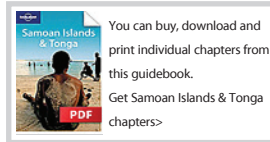


# Getting Started



Figuring out how much time to allow for a trip is the main issue confronting travellers to Samoa, American Samoa and/or Tonga. Think carefully about your priorities before settling on an itinerary. Are you happy to sit on a single beach for a few weeks? Do you have an irresistible urge to explore every hiking trail in one particular island group? Or are you interested in combining relaxed tours of the main islands with brief excursions to smaller, outlying places that take more time and flexibility to reach?

As with any Pacific destination, it seems a shame to take a relatively expensive flight direct from Europe or North America to either Samoa, American Samoa or Tonga and straight back again, unless your travel agent has unearthed a spectacular deal for you or your midnight fare-searching sessions on the Internet have proved fruitful. Instead, consider stopping elsewhere in the Pacific in addition to your primary destination.

## WHEN TO GO

For the majority of the year, the climate in the Samoan islands and Tonga encourages visitors. Both Samoas lie near the equator, so conditions are almost perpetually hot and humid – the average annual temperature is 26.5°C in coastal areas, with a decrease in temperature as the land rises inland. Despite its great latitudinal range, Tonga does not experience dramatically diverse climatic conditions either, although Vava'u and the Niuaus are noticeably warmer than Tongatapu, and 'Eua is noticeably cooler (for different reasons). It's when the wet season and the odd tropical cyclone have to be factored in that things get a little less straightforward.

The most comfortable time to visit the region is during the dry season between May and October. Not surprisingly, this is when most of the major Samoan and Tongan festivals are held. This is basically considered to be the region's high season, though there isn't necessarily much dif-

### DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- Double-checking the visa situation (Samoa islands p146; Tonga p284).
- Hogwarts-strength anti-insect potion (ie bug repellent) to discourage mosquitoes (p297).
- Sunscreen, sunglasses and a hat to deflect fierce UV rays (p302).
- A travel insurance policy specifically covering you for diving, surfing, hiking and other high-risk activities (Samoa islands p141; Tonga p280).
- Knowing what your local embassy/consulate can and can't do to help you if you're in trouble (Samoa islands p140; Tonga p279).
- Your own snorkelling equipment (Samoa islands p136; Tonga p273), because it will often not be available for hire or, if it is, the quality may be poor.
- The ability to ask open-ended questions, particularly across Samoa. (Ask 'Where is the beach?'. Don't ask 'Is the beach over there?', to which the answer will always be a resounding 'Yes!', even if this is completely incorrect.)
- An inexhaustible supply of patience. You'll need it while waiting for objects to appear (buses, people etc).

See Climate Charts (Samoa islands p139; Tonga p277) for more information.

### FAVOURITE FESTIVALS & EVENTS

- Heilala Festival (p279; July) – the Tongan king has a week-long birthday bash
- Miss Galaxy Pageant (p279; July) – Tongan men get dressed up to party
- Teuila Festival (p141; September; [www.teuilafestival.ws](http://www.teuilafestival.ws)) – Samoa's major tourism-focused celebration
- White Sunday (p141; October) – when children run the show in both Samoas
- Tisa's Tattoo Festival (p141; October; [www.tisabarefootbar.com/eventstattoo.htm](http://www.tisabarefootbar.com/eventstattoo.htm)) – entrepreneurial spirit meets traditional art in American Samoa

ference between prices charged during this time and those charged over the rest of the year.

The region's wet season (ostensibly its low season) lasts from November to April. December and January are normally the wettest months across Samoa, while in Tonga, March tends to be the wettest month, especially in Vava'u. Remember, though, that most precipitation occurs at night and the main discomfort will be caused by a rise in the lethargy-inducing heat and humidity. The exception is the harbour area of Tutuila (American Samoa), where the famous Rainmaker Mountain ensures that the region receives over 5000mm of precipitation annually.

Both the Samoan islands and Tonga unfortunately lie squarely within the South Pacific's notorious cyclone belt. The season for tropical storms and cyclones is between November and March. Cyclones seem to occur, on average, every 10 to 15 years. However, in the early 1990s the Samoas were devastated in quick succession by two of the strongest and most destructive storms on record: cyclones Ofa and Val. The last big storm to hit the region was Olaf, which blew across the islands in early 2005.

