

# Helicopter Flights to Tupai for Japanese Newlyweds

Tahiti and a Japanese tour operator are to offer Japanese newlyweds helicopter flights starting in June to the Leeward Islands atoll of Tupai, 19 km (12 miles) from Bora Bora, French Polynesia's most popular tourist destination. According to the French Polynesia Tourism Minister Steeve Hamblin who met with Ryoichi Takemoto, general manager of Tahiti Wedding Bell Japan, a joint promotion campaign began already in February.

The Japanese tour operator, already experienced in selling the French Polynesia destination, specializes in preparing customized and innovative packages for young honeymooners. Takemoto is preparing a package offering Japanese newlyweds a Tupai fly-over and landing to visit what he says is an authentic and exceptional place. Plans call for the helicopter trips to be available from four of the Leeward Islands – Bora Bora, Taha'a, Raiatea and Huahine – based on demand.

Each honeymooning couple will be given the opportunity to help protect the small atoll (11 sq. km/4 sq. miles) by planting a coconut tree as a way of showing their thanks for being able to take the excursion and to respect nature, the Tourism Ministry said.

The heart-shaped Tupai "evokes a powerful symbol 'of a lifetime union' for young Japanese couples", the ministry added. "The Tupai atoll's accessibility near Bora Bora and its idyllic setting are all exceptional assets for our destination."

Tour operator CEO Takemoto said French Polynesia's long distance from Japan is not an impediment, but added that promotion efforts must continue to make the destination unique and exclusive. Tupai perfectly symbolizes this objective, he said.



The French Polynesia government has owned part of Tupai since 1998. The then government's plan at the time was to convert part of the atoll into an exclusive, deluxe private vacation resort for important political VIPs visiting Tahiti.

Tupai's potential visitor tourist destination attraction has always been its proximity to Bora Bora, probably French Polynesia's best-known island worldwide with its 12 luxury hotels. Several of those hotels offer overwater villas and suites at motu, or islets, inside the famous Bora Bora lagoon.

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