

Nuku Hiva In Five Days

By Eric Rigney of Kandu

Leslie with our two sons, Bryce (14) and Trent (12), and I arrived aboard *Kandu* in late June of 2015, intending to stay only a few weeks (RigneysKandu.com or [Facebook.com/rigneyskandu](https://www.facebook.com/rigneyskandu)). Since then, we've become certified residents of Taiohae, Nuku Hiva so our sons could attend the local college (secondary school), the first Americans ever to do so. Having been here seven months with three more to go, we've developed some favorites about what to see and do on Nuku Hiva. With so many wonders throughout the Marquesas archipelago, it may be helpful to provide cruisers a short list of things to do, in order of priority, were one to only have 1-5 days to spend on Nuku Hiva. This is not meant as a boat owner's description of all available services, but as a cruising tourist's guide for getting the most out of Nuku Hiva in the shortest time period. If you want additional details of surrounding the sites, Rose Corsair sells a guidebook at her shop on the west side of the bay. Wearing bug spray and a good pair of hiking sandals you can soak in mud, seawater, and streams, plus carrying a roll of toilet paper in a Ziplock, make for a more comfortable Nuku Hiva experience. Of course, spending more time at any one of these locations is preferable, but if you just don't have the time, here are our recommendations:

1st Day, Taiohae, from east to west

Petit Quai (dinghy dock), in order of appearance:

- Chez Henri (Henry speaks English and can help solve most any problem the Marquesan way) (meals \$8-\$10): Internet WiFi (with food purchase), mostly Marquesan menu, including the classic Marquesan poisson cru (lime-marinated fresh fish in fresh squeezed coconut milk), fresh squeezed fruit juices or citronade (limeade), and bananas you pull off one of the bunches hanging along the tent's edge to eat with your meal (just as Californians eat tortilla chips with Mexican food). For dessert: gateau beurre (butter cake), ice cream, or firi-firi (French Polynesian donut). No alcohol served (BYOB from Kamake, see below).
- Boutique for nice shirts, skirts, and Hinano stickers.
- Nuku Hiva Yacht Services, Kevin can help you check in and/or with boat problems (the American way).
- Trash and oil dump
- Fresh fruits and vegetable stand
- Chez Celina, in the market place at the end of the quay just opened, serves local dishes, (\$6-\$10), cold beer, and is slated to offer Wi-Fi.
- Quay restrooms are now pay (\$1), but not yet well maintained. We are "lobbying" to improve this circumstance, asking that they have toilet seats, doors, toilette paper, soap and drying towels. Would also like to see the showers working too. There's a place to wash clothes behind the building near the toilets.
- Communal artisan center, more active when a cruise ship passes through. You can always ask them to "make you a price," which often means a discount.

- Tourist office, with maps and information about the Marquesas. Best public restrooms on Nuku Hiva!!!!
- Saturday morning flea market, 5-6:30a, fresh seafood and prepared foods. Tuna, wahoo, etc. \$5/kilo. Live lobster, \$15/kilo (out of season Feb-April).

Magasin Kamake (Mr. Kamake passed away in Nov 2015. Largest funeral in recent Taiohae memory.)

- Cold anything, including soft drinks, beer (\$2.50-\$3/can), wine, meats, cheese, and ice cream
- Fresh baked baguette bread (\$0.70) and pastries daily except Sundays and holidays. Open 5:30-11:30a M-Sa, 2-6:30p M-F
- Fresh vegetables and inexpensive casse-croute (sandwiches) sold in front until 11:30a
- Taiohae has 5 general stores and 2 hardware stores. The one furthest away, past the pharmacy, is open 7 days a week. The one behind the bank, across from the stadium field, is open during lunch, M-Sa.

Kou'eva

- Inland ceremonial grounds, built for traditional cultural festivals.
- Turn right up the center street, between Magasin Kamake and Magasin Larson (which sells more exotic items, as well as the standards).
- Walk about a mile up, super small sign on the right side of street marks right turn toward Taiohae's reconstructed ceremonial grounds. It's further than you think and not evident which way to turn . . . ask.
- Walk back to the seaside main street. As you descend, Chez Bigo hardware store is to your right, just before the bus stop, across the small bridge. They serve cold drinks and packaged snacks like candy bars.

