

WINTER 2008

CENTURION

MAGAZINE



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Time For Two • World of Books

BLACK BOOK

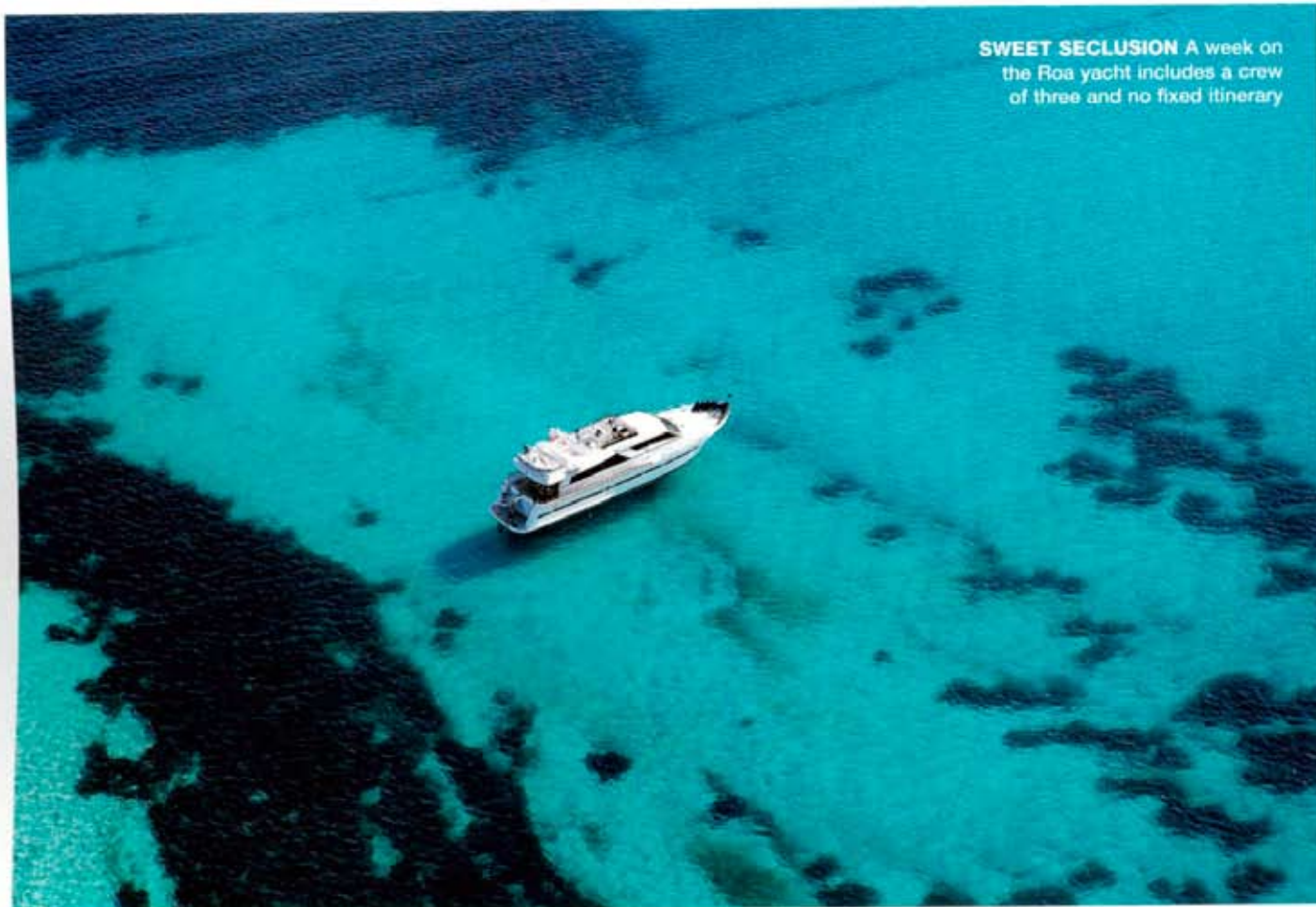
POLYNESIA YACHTING ITALY LONDON SPAS RAJASTHAN GOLF AVIATION

POLYNESIAN paradise

New openings in the South Pacific put remote French Polynesia at the centre of the luxury travel world map. Felix Milns reports

