



# Tips for Cruising French Polynesia

by Chuck Houlihan

After spending almost 6 years cruising French Polynesia, including 1 year in the Marquesas, 12 atolls in the Tuamotus plus most of the Societies I thought it might be helpful to share a few tips with those in our wake. However, before I do I probably should ask Linda to introduce us.

**We are Chuck & Linda.** We cast off more than our dock lines when we left our slip at Silver Gate Yacht Club on May 17, 2005. We sailed out of San Diego Bay for the first time on JACARANDA as liveaboards, leaving a comfortable and familiar land-bound way of life behind in our wake. For Chuck, it meant coming home again, to the way he lived before he chose to temporarily leave it in 1997 so that we could be together. For Linda, it was the beginning of a major adjustment to a new and foreign lifestyle I had only glimpsed. For both of us, it was the realization of our 7-year-old dream to go cruising.

**Just over ten years later we realised another dream, we had arrived in French Polynesia!** Fast forward to today, we are back home having recently sold Jacaranda after owning her for 35 years but our passion for the cruising life and our ties to the cruising community remain strong.



Via our website [jacarandajourney.com](http://jacarandajourney.com) we share our stories and images of our adventures as well as some very useful information for those who are planning to visit French Polynesia. You will also discover that Linda makes spectacular one-of-a-kind beaded fine art necklaces and bracelets that are always noticed.



Both Chuck & Linda are lifetime commodores of the Seven Seas Cruising Association (SSCA). The SSCA is the oldest and largest worldwide organization supporting the liveaboard cruising lifestyle. Today's SSCA remains true to the traditions of its original members: sharing cruising information, fostering camaraderie, and leaving a clean wake.



[downunderrally.com/ahoy](http://downunderrally.com/ahoy)



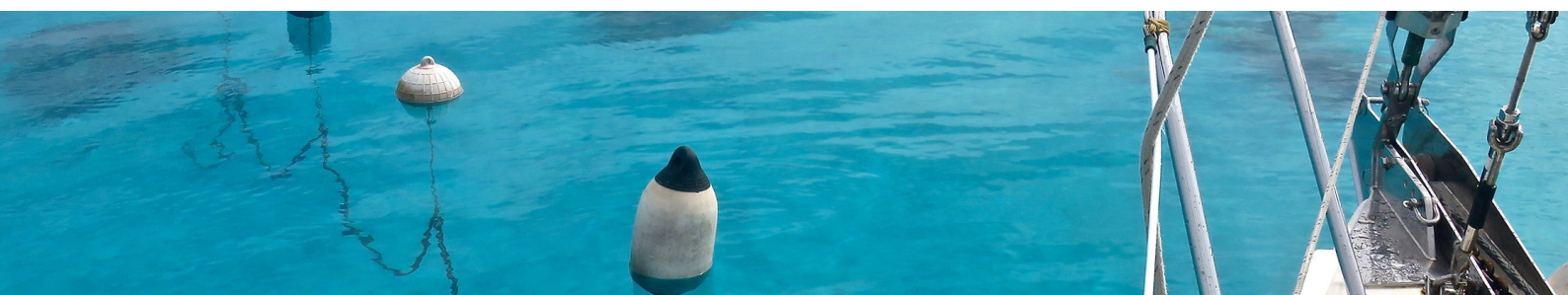


# Tips for Cruising French Polynesia

by Chuck Houlihan

- 1. Wondering what foodstuff is available** when you arrive in the Marquesas? Linda compiled a detailed list with prices from a couple of different islands. While it's several years old, the point of availability may be still helpful in your provisioning. Use 100:1 for xpf to \$ equivalent. Something that is 100xpf = app 1 US dollar. [jacarandajourney.com/foodandfuel](http://jacarandajourney.com/foodandfuel). Unlike 30 years ago when I was in the Marquesas and the tiny stores had very little to offer now they carry a large selection (ok remember these are small stores and you will have to wait till you get to Papeete to see huge supermarkets)
- 2. The FP government subsidises a number of basic food items.** Milk, bread, flour, crackers, sugar, salt etc. Look for items in the grocery store that have a red dot stuck to the product. For example, you might save 30% on a package of crackers. Keep this in mind when shopping as you will save some xpf.
- 3. We would always provision for fuel upon arrival at any location.** This includes propane/butane as well. A few times, islands ran out of these items and had to wait for the next ship to arrive. One time in Hiva Oa, they were out of cooking gas for 3-4 weeks!
- 4. If your propane / LPG bottles** have a non-standard French fitting, buy the fitting to fit your bottle before departing. You can easily make up a transfer hose when you arrive by purchasing a local gas bottle fitting from a hardware store in FP. Easy to transfer cooking gas yourself. We probably filled 40+ bottles when in FP for friends and ourselves. This saved us considerable money versus having it filled. Also, most of the cooking gas in FP is butane, and we noticed very little difference in using it. You can get propane in Papeete and Mo'orea. See our propane doc for how to transfer: [jacarandajourney.com/refillingpropane](http://jacarandajourney.com/refillingpropane)
- 5. Floating your chain;** WTF, never heard of this? If you are anchoring in coral, PLEASE PLEASE float your chain. Your anchor and chain dragging around live coral can do enormous damage. We floated our chain more than 300++ times while in FP. In fact, every time we stopped in the Tuamotus. It takes a little bit of time to set up, but once you have done it a few times, it becomes very easy to do. Remember, you are anchoring in someone`s backyard, so show Respect by trying to protect the coral. For those who wonder why there are numerous anchoring restrictions in FP (Fakarava, Moorea, Raiatea, Bora Bora, Huahine, etc.), one of the major reasons is yachties damaging the bottom. You can see how to do it here> Thanks to SV Spirit of Argo along with comments from us: [jacarandajourney.com/floatingyourchain](http://jacarandajourney.com/floatingyourchain)

