

French Polynesia

Overview:

French Polynesia is a French overseas collectivity in the southern Pacific Ocean. It is made up of several groups of Polynesian islands, the most famous island being Tahiti in the Society Islands group, which is also the most populous island and the seat of the capital of the territory (Papeete). Although not an integral part of its territory, Clipperton Island was administered from French Polynesia until 2007.

Territory:

French Polynesia is a sprawling possession of France in the Pacific Ocean, made up of 118 volcanic and coral islands and atolls. There are five island groups - the Society islands, the Tuamotu archipelago, the Gambier islands, the Marquesas islands and the Tubuai islands. Tahiti is the most densely-populated island.

Location:

French Polynesia is in the heart of the South Pacific located between the America and Australian continents. The island is situated 6200 km from Los Angeles, 5700 km from Sydney, 8800 km from Tokyo.

Latitude and Longitude:

Tahiti (at 17° 40' S and about 149° 20' W) The Marquesas Islands (Îles Marquises, between 8° and 11° S and 138° and 141° W)

Time Zone:

GMT -10

Total Land Area:

4

EEZ:

5

Climate:

With the exception of the Marquesas and the northernmost islands of Tuamotu, the climate of French Polynesia is equatorial with lots of rain.

Natural Resources:

Timber, fish, cobalt, and hydropower.

ECONOMY:

Total GDP:	
2003	4,580,000,000.00 USD

Per Capita GDP:	
2003	17,500.00 USD

% of GDP per Sector:			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2005	3%	19%	76%

% of Population Employed by Sector			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2002	68%	19%	13%
2005	68%	19%	13%

External Aid/Remittances:

\$579.8 million (2004)

Growth:

French Polynesia's economy enjoyed consistent growth from 1997 until the events of 11 September. Following the end of nuclear testing in 1996, the Government implemented an economic development strategy designed to increase the country's self-sufficiency focusing on tourism, pearl farming and fishing. In 1999 a new value-added tax was introduced with greater spending on public infrastructure and youth employment programmes. Following his election in December 2006, new President, Gaston Tong Sang, committed to increase economic growth and development. He also proposed to re-orientate the December 2006 budget so that it relaunched major construction works in a bid to stimulate employment and economic growth, and control public sector spending. He similarly undertook to improve productivity in the primary sector, boost tourism and tackle the high cost of living – results of which as yet to be seen.

Labour Force:	
2005	65,930

Unemployment	

2005	462,000,000	0	0	0	429	0	0	0	0	0
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Official Currency:
CFP franc

Banking and Insurance:

Number of Banks and Credit Unions: 4
Number of Agricultural Credit Unions:
Number of Insurance Companies:

French Polynesia is served by 4 main banks: the Banque Socredo, Banque de Tahiti, Banque de Polynésie, and Australia's Westpac Bank. Offices are only on the main islands of Tahiti, Bora Bora, and Moorea.

Financial Services:

Communications/E-Commerce:

French Polynesia is New Zealand's second largest market in the Pacific. Exports for the year ended December 2005 totalled more than NZ\$158 million made up mainly of Meat fresh and frozen, dairy products, iron and steel, aluminium and cement products. New Zealand imports from French Polynesia in the same year came to just under NZ\$3 million consisting mainly of black pearls and coconut oil. French Polynesian exports are modest because, despite New Zealand's low tariff regime and free marketing advice available to French Polynesian exporters via the Pacific Islands Trade and Investment Commission, high production costs, and irregular and limited supply make them uncompetitive.

Public Ownership:

The contemporary system of land ownership and tenure resulted from French efforts to introduce a system of individual land ownership. Land is inherited equally by all the descendants of a landowner and is often held in common by large groups of related people. Coowners who reside on the family land work out the details of use rights among themselves; these rights are inherited by one's children. Communal land holding is the source of many disputes as heirs petition to divide land into individual holdings or attempt to sell land with competing ownership claims. However, communal ownership has slowed the transfer of land from Polynesian families to recent immigrants. There are few landless Polynesians.

Land Use:

Only 1% of the land is arable.

Agriculture/Forestry:

coconuts, vanilla, vegetables, coffee; poultry, beef, dairy products.

