

hot spots

InterContinental Resort & Thalasso Spa, Bora Bora

Where is it? This US\$70 million resort, off the island of Bora Bora, a 30-minute flight from Papeete, Tahiti, opened last May. It is perched on a pristine beach on the island of Moto Piti Aau, which means "two hearts" in Tahitian. Situated between the ocean and a lagoon, the property sits over a barrier reef facing Mount Otemanu and is accessible only by boat.

Traditional or modern? "Sleek" is the word that comes to mind the moment one steps into the white stone and dark wood lobby. Bubbles Bar, which looks like a trendy "It" spot from a hip Miami Beach hotel, doesn't forget its past, however: an enormous black and white photograph of Bora Bora from yesteryear hangs behind the bar.

Who goes there? Everyone is created equal at this resort, meaning there is no grand presidential suite to attract famous names. However, honeymooners and those in the mood for romance swoon at this dreamy spot. For guests who yearn to exchange vows onsite, the hotel features the world's only over-water wedding chapel with a glass



floor. Be aware that wedding ceremonies for foreign nationals are not legally binding unless they have first gained temporary residency in French Polynesia.

What's the decor like? French architect/designer Philippe Grandous, a Tahitian resident, worked closely with Paris-based interior designers Carole Stevenin and Sylvain Proyart to create a chic environment that meshes island traditions with a metropolitan aesthetic.

What about the guest quarters? Thatch-roofed, over-water bungalows are synonymous with French Polynesia but this is the only hotel in the region to have put all its rooms on stilts. The 80 suites are all of the same size (more than 1,075 sq ft of indoor and outdoor space) and layout, and offer water views from bedroom, living area and bathroom. Each villa has two flat-screen televisions, CD and DVD players, a terrace, an outdoor shower and a private solarium with direct access to the lagoon.

Anything else we should know? In the Deep Ocean Spa by Algoritherm, three of the 14 treatment rooms are glass-



floored, over-water suites, allowing individuals or couples to gaze at the maritime flora and fauna while enjoying a soothing therapy session. This is the first spa in the world to use mineral-rich water extracted from almost 1km below sea level in its signature treatments, such as those in the Swim Spa, an outdoor pool in which one swims against the current.

What's on the menu? Le Reef, the resort's fine-dining restaurant, fuses French and Polynesian fare. You'll find dishes such as red mullet and candied vegetables on the menu alongside traditional Polynesian dishes such as poisson cru (marinated raw fish served with coconut milk and limes). For a treat, have breakfast delivered to your villa by outrigger canoe.

What's the bottom line? Rooms cost from 75,000 CFP francs (HK\$6,700) a night.

InterContinental Resort and Thalasso Spa, Bora Bora, French Polynesia; tel: 689 60 49 00; www.boraboraspa.intercontinental.com. Kelly Carter