 [downunderrally.com/ahoy](http://downunderrally.com/ahoy)







# Tips for Cruising French Polynesia

by Chuck Houlihan

**6. CIGUATERA** -- Like to fish or eat fish? Please read this article on Ciguatera. YES, FP HAS CIGUATERA most everywhere you travel. Some places are worse than others, ie. Gambiers, Bay Anaho in Nuku Hiva. We have heard numerous cases from friends that have eaten local "reef" fish and gotten ciguatera. Once you ingest the toxin, you can never get it out of your body. Sure, most of the locals eat reef fish, but many that we have spoken to have had cases of ciguatera. One of the beloved locals in Tahuata who befriended 100's of cruisers had multiple cases of ciguatera (once when we were anchored in his bay). Ocean fish like Tuna, Wahoo, Mahi, Swordfish, Marlin are, for the most part, considered safe to eat. [jacarandajourney.com/ciguatera](http://jacarandajourney.com/ciguatera). We wanted people to be informed and then do as you think best.

**7. Fishing in FP** Like to Ocean fish? Check this write up by SV Panache for tips on gear and trolling. [jacarandajourney.com/fpfishingin](http://jacarandajourney.com/fpfishingin)

**8. Showing Respect.** The Polynesians are HUGE on showing respect. Remember, someone owns every coconut tree and fruit tree. The fish in the lagoon are considered to be owned by a local. Do not go into someone's yard and just pick fruit. Go up with a smile and just ask. We have never been turned away and usually made wonderful friends in the process.

**9. Supply vessels in FP.** Many of the locals in the outer islands order groceries and supplies directly from either the shop in Papeete or via a personal shopper. If you need a part or want to order specific groceries from Papeete, you can usually get them delivered within a week to the town you are anchored off. All the stores and vendors in Tahiti are very used to shipping out island. See [tahiticruisersguide.com/#section\\_254](http://tahiticruisersguide.com/#section_254) for a selection of buyers in Papeete.

**10. Download everything you can imagine before departing.** Internet is expensive in FP and sometimes not readily available. Here are 2 downloads I would suggest you do before departing. #1. All the Soggy Paws cruising Compendiums. These are the best cruising guides for FP. Up to date and very detailed.. [svsoggypaws.com/files](http://svsoggypaws.com/files). #2. The Tahiti Cruisers Guide which covers ALL of FP with a list of vendors and services. I often update this daily, so download a fresh copy anywhere you stop. What started as a small list of vendors is now over 400 pages. This is especially helpful while in the out islands and needing parts from Tahiti. Many of the stores have GPS coordinates attached. [tahiticruisersguide.com](http://tahiticruisersguide.com)



[downunderrally.com/ahoy](http://downunderrally.com/ahoy)







# Tips for Cruising French Polynesia

by Chuck Houlihan

11. The use of Google Earth charts is a game-changer. You can find thousands of GE charts available for free, either ours (Jacaranda) or from SV Migration. In conjunction with OpenCPN or SASPlanet, it allows you to see your vessel on GE in almost like real-time. You can find Jacaranda's or SV Migration charts via a link here [jacarandajourney.com/geimagesoffp](http://jacarandajourney.com/geimagesoffp)

12. More information on visas, either 90 day (short term) or Long stay visas, including renewing your carte de Sejour: [jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff](http://jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff)

13. Out of print cruising guides for FP  
[drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1SCcFGnv3CASqGn3r0CsNfksHsbJwRZjO](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1SCcFGnv3CASqGn3r0CsNfksHsbJwRZjO)

14. Importing pets, where to leave your yacht while in FP, and numerous other items of interest  
[jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff](http://jacarandajourney.com/other-good-stuff)

Another item I forgot to mention is how helpful a fish finder has been. We installed the cheapest finder (Garmin 151), and it was terrific to see the bottom and avoid bommies when anchoring. Often the inside of the lagoons in FP are not particularly clear. Usually you can't see anything deeper than 25'. The fish finder will show you the bottom type and where the bommies are located. This takes some getting used to, but if you can drop over with a mask on after you anchor to make sense of what you see on the fish finder, it helps. We siliconed the transducer to the inside of the hull.

I hope the information I have shared in this article makes your visit to French Polynesia a little more enjoyable, and I would like to close by sharing the quote below from [Douglas Everett](http://DouglasEverett.com):

 [downunderrally.com/ahoy](http://downunderrally.com/ahoy)

"There are some people who live in a dream world, and there are some who face reality, and then there are those who turn one into the other."--- Douglas Everett