Moana Nui Restaurant, Pension, and Car Rental

- More European than Marquesan menu (\$12-\$30). Great steak. Serves French-style pizza, beer and wine and mixed drinks.
- More expensive than Petit Quai "Snack" cafes, less expensive than Pearl Lodge.

Cathedral Taiohae

- Ask permission to enter building. Strict protocols.
- Rose Corsair, on the west side of the bay, sells a guidebook for Nuku Hiva that includes descriptions of elements within the cathedral.
- Beautiful woodcarvings inside and out.
- Sunday mass begins with meditative chants at 7a, reg. mass at 8a, ends 9-9:30a
- Look for the Marquesan version of the Christian cross. Butted together, the Marquesan cross looks like a pattern of men.

Tohua Temehea

- Seaside ceremonial grounds, built for traditional cultural festivals.
- Read the informational sign on-site (in French and English) for details

Melville Monument

- Tucked in on the shore side, neighboring the western cemetery.

- Wonderfully carved tree stump with weathered roof top and missing elements, shows the path he hiked out of Taiohae and over to Taipi Vai
- This is where Melville reportedly jumped ship and headed for the hills.

Joel's Pizza

- Great pizza, (\$12.50-\$18; \$3 delivery to Petit Quai), a less expensive alternative to Moana Nui Restaurant's pizza. The "Indian" and "Petit Quai" are our favorites.
- Better than the pizza are the desserts, tiramisu and cheesecake (\$4, large slices)

Marquesas Museum at Chez Rose's (American cruiser, arrived in 1972, moved here in 1977.)

- Far west side of bay. Never know when it's open. Knock. Great exhibit.
- Sells a great Nuku Hiva guidebook in multiple languages.
- Restaurant serves an excellent hamburger.
- Free WiFi, password free (some anchor their boats at this side of the bay to closer to her WiFi).

Pearl Lodge

- Nuku Hiva's gorgeous (expensive) bar, restaurant (\$18-\$40), hotel (\$225/night). Very nice!
- Beautiful view of Taiohae Bay.
- Friday evening Happy Hour, half off beautiful \$14 cocktails (or as I see it, two for the price of one!)

Swimming

- Kouvea beach to the east, in front of the French Administrator's residence
- Beach to the west, in front of Rose's place, but no-no's
- Sharks?
 - Cleaning boat bottoms and swimming in the bay have not been a problem for us or anyone else. Locals say sharks are a problem, but Kevin from Nuku Hiva Yacht Services and the Fire Dept. haven't heard of an incident. Kevin says he is never concerned about jumping in to the bay to fix a boat.
 - Not advisable to swim near the Petit Quai as sharks feed on fishermen's scraps. That said, many cruisers have dived here for lost items without incident.

Hikes

- Moderate, but sometimes steep. Bring water and toilette paper.
- Between 1.5 and 2 hours R/T at steady pace.
- Leave early in the morning, before it gets hot, before 7 am is best.
- *East bay mouth*, take upper road above fuel station to maintained dirt path. Ask how to get to the start.
- *Taiohae overview vista*, walk up the center road, as done for Kou'eva, until you get to the top for a stunning view (hitch hike if you don't want to walk).
- *Colette's Bay*, over the ridge on the other side of the bay's west side, . . . path starts above Rose's motel. Turn right above the motel, then another immediate

right, walking down and curving left. Stay on main dirt road until you reach top of saddle/ridge. Turn left, opening and closing the barbed-wire gate. (If you turn right, you're on your way to Hakau Bay, a much further hike, so ask in advance where the paths turn). Colette's Bay is where *Survivor Marquesas* filmed their challenges. Great swimming beach.

2nd Day, Car Tour

Hire a guide for a driving tour (\$50-\$120pp). Several speak English. Ask Henri, Rose, or Kevin to help you find a guide. Or go solo, diesel 4x4 rental is about \$120/day plus fuel.