Marine Activity:

Fishing:

The Government's policy for the fishery section has been set out in the 'Strategic Programme to Strengthen French Polynesia's Economic Self-Sufficiency'. The goal of the basic strategy is to reorient French Polynesia's economy in order to increase its self-generated resources through implementation of a balanced development process which will cement social cohesion while at the same time allowing implementation of a policy to integrate disadvantaged populations so as to reduce the social divide created by the CEP (French Polynesia Nuclear Testing Centre). This process of converting French Polynesia's economy involves, in particular, developing production sectors (sea, agriculture, industries). Between 1990 and 1995, the coverage rate for all transfers by self-generated resources went from 24% to 32%. It is vital to continue this significant level of growth and to intensify it. In the sea production sector, the 'oceanic fisheries' aspect is one of the major components of this development.

Marine Life:

The waters of French Polynesia offer a huge variety of underwater marine life. With clear waters, bright coral, sunken ships and many species of dazzling fish, diving here is a dream. Several varieties of fish, tuna, sharks, jacks, rays, barracudas, dolphins, and sea turtles can be seen as well as tourist can explore shark-feeding expeditions, as well as dives with manta rays, whales and schools of dolphins.

Critical Issues:

Given the scope of its maritime territory, French Polynesia has significant potential for developing its fisheries activities. It has an exclusive economic zone of about 5 million sq. km. and privileged access to international fishing areas with high tuna concentrations. However, semi-industrial oceanic fisheries are just beginning and development efforts must be continued. Although fish exports have increased sharply since the early 1990s as a local commercial oceanic fisheries fleet developed, very significant potential for growth still exists. In fact, the local market absorbs a large part of production. The limited number of boats (54 working boats in 1998, 57 in 1999) is a hindrance to exports getting off the ground, something which will also come about through strengthening productivity in the local fleet. Developing fisheries in the Marquesas Islands requires that techniques to store or process fish (yellowfin or bigeye) before shipping need to be refined. The 'burnt meat' phenomenon, which makes the meat turn from bright red to brown, brings about trade problems on outside markets. Studies should be conducted to both find out the causes of this phenomenon and identify storage or processing techniques to prevent it from happening.

JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES

Capital:

Papeete, on Tahiti

Political System:

Politics of French Polynesia takes place in a framework of a parliamentary representative democratic French overseas collectivity, whereby the President of French Polynesia is the head of government, and of a pluriform multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the Assembly of French Polynesia.

Political Parties:

Alliance for a New Democracy or ADN (includes the parties The New Star and This Country is Yours); Independent Front for the Liberation of Polynesia (Tavini Huiraatira); New Fatherland Party (Ai'a Api); People's Rally for the Republic of Polynesia or RPR (Tahoeraa Huiraatira); Union for Democracy or UPD. Alliance for a New Democracy or ADN [Nicole BOUTEAU and Philip SCHYLE] (includes the parties The New Star and This Country is Yours); Independent Front for the Liberation of Polynesia (Tavini Huiraatira) [Oscar TEMARU]; New Fatherland Party (Ai'a Api) [Emile VERNAUDON]; People's Rally for the Republic of Polynesia or RPR (Tahoeraa Huiraatira) [Gaston FLOSSE]; Union for Democracy or UPD [Oscar TEMARU]

Important Legislation:

European Union Commission's decision on laying down special conditions governing imports of fishery products from French Polynesia. The Commission established particular conditions and rules governing the importation into the Community of fishery products originating in French Polynesia. Each consignment is to be accompanied by a health certificate. The fishery products shall come from approved establishments, factory vessels, or cold stores, or from registered freezer vessels.

Principal Taxes:

In 1993, in return for the 5-year, US\$118 million Pacte de ProgrÃ©s subsidy program, France demanded the institution of an income tax in order to make the territory more self-supporting. A 3 percent tax on earnings over \$1,600 was introduced. The government, however, continues to rely heavily on indirect taxes, which make up around half of the territory's tax revenues. Levies and excises on imported goods and licensing fees are thus among the highest in the Pacific islands.

Associated Power:**Citizenship:**

France

Paradiplomacy:

French Polynesia is a member or participates in some other way in the following organizations: FZ, ITUC, PIF (observer), SPC, UPU, WMO

HUMAN RESOURCES

Since 1962, when France stationed military personnel in the region, French Polynesia has changed from a subsistence agricultural economy to one in which a high proportion of the work force is either employed by the military or supports the tourist industry. With the halt of French nuclear testing in 1996, the military contribution to the economy fell sharply. Tourism accounts for about one-fourth of GDP and is a primary source of hard currency earnings. Other sources of income are pearl farming and deep-sea commercial fishing. The small manufacturing sector primarily processes agricultural products. The territory benefits substantially from development agreements with France aimed principally at creating new businesses and strengthening social services.