If you plan to come during the December–January holiday period, when huge numbers of Samoans and Tongans return for the holidays (mostly from New Zealand, Australia and the USA), it's wise to book flights well in advance.

## COSTS & MONEY

Your daily expenses will be affected markedly by how you travel, the type of accommodation you seek out, the sorts of eateries you frequent and how often you end up clutching a cold beer/wine/cocktail. Your choice of activities will also dramatically alter your budget – sitting on a beach costs nothing (except perhaps a small day access fee), but going on a diving trip or a surf safari obviously requires significant expenditure.

In Samoa, if you stay in midrange hotels interspersed with the occasional night in a standard beachside *fale*, buy all your meals from restaurants and hire a car to get around, you'll probably pay a minimum of ST160 per day (per person travelling as a couple). If, however, you stay almost exclusively in *fale* (particularly those that include two or more meals in the overnight rate), do at least some self-catering and bus it around the islands, you'll pay considerably less.

Due to American Samoa's reliance on the greenback, the costs here are higher than in Samoa. Using the same rough formula applied to Samoa – mainly midrange hotel or motel accommodation, restaurant meals and a hire car – you can expect to pay at least US\$130 per person per day. In Tonga, for the same array of daily expenses you'll be looking at a minimum of T\$125 per person per day.

While travelling anywhere within this region, always carry a supply of small-denomination notes. Bus drivers, kiosk and café proprietors, and villagers accepting payment for beach use can't be expected to change big bills.

### Taxes

Samoa applies a 12.5% VAGST (Value Added Goods & Services Tax) to most commodities and to hotel and restaurant prices. This is almost always included in marked prices, though some top-end accommodation and eateries will add it to your bill.

All such prices in Tonga include a recently introduced 15% GST. All prices given in this book include these taxes.

## READING UP

### Books

Gavin Bell's *In Search of Tusitala – Travels in the Pacific after Robert Louis Stevenson* retraces the principal South Sea voyages of the Scottish writer, who settled on 'Upolu during the final four years of his life.

An entertaining account of travel through the South Seas is *Slow Boats Home* by Gavin Young, the sequel to *Slow Boats to China*. Combined, they recount the author's 1979 around-the-world boat-hop on vessels large and small. A good part of his journey is aboard a Tongan boat, and there's a well-observed Samoa chapter.

*Transit of Venus – Travels in the Pacific*, by Julian Evans, is a well-written account of the author's shoestring travels around the Pacific by boat and ship. It includes very entertaining chapters on the Samoas and Tonga.

A book travellers love to hate is *The Happy Isles of Oceania: Paddling the Pacific* by Paul Theroux, in which the perpetually miserable author kayaks around South Pacific islands. Cynics will love the amusingly downbeat prose; he is particularly hard on Nuku'alofa.

*Friendly Isles: A Tale of Tonga; 'Utulei, My Tongan Home; and The Tongan Past* by Patricia Ledyard Matheson all relate anecdotes of Tongan life and make easy, interesting reading.

### CONDUCT IN THE SAMOAN ISLANDS & TONGA

As a foreigner, you will be considered worthy of respect as long as you behave appropriately as far as the locals are concerned. This can be frustrating at times. Samoans and Tongans will often keep themselves at arm's length in order to avoid the possibility of making you unhappy. They will often answer your questions with the response they suppose you'd like to hear, rather than with the truth, which they believe may upset you. But the better you become acquainted with the people, of course, the more relaxed they will become.

It is perfectly normal in the Samoan islands and Tonga for members of the same sex to hold hands and display friendship in public, but open displays of affection between men and women, married or not, will be met with disapproval.

Be aware that Sunday is the traditional day of rest and quiet. This is the day when tourists are generally not welcome in villages or on local beaches.

A concept that causes breakdowns in communication between Samoans and foreigners is *musu*, which may be roughly translated as 'moodiness'. An otherwise pleasant and vivacious person may inexplicably become quiet and sullen. If this happens, don't worry – you haven't committed some unforgivable faux pas, so don't react with apologies or questions. Your friend is just experiencing *musu* and will usually get over it soon.

For more tips on how to get along with the locals, see the boxed texts on p35 and p160.

