SOFTWARE & TECH

How To Get To Bora Bora

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Introduction: The Allure of Bora Bora

Few places on Earth stir the imagination quite like Bora Bora. With its iconic overwater bungalows, turquoise lagoon, and the dramatic silhouette of Mount Otemanu, this small island in French Polynesia is often described as the ultimate tropical paradise. For many travelers, the journey to this South Pacific gem is as much a part of the dream as the destination itself. Yet, the very remoteness that makes Bora Bora so enchanting also makes planning the trip a unique challenge. If you have ever wondered **how to get to Bora Bora**, you are not alone. The process involves multiple flights, careful timing, and a few important decisions. This guide will walk you through every step of the journey, from choosing your international gateway to stepping onto the white sands of your resort. By the end, you will have a clear roadmap for turning your Bora Bora dream into a reality.

Understanding how to get to Bora Bora is the first and most critical step in planning a seamless vacation. The island does not have direct flights from most countries, which means your journey will almost certainly include a stop in Tahiti, the main international hub of French Polynesia. From there, a short connecting flight or a scenic boat ride will bring you to Bora Bora itself. While the logistics may seem daunting at first, the process is surprisingly straightforward once you understand the key components. This article will break down every option, highlight the best strategies for saving time and money, and answer the most common questions travelers have about reaching this remote paradise.

Understanding Bora Bora's Location

Before diving into the specifics of flights and routes, it is helpful to understand exactly where Bora Bora is located. The island is part of the Society Islands archipelago in French Polynesia, which is itself a collection of 118 islands spread across the South Pacific Ocean. Bora Bora lies approximately 230 kilometers (about 140 miles) northwest of Tahiti, the largest island in French Polynesia and the location of the main international airport, Faa'a International Airport (PPT). This proximity to Tahiti is the key to understanding how to get to Bora Bora: almost all international visitors must first fly into Tahiti and then take a short second flight or a boat transfer to reach Bora Bora.

The island itself is relatively small, with a total land area of just over 30 square kilometers. Its famous lagoon is encircled by a series of motus, or small islets, which are home to many of the luxury resorts. Bora Bora's airport, officially named Bora Bora Airport (BOB) but also known as Motu Mute Airport, is located on one of these motus, just a short boat ride from the main island of Vaitape. This geographical setup means that even after you land in Bora Bora, you will still need a boat transfer to reach your final accommodation, adding another layer of adventure to your arrival.

The Essential Steps: A Bird's-Eye View

To make the process easy to grasp, here is a simplified overview of the journey. Every traveler asking **how to get to Bora Bora** will follow these three main stages:

1. Fly to Tahiti (PPT): This is the only international airport in French Polynesia. All long-haul flights arrive here.
2. Connect to Bora Bora (BOB): From Tahiti, you will take a domestic flight on Air Tahiti or a private charter to Bora Bora's island airport.

3. Transfer to Your Resort: Upon landing at Bora Bora Airport, you will take a boat or a seaplane directly to your hotel or resort.

That is the core of it. Now, let us examine each step in much greater detail, including the best airlines, airports, and strategies for making your trip as smooth as possible.

Step One: Choosing Your International Gateway and Flight to Tahiti

Major Airlines and Routes to PPT

Your journey begins with finding a flight to Faa'a International Airport (PPT) in Papeete, Tahiti. Several major airlines serve this route from various global hubs. The most common points of departure include:

- Los Angeles (LAX): This is the most popular gateway for North American travelers. Air Tahiti Nui and French Bee both offer direct flights from Los Angeles to Papeete. The flight time is approximately 8 to 9 hours, making it one of the most convenient options.
- San Francisco (SFO): United Airlines also offers direct flights from San Francisco to Papeete, with a similar flight time to LAX.
- Seattle (SEA): Seasonal direct flights are sometimes available from Seattle, though these are less frequent.
- Auckland (AKL): For travelers coming from New Zealand or Australia, Air Tahiti Nui and Air New Zealand offer direct flights from Auckland to Papeete, taking about 5 hours.
- Tokyo (NRT): Air Tahiti Nui and Japan Airlines connect Tokyo's Narita Airport with Papeete in approximately 11 hours.
- Paris (CDG): Air Tahiti Nui and French Bee also operate flights from Paris to Papeete, though these are long journeys of around 22 hours including a refueling stop.
- Other Connecting Routes: Many travelers also connect through other Pacific hubs such as Honolulu (HNL), Fiji (NAN), or Easter Island (IPC), though these options often require additional stops and longer total travel times.

