

Austral Islands, French Polynesia

One of the most remote and least-visited archipelagos in French Polynesia, the Austral Islands reward adventurous cruisers with dramatic limestone caves, humpback whale encounters, and living Polynesian traditions barely touched by tourism.

 Tender port (all islands)

 Typical call: 6-8 hrs

 Currency: CFP Franc (XPF)

 French & Tahitian

MY DAY IN PORT

Ship/Date: _____ Arrive: _____ All aboard: _____

Excursion: _____ Notes: _____

GETTING ASHORE

Docking: All Austral Islands are tender-only; ships anchor offshore and ferry passengers by tender to small village landings

Best For: Adventurous travelers seeking off-the-beaten-path Polynesia, whale watching (Jul–Oct), archaeology

Main Islands: Rurutu (caves), Tubuai (Bounty history), Raivavae (lagoon beauty), Rapa (remote), Rimatara (birds)

Don't Miss: Rurutu's Ana Ae'o limestone cave, Tubuai's Fort George, and traditional weaving demonstrations in village markets

 Getting around:

TOP THINGS TO DO

- Humpback Whale Watching (Rurutu)** — Between July and October, humpback whales from Antarctica gather in Rurutu's waters to mate and calve.
- Rurutu Cave Tour — Ana Ae'o & Ana Taupe'e** — Rurutu is dubbed the 'Troglydte Island' for good reason.
- Tubuai: Bounty Mutineers & Fort George** — After the Bounty mutiny in 1789, Fletcher Christian attempted to settle Tubuai, building an earthwork fort named Fort George at Ta'ahueia before...
- Village Weaving & Craft Demonstrations** — Rurutu is famous throughout French Polynesia for exceptionally fine woven pandanus products — hats, baskets, and mats.
- Raivavae Lagoon by Outrigger or Boat** — Often called the 'Bora Bora of the South,' Raivavae has a stunning turquoise lagoon ringed by reef motu.

BEST WALKS

- Moerai Village & Coastal Walk (Rurutu)** ~3 km · 1-1.5 hrs · Easy · Flat — From the Moerai tender quay, walk the coastal road south past the village church and waterfront, then loop back through the village market.
- Tubuai North Coast — Bloody Bay & Fort George** ~3 km · 1-1.5 hrs · Easy · Flat coastal road — From the northern landing, follow the flat coastal road east toward Bloody Bay — the shoreline where the Bounty mutineers clashed with islanders in 1789 — and on toward...

WEATHER · DAYLIGHT · MONEY

 **CLIMATE (AVG °F · RAINY DAYS)**

	Mon	High	Low	Rain
Apr		79°	76°	14d
Jun		75°	72°	11d
Aug		73°	70°	10d
Sep		73°	70°	9d
Oct		73°	71°	11d

 **DAYLIGHT &  MONEY**

Apr 6:18AM–5:51PM · Jun 6:43AM–5:28PM · Aug 6:29AM–5:50PM · Sep 6:01AM–5:59PM · Oct 5:32AM–6:09PM

 Currency: CFP Franc (XPF)