*Tonga Islands: William Mariner's Account* by Dr John Martin and *Tales of the Tikongs* by Epeli Hau'ofa should be mandatory companion reading for visits to Tonga. The former provides a fascinating historical background to many sights throughout the islands, while the latter is a collection of wry, satirical vignettes on life in 'Tiko'.

For a glimpse of American Samoan life in the mid-1970s through the eyes of a cynical American humorist, track down a copy of *Tales from the Margaret Mead Taproom* by Nicholas von Hoffman. It's illustrated by Garry Trudeau, the Doonesbury cartoonist.

*My Samoan Chief* by Fay G Calkins is a wonderfully entertaining account of how a young American woman deals with the often confounding customs of traditional Samoa after she moves there with her Samoan husband.

### Websites

**Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)) Get started with summaries on the Samoas and Tonga, links to island-related sites and travellers trading information on the Thorn Tree.

**Matangitonga** ([www.matangitonga.to](http://www.matangitonga.to)) Provides lots of Tongan news and current affairs.

**Office of Tourism** ([www.amsamoa.com/tourism](http://www.amsamoa.com/tourism)) Quite a good site on American Samoa, with information on history, language and customs, and a calendar of events.

**Samoa Sensation** ([www.samoa.co.uk](http://www.samoa.co.uk)) Good general site about both Samoas. This website has the *Samoa Observer* and *Samoa News* online, a Q&A forum and a good selection of books about Samoa that can be ordered from the site.

**Samoa Tourism Authority** ([www.visitsamoa.ws](http://www.visitsamoa.ws)) Samoa's official website, with lots of useful info and links.

**Tonga Visitors Bureau** ([www.tongaholiday.com](http://www.tongaholiday.com)) A good place to start looking for information, with lots of links that will be of interest to travellers.

## RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

If you enjoy snorkelling around reefs and getting glimpses of wildlife in their natural environments, then do your bit to protect them by not buying souvenirs made from endangered animals or plants – that means anything utilising coral (particularly black coral), shells (such as triton shells), turtles, sandalwood and the like. If you do buy such goods, it will probably be confiscated when you get back home anyway, due to international conventions banning trade in endangered species. Speaking of coral, avoid stepping on or otherwise damaging reefs while you're checking them out.

On the same theme, think carefully about visiting (and therefore supporting) any attractions that exploit wildlife, endangered or otherwise. For one such scenario in Savai'i, see *Responsible Choices* (p94).

The careful disposal of all nonbiodegradable rubbish should also be a priority for travellers. Anyone who has seen the rubbish that plagues beaches, parks and other public places across the Samoan islands and Tonga will need no further convincing of the importance of this. Also keep this in mind while you're quick-stepping it down a pristine walking trail. For further information, see p49 for the Samoan islands and p172 for Tonga.

# Itineraries

## CLASSIC ROUTES

The well-beaten Samoan path is lined with beautiful beaches, gorgeous snorkelling options, legendary sites and other natural trappings of tropical islands. Why come all the way to the Pacific to rush around? Take a few weeks to get into the Samoas' relaxed spirit.

