

A  
Botanical  
and  
Historical  
tour





### **1. FRANGIPANI TREE (TIPANIE) *Plumeria Alba***

**Tipanie is the real symbol of the tropical Paradise.** The Polynesian people usually wear the *tipanie* behind their ear even though its sap is toxic. The large variety of this plant includes flowers ranging in color from white to purple (even pink and orange). The blossoms enhance public areas and beautify the women.

### **2. MULBERRY PLANT (NONI, NONO) *Morinda Citrifolia***

The *noni* is a world-renowned plant thanks to its **phenomenal medicinal properties**. Since 1990, many people use *noni* juice to treat infections prevent tumors and relieve rheumatism. The *noni* also calms muscle pain and helps fight against tiredness and purify the body. This is the reason why so many Polynesians drink *noni* juice in spite of its strong smell.

Polynesian people use the roots to color *tapa* (a plant tissue) and the “*more*” their traditional dance skirt.

### **3. TIARE TAHITI (TIARE MAOHI) *Gardenia tahitensis***

The *Tiare Tahiti* is the **emblem of our islands**. The sweet scent of this pure white flower fills the air of our gardens and public places. We all love wearing a *tiare tahiti* behind our ear, men like flower buds and women prefer open flowers. But wearing a flower usually follows a funny custom: the taken persons should wear the flower behind their left ear, and the single person should wear it behind their right ear. Polynesian people created this custom to signal whether they're available for romance or not.

We also use *tiare tahiti* to make flower leis to offer our guests as a warm and generous welcome.

The *Tiare Tahiti* is one of the main components of the famous *Tahiti Monoï* (coconut oil for the skin), which is often sold with a dried *tiare* inside the bottle.

### **4. GARDENIA (TIARE TAINA) *Gardenia Augusta***

The *tiare taina*, Tahitian name of the Gardenia, is indisputably **THE Polynesian rose**. The plant flowers from September to February. During this period, you can wear this beautiful rose behind your ear or enjoy it in a flower lei or a bridal bouquet.

### **5. BOUGAINVILLEA (VARE'AU) *Bougainvillea Glabra***

The bougainvillea is greatly appreciated in French Polynesia. The women praise the beauty of their bougainvillea because of its large panel of colors from purple to pure white in their gardens. This plant can be grown as an ornamental tree or dwarf ornamental in the garden and even as a bonsai plant inside the house.

### **6. HIBISCUS TREE (PURAU) *Hibiscus Tiliaceus***

In French Polynesia, the *purau* blooms all along the shoreline of our islands and also likes other water points such as lakes and rivers. Its seeds float on the water pushed by the wind and currents and take root when they reach a new shore.

The flower (similar to their cousin, the hibiscus) has **the ability to change color throughout the day**; in the morning its petals open yellow then become orange and fade to red brick at night.

The Polynesian people enjoy its welcomed shade, and use the fallen flowers for medicine and the leaves as ecological plates, a custom still practiced by our young people. The wood is used to manufacture canoes and paddles. Dancers use its bark to make their “grass skirt” called in Tahitian *more*, and other components of their traditional dance costume.

## **7. WATER LILY** *Nymphaea Capensis*

The water lily is an aquatic plant that grows along Polynesian water points. Often confused with its close cousin Egypt lotus, the water lily is native to India. It owes its name to the fact that the Greeks dedicated it to the nymphs.

Its silhouette is the image of well being and good health. Because of its purifying and moisturizing properties, the herbal products derived from the flowers have a soothing and relaxing effect and are especially recommended for stress and anxiety.

In French Polynesia, this beautiful freshwater flower has three colors: white, pink and purple. However it is interesting to know that only the white water lily has medicinal properties. In fact this plant helps to heal itching, insect bites and minor burns.

## **8. TI PLANT (TI, AUTI)** *Cordyline Fruticosa*

The *ti* plant, or more commonly known as *auti* is **a sacred plant**. Tradition tells that the god Ta'aroa offered his *ti* plants to humans so that they could eat during the long periods of famine. The roots of the plants are high in carbohydrates and gave the Polynesians strength to survive against starvation. Hawaiians ate the leaves of the green plants as spinach.

