

# Crafts



## Acknowledged art forms

In order to participate in the activities of Polynesian society such as subsistence farming, ocean navigation,

shelter and clothing fabrication, arts and crafts, entertainment, war and rituals, all families were required to contribute as well as develop skilled craftsmen. A high degree of traditional knowledge, skill and esthetic sense were required for making all sorts of very complex and prestigious items such as feather capes or hair adornments.

Each archipelago of French Polynesia can be recognized by its proud tradition of arts and crafts, including distinctive styles of weaving, carving in wood, bone, coral, mother-of-pearl, stone sculpting, sewing and making ornament.

For example, women of the Austral group became experts in weaving using the plant fibers of pandanus, coconut and aeho (reed). As keen observers and lovers of nature, their sumptuous



tifaifai bedspreads with plant and cultural designs are handsewn.

Marquesans excel in woodcarving and produce superb artifacts such as spears, wooden clubs and umete (fruit bowls), which can be used

as large dishes. They also work on volcanic rocks, coral, and even bone to sculpt thousands

of decorative and practical objects like penu or stone pestles.

The ever-changing colors of polished mother-of-pearl make it a favorite decorative element for embellishing dance costumes, or for making shimmering jewelry pieces.

# Tahiti Pearls



## The island jewels

The warm waters of the South Seas for many thousands of years have nurtured a great marvel, the "Pinctada margaritifera", Cumingi variety, named

for the biologist who classified it in 1820. This mother of pearl is unique due to its exceptionally pure lagoon habitat which brings out an incomparable natural color range that is passed on to cultured pearls as well, thereby creating real jewels.

Tahitian pearls have become a symbol of elegance and beauty throughout the world. Whether perfectly round, romantically pear-shaped, baroque or modern, of shimmering green known as "fly's wing", aubergine, blue-tinged, reddish-bronze, pinkish or more simply just steel gray, they have an iridescent luster and orient that charms the eye.

Every visitor desires to take home a Tahitian pearl as a souvenir, as the symbol of those fleeting and unforgettable moments spent

on vacation in the South Seas. Every woman has always had the secret wish to possess a pearl, the pearl, the jewel of the thousand and one nights, that contains a touch of magic, symbolizing great charm and perfection.

For visitors who wish to discover the secrets of Tahitian pearls, a visit to one of the pearl farms on the island of Tahaa or on one of the low islands in the Tuamotu is an experience not to be missed (see activities).