- Taipi Vai, Tohua ceremonial grounds (toilets often available) w/modern stone tiki
- Hoomi, see church and visit with Pena, a sculptor (toilets available in Hoomi)
- Hatiheu
 - Road from Taipi Vai to Hatiheu and beyond becomes rough dirt, requiring 4x4.
 - Once arrived, visit the archeological ceremonial grounds, see petroglyphs
 - Check out the Marquesan history museum. Great history of Anaho too.
 - Virgin Mary statue atop pinnacle
 - Chez Yvonne's for lunch (toilets available)
- Aakapa vista point, beautiful Attitoka mountain ridge. From Hatiheu to Aakapa and especially beyond, requires 4x4 driving skill. If it were raining, I'd pass on going to Aakapa and/or beyond.
- Some drive from there (Aakapa) directly to the airport, but told it can scratch cars. Easier on the car if you drive back toward Taiohae, but after exiting Taipi Vai, turn right atop the hill at the main intersection, toward the airport instead of left to Taiohae.
- Drive across central plateau toward airport (or from airport, depending on how you drove there). This area is called 'Too Vii' or as some call it, mini-New Zealand, with its fresh air and pines.
 - Stop at vista points at the top of the mountain ridge, including Nuku Hiva's Grand Canyon.

3rd Day, Hakatea Bay and Hakau Valley

- Buy fresh baguettes to give to locals as gifts.
- Leave Taiohae, sail west to Hakatea and anchor on the eastern bay ("Daniel's" Bay, where *Survivor* was shot. Daniel passed away a few years ago) (1-1.5 hr motorsail). Careful, lots of no-no's, some even fly to the anchored boat.
- Walk west along bay's north shore to Hakau Bay.
- Wade through river to other side (good place to run your dinghy to give it a fresh water rinse)
- Along the way, make lunch reservations for your return trip (4 hrs R/T) with one of the valley families. Teiki and Kua, as you enter the village, are favorites, but all meals from any family here are great. \$10pp.

- Walk to one of the world's most breathtaking waterfalls, following a not so carefully marked path. Walking through the stream is sometimes safer than negotiating slippery rocks and tree trunks over the stream.
- Wear bug repellent and re-apply after swimming in waterfall.

4th Day, Anaho Bay

- Sail to Anaho, on the northeast corner of Nuku Hiva. About a 6 hour motor-sail. *Careful the rock on the SE corner of the island, off Controller Bay and Tikapo pt.*
- One of the most scenic and protected bays in the Marquesas. It's where Marquesans go to vacation. Can't help but sing the *Bali Hai* song from the musical *South Pacific*.
- To protect the coral, anchor south of the coral carved dinghy path.
- Good snorkeling, safe (no sharks, sometimes jellyfish), clear, often times manta rays. Don't eat any fish caught there. (Ciguatera).
- Fresh spring water available on the beach for drinking and bathing.
- Careful, no-no's on the beach and more so to the east.
- Good surfing and a plantation on the beach over the small hill to the east, but be warned—mega no-no's on this beach, so run to the surf.
- Many artisans live in this bay, including a well-known Marquesan tattoo artist, Moana, when he's not in Taiohae.
- Another Moana owns the neighboring fruit and vegetable farm and has re-opened a small pension that serves meals. This makes two pensions that serve meals. Usually about \$10 a large plate of local fare.
- Nice hike up and over western ridge to Hatiheu and back (2.5 hr R/T), start early as it gets hot. Easier coming back than going. Some say they walk it in half the time.

5th Day, Controller's Bay (Taipi Vai) or Hanapani

Northern Swell = Controller's Bay's Bays to the southeast of Nuku Hiva

- Sail south along the east coast, sharp turn around the SE corner of Nuku Hiva (careful, there's still that killer rock off the point to worry about)
- Hoomi to the east, Hakapuvai to the west, Taipi Vai in between.
- Coral surrounds these bays, so anchor down the middle of each bay.
- West side bay only good if no swell.
- Hakapuvai & Hakapaa (anchoring), the other *Survivor* beach.
 - We anchor in Hakapaa, the bay to starboard, more easterly, where there are pigs roaming the beach and a pretty waterfall (easy, short hike) in the back, to the west (left when facing inland from your cockpit).
 - Hakapuvai, to the west, has a beach of shells.
 - Snorkeling over coral in both bays.
 - Occasionally no-no's can reach the boat.

Southern Swell = Hanapani Bay to the northwest of Nuku Hiva

- Haven't been here yet, but told that . . .

- When the swell allows, for those who prefer remote white-sand beaches and clear water without other boats nearby, this is the place for you. Just west of Aakapa. Aakapa is not good for anchoring. Pua, to further west than Hanapani, is quiet as well, but a landscape just a tad less “magnifique.”