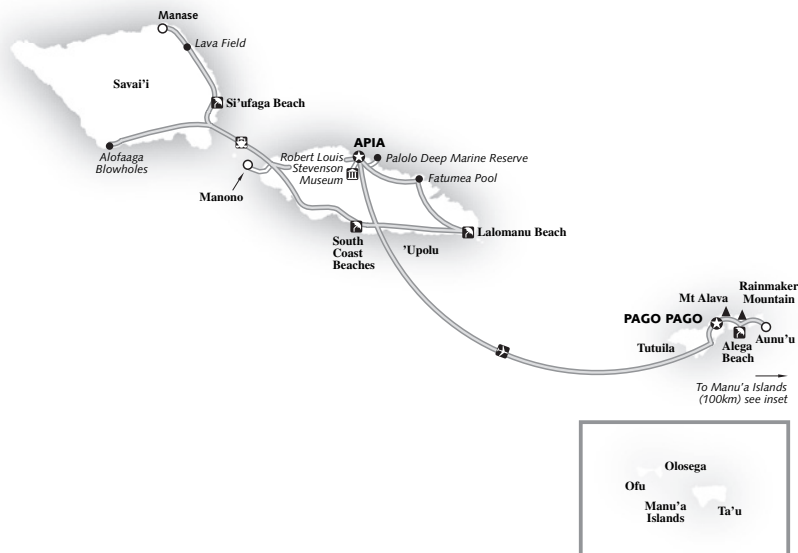
### SAMOAN ISLAND-HOPPING

Two Weeks / Apia to Pago Pago

In Samoa, experience the delightful **Palolo Deep Marine Reserve** (p64), then head inland to the charming **Robert Louis Stevenson Museum** (p74). Back-track to Apia and head eastwards to the seductive sands of **Lalomanu Beach** (p83), with a pit-stop at **Fatumea Pool** (p78). Meander along **south coast beaches** (p79) to laze in more beachside *fale* before boating out to **Manono** (p84) to circumnavigate this peaceful islet.

Back on the 'mainland', catch the ferry to Savai'i (p148). Motor up the east coast, stopping for a dip at beautiful **Si'ufaga Beach** (p92). Now traverse the desolate **lava field** (p94) before depositing yourself on the sand at gregarious **Manase** (p96). Return down the east coast and continue west for the wave action at **Alofaaga Blowholes** (p100), then recross Apolima Strait and fly to American Samoa (p290).

Admire the beautiful harbour setting of **Pago Pago** (p105), then climb **Mount Alava** (p108) for spectacular views. Maroon yourself on **Alega Beach** (p116), detouring for a close-up of **Rainmaker Mountain** (p115). Wind along the coast to Au'asi for a small boat to **Aunu'u** (p121) to explore its wild nature, before taking a slow ride back to Pago Pago.



### TONGAN SAILING TOUR

10 Days to Two Weeks /  
Nuku'alofa to the Vava'u Group

One classic route taken in Tonga involves a thorough exploration of the vibrant jumble of islands that make up the ever-popular Vava'u Group, followed by an investigation of plantation-studded Tongatapu.

Head straight to the paradisaical Vava'u Group, Tonga's activities playground. On **Vava'u Island** (p249), climb up to the peak of **Mount Talau** (p252) for some amazing island views and to map your path through the Port of Refuge. Then join a chartered or bare-boat yacht and sail around the islands of the group. Change your anchorage each night and jump off board each day to snorkel at the various sites. Stop at **Tapana** (p260) for a paella feast then make your next location **Hinakaua Beach** (p260) for a Tongan feast. Spend some time exploring the **Japanese Gardens** (p260) off Mala and swim into **Swallows' Cave** (p262) on Kapa. Experience the magical fog of **Mariner's Cave** (p262) on Nuapapu before moving on to lovely **Nuku** (p262), and then hike to the royal tomb on **'Euakafa** (p263). Arrange your charter to sail through the Ha'apai Group en route to Tongatapu, or catch a short flight.

On **Tongatapu** (p179), have a quick look around **Nuku'alofa** (p182) and then visit the island's fascinating archaeological excavations, including the **Lapaha archaeological site** (p199), followed by the energetic **Mapu'a 'a Vaca blowholes** (p211). Then get yourself in holiday mode by spending a day or two snorkelling, swimming or just being lazy on one of the resort islands to the north of Tongatapu, such as **Pangaimotu** (p213) or **Fafa** (p213).

See the relevant destination sections for information on transport options around each island grouping. For details of transport between Tongatapu and Vava'u, see p285.



The Vava'u Group is an enticing cluster of islands – some topped with emerald green and with sheer basalt walls plunging into the protected waters, others ringed by idyllic swathes of sand and coral reefs. You'll want at least 10 days to let the wind fill your sails.

## ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

To travel into the Samoan wilds is to weave your way between ancient Polynesian sites, quicksand lakes, collapsed calderas and some of the most beautiful beaches in the Pacific. Take two weeks, but a month would build in the flexibility required for trips to outlying islands such as Apolima and the Manu'a Group.

