

# Islands<sup>®</sup>

*Enthusiast Travel Since 1981*

YOUR  
WISH  
LIST  
FOR 2015  
P. 30

## 15 SECRET ESCAPES

THIS IS A TAHITIAN ISLAND  
OFF A TAHITIAN ISLAND OFF A  
TAHITIAN ISLAND. FOLLOW US,  
BECAUSE IT ONLY GETS BETTER.

P. 30



### HAWAII

The most mysterious  
place we've ever seen  
(and never touched)

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### COOK ISLANDS

A four-day cruise with no  
technology, no plumbing  
and no whining

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### BRAZIL

New walkways lead to  
world-renowned beaches.  
So why is no one here?

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YOUR  
**WISH  
LIST**  
FOR 2015

# WHAT IT'S LIKE TO...

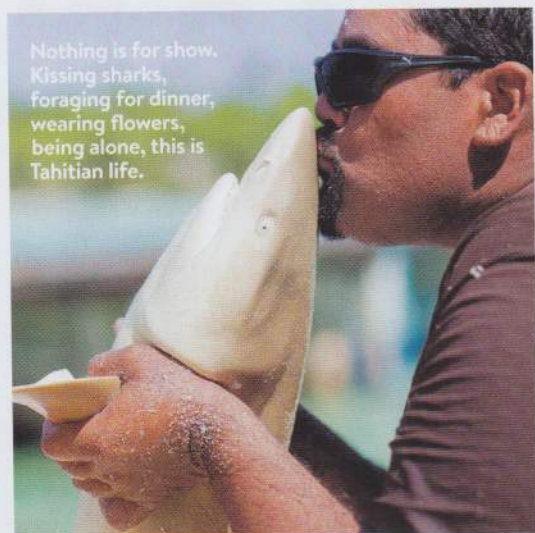
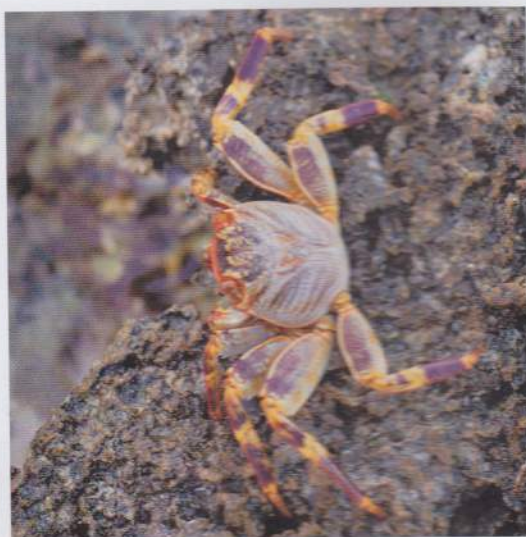
Escape. Get away. Disappear. Let's be serious, they're all wishy travel concepts that can never come to life, not literally. Something always happens. Four days of feasting become painful. A dream hike hits shaky ground. The unblemished beach has footprints. The swim to a mystical shore hits a blockade. The wish gets twisted ... and in a way it becomes better. No, wishes don't come *exactly* true, except maybe this one:

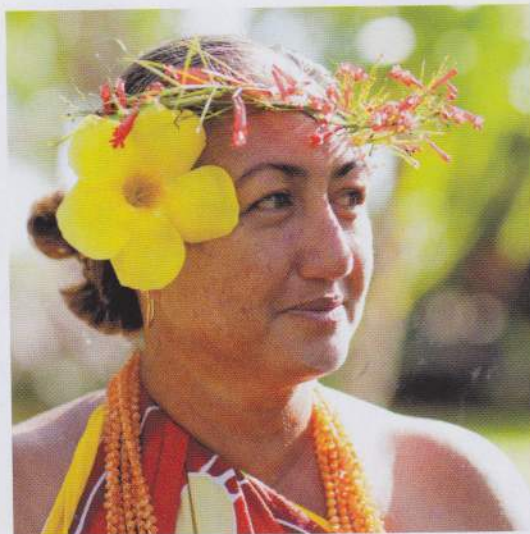


# CLAIM A TAHITIAN ISLAND

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE ON THIS PRIVATE  
MOTU IS HOW TO DOWNPLAY IT BACK HOME.