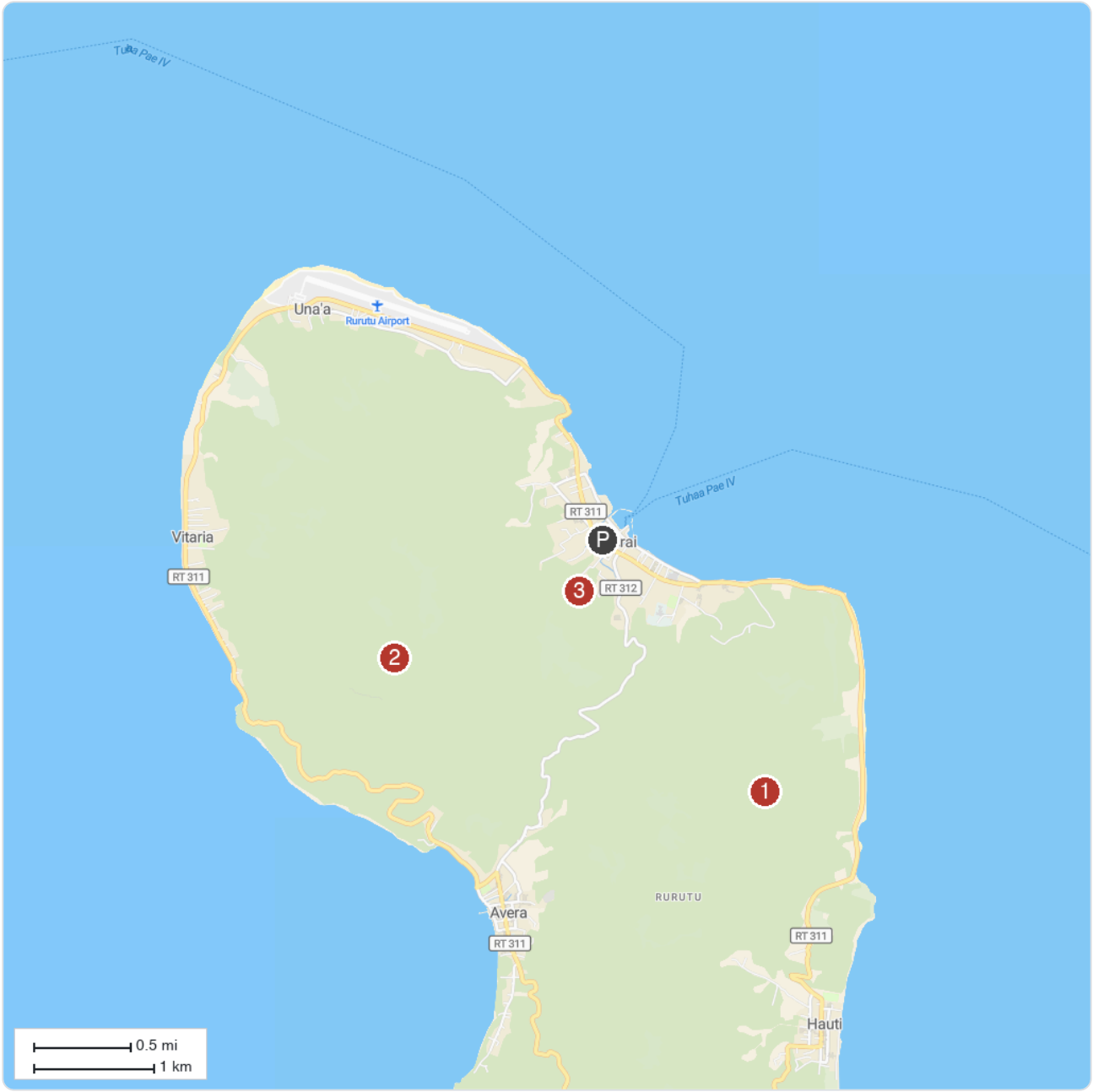
KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Bring XPF cash from Papeete. ATMs are scarce or absent on most Austral Islands, and card readers are rarely available in village markets or at tender landings. Stock up before departure.
- Tender seas can be rough. These are exposed anchorages in the South Pacific — swells are common. If you're prone to motion sickness, take medication before the tender ride ashore.
- Whale season is July–October. Humpbacks migrate to Rurutu's warm waters in those months. If your call falls outside this window, don't expect whale encounters — but caves and culture are year-round.
- Infrastructure is minimal by design. No resorts, chain restaurants, or large stores. Embrace it — the Australs' appeal is exactly this remoteness. A small day pack with water and snacks is wise.
- French is the working language; English is limited. Basic French phrases help enormously. Locals are warm and welcoming even across language barriers.
- Don't wander too far without a watch. Tender schedules are strict and the ship will not wait. Check the all-aboard time before exploring beyond the village on foot.

Austral Islands, French Polynesia — Port Map

cruiseports.org

Red = walkable sights · Amber = excursions farther out · P = cruise terminal. Numbers match the order you'd typically visit.



- 1

Archaeological Site
An ancient Polynesian stone temple platform on Rurutu, still used as a stop on the island's traditional 'Tere' pilgrimage circuit.
- 2

Natural Landmark
A limestone cave on Rurutu formed from uplifted ancient coral reef, with stalactites and remains of early burial sites inside.
- 3

Viewpoint
Rurutu's highest peak, with trails through volcanic interior forest leading to panoramic views over the coast and lagoon.
- P

Cruise port / terminal