### INTO THE SAMOAN WILDS

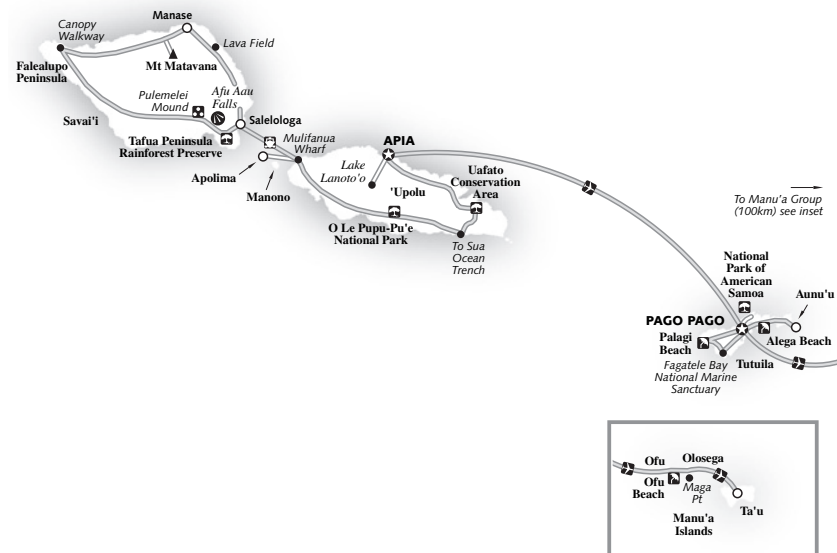
Most of the region's fascinating sites lie off the main coastal roads: in the middle of plantations, on the slopes of ruptured volcanoes, and on far-flung satellite islands. From **Apia** (p60), take the Cross-Island Rd to eerie **Lake Lanoto'o** (p77). On the north coast, rattle into the remote **Uafato Conservation Area** (p77). Peek into the sublime depths of the **To Sua Ocean Trench** (p81) and explore an overgrown trail in **O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park** (p80). Then organise a visit to spectacular **Apolima** (p85) before sailing for Savai'i.

Delve into the **Tafua Peninsula Rainforest Preserve** (p92) before visiting the **Afu Auu Falls** (p99) and **Pulemelei Mound** (p100). Continue west to **Falealupo Peninsula** (p97) to trudge across the **Canopy Walkway** (p98). Head east to **Mount Matavana** (p95). Relax at **Manase** (p96) before returning to 'Upolu.

On Tutuila, head for the **National Park of American Samoa** (p115). Go south to explore the pristine **Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary** (p118), then travel beyond Leone at least as far as beautiful **Palagi Beach** (p119). Re-cross the island, stopping at **Alega Beach** (p116), then visit **Anuu'u** (p121). From Pago Pago, fly to Ofu to experience stunning **Ofu Beach** (p127) and **Maga Point** (p128). Your last stop is the remote rainforest grandeur of **Ta'u** (p129).

Getting Around sections fronting each destination chapter summarise travel around 'Upolu (p57), Savai'i (p90) and Tutuila (p104). For ferry info, see p148. For info on transport between Samoa and American Samoa, see p290. Transport between Tutuila and the Manu'a Islands is on p147.

### One Month / Apia to Ta'u



### SLOW BOATS AROUND TONGA One Month / Nuku'alofa to the Niuas

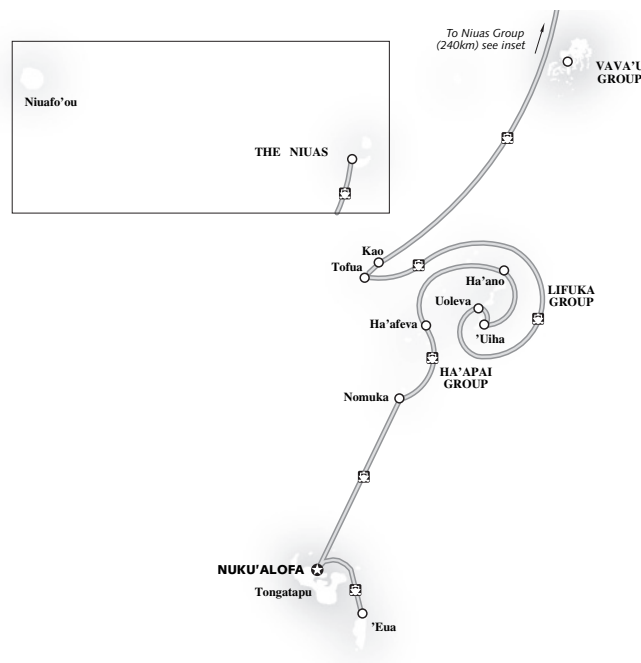
There's no better way of enjoying the peaceful solitude on Tonga's wonderfully isolated islands than to stow away on slow boats around the region, jumping off whenever the urge strikes you.