TURQUOISE MORNING At the new Four Seasons Bora Bora, each day starts with a refreshing view over the glittering ocean

WITH A TERRITORY LARGER THAN GREENLAND and a landmass half the size of Corsica, the islands of French Polynesia have become lodged in our collective consciousness as the embodiment of an unchanging paradise. Changes, however, of a design-conscious kind are afoot, with a pair of recent openings that are making the 20-hour flight seem a more appetising prospect. This September, **Four Seasons** waded ➤



SWEET SECLUSION A week on the Roa yacht includes a crew of three and no fixed itinerary

into Bora Bora's turquoise waters with its latest offering, a stylish collection of thatched overwater bungalows; while across the sea on the verdant mountains of Moorea, **Legends Resort** has unveiled a collection of exclusive private villas.

Clearly sensing the new competition, the traditional villa-only celebrity hangout of Hotel Bora Bora closed this month for a year-long multi-million dollar refurbishment. The islands are in vogue with the cinema world as well: IMAX is filming a dedicated feature on the islands starring surf hero Kelly Slater, and Universal Pictures is filming a romantic comedy on Bora Bora this November.

Seven years in the making, the Four Seasons resort sits on three interlinking islets on a 40km-long ring of coral reef that encircles the lagoon. Whereas most of Bora Bora's prime hotels are built on similar reef motus, looking inwards onto the lagoon and the lava peaks of the central island, the Four Seasons has arguably the finest views of Mount Otemanu, especially when the sun sets behind the shoulder of the island.

Those views are best enjoyed from the Sunset bar or the balcony of one of the hundred overwater thatched bungalows that stretch into the lagoon on two weathered wishbones of walkway. The largest bungalows feature private plunge pools but even standard rooms are suite-sized. Sliding doors separate

living area, master bedroom and bathroom, whose vast Corian carved bathtub has its own set of French doors. Outside there's a canopied dining area and open sun deck, with central stairs leading down to a lower balcony, where you can dive into the turquoise water or receive your boat-delivered breakfast.

Back onshore, the prospects are equally attractive: guests can luxuriate on the perfectly manicured beach, wade into the warm waters of the lagoon or plunge into the amorphous swimming pool, complete with a large whirlpool and backed by five 3.6m-high thatched

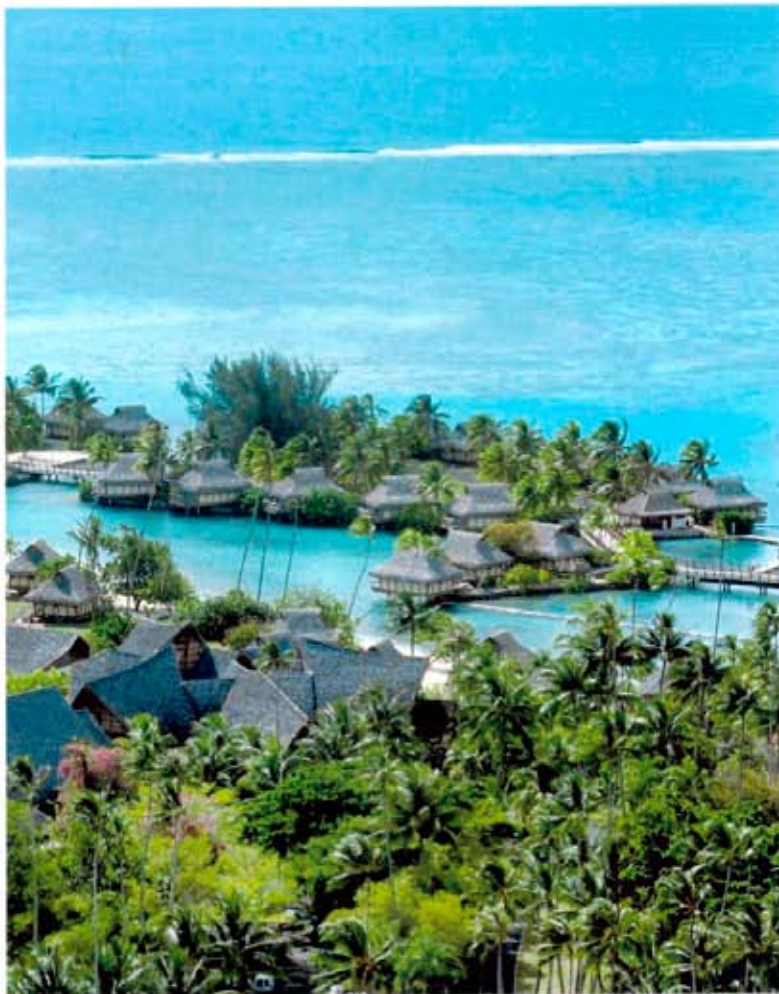
day beds that look like the upended prows of boats.

