



**DESTINATIONS**

# Bora Bora

Explore the beauty of this South Pacific paradise, which is heaven on earth for the spa-loving set.



## Blue Lagoon

No matter how much island hopping you've done in your life, Bora Bora is sure to take your breath away. Famous for the strikingly clear lagoon surrounding it, this tiny volcanic island in French Polynesia offers a harmonious blend of every element necessary for the picture-perfect beach vacation: blue sky, powdery beaches, lanky coconut palms, sweet-smelling flowers, thatched-roof bungalows, slowly swaying hammocks, and stunning first-class resorts that cater to the well-heeled traveler. As if this all wasn't soothing enough, these resorts are home to splendid spas that take relaxation to an entirely different level.—*Cristina De Oliveira*

Many resorts on Bora Bora are situated on islets, known as motus, that surround the main island. This allows guests to enjoy the beloved vistas, such as this one showing Bora Bora's most famous peaks—Mount Pahia to the left and Mount Otemanu to the right.

PHOTOGRAPHY: FOTOLIA



## Continental Waters

While the lagoon is the heart of Bora Bora, the sparkling seawater is the soul of the InterContinental Resort and Thalasso Spa. Ideal for earth lovers, the Green Globe Certified property is said to save 90 percent of its electricity consumption through a cutting-edge air conditioning system that runs on water from the Pacific Ocean that is extracted from 3,000 feet deep.

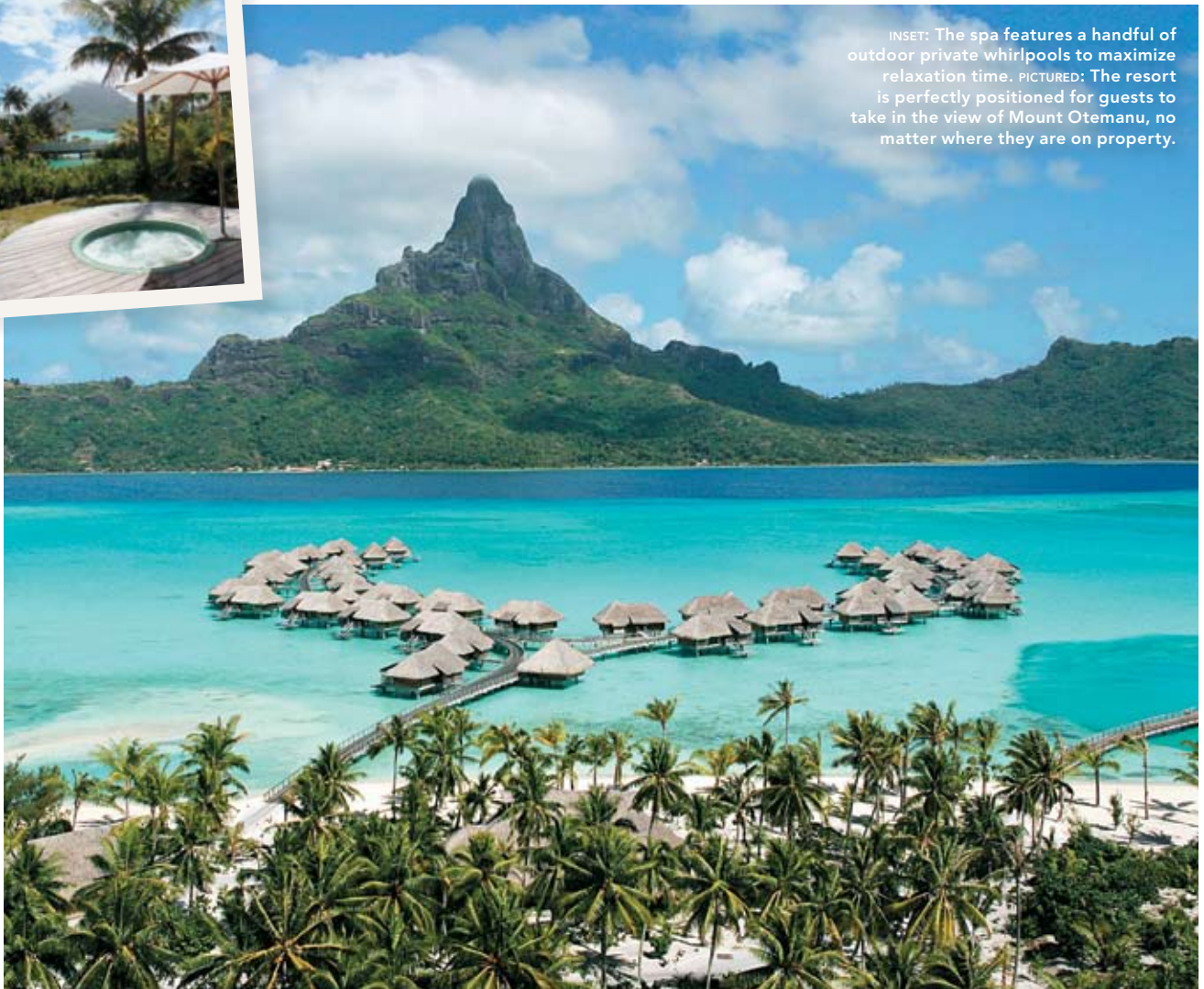
Not only is the seawater used to cool the resort but it is also the foundation of the 14-treatment-room **Deep Ocean Spa**, the first thalassotherapy spa in the South Pacific. Conceived by the French skincare company Algoterm, the spa celebrates the bounty of mineral-rich ocean water and features it in most of its treatments. Although the spa is situated amid a picturesque island setting, many of the services are decidedly European, fusing traditional spa treatments with high-tech equipment to provide