After spending a little time acclimatising to the tropics in **Nuku'alofa** (p182), head out to nearby **'Eua** (p215) and spend a few days (or why not a week?) hiking through the island's lush rainforests and exploring its caves and sinkholes, where you'll sometimes have to climb huge, tangled banyan trees to get out. From Nuku'alofa, clamber aboard a church boat headed for the coral charms and soothing serenity of the scattered, low-lying **Ha'apai Group** (p225). Visit remote **Nomuka** (p241) or **Ha'afeva** (p241) and immerse yourself in the culture and traditional lifestyle of Tonga – extra incentives to come out here are the amazing reefs and shallows you'll want to explore on snorkelling and diving trips. Spend some more time absorbing unexploited Tongan culture on friendly islands in the Lifuka Group, such as **Ha'ano** (p237) and **'Uiha** (p238), then shack up in a beachside *fale* on budget-oriented **Uoleva** (p237). Embark on a trip out to volcanic **Tofua** (p240) to hike up to the crater rim, and to nearby pyramidal **Kao** (p240) where you can scuba dive its blackened drop-offs.

If time is not your scarcest commodity, continue via the sundry physical distractions of the **Vava'u Group** (p243) to the remote **Niuas** (p265), three remote volcanic islands where you'll find lava fields, untrammelled ridges and languid locals.

See the relevant destination sections for information on transport options around each island grouping. For details of transport between Tongatapu, the Ha'apai Group and the Niuas, see p285.

Take as long as you can to get lost in the South Pacific of old. Discover 'Eua's tropical rainforest, the Ha'apai Group of stunning, far-flung and low-lying sand and reef islands, and the charm of slow-moving, unexploited Tongan culture.



## TAILORED TRIPS

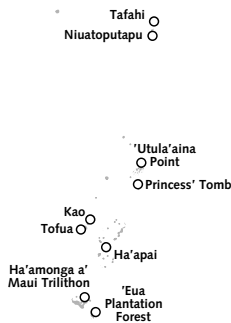
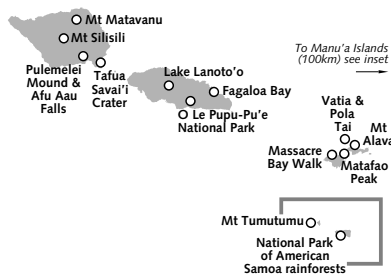
### WALK THIS WAY

If wandering along deserted trailways on remote Pacific islands with only a daypack, sunshine and local wildlife for company is your idea of paradise, then you'll find plenty of fulfilment waiting for you throughout the Samoan islands and Tonga.

On the main Samoan island of 'Upolu, tackle the challenging trek through overgrown terrain to the mysterious **Lake Lanoto'o** (p77), walk around the remote perimeter of **Fagaloa Bay** (p78) on the north coast, and disappear into the tangled flora of **O Le Pupu-Pu'e National Park** (p80). On the neighbouring island of Savai'i, scale some impressive ancient volcanic craters – namely the wonderful heights of **Mount Matavanu** (p95) and the **Tafua Savai'i crater** (p92) – before embarking on a hike through the lush undergrowth of a sprawling plantation to the ancient ambience of **Pulemelei Mound** (p100) and the magical sight of nearby **Afu Au Falls** (p99), and then climbing up the beguiling slopes of **Mount Silisili** (p97).

In American Samoa, the serpentine island of Tutuila offers a ridge walk up to a derelict cable-car terminal on **Mount Alava** (p108) that continues down steep mountain slopes to idyllic **Vatia** (p116) and the strange contours of **Pola Tai** (p116) on the island's rugged north coast. Those with more energy to burn can then roam along the splendid **Massacre Bay walk** (p119) and prepare themselves for the challenging climb up **Matafao Peak** (p117). Meanwhile, in the deliriously secluded Manu'a Islands, you can march up **Mount Tumutumu** (p127) on the tiny island of Ofu and then fly over to the nearby enigmatic island of Ta'u to stumble through pristine rainforests and along some of the tallest sea cliffs in the world within the confines of the **National Park of American Samoa** (p129) on Ta'u.