Best Practices for Booking Your Flight to Tahiti

When planning how to get to Bora Bora, the flight to Tahiti is your single most important booking. Here are some tips to consider:

- Book Early: Flights to Papeete, especially during peak season (May to October), can fill up months in advance. Aim to book your international flight at least 6 to 9 months ahead of time for the best availability and price.
- Consider Your Connection: If you are flying from a city that does not have a direct flight to PPT, plan your connection carefully. Los Angeles is a common transit point, so you might need to book a separate flight to LAX first, or look for an airline that offers a single itinerary with a connection.
- Check Baggage Allowances: Some airlines flying to Tahiti have strict baggage limits, and overweight fees can be steep. Be sure to check the allowance for your specific fare class, especially if you plan to bring snorkeling gear or camera equipment.
- Arrive the Night Before: Most flights from North America arrive in Papeete in the early morning. To ensure a smooth connection, consider arriving the evening before your domestic flight to Bora Bora. This gives you a buffer in case of delays and allows you to rest after your long flight.

Step Two: The Domestic Flight from Tahiti to Bora Bora

Air Tahiti: The Primary Carrier

The only commercial airline operating flights between Tahiti and Bora Bora is **Air Tahiti**. This is a critical point to understand when researching **how to get to Bora Bora**. Air Tahiti operates a fleet of ATR turboprop and small jet aircraft, and the flight from Papeete (PPT) to Bora Bora (BOB) takes approximately 50 minutes to 1 hour. The flight

itself is a scenic marvel, offering stunning views of the Society Islands, including Moorea, Huahine, and Raiatea, before the iconic shape of Bora Bora appears on the horizon.

Air Tahiti offers multiple flights per day between Tahiti and Bora Bora, but the schedule can vary by season. During peak travel times, there may be as many as 10 to 12 flights daily, while the off-season may see fewer options. It is essential to book your domestic flight in advance, as seats can sell out quickly, especially for the morning departures that align with international arrivals.

Booking Your Air Tahiti Flight

You have two main options for booking the domestic segment of your journey:

1. As Part of a Package: Many travelers book a vacation package that includes both the international flight and the domestic connection. This is often the most convenient and sometimes more cost-effective option, as resorts and tour operators handle the logistics.
2. Separately: If you are booking everything independently, you can book your Air Tahiti flight directly through their website or through a travel agent. Be aware that Air Tahiti operates on a separate reservation system from most international carriers, so you will need to manually match your flight times.

A word of caution: If you book your international and domestic flights separately, allow ample time for your connection. It is recommended to have at least 3 to 4 hours between your arrival in Tahiti and your departure for Bora Bora to account for customs, baggage claim, and any potential delays. If your international flight is delayed and you miss your domestic connection, you could be responsible for rebooking fees.

Private Charters and Seaplane Transfers

For those seeking a more exclusive or flexible experience, private charters and seaplane transfers are available. Companies like **Air Archipels** and **Heli-Inter Polynésie**offer private flights and seaplane transfers between Tahiti and Bora Bora. These options are significantly more expensive than a standard Air Tahiti ticket, but they offer unparalleled convenience and a truly memorable arrival. A seaplane transfer, for example, can land directly at your resort's private dock, eliminating the need for a boat transfer from the airport. This is a luxury option that some travelers choose for special occasions.

Step Three: From Bora Bora Airport to Your Resort

The Boat Transfer

Upon landing at Bora Bora Airport on Motu Mute, you will immediately notice that the terminal is small and open-air, giving you your first taste of the island atmosphere. After collecting your luggage, you will proceed to the dock area, where representatives from your resort will be waiting with signs. Almost every resort on Bora Bora provides a complimentary boat transfer for its guests. These boats range from small speedboats to larger luxury catamarans, and the ride to your resort typically takes between 10 and 30 minutes, depending on the location of your hotel.

The boat transfer is often one of the highlights of the journey. As you speed across the lagoon, the water shifts from deep blue to every shade of turquoise and emerald, and the view of Mount Otemanu grows more impressive with each passing minute. This is the moment when the reality of being in Bora Bora truly sets in.

Seaplane Direct to Resort

As mentioned earlier, if you have arranged a seaplane transfer, your pilot will meet you at the airport and fly you directly to your resort's overwater bungalow or private dock. This is an extraordinary experience, but it comes at a

premium. Most travelers will use the standard boat transfer provided by their accommodation.

Alternative Ways to Get to Bora Bora

By Cruise Ship

Another popular way to experience Bora Bora is by cruise ship. Several major cruise lines include Bora Bora as a port of call on their South Pacific itineraries. Ships like those from Paul Gauguin Cruises, Windstar, and some larger lines like Princess Cruises and Holland America occasionally visit the island. If you are on a cruise, you will arrive at the main port in Vaitape, and your journey to the island is simply a matter of walking off the ship. This is a fantastic option for those who want to see multiple islands in French Polynesia without dealing with multiple flights. However, your time on Bora Bora will be limited to the ship's port schedule, usually a single day or an overnight stay.

Private Yacht or Sailboat

For the more adventurous traveler, arriving by private yacht or sailboat is a dream come true. Bora Bora has a well-regarded marina and several anchorages. If you are sailing through the South Pacific, you can clear customs and

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