The resort also features seven spacious beachfront villas, ranging in size from 300 to 500sq m, as well as a kids club with a spray pool where children aged five to 12 can chase down ever-changing jets, and a private beach for teenagers with volleyball nets and a couple of tennis courts. Hidden at the back of the island where the surf crashes onto the reef is the cathedral-like spa, with its 12m ceilings, private treatment cabins and yoga platform stretching into the lagoon.

As an island, Bora Bora has many virtues worth exploring. You can hike the volcanic peaks, dive with lemon sharks, eagle rays and turtles or snorkel the pristine coral beds. One of the best ways to explore this cornucopia, though, ➤

HIDDEN AT THE BACK OF THE ISLAND
WHERE THE SURF CRASHES ONTO THE
REEF IS THE CATHEDRAL-LIKE SPA

**ISLAND
SPLENDOUR**
A sitting room
at the Four
Seasons, *right*;
the idyllic view
from a Legends
villa on Moorea,
below; Legends'
sunbedded decks;
the Roa yacht



is by boat. Historically, this was only possible on large cruise ships or private sail boats, but now guests can tap the services of the year-old **Roa Yachting Company**, the first to offer private motor yacht hire. The set-up was not plain sailing, which may explain their exclusivity: "It was very expensive to arrange access, but the major problem is parts. We are so very far away," says Jean-Christoph Drouard, manager of the company.

The boat, a 24m Falcon 72, has four ensuite guest cabins (two doubles, two twins) with an open-plan living area upstairs. The main dining area is on the rear deck, with a further sundeck above and fore. Amiably staffed by three dynamic Frenchmen, including an excellent chef, its engines allow for quick exploration of the six surrounding islands, while its low draught ensures access to coves and lagoons far beyond the cruise ships' reach.

LEGENDS HAS CARVED ITS OWN NICHE FOR THE DIY TRAVELLER WITH ITS HIGH-END SELF-CATERING MODEL

A 45-minute flight to the southeast is the "green" island of Moorea, famous for its stunning mountainous interior. The new Legends Resort, comprising 46 multi-roomed mountainside villas designed to look like boats sailing in a sea of palms, overlooks an idyllic coral-ringed bay, where a lone motu houses the hotel's private beach. The villas' balcony walls bow outwards from the decks, which come with a private jacuzzi and "fare pote'e" outdoor eating area.

Built from imported Indonesian woods and local volcanic stone and topped with wood shingle roofs, every room features sliding French doors and, instead of windows, wooden shutters that allow the wind to stream through. Inside, a granite-topped and well-stocked kitchen makes up half the open-plan living space.

Whereas the Four Seasons caters for your every whim, Legends has carved its own niche for the DIY traveller with its high-end self-catering model. The stylish villas, boutique and on-site deli – selling fine French wines, preserves and posh ready meals – give the resort a chic, epicurean feel, "as that is what we're good at", concedes manager Isabelle Caudrillier. For those not wanting to cook in every night, there's also a gourmet restaurant opening in November. All in all, the new developments across the islands make French Polynesia very tasty indeed.

ADDRESS BOOK

Four Seasons Bora Bora
offers one-bedroom
above-water bungalows from
\$1,000-\$5,800 per night.
fourseasons.com/borabora

Roa Yachting Company
offers all-inclusive four-day/
three-night cruises on their
motor yachts for up to eight
persons, from \$19,000- \$34,000.
roa-yachting.com

Legends Resort offers
two- to three-bedroom villas
from \$850-\$2,050 per night.
legendsresort.fr