The far-flung islands of Tonga also provide an abundance of other glorious trails to follow. The island of 'Eua in the midst of the Tongatapu Group has a myriad potential walks, such as the one through the beautiful **'Eua Plantation Forest** (p218). Walkers also devote themselves to exploring the pyramidal tombs and the South Pacific version of the famous **Stonehenge** (p209) on Tongatapu Island. In the Ha'apai Group, you can have the unique experience of scaling the active volcano on **Tofua** (p240), while the enormous cone of nearby **Kao** (p240) provides an even more strenuous climb for those with enough puff. For less of a physical workout but an absolutely brilliant view, take the short trail to **'Utula'aina Point** (p258) on the northern extremity of Vava'u Island. Then allow yourself to discover



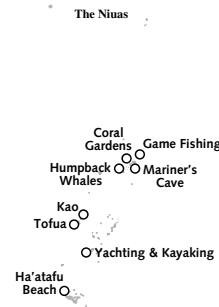
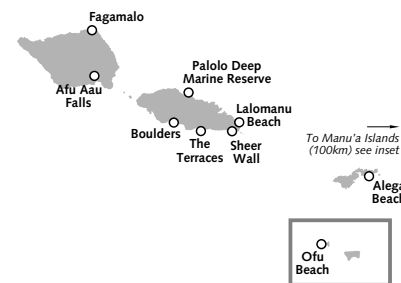
the queen's tomb on uninhabited **'Euakafa** (p263). The beautiful seashore of **Niuatoputapu** (p266) in the Niuaus makes for a sublime circumnavigation, and from the imposing summit of **Tafahi** (p268) you can actually see across to the islands of neighbouring Samoa on a clear day. Finally, don't forget that the hundreds of kilometres of sandy beaches that garland the islands of Tonga make for superb soft walks – arguably the best of these can be experienced in **Ha'apai** (p225) and on **Niuatoputapu** (p266).

### SPLASHING OUT

A bewildering array of water sports are available to travellers across this waterlogged region. The appealing options for immersing yourself in the stunning deep blue of the South Pacific range from plain old swimming – off sublime beaches and in sheltered and often secluded lagoons – to snorkelling, surfing, sailing, fishing and scuba diving.

Locations in the Samoan islands that regularly get a big thumbs up from travellers for the quality of the snorkelling and swimming on offer include the wonderful **Lalomanu Beach** (p83) and other fine watery spots within the Aleipata island district in the southeast corner of 'Upolu; the spectacular coral-encrusted hole at the centre of the **Palolo Deep Marine Reserve** (p64) off Apia; the superb freshwater swimming hole watered by **Afu Au Falls** (p99) and surrounded by thick jungle on Savai'i; the marvellous swathe of **Alega Beach** (p116) on the southern coast of Tutuila; and, of course, glorious **Ofu Beach** (p127) in the Manu'a Islands, a place that easily rates as one of the best beaches and snorkelling locales in the entire South Pacific region. Keen surfers (you have to be not just keen but also very experienced to tackle the intimidating reef breaks in the region) head for the south coast of 'Upolu to well-known sites such as **Boulders** (p79), and to **Fagamalo** (p95) up on the far northern tip of wild Savai'i. The south coast of 'Upolu is also a great place for divers; with popular underwater features including **Sheer Wall** (p134) and **The Terraces** (p134). Samoa also offers **kayaking** (p136) around the peaceful satellite island of Manono and challenging **game fishing** (p135) in the deep waters off Tutuila.

In Tonga, there are few finer swims than the one into **Mariner's Cave** (p262) at Nuapapu in the Vava'u Group – those entering the cave will find themselves shrouded in a strange fog that materialises and then quickly dissipates with each new oceanic swell. Also located near Nuapapu is the superb snorkelling offered by the **Coral Gardens** (p262), which has earned the reputation for being the best snorkelling site in Vava'u. Needless to say, the opportunity to swim with the **humpback whales** (p248) around Vava'u between July and November, when the massive creatures slowly drift through, is reason in itself to cross the world to visit Tonga. The Ha'apai Group offers some



unforgettable diving, particularly around the hulking volcanic islands of **Tofua** (p240) and **Kao** (p240), while easily accessible reef breaks tantalise surfers just off **Ha'atafu Beach** (p212) on the island of Tongatapu. **Chartering a yacht** (p275) so that you can sail aimlessly around the outer islands of the Ha'apai Group is another activity that's high on the list of things to do for active travellers. Ha'apai also gives you the chance to camp out and participate in organised **kayaking trips** (p228) around its outer islands. Last, but not least, **game fishing** (p246) around Vava'u is another highly pleasurable water sports drawcard in Tonga.