The *ti* plant was also essential to **traditional Polynesian wedding ceremonies**. Marriage was very important and no decision was taken lightly. When two people wanted to get married, they had to have the approval of their respective families. Once obtained the consent of the families a branch of *ti* was planted at their *fare* (houses). In addition to openly announcing their new situation of "engaged people" it symbolized the blessing of their elders and the wish that abundance would fill their home.

Finally, a branch of *ti* was used by the *tahua* (priest) to bless their union and declare them man and wife.

### **A. THE LAPITA « MARAE »**

The mare Lapita was built in 2010 in a traditional fashion under the guidance of the archaeologies Mark Eddowes.

The marae is a rock platform with two levels the (ahu) elevated level being for the Gods or ancestors. It was used for religious ceremonies and rituals

The wooden ornamental stele 'unu' erected upon the ahu provided a resting place for family spirits whom are called upon during the ceremony for help.

## **9. TAMARIND (TAMERENI)** *Tamarindus Indica*

Polynesians love the tamarind tree. As children everyone enjoyed the sweet tropical fruit found in their gardens. Most commonly eaten raw, tamarind is also cooked into jam or syrup. Tamarind seeds were roasted to make a cheap coffee substitute.

## **10. YLANG YLANG (MOTO'I)** *Cananga Odorata*

Widely used in cosmetics, the essential oil of ylang-ylang has antidepressant and relaxing virtues recommended in cases of anxiety, depression and arrhythmia.

In our islands, Ylang-Ylang is mainly used for its flowers commonly put behind the ear, for its exotic scent and its long lasting perfume. In the Marquesas Islands, the *moto'i* is an important ingredient in the manufacturing of their famous love potion, the *Kumu'hei*.

Coco Chanel has internationally spread the aroma of this flower with its perfume **Chanel n 5**.



### **11. KAVA (TE KAVA) *Piper Methysticum***

The beverage extracted from the Kava was usually consumed during traditional ceremonies, like the arrival of allied clans and traders on the island. To prepare this drink, they had to harvest the roots of the kava and crush them using a *penu* (pestle) before mixing it with water. The solution was then poured into a coconut shell and shared between each and every participants of the ritual. **This tradition symbolized friendship, understanding and unity among the participants.**

The numbing and euphoric effects of the kava drink were sought by Polynesians to relieve pain, especially during *tatau* (tattoo) ceremonies.

### **12. BANANA TREE (MEI'A, FE'I) *Musa Paradisiaca***

Contrary to the popular opinion, **the banana is actually a grass** (the largest grass in the world). Bananas are rich in vitamins and minerals and are the most popular and consumed fruit by the Polynesians. Despite many species, there are two major varieties:

- The **mei'a** are bananas which are eaten raw.

- **Fe'i** or plantains are bananas that require cooking before being eaten. Lapita people introduced the latter variety in Polynesia.

### **13. SOUR SOP (TOTARA) *Annona Muricata***

The sour sop is a tree whose fruit is eaten raw in juice or ice cream. Rich in vitamins, calcium and minerals, its fruit actively fights against certain cancers and various infections. The infusion of its leaves, incorporated in the bath of newborns is a natural treatment to calm their nerves and fight insomnia and stress. **Polynesians call this remedy ra'au ira.** Be careful, it is however strongly recommended not to drink this infusion, ingested this solution would cause a form of atypical Parkinsonism. The fruit itself is also not recommended to five months or more pregnant women. But rubbed straight onto the skin, the sour sop leaves are an excellent insect and mosquito repellent.

### **14. MADAGASCAR ROSY PERIWINKLE (PEREVAI, TIHAPAI) *Catharanthus Roseus***

This small decorative plant wears well its Latin name "Catharanthus" that means "**flower which purifies.**" Despite the toxicity of its stems and foliage, this plant is one of the oldest medicinal plants in the world. It fights against diabetes and hypertension, helps to heal infected wounds and insect bites. Its malaria, anticancer and anti-leukemic assets have always made it a plant widely used in medicines. The infusion of its flowers is particularly widely used as an anthelmintic.