serious results. For example, the Algospa Marine Scrub and Wrap (\$205, 75 minutes) allows guests to experience weightlessness on a chromotherapy-enhanced dry-float bed, while the skin is remineralized with a seaweed wrap. In addition to an array of modern, hydrotherapy-focused treatments, the spa also offers classic services, such as Deep Tissue Massage (\$183, 50 minutes), that can be performed in one of the overwater treatment villas.

Guests can also enjoy the outdoor co-ed relaxation area while still taking in the benefits of seawater through a hydrotherapy circuit, which includes whirlpools, a Swim Spa in which people feel like they are swimming against ocean currents, and a revitalizing Deep Chiller Walk. For spa guests who want to kick back while staying dry, one of the rowdiest areas on property is ironically one of the most soothing—honoring its roots, the spa has an indoor relaxation area that faces the roaring ocean.—*C.D.*



INSET: The spa features a handful of outdoor private whirlpools to maximize relaxation time. PICTURED: The resort is perfectly positioned for guests to take in the view of Mount Otemanu, no matter where they are on property.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A lush private beach flanks the spa reception desk; massage is available en suite for guests who don't want to leave their beautiful bungalows; spa guests can enjoy an outdoor soak in several of the treatment rooms.



## A Spa With a View

From the moment of arrival at Bora Bora's Motu Mute Airport (BOB) to the moment of departure, visitors chase the view they were awarded when they first landed—that of the emerald-green mainland with the slanted summit of Mount Otemanu teasing the sky. While this view can be enjoyed from many of the bungalows at the posh St. Regis Bora Bora Resort, the panoramic vista from the property's **Spa Miri Miri** is splendid.

The priceless view is best appreciated from the beachfront relaxation area by the spa's reception desk, which is the ideal spot for whiling the day away. If spa-goers leave their snorkel gear in their bungalows, they can pick some up at the desk and explore the surrounding lagoonarium, which is home to a few sea turtles that steal the show.

Located on its own island, the 13,000-square-foot, seven-treatment-room spa features a menu that gives a nod to local traditions. The Polynesian Taurumi Massage (\$183, 50 minutes; \$241, 80 minutes) encourages relaxation through strokes that are meant to unify the mind, body, and spirit. Guests can also smooth out their skin with a sweet-smelling Tahitian Body Exfoliation (\$103, 30 minutes; \$172, 50 minutes), featuring vanilla and coconut pulp, or with a Bora Bora Exfoliation (\$103, 30 minutes; \$172, 50 minutes), featuring monoï. Between the view, the beach, and the services, spa-goers are guaranteed a truly Tahitian treat.—C.D.

## THE MAGIC OF MONOÏ

Post-impressionist painter Paul Gauguin, who spent part of his life in the remote Marquesas, was entranced by the beauty of French Polynesia. Not only was the lush vegetation on the islands a common subject of his paintings but the female inhabitants, with their bronze, supple skin and dark, shiny hair, also became his muses. These women and the ones who came thousands of years before them have something in common—their reliability on monoï to keep hair and skin looking vibrant. Popular before “organic” was a buzzword, this ages-old Polynesian beauty secret is still as potent and popular as ever. The process to manufacture authentic monoï, which is derived from refined coconut oil that is infused with fragrant tiare flowers, is protected by an Appellation of Origin (AOC), a certification granted by the French government to ensure that products are of high quality and manufactured following a strict set of standards. Commonly used during spa services throughout Tahiti, the intoxicatingly sweet oil is beloved for its superior nourishing and hydrating benefits and is the ideal way to experience the perfection of Polynesian pampering.—C.D.