# The Authors



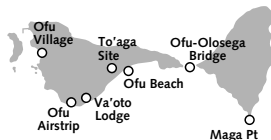
## PAUL SMITZ

**Coordinating Author, Samoa & American Samoa**

Paul has believed the South Pacific to be an adventurous place ever since a ship he was on caught fire off Fiji – OK, he was six years old at the time, but the memory has stayed with him. He has tackled several other Pacific destinations for Lonely Planet, including Australia and New Zealand, but he found his research on ‘Upolu, Savai’i and Tutuila, plus numerous smaller islands such as Apolima, Ofu and Anunu’u, was as exhilarating as a tropical high-seas field trip gets. The spectacular terrain, the oceanic vistas and the warmth of the locals have entrenched the word ‘paradise’ in his otherwise limited vocabulary.

### The Coordinating Author’s Favourite Trip

My trip across the Samoan islands contained numerous special moments, but swooping down on the minuscule airstrip on Ofu (p126) in the Manu’a Islands was the highlight. I stepped from the plane and straight into the warm hospitality of Va’oto Lodge (p128), then lunged across the airstrip and into the waters of the island’s sublime lagoon. I caught a lift to Ofu village (p127), where I was greeted by local families and territorial dogs, before walking past the hidden, mystical To’aga site (p127) and plunging straight off deserted Ofu Beach (p127) to snorkel in the most magical waters I’ve ever seen. Later, I crossed the Ofu-Olosega bridge (p128) (leaving the plunge off it for another day) and past Olosega village to the perfect solitude of Maga Point (p128).



## SUSANNAH FARFOR

**Tonga**

Susannah is an Australian-based writer and editor whose work regularly appears in food- and adventure-related travel publications. She has explored many of the South Pacific’s gems since donning her first grass skirt in Tahiti at age seven, and has also researched and written on the Cook Islands and Australia series guides for Lonely Planet. For this title she got a taste for Tonga while sailing, snorkelling, kayaking, delving into caves and sinking her toes into the sand on long stretches of uninhabited beach.



### My Favourite Trip

On Tonga’s main island, Tongatapu, some of my happiest hours were spent discovering for myself the ancient, overgrown archaeological sites of Mu’a and Lapaha (p199) and chilling out near the magnificent edifice of the Ha’amonga ‘a Maui trilithon (p209). Offshore, I had trouble leaving the luxury of Pangaimotu (p213) and loved the quiet tropical jungles of ‘Eua and its national park (p215).

## CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

**Martin Robinson** wrote the Samoan islands Snapshots chapter. Martin lived on Samoa for a year getting to know the islands from the grassroots by staying with hospitable families in small villages on all the main islands. From his experiences and other research he has written numerous articles on Samoan culture and history for Pacific island magazines. He currently lives in Auckland, on another Polynesian island that he has written about for Lonely Planet.

**Michael Sorokin** wrote the Health chapter. Dr Sorokin has extensive experience as a physician and GP in South Africa, the UK, the Pacific islands and rural South Australia. He has special interests in rheumatology, infectious diseases and preventative medicine. He was recently awarded the Order of Fiji in recognition of his services to health care in Fiji. Dr Sorokin is partly responsible for the maintenance of the Traveller’s Medical & Vaccination Centre (TMVC) Database and helps with reference material for the continuing education of TMVC medical staff.

**Miranda Tetlow** wrote and updated the Tonga Snapshots chapter. Miranda is a columnist, freelance writer and broadcaster, currently working in Australia for the *Canberra Times* and Triple J. In 2003 she was lucky enough to spend 12 months in Nuku’alofa. Most of this time was spent working as a Media Advisor for a Tongan NGO and learning the much maligned art of cooking *sipi* (mutton flaps). Despite a series of unfortunate events that involved dengue fever, tinned corned beef and an amorous taxi driver, Miranda has been passionate about Tonga and its people ever since.

### LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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