PHOTO ESSAY BY JON WHITTLE





# M

MY DEAREST WIFE,

Sorry for just getting around to writing you. I arrived on the island a few hours ago on a little shuttle boat — nope, no ferry service. At one point on the ride over from Rangiroa I thought we might be lost. All I could see was eerily blue water and a little dot of land in the distance (yep, Motu Teta). We made it, but there are only three people here: me, a lady named Celine, and a big dude named Heiarii. They're the island hosts, and get this: *Neither of them was trained at a French hospitality academy.* They're just regular Tahitian people. She fishes (using old spark plugs for weights) and he has pets (sharks in the lagoon). Definitely not a resort. Bummed you couldn't come, but at least you have cable TV.

Note: The Wi-Fi is spotty at best, so sending pictures is out of the question.

HI BABE,

Can't sleep. There's no road traffic outside or drunken laughter at a pool to lull me to sleep. I tried going for a long walk, but it only took five minutes to get to the other side of the island. It's all beach, beach, beach, even off my front porch. You'd probably find it way too quiet here. And way too sandy.

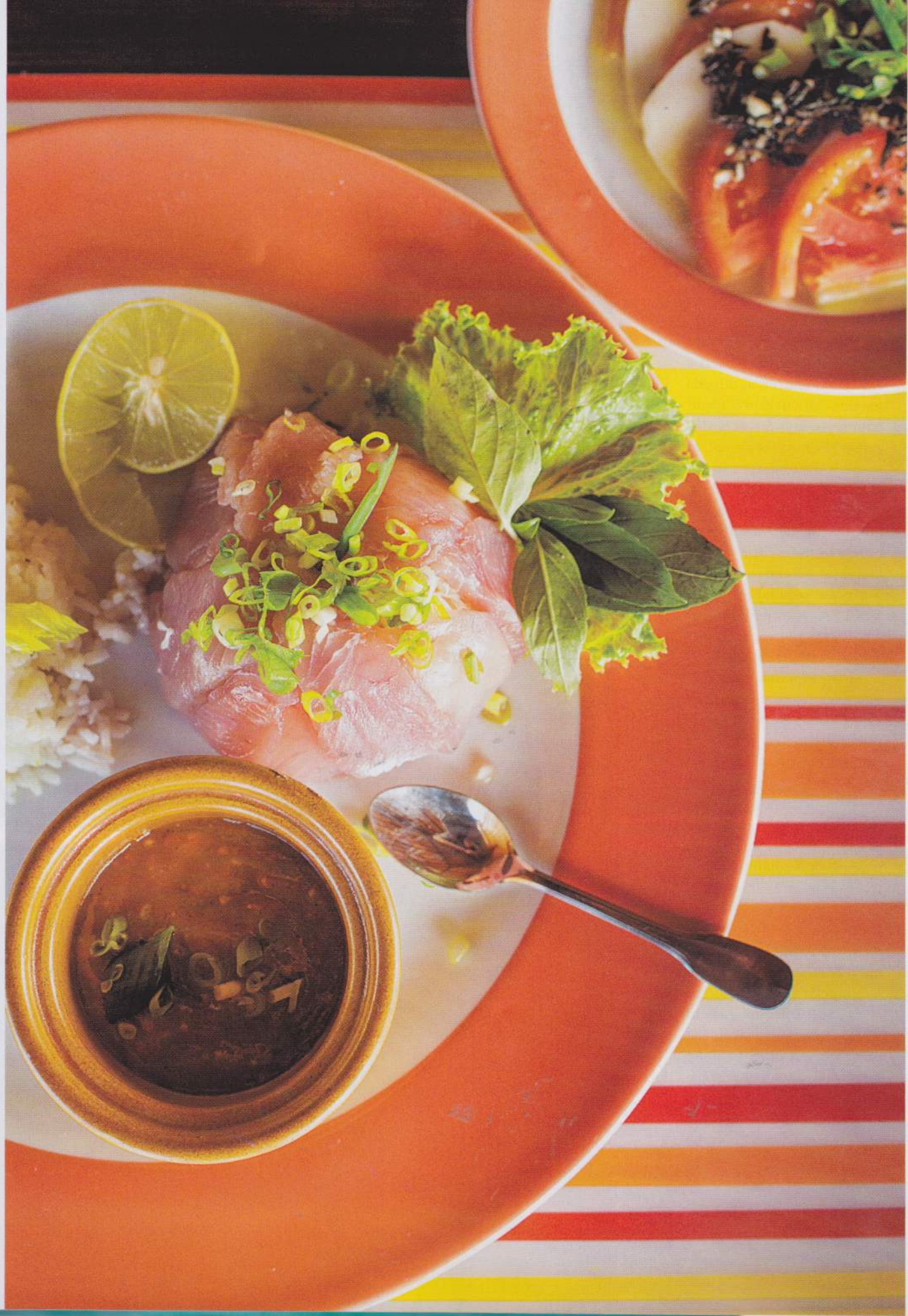
Oh, and the ambient light is a bit of a problem too, because the stars look like they're collapsing right on top of me. I'm staring at them now (sigh).

