


Module 9: Amusons-nous!

Topic 4 Content: Tahiti Notes

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Tahiti

Introduction



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Location

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Location



Tahiti is the largest island of the archipelago known as French Polynesia, which is located in the South Pacific Ocean. It is considered an "overseas country" of the French Republic. The capital of Tahiti is Pape'ete.

Image: Jardins de Pa'ofa'i, Pape'ete

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Geography

Tahiti

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The island is divided into two parts. The larger section is called *Tahiti Nui*, the smaller section is called *Tahiti Iti*. Like many other islands, Tahiti was formed by volcanic activity. Its landscape is mountainous and surrounded by coral reefs. In addition, the country is famous for black sand beaches.

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Relation to France


Tahiti

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Tahiti was annexed by France in 1880, and subsequently became a French colony. Almost sixty years passed before the people who originally settled in Tahiti, the Tahitians, were allowed to become French citizens. Today, people who live on Tahiti consist of Polynesians, Europeans, and Chinese. French is the only official language in the country, although the Tahitian language, Reo Tahiti, is widely spoken.

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Government

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Although Tahiti is an overseas country of the French Republic, and its inhabitants are French citizens, it has its own assembly, president, budget, laws, and is considered a republic.

Image: The French takeover of Tahiti, 1842

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Economy

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Economy



Tahiti relies on many imports to provide enough electricity and oil for its people. The country exports black pearls, vanilla, fruit like coconuts and limes, flowers, and fish. Its currency is the French Pacific Franc (CFP). In addition, citizens of Tahiti mainly farm and work in the tourist industry. In fact, tourism is a significant part of the island's economy.

Image: A cruise ship docks at the small port in Pape'ete.

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Culture

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Culture



The culture of Tahiti is rich and varied. As with many island nations, it has an ancient oral tradition, as well as other types of traditions, like tattooing and making outrigger canoes. Paul Gauguin was a French artist of the Impressionism period, and he is well known for his paintings of Tahiti. There is also a traditional dance called the ote'a that is frequently confused with the Hawaiian hula. The hula is slower and focuses on the hands and story-telling. Conversely, the ote'a is performed with very fast hip movements.

Image: Nave nave moe (Sacred spring, sweet dreams), 1894 by Paul Gauguin.

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Image: Nave nave moe (Sacred spring, sweet dreams), 1894 by Paul Gauguin.

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Education

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Education



The education system of Tahiti is very similar to that of France and Haiti. In addition, Tahiti has higher education, including the University of French Polynesia.

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