

*Eco-Responsible Hiking in  
French Polynesia Awareness  
Manual*

Welcome to French Polynesia, an archipelago of priceless ecological wealth. From the peaks of Moorea to the deep valleys of Tahiti, the trails open the way to a wild and sometimes fragile nature. But behind this beauty lies a major challenge: invasive plants.

Certain plant species from elsewhere proliferate in the forests, threatening the balance of local ecosystems. As a traveler, you have an essential role to play. This guide aims to inform you and give you the keys to hiking in an eco-responsible way, so that your visit leaves a positive footprint.

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## *What is an invasive plant?*

An invasive plant is an introduced species (often accidentally) that rapidly colonizes a natural environment, to the detriment of local species.

In French Polynesia, where biodiversity is often endemic (i.e. unique in the world), these plants represent a direct threat. They often have no natural predators, allowing them to grow unchecked.

## Falcata

**Origin: Southeast Asia**

It grows fast and forms forests composed almost entirely of its own individuals. This reduces the diversity of flora and fauna.



**SOME OF THE BEST-KNOWN ARE:**

## Miconia calvenscens

**Origin: South America**

It blocks sunlight, impoverishes the soil and suffocates local flora.



## African tulip tree

**Origin: Africa**

Grows very quickly and spreads thanks to its many seeds. It takes the place of local plants, particularly in the mountains, blocking light and preventing endemic plants from growing.



# *Impacts on the local environment*

## **Disappearance of endemic species**

Invasive plants compete with local species for light, water and nutrients. This leads to an irreversible loss of biodiversity unique to Polynesia.

## **Disruption of food chains**

Local fauna depend on native plants for food and reproduction. By replacing these plants, invasive species deprive the fauna of its resources. This causes an imbalance in the ecosystem and can lead to the decline of certain animal species.

## **Soil erosion**

Some invasive plants prevent the regeneration of deep-rooted native trees. The soil becomes more vulnerable to rain and runoff. The result: landslides, mudslides and loss of fertile soil.

## **Modification of watercourses**

The shallow or dense roots of certain plants modify water absorption. They can divert streams, drying out certain areas or causing abnormal flooding. This affects water quality and aquatic habitats.

## **Reduced natural resources for local populations**

Less access to useful plants for food, traditional remedies or handicrafts. This results in a loss of cultural know-how linked to the use of local plants and a reduction in the diversity of agricultural, forestry and craft products.

# Good Eco-Responsible Hiking Practices



## Before the hike

- Clean your shoes, bags and clothes to avoid carrying seeds.
- Find out about authorized trails.
- Avoid picking plants or bringing back natural souvenirs.



## During the hike





- Stay on marked trails.
- Don't introduce any plants or seeds, even local ones.
- Respect the flora and fauna: don't touch, don't disturb.
- Avoid fragile areas or those marked as ecological restoration zones.



## After the hike

- Clean your equipment again.
- Report any unusual plants to a local agent or guide.
- Don't throw away garbage, even biodegradable garbage (which may contain exotic seeds).

# What to do if you spot a suspect plant?

-  Take a photo (close-up and at a distance).
-  Note the location (GPS coordinates if possible).
-  Don't touch it or pull it out yourself.
-  Report it to the local authorities (e.g. environmental authorities, guides or local associations).

## Resources & Useful Contacts

French Polynesia Environment Department:


 Address: 1st floor of the Culture building,  
opposite CESEC, rue des Poilus Tahitiens,  
Papeete 98714

 B.P. 4562 – 98713 Papeete

 Tél. : 40 47 66 66

 Fax : 40 41 92 52

 Mail: [secretariat.diren@administration.gov.pf](mailto:secretariat.diren@administration.gov.pf)

 Opening hours: 7:30am–3:30pm  
(7:30am–2:30pm on Fridays)



# Our partner AOA



### SPONSOR A *Microsorium commutatum* - "MAIRE"

**5 000 F**

A magnificent native fern, it was once used in the preparation of many remedies. By sponsoring it, you help preserve the resources and knowledge of traditional medicine. A valuable gesture for our culture and our nature.



### SPONSOR A *Glachidion manono* - "MĀNONO"

**5 000 F**

An native shrub of the Windward Islands, its reproduction is closely linked to certain butterflies. By sponsoring a *Mānono*, you help protect an entire ecosystem. A beautiful gesture for the Polynesian biodiversity.



### SPONSOR A *Aleurites moluccana* - "TĪ'A'IRI"

**8 000 F**

Introduced 1,200 years ago, this tree had many uses, including lighting up households and tattooing. By sponsoring it, you help preserve ancestral knowledges and uphold a cultural heritage.



### SPONSOR THE "E-TAHITI TRAVEL TRAVELERS' MINI-FOREST"

**FREE DONATION**

Made up of native trees, shrubs, ferns, and orchids, it not only preserves flora biodiversity but also restores natural habitats for birds and other wildlife in our valleys. A strong environmental commitment.

Let our team know the plant or the amount you wish to donate. A sponsorship certificate will be sent to you. You will regularly receive photos of your plants, symbolizing your contribution to the restoration of the Polynesian forest.