MISS YOU,

This has been another strange day. I'm eating breakfast alone



This is “the residence,” as in the one and only place to stay on Motu Teta. Live-streaming entertainment comes in the form of an object called the ocean, which also serves up the island’s food.



this morning when Heiarii strolls up and says he wants to take me by boat to a little island called Ote Pipi. Love hearing a guy the size of a commercial freezer saying cute Tahitian names. *Ote Pipi*. Yeah, so anyway, he says, “We’ll get dinner on *Ote Pipi*.”

Sounds great, right?

When we get to Ote Pipi, Heiarii shows me around a really old church and leads me through a field of coconut palms. He says farmers still gather the nuts for monoi, or coconut oil, to make a living. Hmm. No corn or soy, I guess. It’s an eye-opener because I now realize there are about a billion of these little islands and most belong to families, not hotel companies. Even Motu Teta is owned by a guy who wants to keep it totally Tahitian (sidebar opposite).

So Ote Pipi was pretty cool, but there’s no restaurant. Heiarii and I got to this pink reef and started collecting snails ... *our dinner*. Back on Motu Teta (is it easier if I just call it “my island?”) Celine did something magical with the escargot. But you might have freaked — they didn’t have any frozen chicken as a backup.

#### ME AGAIN,

Been really busy. This afternoon I was into a three-hour hammock nap when Heiarii stirred me. Something about a Polynesian voice — it almost put me right back to sleep. Anyway, he says he has some special entertainment in mind for tonight. If it’s anything like yesterday, it will not be tame. Yeah, we lassoed sharks — Heiarii kissed them and called them by name. We spend most



As if Rangiroa weren’t remote enough, the ride by skiff to Motu Teta goes even farther afield, across one of the prettiest lagoons we’ve ever seen.





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## WHAT'S IT LIKE TO OWN A TAHITIAN ISLAND FOR MORE THAN A WEEK?

The holder of the deed to Motu Teta, a full-time California resident who wishes to remain anonymous, tries to help us comprehend. "The 12-by-12-foot pavilion you see here is my favorite spot in the world. I like simple. It's why I fell for Motu Teta from the very start. Being disconnected from Internet and cell service made me more connected with the Tahitian way of life. I often think of the day my wife and three children first stepped onto the island. The excitement in those faces ... I'll never forget it. They didn't need a computer or a theme park. All they had to do was open their eyes. After that trip, I came back to the States ready to handle anything in life. That's why I'm keeping the island distraction-free. I want others to experience Motu Teta for what it is, not for what someone wants it to be." Prices range from \$688 to \$1,679 per person per night. Go to [yourdreamisland.com](http://yourdreamisland.com).

of our time in the lagoon. The water is as clear as an aquarium, and I think Heiarii knows when I pee. Makes me miss a crowded pool.

#### JUST A QUICK NOTE,

Forgot to check in with you last night. I got caught up in some things. Heiarii came over after my dinner on the beach, handed me a headlamp and said, "The lobsters are out."