Remember that many sailors from around the world have long benefited from its appetite suppressant properties. During their long journeys, they survived by eating less food and making the ship lighter.

### **15. JAVA PLUM, JAMBUL (PISTAS) *Syzygium Cumini***

In French Polynesia, the Java plum is usually planted as an ornamental tree or for the shade it provides. Its raw fruit is rarely consumed or manipulated because it has an unfortunate tendency to **stain the tongue, fingers, clothing, etc...** However, after cooking, it can produce delicious jams.

In temperate countries the wood is a very popular fuel for heating homes. The medicinal properties of this tree are many; its seeds actively fight against diabetes, the leaves are used to control blood pressure and treat gingivitis and the fruit is packed with vitamins A and C.

### **16. ORCHID** *Orchidaceae*

The refined elegance of this flower has attracted gardeners around whole world. The Orchidaceae family includes **over 25,000 species today**, a number that keeps on increasing due to the hybridization of different varieties of this beautiful flower.

The orchid is becoming more and more essential as an ornamental plant to Polynesian gardens and greenhouses where they're cultivated with passion and admiration.

### **17. PANDANUS, SCREW PINE (FARA)** *Pandanus Tectorius*

The *fara* is used by Polynesians since the dawn of time. With woven leaves, we make the roof of our *fare* (houses), and local handicrafts. Our mamas weave sumptuous *peue* (matts) or baskets, hats and hand bags which are proudly worn by Polynesian people. After undergoing a special treatment, the roots are used in the manufacturing of our traditional dance costumes. Its large fruit, formerly consumed by the Polynesians, serves today as decoration in flower leis. Its flower, the **Hinano** exalts a sweet fragrance and has inspired the name of the famous local brand of beer Hinano. Tradition tells us that we must throw *fara* seeds into the sea in the direction the canoe will take before launching it in water. For this ritual the Polynesians pray and ask the god To'ahiti (god of the valleys and precipices) to ensure a safe passage for the canoe and its crew.

### **18. PUA KENI KENI, PERFUME FLOWER TREE (HAUOU, HAOU PUA)** *Fagraea Berteriana*

This tree was once "tabu" because of the status Polynesians originally gave it. This was the god *Tane*, god of the forest who brought the *pua* into the human's world. Its wood was exclusively dedicated to him and only his representations could appear on it. But nowadays, its wood is used for furniture and sculptures.

This plant is more renowned for **its odorous yellow flower** than for its wood. Exhaling a heady fragrance, its flower called *pua* is used in the making of the famous Marquesas love potion, the *Kumu'hei* (or *Umu hei*).

## **B. THE TAHU'EA MARAE**

Marae Tahu'ea according to oral tradition is one of the principal marae of the Chiefs of Te-Fare-Nui-Atea along with the now destroyed Tiatara'i

Tahu'ea was constructed with a stone taken from a marae of the same name on Ra'iatea Island and was dedicated to the sea-god Ruahatu. Certainly the god Tane was likely invoked here by the famous navigator priest Tupaia during his visit with James Cook during the first voyage. He being the primary deity worshipped on the island.

The marae has a platform called an ahu made up of upright coral and basalt slabs with an interior fill. The ahu has abutted to its face an *ava'a* or smaller platform upon which were laid the images of the different gods or *atua* during ceremonies.

Out fronting the whole are large uprights in front of which sat the chief or priest during ritual. The whole is oriented to a mountain called Pahi-area.

This marae dates to around the 16th to 18th Century.

This archaeological site was graciously donated by Kalani Wimer, to the Hotel Lapita.

**19. LEMONGRASS, CITRONELA GRASS (TI TAPORO)** *Cymbopogon Citratus*

After rinsing the freshly picked leaves of lemongrass, they are used to prepare an infusion able to calm digestive disorders and to fight the flu and especially diabetes: its hypoglycemic virtues help reduce the concentration of sugar in the blood.

