

Honeymoon Before Wedding French Polynesia and Tahiti Islands

By Brad Butler

Vacationing in French Polynesia and the Tahitian Islands, a dream trip harbored by many a traveler, offers a host of different destinations and activities. In fact, this vast archipelago has options enough to overwhelm even those with a good idea of their ideal

tour guide will be Ziggy. Speaking in halting English and of slight stature, with a beard and dreadlocks, he looks more Jamaican than Tahitian, who tend to be taller and possessed with those classic Polynesian facial features. Part comedian, part Tahitian philosopher, part knowledgeable guide

destination is at hand. With the front of the boat pointing out to sea, Ziggy moves forward and throws the anchor into waters that are about 15 to 20 feet deep and issues this order, "We are putting down the ladder and

about half of those on board. The cameraman for Albert Tours is the first in and he takes the chum for the sharks

fish. With determined calm the sharks move back and forth in search of fish parts being doled out by the crew.



Riding a shark in clear blue waters

agenda. One of the most popular islands in the chain is Moorea, which lies close to the main island of Tahiti and offers something for every kind of tourist.

Taking advantage of local tours is part and parcel of just about any location that travelers choose to visit, whether in major cities or in the exotic wilderness. Well, on the beautiful island of Moorea in Tahiti the local tour that is essential for everyone is the Lagoon Motu Picnic, which is available through Albert Tours and a staple in tour packages offered by Tahiti Vacations out of Los Angeles. Along with getting a terrific boat ride down the coast of one of the most picturesque and serene destinations in the world, the fun-loving tourist will get a chance to swim with sharks, feed stingrays and enjoy a relaxing afternoon lunch on the beach of a Motu, which means small island in Tahitian.

After pickup by the friendly Albert Tours drivers, everyone is dropped off at the historic Club Bali Hai Hotel in the middle of Cook's Bay for departure. The twin-outboard catamaran, with a cover to protect from the sun, seats about fifty and is very comfortable. Hopefully your

and completely entertaining, Ziggy proceeds to identify who speaks what language, French or English, before explaining that Moorea is pronounced MOE-oh-ray-ah and that he was born and raised on the island.

Before moving on, while the boat sits idle in the middle of a quiet Cook's Bay, he gets everyone to look at Mt. Rotui to see how a particular black rock formation looks like King Kong playing a piano, well maybe. Then they crank up the motors and you're off to the races. Coming out of Cook's Bay into the wide open South Pacific waters, more than likely with huge cloud formations playing across the horizon, the water goes from dark blue at the reef break to shallow, clear blue coastal waters backed by a white sand bottom dotted with a checkerboard of coral formations. To the left the emerald jungle slopes steadily from the shore into a tangled interior of steamy rain forest. Plumes of white smoke are often seen drifting from the foliage as the locals burn the dried brush from their yards.

Within a short time, about a half-mile off the coast and not far from the Sheraton Moorea Hotel, the first

anchor rope, do not touch the sharks, they will bite, and do not pee in the water, that will

will feed the sharks, they are Black Tipped Reef Sharks, for safety hold on to the

with him. The sharks, knowing this drill, have heard the motors and begin to gather for a meal, hopefully not human flesh. The water is generally calm but can get a bit choppy at times, making it wise to hold onto the anchor rope.

The sharks gather

Some of the sharks are pretty big, giving one the thrill of danger and the fascination of viewing them in the wild. This is fun and interesting, until one looks around and realizes they are circling behind and under the boat in a pattern, causing most to



attract the sharks. We stay here for 20 minutes." It is safe to say no one peed in the water.

Those who wish to get in the water grab their mask and snorkel and move to the front of the boat to jump in the warm Tahitian waters, which on average amounts to

anxiously and it is a bit shocking at first, especially for the inexperienced. However, knowing thousands come through this tour every year makes it easy to believe all is well. For the most part the sharks stay on the right side of the boat, joined by large schools of tropical

pull in their feet so they are in view. Underwater pictures are part and parcel of this exercise, and all too soon Ziggy calls everyone to get back aboard.

Once everyone gets situated, the route down the coastline continues. The breeze refreshes as everyone