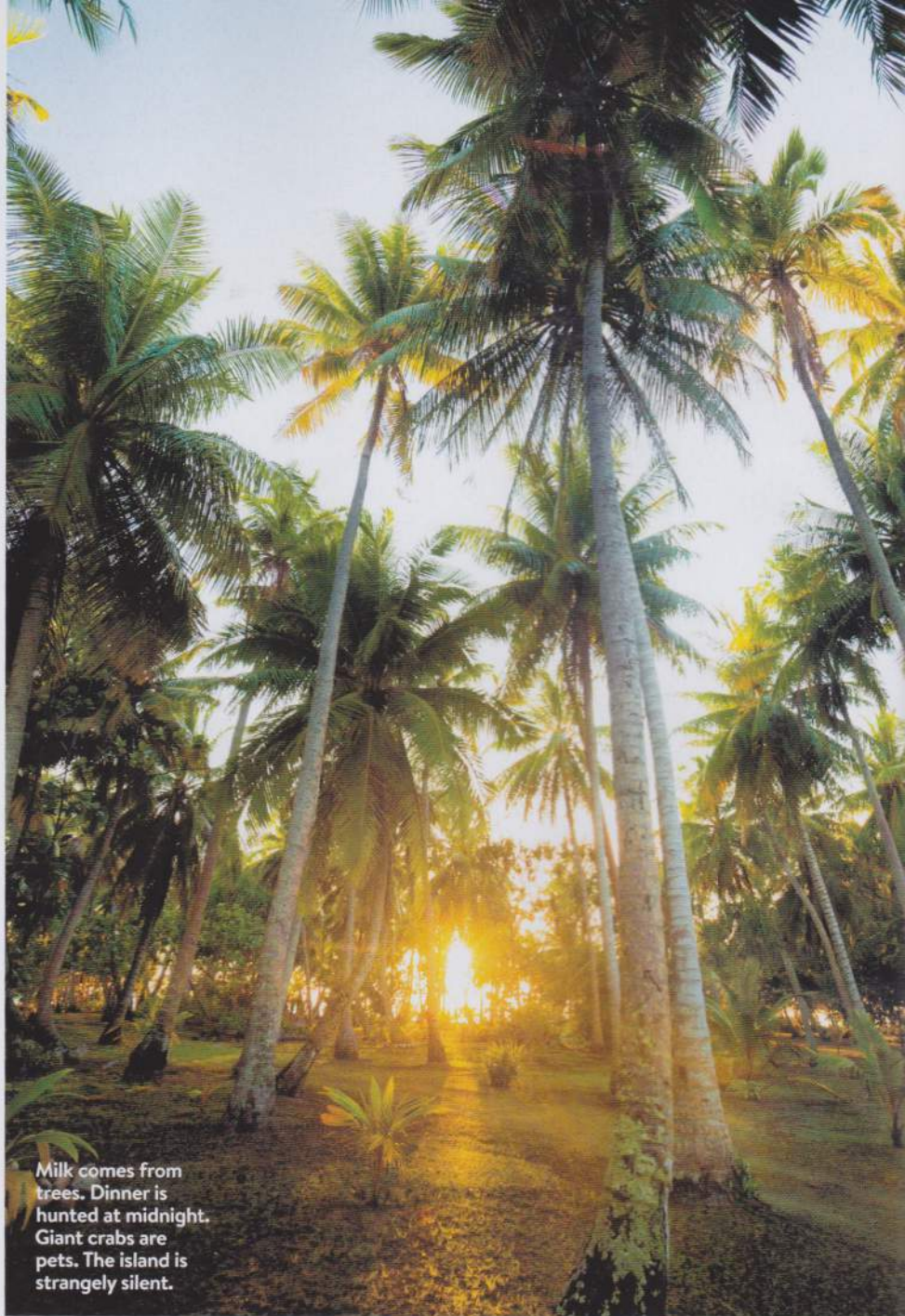
So while you were sleeping with the cats, I was hiking in waist-deep water with a light strapped to my forehead. An albino eel slithered at my feet and a shark fin moved past — Heiarii's buddy, I suppose. I'm thinking this would be an insurance nightmare in the U.S.

Then my light hit two shiny blue orbs: the eyes of a Pacific-size lobster. I went to grab it, but my grip was weak from carrying the camera all day. Heiarii laughed. I love that laugh. Can't you just hear it?

HEY,

Haven't seen Heiarii yet. But Celine says she wants to show me what her family does for fun. It could get complicated, so I gotta go. Oh, I might need to stay a couple extra days.

**SEE A 60-SECOND VIDEO:**  
[islands.com/videos](http://islands.com/videos)



Milk comes from trees. Dinner is hunted at midnight. Giant crabs are pets. The island is strangely silent.

#### PRIVATE ISLANDS TO RULE (FOR A FEW DAYS)



##### HAYMAN ISLAND

A seaplane drops guests onto this Great Barrier

Reef hideaway. Not private enough? A shuttle boat can take two guests to their own low-tide sand spit. \$700+ nightly, [oneandonlyresorts.com](http://oneandonlyresorts.com)

##### EAST SISTER ROCK ISLAND

It sits less than half a mile off Marathon, Florida, so essentially it's on the Florida Key-chain. Not a resort, it's a 2,500-square-foot home (with 19 sliding glass doors!) plus a guesthouse. Bring your own butler — or at least some fish for the grill. \$6,000 weekly, [floridaisland.com](http://floridaisland.com)



##### PETIT ST. VINCENT

How perfect that transportation is by Mini Moke.

What's big? The staff, and hopefully not your head when you see 130 people waiting on your little party of 56. \$108,000 for four nights, [petitstvincent.com](http://petitstvincent.com)

##### HATCHET CAYE

An island of cabanas, a bar and a volleyball court — it's 17 miles off the Belize coast and claimable for as few as three nights (for up to 26 people). Pack kazoos and knitting needles — Hatchet Caye collects items for a youth center on the mainland. \$1,080+ per person per night, [hatchetcaye.com](http://hatchetcaye.com)