The essential oil, as well as the plant itself, are an **excellent insects and mosquitoes repellent**. The lemongrass is also a very good antiseptic. To make this, simply crush the leaves, pour on a few drops of water and apply to the skin. This remedy would also work for skin irritation.

**20. PORCELAIN ROSE** *Etilingera Elatior*

Fond of water points, the porcelain rose first appears as a fragrant bud made of thick waxy petals. Once the bud blooms, a beautiful pink porcelain rose (or bright red, depending on the species) appears similar to porcelain at about 60 cm above the ground. Because they are long lasting and have incredible color, these beautiful flowers are essential to a Christmas bouquets.

**21. COCONUT TREE (HA'ARI)** *Cocos Nucifera*

The coconut tree is undoubtedly **the Pacific welfare tree**. Since immemorial times, its uses by the Tahitians are multiple. The trunk was used for the construction of the *fare* (houses) and the manufacturing of domestic utensils. The woven leaves (*ni'au*) are still used as a roofing material and to make baskets. The coconut provides flavored water, and its heart, a spongy pulp (called *uto*) coated with a fat used to make the coconut oil. Finally, The meat is grated and squeezed to obtain the famous milk used in the preparation of Tahitian **raw fish in coconut milk**.

The famous **Monoï de Tahiti** is made with coconut oil and lots of tiare tahiti flowers.

Mixed with some coconut water, the coconut oil is used in traditional medicine for treating poisoning and kidney disease.

**C. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE VAITOTIA**

This archaeological site is remarkable having the earliest ceremonial site or marae so far identified in East Polynesia. A small square stone pavement "paepae" had in its center a large piece of coral into which was set an upright "ofa'iti'a" representing a deified ancestor that was worshipped here.

Adjacent to this is a rectangular pavement of basalt stone that likely fronted an ancient priests house. This pavement is still visible.

Basalt flakes in the vicinity point to the place being used for stone working possibly to make tools such as adzes many of which have been recovered across the site during excavations.

The marae and paepae date to around 1000 A.D.



## **22. MANGO TREE (VI POPA'A) *Mangifera Indica***

**The mango tree is the world's most popular fruit tree.** Its fruit, rich in vitamins A and C, considerably varies in size, shape, color, fragrance and taste, depending on the variety and the stage of maturity.

The fruit helps to tighten the skin tissue and actively fight against the proliferation of worms in the body. It is said that the leaves were used in *ra'au tahiti* (traditional medicine) to treat respiratory diseases such as asthma and bronchitis.

## **23. ALOE VERA *Aloe Vera***

Aloe vera is a worldwide renowned plant thanks to its health benefits. It's used to **treat, heal and protect the skin** due to wounds, sunburn and burns.

Cosmetically speaking, its moisturizing and regenerating properties help heal eczema and acne. Aloe vera is also used to fight against aging skin.

Carefully ingested Aloe vera improves digestion and cleans the intestinal flora.

## **24. INDIAN COLEUS (TEREVETE) *Solenostemon Scutellarioides***

This small native herb from India and China is perfectly naturalized in French Polynesia. Sometimes it is variegated **red-green leaves, sometimes lime-green, sometimes red-purplish it makes** beautiful bouquets and flower leis.

## **25. VANILLA (VANIRA) *Vanilla tahitensis***

Vanilla is a staple of the Polynesian cuisine as it pleasantly spices many of our culinary preparations, sweet or savory. **The Polynesian people cut the pod in half to release the thousands of small black grains and the sweet aroma it contains.**

Vanilla is an excellent stimulant of the nervous system and body it fights against mental and physical tiredness. It is particularly recommended against hysteria, depression or melancholy. IT also fights rheumatism and promotes muscular effort.

Vanilla extract is often used in cosmetics and perfume it's wonderful smell stimulates the senses. Its **protective and nourishing properties** are commonly cited in the composition of many creams and skin lotions.

Some Tahitian women also like to rub their hair with black vanilla beans and men wear a vanilla pod behind their ear.

