is typically a highlight for visiting cruisers – these days often both men and women are invited to join this important ritual.

Rather than bringing only kava, a meeting with an island's chief is a good opportunity to bring useful gifts as well, which will benefit the women and children of the community. Schools in Fiji are provided with exercise books, but teachers will always appreciate receiving a large map of the Pacific Islands, the world, or other teaching aids such as a world atlas.

New Caledonia

The entire country of New Caledonia is a marine park called Parc Naturel de la Mer de Corail. Some areas within it are UNESCO world heritage sites. When you do your entry formalities, we suggest that you ask for information about the park and its rules (or download the free Stopover Handbook in New Caledonia from the Yellow Flag Guides website: www.yellowflagguides.com).

Some areas are traditional fishing reserves, called reserve coutumieres, where anchoring is not permitted. Ask the islanders (called Kanaks) for clarification.

- ✳ Showing Respect, the "coutume" – when you anchor near a tribe, or disembark for the first time on a beach it is customary to ask for a meeting with the chief, "la chefferie," and give him a present to explain the reason for your visit, and ask for permission to stay. Learning about subtleties of this custom will bring you closer to Kanak culture.
- ✳ Anchorages & Moorings – In the South Province, 100 moorings (2 t) have been placed around some Protected Marine Areas islets. They are free, so please use them instead of anchoring, which damages the seabed. In the North and South Province, yellow buoys define the Protected Marine Areas.
- ✳ Fishing – Fishing is a big part of the local culture. Visitors are allowed to fish also, but ask permission first, and don't clean fish near beaches because of sharks.
- ✳ Garbage – In Noumea trash cans and recycling bins are everywhere. So store your garbage on board until you get to Noumea. Grey water and black water tanks can only be emptied with a mobile unit in Port Moselle.



New Caledonia's Port Moselle

Make a Commitment to Responsible Cruising



International sailors: Members of the South Pacific Sailing Network welcome you to their islands, which together comprise one of the most spectacularly beautiful cruising grounds on earth. And more often than not, the islanders you'll meet ashore will be genuinely welcoming, and happy to introduce you to their centuries-old cultural traditions.

As in other popular cruising grounds around the world, visiting sailors like you can play a vital role in preserving the unspoiled natural beauty of the South Pacific islands, while also reinforcing the long history of mutual respect between islanders and world cruisers.

With these thoughts in mind, we invite you to take a few minutes to review the following common-sense guidelines, and join us in making a commitment to responsible cruising practices that will help preserve the natural ecosystems of these islands for future generations of residents and travelers.

The island communities you will visit have long-held values and traditions that deserve your respect during your visit.

Show respect for cultural traditions

- ✳ Before you arrive in a new island or archipelago, do a little homework to learn about that area's religious and territorial customs. For example, in Fiji, it is customary to visit the village chief with an offering of kava roots when you come ashore to request permission to anchor (more details on each island group's SPSN website, www.south-pacific-sailing.com).
- ✳ Many island cultures are surprisingly conservative regarding revealing clothing, even when swimming. Following their example is a show of respect.
- ✳ Please do not offer alcohol!
- ✳ Showing a genuine curiosity about an island's history, culture and day-to-day life is a great way to enhance your own travel experience, while showing respect for your island hosts. Examples include: Ask for a little help learning some local words; ask to go along on a fishing trip; ask women about cooking with local ingredients; if you play an instrument, share some music from your home country; if you have practical skills or talents, offer to help out at a school — either teaching something, hands-on, or making a presentation about your experiences.

Respect local ecosystems

- ✳ Learn the local fishing regulations before casting a line.
- ✳ If fishing is allowed, fish only for what you need to eat, not to fill your entire freezer.
- ✳ Anchor on sandy bottoms, never on coral, as it will be destroyed by your chain dragging across it.
- ✳ Use sewerage holding tanks in near-shore waters.
- ✳ Do not expect to leave your rubbish on a small island—especially in private rubbish bins. Islanders themselves often struggle to cope with their own rubbish. Don't burn garbage on beaches.
- ✳ Avoid introducing new species of sealife to an anchorage by scraping your hulls in bays or lagoons.
- ✳ Shall respect for private property, including beachfront.
- ✳ Never pick fruit without asking permission.
- ✳ Use eco-friendly sunscreen and soap.

Respect local economies

- ✳ One-way 'gifting' can have unintended consequences to a local economy, as it creates the expectation that all cruisers will do the same. It's better to trade or barter.
- ✳ However, some medical and educational items are appreciated as practical gifts in many islands, such as reading glasses, sunglasses, female hygiene items, wire and light fishing line to create fishing hooks, toothbrushes (but not toothpaste), and bras.
- ✳ Even better than giving products is to offer education and assistance. For example: Show how to clean corroded wiring on solar power units, or repair an outboard engine or sewing machine.



Arriving at Cook's Bay, Moorea

After setting sail from the West Coast of the Americas, the first landfall that most westbound sailors make is within the five archipelagoes of French Polynesia: the Marquesas, Tuamotus, Societies, Gambier and Australs. Although each region is geographically and culturally distinct, they all share similar threats to their natural ecosystems as populations of visitors and residents increase.

Considered by many circumnavigators to be among the world's most alluring sailing destinations, we think you'll soon agree that it is truly a privilege to sail, snorkel, dive and explore these unique volcano-formed isles and atolls — and that it's equally a privilege to meet French Polynesian islanders and learn about their time-honored cultural traditions.

Because virtually all westbound cruisers pass through these archipelagoes, sailors share an increased responsibility to protect and respect them — and their coral reef ecosystems — just as generations of islanders have done. While planning your visit be aware that anchoring is regulated or restricted in parts of Tahiti, Moorea, Huahine, Bora Bora and Fakarava, all of which have some type of specially protected status. Learn the details at the governmental website www.maritime.gov.pf.

Although there are more than 110 islands and atolls in French Polynesia, most visiting cruisers follow a similar pattern. They make landfall in the rugged Marquesas Islands, then eventually sail on to explore the low-lying coral atolls of the Tuamotus before crossing to Tahiti and her sister islands — collectively called the Societies. Today, these Societies face the greatest pressure from increased yacht arrivals, so it's no surprise that new rules and restrictions are being applied to formerly unregulated anchorages in Tahiti and elsewhere. For example, no independent anchoring is allowed in Bora Bora any longer. But as an alternative, new mooring fields have been installed that have the added benefit of protecting coral colonies on the sea floor from being pulverized by chain and anchors.

Learn more at the Yellow Flag Guides website: www.yellowflagguides.com