PHOTOGRAPHY: FOTOLIA (COCONUT)



## Going Local

Mother Nature is ever-present at the Bora Bora Lagoon Resort's **Marù Spa**. Tahitian for gentle, soft, and quiet, Marù relies on its unique location to provide a soothing soundtrack during services—the sound of the wind through the trees. Nestled among two giant Banyans, the spa's treatment rooms feature tropical woods, bamboo, and volcanic stones from the neighboring islands of Moorea and Taha'a.

Also, taking a natural approach, the spa's signature skincare line, which was developed locally, offers a taste of the islands. In addition to different types of *monoï*, including pineapple and vanilla, the product line offered at Marù features a series of scrubs that combine fruit, organic sugar, sand, and semi-precious stones to treat the skin and provide spa-goers with an undeniable sense of place.—C.D.



ABOVE AND BELOW: The spa's treehouse treatment rooms offer spa lovers a unique experience. LEFT: Guests can enjoy the peaceful sounds of the outdoors during services.





PICTURED: The new villas include their own gazebo on the top floor. INSET: Guests can enjoy massages in the comfort of the en suite Well-Being Room.



## Presidential Retreat

Considering that the hilltop **Hina Spa** at the Hilton Bora Bora Nui Hotel & Spa boasts an outdoor treatment simply called the “One Million Dollar View” Experience (\$400 for one person, \$688 per couple; 2 hours), one can imagine how pleasant it is to spend the day there. While Hina Spa offers amazing services, there are a few new spots on property that are perfect for enjoying spa treatments.

Last fall, the Hilton introduced its two multi-level Presidential Overwater Villas, each measuring more than 3,220 square feet. Complete with glass panels on the floor and a ladder to head right into the turquoise lagoon, the villas capture the charm of staying in an overwater bungalow, only they have supersized the experience by offering every amenity anyone could ever want while staying in paradise. In addition to two bedrooms, three bathrooms, an expansive living room, a gazebo, a swimming pool, a Jacuzzi, and a sun deck, both villas house a Well-Being Room with a massage table. Guests can contact Hina Spa to arrange their treatments.

This private piece of luxury starts at about \$4,600 per night and comes with an amazing perk—because the villas are perfectly situated at the end of the pontoon, guests can take in an unobstructed view of the beautiful island sunsets.—C.D.

## THINK INK

Nestled amid a beautiful garden, **Manea Spa** at Bora Bora Pearl Beach Resort & Spa is not for skincare alone. Visitors who want to commemorate a trip of a lifetime can meet with the spa’s tattoo artist, known as Matatiki. Raised in the Marquesas, Matatiki is a serious craftsman and refers to tattoos in Marquesan history as being the “mark of a membership.” “Marquesans tattoo themselves to make ancestral tradition reborn and to prove their courage,” he says. “Tattoos are also a protective barrier against evil’s influences.” Respecting tradition, Matatiki only uses black ink and works mostly with traditional motifs, such as abstract line patterns, symbols of divinity, and figurative renderings of humans and animals. Starting at \$115, the mini-masterpieces are a spa service that guests will never forget.—C.D.



Matatiki



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: Powder derived from black pearls is used to exfoliate; the Kahaia Spa Suite offers great sights both inside and out; the spa's main corridor is an architectural masterpiece.



## Couples Retreat

With thousands of honeymooners passing through Bora Bora per year, the romantic allure of the island cannot be denied. Opened in 2008, the Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora, the newest property on the scene, offers a host of romantic experiences—everything from private dinners on the beach to cozy couples treatments at the blissful spa.

Situated on the highest point of the property, the **Spa at Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora** features the spacious overwater Kahaia Spa Suite, which can be reserved for three hours (\$805), including two hours of services for a couple, as well as one hour of relaxation time prior to treatments. During that first hour, guests can enjoy the soaking tub for two on the outdoor deck, which offers the placid lagoon and Mount Otemanu as a backdrop. While the view outside isn't too shabby, the view from inside the treatment room is positively dynamic. The face cradles for each of the two massage beds are positioned over glass panes on the floor so that spa-goers can catch a glimpse of marine life during treatments.

A favorite package to book in this suite is the Kahaia Haven Ritual (\$344, 2 hours). The luxe service offers full-body pampering, while incorporating native vanilla, known for its energizing and aphrodisiac qualities, and *parau*, which is South Seas black pearl powder that is used to exfoliate. Guests start off with a Maeva Foot Ritual on the back deck, meant to purify the mind and body while renewing the spirit. Then, the therapists exfoliate the body prior to a massage and end with a facial, featuring algae-rich Osea products. No matter how long couples have been together, after a visit to the Kahaia Spa Suite, they'll feel like they're back in the honeymoon stage.—C.D.