## **26. HIBISCUS (AUTE) *Hibiscus Rosa-sinensis***

This beautiful shrub was very important to the early Polynesians. Planted at specific locations the red *aute* (pronounced a-ou-te) **helped the ancient Polynesian people to identify paths leading to mountain passes.** The continuous blooming of its remarkable bright red flowers ensured the rapid visibility of this shrub that can reach 2 meters.

Tradition tells that the Polynesians also used hibiscus in *ra'au tahiti* (traditional medicine) for its antispasmodic and sedative properties. Tahitian rubbed petals to obtain a black dye they used to paint their bodies and faces. Europeans used this same black dye to polish their shoes.

## **27. FIRECRACKER PLANT, CORAL PLANT *Russelia Equisetiformis***

This plant embellishes gardens and public parks. Its intriguing name comes from the interpretation of its small red flowers scattered around the plant, like fireworks on a green night.

Here in French Polynesia the firecracker plant is ornamental but it is said that in Mexico this plant possess medicinal properties used to treat malaria and cure cancer.

### **28. RED GINGER (OPUHI) *Alpinia Purpurata***

This decorative plant loves to embellish Polynesian gardens. The petals of *opuhi* are commonly found in the manufacturing of necklaces, wreaths and costumes for fashion and dance contests. It is also very interesting to come across girls wearing *opuhi* petals as false finger nails. Its popular and exotic appearance gives it an important role in bouquets of all kinds and for any occasion.

### **29. GIANT FERN, KING FERN (TE NAHE) *Angiopteris Evecta***

During tribal wars, the warriors of the island of Huahine went to take refuge in the moist valleys where they only had food from this large fern. Because of this major role the *Nahe* played, it became the **emblem of Huahine**. The terms "*Huahine I te nahe to'eto'e*" (Huahine, fresh fern island) and "*Huahine i te turatura nahe*" (Huahine, respected fern island) remind us of this memorable story.

### **30. SPANISH JASMINE (PITATE) *Jasminum Grandiflorum***

Even though this plant often has a bushy appearance, the Spanish jasmine is a vine and its innocent little white flower gives off a powerful and very sweet scent.

Thanks to **Jasmine tea**, the relaxing properties are proven, like its cosmetic properties.

Tip: Pick and wash some jasmine flowers, then soak them in hot water for 5 minutes and wash your face with this scented water. In a few days you will see your skin smoother and softer.

### **31. CROTON PLANT (RA'AU PUREPURE) *Codiaeum Variegatum***

The croton is an ornamental plant whose beauty and uniqueness of its leaves are very popular. Most commonly used to make **colorful bouquets**, the croton plant although slightly toxic, is also used in our *ra'au tahiti* (traditional medicine), to treat sprains and children's scratches. This remedy is locally called **ra'au fati**. All you need to do is to simply rub the leaves of this plant on your (childrens) scratches.

## **D. THE MUSEUM**

Vaitotia is listed as the oldest archaeological site of French Polynesia... The story takes place here at the exact location of your hotel Maitai Lapita Village, we're in the 900 year.

Many reproductions of objects found during the excavations of Dr. Yoshiko Sinoto in the 1970s and original objects of great browsers allow us, through this museum, to take you in the footsteps of the Lapita culture.

The Lapita people, most ancient Polynesian civilization and proud ancestors of Tahitian people, have proven to be true potters; a passion also shared by Peter Owen. The artist has been inspired by the Lapita to make potteries (that decorate the museum) and the very concept of this hotel based on the remnants of its rich past.

It's on this lovely island full of resources that the famous hawaiian artist Bobby Holcomb decided to elect house. Ardent devotee of our islands and our culture, Bobby Holcomb were very interested in the Lapita culture. Through relevant paintings of this talented artist and narrative texts available, immerse yourself in the fascinating history of this people.



### **32. UMBRELLA PLANT (MOU ? AIHERE PAPE ?) *Cyperus Involucratus***

Often confused with its close cousin *Cyperus Papyrus*, this ornamental plant is more commonly called "Umbrella" because of its foliage similar to the colonial times ladies' umbrellas. Although it differs from the "Papyrus" by its larger and more slender leaves, the umbrella can also be used to make the Egyptian papyrus.

