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Quick Guide To The Pacific

By Chic Retreats

The whole Pacific area is too vast to cover in one simple article, so we've selected some of the best places to stay.

Where is it?

For the purposes of this guide, the Pacific refers to Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and French Polynesia. There are thousands of islands scattered around this area of the Pacific and the Coral Sea, and many are largely unexplored by tourists.

Where can I stay?

Each of these countries is used to tourism and Australia and New Zealand in particular are not short of places to stay; from grand hotels to backpacker hostels. Europeans travelling to this part of the world usually stay for some time because of the long flights and because there's so much to explore. Take the weight off your sight-seeing feet and choose to stay in one of the growing number of boutique hotels. Specifically designed for those who like to stay somewhere different on their travels, these hotels pay careful attention to design, detail and service, ensuring that your stay is comfortable and straightforward so that you can concentrate on the cities, landscapes and activities nearby. In Australia, try the Tower Lodge in the country's Hunter Valley - internationally famous for its wine production. With just twelve rooms that are simply and elegantly furnished and designed for maximum comfort whatever the weather, a stay at Tower Lodge is the perfect start to an Australian tour. By contrast, try the luxury yachts that operate out of French Polynesia. A six or seven night cruise around these beautiful islands is refined by the number of spacious bedrooms - just 30 - and the addition of several sundeck levels, champagne breakfasts and on-land excursions designed to let you see the wonder of these islands at first hand.

What can I see?

You can't possibly fit everything that this area has to offer into a couple of paragraphs, but all of the countries of the Pacific benefit from astonishing coastlines, unforgettable mountain, desert and

forested areas, rich culture and an adventurous spirit. Whether you're bungee-jumping in New Zealand, surfing in Australia, river kayaking in French Polynesia or enjoying the scuba diving in Fiji, you're sure to want to return to the Pacific again to explore its delights.

How do I get around?

Transport varies from country to country. Australia and New Zealand are well served by airlines, so you can visit both countries in one trip, just move between New Zealand's North and South islands, or take in as much of Australia as you can. It's straightforward to hire cars in both countries and they operate public transport networks that are obviously cheaper and more regular in the cities than in rural areas. In Fiji, you can island hop by plane or, more cheaply and slowly, by ferry. Alternatively, there are reasonable bus services on the larger islands. French Polynesia is much the same, as are many of the other island groups in this part of the Pacific.

As more and more boutique hotels emerge to cater for travellers who appreciate design and service, the Pacific islands will feature in many more travel wish lists.

Chic Retreats is a collection of small, sophisticated hotels around the world that offer the traveller a true taste of luxury and service. Visit their website now by clicking on

<http://www.chicretreats.com>

Why Is The Atlantic Ocean So Desirable?

By Hallidae Thomason

Well it might be wise to start this column off by stating that it comes with a bias. I love the Atlantic Ocean and I would not move away from it in a million years. My bias comes from the first 22 years of my life living on the beaches of Santa Barbara over on the west coast.

Not what you expected to hear I bet! Most people that grow up in California either stay there, right on the coast, or at least stay on the western side of the states where they can at least enjoy the mountains. I however have quite a different take, not an unpopular one either, especially after you are able to hear and to think about what you are able to hear and think about what you are about to read and ponder in the following paragraphs about the wonders of the Atlantic Ocean.

Growing up on the west coast was great don't get me wrong but there were certainly things that tainted the beautiful serenity of the Pacific ocean for me that are not associated with the Atlantic ocean in my mind.

Number one thing would be the drugs. Basically in California if you weren't a weirdo you were high on some chemical that made you forget about the high cost of living that you had to deal with and the constant threat of earthquakes ever lurking on the horizon of my anxiety. The mixture of these more than average stressors drove me to cocaine and heroin, which was everywhere you turned in sunny

Quick Guide To The Pacific

California and especially on the beaches. I'm sickened to think about the dragnet that this was for me and a lot of other folks who wasted their chance at a productive start on the shores of an ocean that was not the Atlantic Ocean.

The other main thing I love about the Atlantic Ocean is the relative lack of surfing, a sport I once loved but now detest. I lost my love to the jaws of a viscous Pacific Ocean shark as she was paddling out on a large wave day you see, and have renounced the sport that took so much from me. Its not that the east coast waters don't have sharks its just that they are colder and less enjoyable to surf in (less waves.)

So overall it isn't a love of the Atlantic Ocean for me so much as it is a hatred for the Pacific Ocean that haunts me with all of the deepest recesses of my life that I want to recover from and forget about. Maybe this way I will be able to fall asleep at night without valium.

Hallidae Thomason understands that her love of the Atlantic Ocean is not rational—but when is true love rational? Go to

<http://www.funatlanticocean.info>

to learn many more wonders.



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