2005			
Island	Area (km sq.)	Population	% of Total Population
French Polynesia	1,609	278,633	76.3%

composition by sector: agriculture: 3.1% industry: 19% services: 76.9% (2005) Labor force: 65,930 (December 2005) Labor force - by occupation: agriculture: 13% industry: 19% services: 68% (2002) Unemployment rate: 11.7% (2005)

Population:	
Year	Resident Population

Age of Population:	0-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65 and up
2004	26	22	22	22	6

Migration:

Major countries of destination of migrants from French Polynesia are Australia, Fiji, France, Kiribati, New Caledonia, and New Zealand. France 23,183 74.0% Wallis and Futuna 2,402 7.7% New Caledonia 180 0.6% All other countries 5,562 17.8%

Crude Birth Rate:	
2007	1.64%

Life Expedctancy:

71 years (men), 76 years (women)

Crude Death Rate:	
2007	0.5%

Ethnicity:

Polynesian 78%, Chinese 12%, local French 6%, metropolitan French 4%

Class Division:

The class structure closely mimics that of metropolitan France: small upper class, large middle and lower-middle classes, and a small number of poor people. The upper class includes wealthy Polynesian-European families, Chinese merchant families, and foreign residents. The middle class includes members of all ethnic groups. These families typically own their own homes and have at least one wage earner in the household. The Polynesian hierarchy of ranked titles and chieftainship has disappeared, but Polynesians continue to keep detailed genealogical records and the descendants of chiefly families are aware of their history. The descendants of the Tahitian monarchy are socially prominent. Symbols of Social Stratification. Class structure is most evident in the display of imported goods such as automobiles and clothing. There is residential segregation of social classes in the urban areas of Tahiti, with oceanfront and ridgetops dominated by the upper classes, the flat littoral plain by middle-class households, and the interior valleys by lower-class households. On the outer islands, house style and size also mark social stratification, while location is less indicative of class.

Languages:

Tahitian and French

Religion:

Protestant 54%, Roman Catholic 30%, other 10%, no religion 6%

Literacy:

98% (1977)

Education System:

Formal education is mandatory in Tahiti for every child up to the age of fourteen. Primary education begins at five and continues until the age of twelve, when secondary education begins. There are several technical and vocation schools in Tahiti including hotel, restaurant, nursing and teaching programmes, as well as a large adult education programme.



Total Pre-schools:()	
Total Primary Schools	
First Level:	
Second Level:	
Third Level:	
Total Secondary Schools:	
Total Professional Schools	
Universities:	1

Number of Schools per Island:											
		Pre-school		Elementary			High-school		Prof.	University	
		Pub	Priv	1	2	3	Pub	Priv		Pub	Priv

Students Enrolled:					
Year:	Pre-School	Elementary	High-school	Prof.	University

Teachers							
Year	Pre-School	Elementary			High-School	Prof.	University
		1	2	3			

The educational system is well-developed. Even though schooling in French Polynesia has been conducted entirely in French, using the same syllabus as schools in France for most subjects, as late as 1962 almost half of the population claimed that they were able to read and write only in Tahitian. This high literacy rate attests to the importance of Tahitian in everyday life, especially if we remember that Tahitian was forbidden in schools for both teachers and pupils, and banned both in the classroom and during recreation. This Tahitian literacy is maintained in adult life mainly through the writing of personal letters and the reading of religious texts. The Université de la Polynésie Française (UPF) was created in 1999, out of the former Université Française du Pacifique. The UPF had 2,372 students preparing for a diploma during the 2002–03 academic year. Agricultural and technical schools also offer postsecondary education.

Medical Services:

There are a number of hospitals and private clinics on the island, and one large government hospital on Tahiti.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

History:

The term French Polynesia is applied to the scattered French possessions in the South Pacific—Mangareva (Gambier), Makatea, the Marquesas Islands, Rapa, Rurutu, Rimatara, the Society Islands, the Tuamotu Archipelago, Tubuai, Raivavae, and the island of Clipperton—which were organized into a single colony in 1903. There are 120 islands, of which 25 are uninhabited. The principal and most populous island—Tahiti, in the Society group—was claimed by the French in 1768. The indigenous people are mostly Maoris. The French Polynesian island groups do not share a common history before the establishment of the French protectorate in 1889. The first French Polynesian islands to be settled by Polynesians were the Marquesas Islands in AD 300 and the Society Islands in AD 800. The Polynesians were organized in petty chieftainships. European discovery began in 1521 when the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan sighted Pukapuka in the Tuamotu Archipelago. Dutchman Jacob Roggeveen discovered Bora Bora in the Society Islands in 1722, and the British explorer Samuel Wallis visited Tahiti in 1767. The French explorer Louis Antoine de Bougainville visited Tahiti in 1768, while the British explorer James Cook visited in 1769. Christian missions began with Spanish priests who stayed in Tahiti for a year from 1774; Protestants from the London Missionary Society settled permanently in Polynesia in 1797. King Pomare II of Tahiti was forced to flee to Moorea in 1803; he and his subjects were converted to Protestantism in 1812. French Catholic missionaries arrived on Tahiti in 1834; their expulsion in 1836 caused France to send a gunboat in 1838. In 1842, Tahiti and Tahuata were declared a French protectorate, to allow Catholic missionaries to work undisturbed. The capital of Papeete was founded in 1843. In 1880, France annexed Tahiti, changing the status from that of a protectorate to that of a colony. In the 1880s, France claimed the Tuamotu Archipelago, which formerly belonged to the Palmer dynasty, without formally annexing it. Having declared a protectorate over Tahuatu in 1842, the French regarded the entire Marquesas Islands as French. In 1885, France appointed a governor and established a general council, thus giving it the proper administration for a colony. The islands of Rimatara and Rurutu unsuccessfully lobbied for British protection in 1888, so in 1889 they were annexed by France. Postage stamps were first issued in the colony in 1892. The first official name for the colony was Etablissements De L'Océanie (Settlements in Oceania); in 1903 the general council was changed to an advisory council and the colony's name was changed to Etablissements Français De L'Océanie (French Settlements in Oceania). In 1940 the administration of French Polynesia recognised the Free French Forces and many Polynesians served in World War II. In 1946, Polynesians were granted French citizenship and the islands' status was changed to an overseas territory; the islands' name was changed in 1957 to Polynésie Française (French Polynesia). In 1962, France's early nuclear testing ground of Algeria became independent and the Mururoa Atoll in the Tuamotu Archipelago was selected as the new testing site; tests were conducted underground after 1974. In 1977, French Polynesia was granted partial internal autonomy; in 1984, the autonomy was extended. French Polynesia became a full overseas collectivity of France in 2004. In September 1995, France stirred up widespread protests by resuming nuclear testing at Fangataufa atoll after a three-year moratorium. The last test was on January 27, 1996. On January 29, 1996, France announced it would accede to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and no longer test nuclear weapons.

Referenda:

In a 1958 referendum, French Polynesia chose to remain a French territory, subject to the French constitution, rather than become independent and lose French economic assistance.

Recent Significant Events:

The most important historical event of the era was the discovery of Tahiti by Samuel Wallis on 17 June 1767. The English captain anchored the Dolphin at Taiarapu in the southern part of the island. The islanders were so hostile he was obliged to intimidate them by firing cannons. The next day the ship moved to the North of the island looking for a more pleasant anchorage, and on 23 June, he landed in Matavai Bay. In more recent history, the atolls of Mururoa and Fangataufa which are located in French Polynesia, (between 1966 and 1974), France conducted nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere at the atolls, including 41 nuclear tests and five "safety trials". In a safety trial, a nuclear weapon is destroyed with conventional explosives with no, or very little, release of nuclear energy. With the exception of four tests (three at Mururoa and one at Fangataufa) carried out on barges floating in the lagoons, most atmospheric tests were carried out, suspended from balloons, hundreds of metres above the lagoons so that there was very little local fallout of radioactive material. Indeed, most of the radioactive material was transported into the upper atmosphere and dispersed. Thereafter, testing was conducted underground in sealed vertical shafts some 500-1100 metres beneath atoll rims or under the lagoons. Between 1975 and 1996, a total of 137 deep underground tests took place, and 10 underground "safety trials" were also conducted.

Music, Dance, Handicraft and Patrimony:

Petroglyphs gained wide popularity in this region as a graphical art form that denoted a noble character. One would even come across the wooden or stone human figured statuettes, which was known as ti'i or tiki in the Marquesan language this place. The native people indulge in dancing whatsoever maybe the cause. Be it just for enjoyment or be it defying their enemy, be it celebrating one's victory or be it engaging oneself just for a festive cause, dancing has been a major aspect of Polynesian society. Hawaiian and Spaniards brought about stringed instruments during the period of 17th century like the pu, a conch shell that was used for delivering a particular announcement. Vivo is a nose flute, which was used during a particular function that was accompanied with the native song and dance.

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