In French Polynesia, it grows abundantly around fresh water bodies and has an exotic look to it.

### **33. BREADFRUIT TREE ('URU, MAIORE) *Artocarpus Altilis***

The *Uru* has every reason to be recognized as **the natural Polynesian bread**. The fruit is rich in starch and Tahitian people enjoy it with canned meat.

The *Uru* is the main ingredient of the famous Marquesan *ka'aku* (also called *poipoi*). The preparation of this dish consists of beating the breadfruit with a *penu* (pestle) until you get a homogeneous paste and then the dough is generously soaked in coconut milk and eaten hot.

The wood of the tree is used in making canoes, weapons, musical instruments and the sap was used for calking the canoe.

According to Polynesian legends, the breadfruit tree had once been a man named Rua-ta'ata. The drought that had hit the island had deprived the local population, including his family from food for several days already. Desperate and concerned about the well being of his wife and children, this man would be transformed into this beautiful breadfruit tree to feed his family.

### **34. PAPAYA TREE ('I'ITA) *Carica Papaya***

Papaya has many nutritional and medicinal properties. Its ability to produce fruit throughout the year allows it to satisfy the Polynesians nutritional needs. Applied on the skin, its crushed fruit puree quickly calms burns down and acts as a powerful natural antioxidant. Ingested, **the list of the papaya's benefits is long and yet non-exhaustive**. Fermented papaya helps to boost the immune system and fight against premature aging of the cells.

In addition to its health virtues, papaya is also widely used in cosmetology its **purifying, moisturizing and lightening properties** ensure it a very bright future in this area.

Is easy to distinguish the male tree which has long clusters of small white flowers while the female tree has flowers and fruits growing at the very base of its trunk.

### **35. TANNIA, ARROWLEAF ELEPHANT EAR (TARUA) *Xanthosoma Sagittifolium***

Once its leaves are washed, boiled and drained, they are eaten as Polynesian spinach. This dish is locally called "*fafa*" and is served with small pieces of chicken and is part of the famous *ma'a Tahiti (Tahitian feast)*.

A staple starch of the Polynesian cuisine, the *tarua*, is just like a potato and can be deliciously eaten as chips or pureed.

### **36. GIANT ELEPHANT EAR TARO (APE) *Alocasia Macrorrhiza***

Due to the impressive form of its foliage, the Ape is also known as the giant elephant ear. Polynesian people rarely eat the *ape* because of its irritating and stinging foliage, unlike its close cousin the *tarua*.

However when it rains children will use it as an umbrella.



**37. BEACH GARDENIA, ZEBRA WOOD (KAHAIA, TAFANO) *Guettarda Speciosa***

Widely known for the durability and hardness of its wood, the *Tafano* (its Tahitian name) is generally used in carpentry. It is still widely used in the manufacture of houses and everyday objects.

Fallen branches on the beach are used as fuel for the families who came under its welcoming shade to make a barbecue. When rinsed with seawater the leaves are biodegradable plates.

Finally, the flower called *Kahaia*, will not leave you indifferent despite its size this little flower exalts its subtle although very powerful scent. Moreover the *Kahaia* is often used in *Monoï*.

The roof structure and pôles of Lapita village are made of Kahaia Wood (known as local teck).

**38. ALEXANDRIAN LAUREL, BEAUTYLEAF TREE (TAMANU, POROATI, 'ATI) *Calophyllum Inophyllum***

The robust nature of the wood of this tree makes it a highly sought after for carpentry, sculpture and in the manufacturing of wooden *fare* (houses).

The nuts are harvested to produce the **Tamanu oil**, also called **the miracle oil**. Polynesians from a very young age on are accustomed to this oil that is used for massaging newborns. It is used to relieve insect bites, to treat infections and sunburn. The anti-inflammatory and regenerative properties of *Tamanu* oil help moisturize, soothe and heal burns especially sunburn. You can also find *Tamanu* oil in cosmetics products like cream or ointment to beautify the skin texture and fight against cellular aging.

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